MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT IN THE PRIVATE CLUB INDUSTRY

A thesis submitted to the
Kent State University College of Education,
Health, and Human Services in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
of Master of Science

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May 2012
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MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT IN THE PRIVATE CLUB INDUSTRY (68pp.)
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The objective of this study was to identify strategies being used or planned by private club managers to recruit new members into private clubs, thereby enabling financial stability and the ability to maintain club facilities and amenities desired by members. Interview questions were developed for managers holding the titles of general manager, clubhouse manager, and membership director. To obtain data, the questions were presented to the private club managers during a recorded phone interview. Results of this study indicated that club managers were still using traditional strategies to recruit new members into the private club industry. This research can help club managers consider membership recruitment strategies needed to attract new members.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my committee members Philip Wang and Ning Kuang Chuang for their support, suggestions, and feedback of knowledge that they provided during this process. Their backgrounds and expertise of the hospitality industry were evident to making this research study a success.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of my advisor Barbara Scheule. I would like to thank her for the extra time she took out of her schedule as well as her family’s schedule to ensure that this research study was complete. Her knowledge and expertise in the private club industry made this research attainable. Without her motivation this research study would not be as successful as it is.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family, friends, and classmates for their support and encouragement during this process. It was sincerely appreciated.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Private clubs provide many amenities for their members including recreational activities such as golf, tennis, and swimming, social events such as dining and parties, and professional services such as business meetings. Members are able to enjoy the facilities and activities provided by their club with their friends, family, and business associates. Many members of society may think of only the services private clubs provide without considering the business aspect of these organizations. For private clubs to be financially successful, revenues must exceed expenditures. Membership initiation fees and monthly dues are a key source of revenue for clubs. Therefore, when club membership declines, the club revenues also decline. In recent years, the club industry has suffered in part because of the economic recession and changes in society that are potentially resulting in few club members. The number of clubs that have closed or are currently struggling to remain open has increased in recent years.

The value of sustaining membership in the private club industry is important when it comes to the financial impact of clubs. In 2010, the average loss of members in clubs nationwide was one to ten (Brasser, 2011). For instance, a club with 300 members would lose nearly 30 members, which would have a significant impact on club’s finances. This staggering number would mean that all country clubs nationally lost an average of $187,000 annually per club due to the amount of members that dropped their
club memberships (Brasser, 2011). The impact of gaining members for a club can be a beneficial thing, especially with the cost of the shrinking dollar (Brasser, 2011).

**Statement of the Problem**

York (2002) reported that the three main sources of revenues in clubs are membership, food and beverage and other sales including unused food and beverage, recreation revenue, and non-member expenses. It is typical for a 501c non-profit private club to have 85% of their revenue from members. Clubs spend a lot of money on their current members and it continues to grow each year. From 1999 to 2000 club revenue per member rose from $3,470 per member to $6,163 per member, this is a 77 percent increase. York (2002) also states that membership revenue has been the largest contributor to country clubs over the past 20 years. On average the number of dollars spent on each club member annually in 1981 was $1,635, while in 2000 that price rose up to $8,471 per member annually (York, 2002).

Membership at country clubs has dropped about 5 percent since 2006, according to a report from the Club Managers Association of America (Smith, 2009). Since the cost of clubs memberships are so valuable there has to be a reason why club memberships are not increasing. From 2000-2003 the disposable income of many households throughout the country declined by more than 10% (as cited in Ferreira, 2002).

This research study is being conducted because of the lack of academic research
that has been done on country clubs. Between 1994 and 2005 there were only 45 academic research articles done on the private club industry (Barrows & Ridout, 2005). Managing a private club is much more than forecasting and budgeting. It is a gathering place for daily family activities as well as a place to dine and take part in miscellaneous recreation activities. Recently private clubs have been dealing with the addition of fitness facilities, business centers, changing of initiations fees, demographics, and environmental adaptations to environmental issues. Clubs of the past have used their current members to recruit new members into their clubs. In this qualitative study, club managers were interviewed to assess if they were implementing these new trends into their membership recruitment process. Northeast Ohio is being utilized in this study because (a) it has a large number of private clubs (b) has experienced selected club closings (c) is an area affected by the downturn in the economy with high unemployment.

**Study Purpose**

This purpose of this study is to identify strategies being used or planned by club managers to recruit new members into clubs, therefore enabling financial stability and the ability to maintain club facilities and amenities desired by members. Interviews with general managers, assistant club managers, or membership/sales directors within the greater Cleveland area were conducted to understand membership recruitment strategies that can enable clubs to be financially successful into the future. The private club industry has changed over the years for a variety of social and financial reasons.
Historically current members who encouraged their business associates and peers to join the club recruited club members. In today's society, club membership rates have declined, and for private clubs to remain financially successful, the literature suggests that club managers are taking new approaches to obtain new members while still needing to manage membership recruitment within 501c3 (nonprofit) guidelines. Specific research questions were

1. What strategies are private club managers using to recruit members?

2. Are club managers in Northeast Ohio adjusting initiation fees to attract new members?

3. What club services, amenities, or policies do club managers believe are desired by prospective members?

4. Are managers recruiting potential members who are single, members of generation Y, or women?

5. Are managers reducing staff and if so, do they believe these reductions will have an impact on the recruitment of new members?
CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Borrows and Ridout (2010) describe a private club as being a nonprofit organization that is owned by the membership. Private clubs include country clubs, athletic clubs, city clubs, military clubs, university clubs, tennis clubs, yacht clubs, and corporate clubs (Perdue, 2007). Country clubs, which include golf courses and other recreational activities along with a clubhouse offering dining and other amenities, are the most well-known type of club within the club industry. City clubs are another type of club that focuses primarily on dining and business meetings. The key to country clubs’ success revolves solely around its membership. Members not only pay an initiation fee to join their club, but they also pay monthly dues that are usually used for the day-to-day club operations. Clubs are generally formed as social societies that focus on the creation and maintenance of a high quality lifestyle experience for the membership.

Clubs are also classified by their ownership structure. According to Perdue (2007) there are two types of clubs, those owned by members are known as equity clubs, and non-member owned clubs are known as non-equity. In equity clubs, the members are the shareholders of the club. Corporations or individuals typically own non-equity clubs (Perdue, 2007). The biggest difference between these club types is that non-equity clubs are usually not tax exempt, while equity clubs are typically non-profit (Perdue, 2007).

What makes private clubs different from other types of hospitality organizations
is that members join the club to be able to access and use the club services. Membership types are sold in different packages. A full membership package enables the member to have full use of the club and its recreational facilities. Full members are also eligible to vote on issues pertaining to the management of the club. There are other membership packages that private clubs sell besides a full membership package. These are

1. non-athletic or social memberships typically used for dining privileges,

2. child memberships which is often a reduce priced package for adult children of current members,

3. senior memberships for older adults, and

4. temporary membership for potential members who are testing the facilities (Perdue, 2007).

Very few private clubs can say that they have better membership numbers right now than they had last decade. According to Gulati, Nohria, and Wohlgezogen (2010) this is what many are calling “The Great Recession.” The depressed economy has had an impact on club membership. For many, club membership is a discretionary expense that is discontinued when budgets become tighter. Thus, the club industry, domestic and international, has experienced financial challenges as a result of the economy. Country clubs in general have experienced financial challenges for several years, but last year has really been a financial disaster for many private country clubs that have closed because of
declining membership.

**Economic and Legal Environment**

For many generations, being a member of a country club was sometimes akin to being in the hierarchy of social status. Throughout most of the 20th century and continuing into this century, most American country clubs were booming with a myriad of both business and individual memberships. Affluent Americans enjoyed the social and recreational activities provided in clubs for both personal and business reasons. Businessmen were able to hold business meetings over a meal in a fine dining setting or discuss business over a game of golf. The success of many American businesses enabled many to pay for both a business membership for the company in general, as well as individual memberships for their key employees.

In the 1990s a change in tax regulations resulted in American businesses no longer having the right to provide corporate memberships for their employees and then take an income tax deduction to recover these costs (Langley & Rosenberg, 1996). Langley & Roberts (1996) stated that companies could not buy memberships and use them to entertain clients, because the government found that there were too many forms of non-business entertainment involved in social clubs. As a direct result, many clubs needed to significantly raise their regular membership and initiation fees in order to cover the lost revenue.
Other forces have also impacted the club industry over the years also. Ferreira & Gustafson (2006) discussed that in the 1990s the financial status of the private club industry was split into two halves. In the first half of the 90s country clubs suffered because of the economic downturn, while in the second half of the 90s clubs saw an economic expansion that peaked in March of 2001 as shown by a 4.7% increase in the nation’s Gross Domestic Product. During this favorable economic time, clubs gained memberships. But, Ferreira & Gustafson (2006) explained that membership growth in the second half of the 1990s did not last long because of an economic downturn in 2001, followed by dot-com failures, declines on Wall Street, and the tragic events of September 11, 2001. The impact of these events resulted in companies reducing employee benefits, lowering salaries, and eliminating travel and entertainment budgets. These changes in turn eliminated many business memberships that country clubs relied on for revenues (Ferreira & Gustafson, 2006). After 2003, the economic markets improved and memberships to private clubs started to rise again, allowing more clubs to increase their yearly spending budget (Ferreira & Gustafson, 2006).

In 2004, country clubs were steady in membership retention, while some even had waiting lists to get in. With steady membership, as well as financial prosperity, new country clubs were being built in newly designed suburbs, while current country clubs were spending money to update their facilities. One of the main reasons clubs were being renovated and built at this time was because people saw the overall numbers of clubs were down by about 10% since 1990 and clubs needed to become elaborate again
(Clemens, Kim, & Weaver, 2006). However, the building of these additional clubs was ultimately negative for the industry, as 2002 and 2003 were not strong years for the industry and there were more club facilities than could be supported by the membership numbers. The 2002 edition of *Clubs of Town and Country*, which is the “statistical board of operating and financial performance of more that 200 private clubs,” reported financial challenges of clubs (York, 2002). *Clubs of Town and Country* points out there was already a recession in the economy during those years.

Foust (2009) reported that the United States alone has nearly 4,400 country clubs, and of these, there are just a couple hundred that remain economically safe. Many American business entities no longer can afford to (or chose not to) maintain business memberships in country clubs, as well as pay for individual memberships for key employees. In general, the country clubs that are the most negatively affected by these tough economic times are the ones that go by the status of “lower and/or middle-tier clubs.” To demonstrate how significantly the current economy is hurting country clubs and leading to significant declining memberships in many of them, a *Business Week* article, published in 2009, stated, “dozens are in foreclosure” (Foust, 2009). According to the National Golf Foundation (NGF), as many as 15% of clubs report they are currently suffering serious financial problems (Foust, 2009). Foust (2009) reported that among those clubs seriously in financial trouble are such “long-existing venerable clubs as The Country Club of Lansing, Mich., and the former IBM Heritage Country Club outside Binghamton, N.Y., both of which are now facing foreclosure.”
The trend of “struggling” country clubs is not only happening domestically, but also internationally. Several clubs in Southeast Asia are financially troubled (Smith, 2009). “Membership at country clubs has dropped about 5 percent since 2006, according to a report from the Club Managers Association of America. This year alone, the decline could tally another 5 percent, said Kevin Reilly, an industry consultant who wrote the report for the association” (Smith, 2009). It is no surprise that the Club Managers Association of American has reported that country clubs have struggled financially in recent years with significant declines in membership.

In a personal interview, a former membership director at private club in Akron Ohio (personal communication, November 17, 2009) stated they are preparing for the future and dealing with the current weak economy by working with a far tighter budget. Additionally, this membership director lamented about Ohio’s current high unemployment level—which was currently above 10 percent. As a result, the bottom line of many businesses were impacted, as well as the financial status of individuals in and around Akron, causing many to drop their memberships, some of which had been maintained for decades. The manager said that much of this is due to the fact that Ohio was very well known for their many industrial businesses in steel, rubber, coal, and auto manufacturers, and now many of those businesses have either closed in recent years or have significantly cut back on non-essential business items such as their former corporate and individual company-paid memberships to their club (personal communication, November 17, 2009).
With these on-going issues, country club general managers and membership directors cannot continue to maintain their reduced budgets in light of the significantly decreasing membership numbers coupled with the ever-increasing club maintenance costs. These are the major issues that are currently affecting country clubs and leading to the demise of many of them. As long as the economy remains depressed, the club industry is going to have to change, and the managers and board of directors are going to need to make difficult as well as creative decisions to remain viable.

**Club Adaptations to Environment**

**Club Status**

Historically, club membership has been exclusive, and with this membership comes an association with a certain level of status. As clubs have struggled financially in recent years, some have had to open their doors to the public as a way to increase revenue. For example, the 101 year old Uniontown Country Club in Pennsylvania recently opened its doors to the public. The public may now enjoy use of the golf course, as well as its restaurant. In addition, the Uniontown Country Club offers discounted rounds of golf and affordable menu items so the general public can access and afford the country club lifestyle.

Unfortunately, when clubs open to the public, the morale of many of the current members at the club tends to go down because they no longer have a sense of being
special and belonging to an elite organization. Previously, Uniontown Country Club was the hot spot for successful citizens living in and around the city of Uniontown. Now, to remain financially viable, it is no longer exclusive to members. Six other country clubs within the western Pennsylvania area have also fought off bankruptcy in the last year by doing the same thing—opening their doors to the public and unfortunately both risking, and in many cases ultimately experiencing, the alienation and rejection of many long-time members in the process (Saslow, 2009). In addition to the change in the perception of the club by members and the public at large, clubs that are open to the public will experience a change in tax status by no longer meeting the requirements of a nonprofit organization.

Consolidation

Another technique that some clubs are coming up with to survive is consolidation. Consolidation is when two previously separate clubs join their members and assets together to make one larger club. The idea has not been developed on a wide scale as of yet, but it will likely be crucial for many clubs survival in the upcoming months and years. For instance, two clubs in northeast Ohio have already successfully consolidated. In 2006, Sand Ridge Country Club and Mayfield Country Club joined together to make Mayfield Sand Ridge Country Club. By merging these two country clubs together, the owners took advantage of the combined assets of the two formerly separate clubs, thus allowing the two clubs to share employees and also to reduce expenses by eliminating
redundant administrative functions. They were also able to save money by being able to purchase larger amounts of supplies at lower costs due to volume discounts (Foust, 2009). In addition, members now have access to two clubhouses and two golf courses, each with a unique style that can offer different experiences depending on the members’ needs and desires.

In 2010, the Mayfield Sand Ridge Country Club added another organization by consolidating with a third club—Oakwood Country Club. In this merger, 297 former members of Oakwood Country Club came into Mayfield Sand Ridge, bringing their monthly membership dues with them. At the end of 2008, Mayfield Country Club’s membership was down 11%, but since the addition of Oakwood Country Club and Sand Ridge Country Club, membership has increased 33% (personal communication, January, 30th 2010). The merger that these country clubs have done is one of the first of its kind, and it is one of the newest and successful innovations in the country club industry.

**Initiation Fees**

In most country clubs, an initiation fee is required to become a member. Initiation fees to join a club can range from $0 to $150,000, therefore initiation fees, along with the monthly membership dues are a deterrent to many who may otherwise consider joining a private club. Because private country club memberships are down 13% from the average, clubs are lowering initiations fees in hopes that they can attract new members by discounting the price of membership (Smith, 2010). For instance the club in Murrieta,
California, known as the Bear Creek Golf Club, had an initiation fee of $45,000 per member before the recession. Now that they are struggling financially like many other clubs, they did not raise their initiation fee but the lowered it to $2,500. Bear Creek also cut their monthly membership from $1,200 a month to $500 a month.

The Vista Country Club in California took a slightly different approach to initiation fees. In most clubs, the initiation fee must be paid in full when the new member joins the club. The Vista Country Club implemented a system where the member has up to 5 years to pay off the initiation fee, but kept their initiation fee at $25,000. One other unique thing that Vista Country Club created is what they call a recallable membership. This is where a new member pays just $5,000 of the initiation fee out of the $25,000 and when the third year of the membership is upon the member, they have the option of paying the rest of the money off or taking a full refund and leaving the club with no questions asked (Smith, 2010).

Many clubs have been implementing what is called a legacy initiation fee. The legacy initiation fee is where a member can have a discounted initiation fee if they are the child or grandchild of a present member. However, the club is not doing this discounted fee for all who are eligible, but for only the first ten people who apply for this special rate. Reduced initiation fees can be great for country clubs if they are looking to increase their membership. However, the problem with lowering or eliminating initiation fees at country clubs is the current members, as the people who already belong to that country
club, paid the previous higher initiation fees. Historically, initiation fees have increased over the years so current members were not perceiving a loss of value to their membership. The University Club of Kentucky was sued by seven members because they had reduced the initiation fee over $6,000. The members said that this “violated the club’s vows that the value of their memberships won’t decline” (Foust, 2009). The case was later settled out of court, but these kinds of problems do happen within country clubs (Foust, 2009).

**Demographic and Social Environment**

**Women in the Club Industry**

McMahon Group (2009) is a company that specializes in country club research and is constantly coming up with ways for country clubs to evolve. They suggested a couple of opportunities that country clubs need to develop on in order to become more stable and successful (McMahon, 2009). For instance, historically, most managers were male, but that has drastically changed over many decades. Mintz & Krymkowski (2010) reported 16 percent of women were managers in 1970; this number climbed to 29 percent in 2000.

**Diversity**

Diversity is a major key to getting more club memberships. There are a variety of different ethnicities and lifestyles today that country clubs need to understand and
respond to both with their membership base and their management. Club leaders must look past prior gender, racial, ethnic, and lifestyle restrictions on membership requirements in order to survive and prosper in the future. There are fewer traditional White Anglo-Saxon Protestant families who are interested and can afford country club membership than in the past (McMahon, 2009).

**Singles**

Another aspect that clubs are overlooking is how many single adults are now in the world. With 40 percent of adults single, the country club industry should be extending many membership packages pertaining specifically to the single adult (McMahon Group, 2009). Attracting people with different age, marital status, ethnic, racial and lifestyle groups to be club members is going to be a key to success for clubs in the future.

**Attracting Generation Y**

The baby boomers currently make up a large demographic of the country club model. In looking to the future, however, the recruitment of younger generations into clubs is needed. With the baby boomer generation nearly in retirement, club managers are being criticized because they are not trying to pull in members who are in their 40s. By not capitalizing on these potential younger members, country clubs are losing them to high-end public golf courses (Clemens, Kim, & Weaver, 2006).
Fortuna (2009) interviewed Jason Ryan Dorsey, who identified generation Y as those born between 1977 and 1995. Many club managers wonder why it is so hard for them to attract these generation Y members, but Fortuna (2009) suggests it may be because of “generation Y’s fierce protection of its individualism that often makes it hard for club managers to convince them to join a large group.” Reaching out to generation Y through social media, such as Facebook and Myspace (Fortuna, 2009) may be the key to success for private clubs in the future. Dorsey suggests managers are recruiting the wrong way. He believes generation Y members are best recruited through other generation Y members because this group does not want to be individualized by their age group in a social setting, but instead want to be surrounded by others within their generation (Fortuna, 2009). Ultimately, Dorsey suggests that clubs look into slight changes when attracting generation Y membership, mentioning that “generation Y might feel comfortable in jeans and sneakers more than formal attire” (Fortuna, 2009).

According to Tufel (2007), one of the biggest changes in country clubs is the demographics. Burton Ward of Century Country Club mentioned that CMAA’s biggest change in membership is that the members and managers are younger. This trend toward younger members has been growing over the past ten years (Tufel, 2007).
Fitness

According to McMahon (2009), most clubs are focusing their current membership recruitment efforts on baby boomers. Boomers, as well as younger generational groups are increasing seeking to improve their fitness and overall wellbeing. Flegal, Carrol, Ogden, & Curtin (2010) report the prevalence for obesity among men and women in the United States is 32 and 36 percent, respectively. Common ailments such as heart disease, diabetes, and obesity are affecting more people, making it more beneficial for country clubs to set up wellness facilities, diet programs for members, as well as group exercises (McMahon Group, 2009).

Gustav (2010) stated that the McMahon Group surveyed 226 private clubs in 2008 and out of those 226 clubs, 62 percent of them had fitness facilities. Out of those clubs managers who had fitness facilities, 75 percent of the managers stated that the usage of the clubs has increased drastically in the past years (Gustav, 2010). Of note is that 59 percent of the workout facilities in clubs have different operating hours than the actual club, because the lifestyles of members who workout are different (Gustav, 2010).

Many clubs are coming up with different ideas to make fitness a main concern. According to McPherson (2010) the Country Club of Virginia took both a health and entertainment approach by building a $12 million aquatics facility. The 18,000 square
foot facility has five swimming pools, including a separate pool for diving (McPherson, 2010). A $12 million investment in facilities may be beyond the financial ability of many clubs; therefore other clubs are taking the more economical approach. For instance, the Gainsville Health and Fitness Center (GHFC) has put a big emphasis on the dance exercise know as Zumba (Gustav, 2010). Zumba is efficient because there is no equipment needed, just some space and Latin/Salsa music. Gustav (2010) also reported that GHFC is putting a boot camp for men, only gentler. By putting on workout programs that do not involve much equipment, it is very cost effective.

Club Policy Changes

At the turn of the 20th century when many of the well-known clubs were founded, society was much different than today. At that time, clubs were predominately a men’s organization and therefore many traditions in clubs today have been passed down from this earlier era. One tradition that was passed down to Augusta National County Club in Georgia is that it does not allow female members. This country club in particular has received a lot of negative public press about this issue because some view their membership policies as discriminatory, especially if the club is used as an environment in which to conduct business.

Similarly, an article published in The New York Times about the Phoenix Country Club detailed the controversies surrounding the club’s policy that women cannot be allowed into a men’s only “grille room.” The story first started off when a husband and
wife (Logan and Barbara Van Sittert) wanted to eat breakfast at their club one morning in the men’s only grille room. They were not allowed to eat together because the main dining room had already been closed after breakfast and they would not allow women in the men’s only grille room.

**Electronic Services**

Clubs have a long history and many clubs hold long standing traditions. The use of technology such as cell phones and wireless internet in clubs can collide with tradition perceptions of social interactions. In today’s world, most forms of entertainment are run by technology and clubs need to keep up with the changes to provide the services expected by many members. However, technology can offer challenges and therefore some clubs have policies to guide use while at the club. For instance, Los Angeles Country Club does not allow cell phones in the clubhouse, on the golf course, or in lounges (Tufel, 2007). Peachtree Country Club in Atlanta, Georgia, has taken more drastic measures and does not allow any electronic devices on their property. Other clubs provide specific areas where the use of cell phones is acceptable.

**Internal Cost Cutting Related to Staffing**

Notwithstanding all the discussion about the financial difficulties currently facing most US country clubs, there is also another important component of the country club that is usually not discussed—employees. Many people throughout the United States
make their living by working in the club industry. Whether they are employed in the administration of the club, its food and beverage services, the club’s lodging facilities, its golf courses and/or grounds, or at other jobs therein, employment is a major factor for the club industry to deal with—particularly in light of the current economic woes. With country clubs trying to develop new ways of spending less, the first thing reduced is the work force, especially in the food and beverage sector. This has already resulted in significant cutbacks in hours as well as many job losses at clubs in American and throughout the world. Moreover, according to StlToday.com, nearly 58,000 additional workers within the club industry could be out of jobs over the next few years because of the possibility that country clubs may not have enough members to sustain certain activities (Benjamin, 2009). So it is a two-edged sword—i.e. with the weak economy significantly hurting memberships in clubs, employees are being hurt just as much as the clubs themselves (Benjamin, 2009).

The reduction in staff working in country clubs affects these employees individually, however, the need to reduce staff can also impact the ability of the club to provide the level of services desired and expected by members (Benjamin, 2009).

Summary

There are an endless number of solutions that country clubs could use, but some fit the current situations better than others. The McMahon Group recommends country clubs should come up with new ways to attract new members while developing
innovative solutions to retain current members. With the impending retirement of the baby boomer generation, right now is the time for many to join country clubs after retirement. This makes the option for staying healthy and promoting health care in country clubs profitable, whether these are through spas, pools, or workout facilities. Another way country clubs could bring in business would be by promoting racial, ethnic, and gender diversity. By making country clubs more culturally diverse, issues such as the gender discrepancy at Phoenix Country Club would be eliminated or at least greatly reduced. If the United States of America can have a multi-racial president, then country clubs should be able to have men, women, and children of all colors and ethnic backgrounds to socialize together (McMahon Group, 2009).
CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

Human Subjects Review

The Kent State University Institutional Review Board reviewed this research study. Human subjects approval was obtained. Respondents and the clubs represented by the club managers interviewed will be kept confidential.

Instrument Development

A set of interview questions were developed to address the research purpose based on the literature (Appendix B). Several themes associated with membership trends and membership recruitment were found in the literature pertaining to demographics, financial management approaches (York, 2002), and club amenities. The interview questions were developed based on these themes. Questions were grouped by theme so that as that interview progressed selected topics were explored before moving onto another line of questioning. Face validity was established by having experts review the interview questions for content and clarity of the question.

Sampling

The sample for the study was private club managers within the geographical area included in the Greater Cleveland Club Managers Association of America (CMAA) chapter. This area includes northeast Ohio and some areas of western Pennsylvania.
Thirty-two clubs located within the geographical area described were selected from the membership directory of the Club Managers Association of America. In addition, one club not associated with the Greater Cleveland Chapter of CMAA was also selected because of its unique size and prestigious name. The clubs were selected to represent a variety of different sizes and types of clubs.

Next, the general manager of the club was contacted by e-mail to requesting their participation in the study by scheduling a phone interview with the researcher. The e-mail included information about the study (Appendix A). A second e-mail was sent as follow-up if a response was not received, following by a phone call to the club. If the general manager was not available or willing to participate, and the club had a membership director, then membership director was approached regarding his or her potential participation in the research. In efforts to increase the sample size, an announcement was made at the Greater Cleveland Club Managers Association of America annual meeting in October 2011, requesting participation. Some of the managers previously approached via e-mail agreed to participate after this request.

**Data Collection**

Club managers, who agreed to participate in the study, were contacted by phone to establish an interview appointment. The audiotape release form was sent to each club managers via e-mail (Appendix C). On the agreed upon date and time the club manager was called by the researcher. The researcher requested permission to tape the interview
and also asked that no club or club manager names were used during the interview as another means to ensure the confidentiality of their responses. The questions were asked in the same order for each club manager. However, in some cases, a follow-up question was asked to further clarify a point made. If the club manager answered a question within a previous response, which was planned later in the interview, the club manager was informed they had just answered an upcoming question that would not be repeated.

Data Analysis

A thematic analysis approach was used to cluster key themes discussed by the club managers during the interview. Following the interviews, the taped audio recording was listened to and key themes were recorded for each question. The number of times a particular theme was discussed by the managers was recorded (Appendix D). Interviews were listened to more than once to identify the themes accurately. Recordings were paused as needed to record specific statements, or comments made by the managers.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Sample

Thirty-three club managers in the northeast Ohio area were contacted via e-mail, in which they were informed of and asked to participate in the study. Based on publicly known information, the nonparticipating clubs had similar characteristics to those included in the study. Out of these 33 club managers, 12 agreed to participate in the study. All the club managers managed clubs in northeast Ohio. Nine of the managers were male, while three of them were female. The participating managers in the study came from a variety of clubs. These clubs included nine country clubs, one city club, one athletic club, and one yacht club. All the clubs ranged in size. The size of the smallest club was 150 members while the size of the largest club was 1,150. Most of the managers interviewed managed clubs with over 500 members.

The title of each manager was different. Out of the 12 managers interviewed, eight of them were general managers of their respected clubs. Three of the managers were membership directors, while one of the managers was an assistant general manager. The interviewed club managers ranged in age, with the youngest being 25 years old and the oldest being 67 years old. The average age of all the interviewed managers was 47.5 years old. All of the managers had worked at a variety of clubs during their careers. However, one club manager had only worked at one club. The average number of clubs that each manager worked at was 3.6. Each club manager has worked in the club
industry for a variety of years; the combined average number of years worked in the club industry was 19.5 years. Eight out of the twelve club managers have worked in the club industry for 15 or more years.

**Member Recruitment Strategies**

There are many things that clubs managers are trying to do to recruit new members (Table 1). Although the managers mentioned similar recruitment strategies, differences were evident. The recruitment strategies that came up most often were to have current club members do their own recruiting by having members recruit their friends (n=6) and families (n=3), as well as having members refer potential new members (n=4). Members who get new members to join their club are usually entitled to rewards from their club, such as discounts off their annual dues, or being rewarded with certain amenities.

**Initiation Fees**

When managers were asked what their thoughts were on lowering initiation fees, six said they were for it while the other six said they were discouraged by it. Four of the managers said that they lowered the initiation fees to their club, where only one club manager said their club raised the initiation fee. Many of the managers have done things that have helped with initiation fees such as finding different way to pay them, or finding different rates or types of membership. For instance, three clubs used a legacy initiation
for family members of current club member’s family who are interested in joining for a lower initiation fee because they currently have family members who are members of the club. They made it easier for new member to pay their initiation fee over a certain period of time, instead of all at once. Needless to say, a third of the managers said their club lowered initiation fees and half of the managers said they think that clubs need to lower initiation fees.

**Club Services, Amenities, and Policies**

The services and amenities as well as club policies may have an impact on membership recruitment (Table 2). Managers were asked if potential members were looking for certain amenities more than others right now. Eight out of the twelve managers stated that fitness centers were the top amenities they felt potential members wanted. While seven of the managers mentioned that potential members were looking at a variety of options. Half of the managers stated that members are looking for clubs that offer a variety of options for families as well. Examples of options could be dining, tennis, golf, swimming, and additional recreational or social activities. A variety of family options would be family golf, family dinners or gatherings, father daughter dances or mother daughter cooking classes.

The 12 managers were asked if potential members are looking at dress codes as a recruitment issue. All of the managers mentioned that it is not looked at as a recruiting issue, however it is something that is changing in most clubs. Eight out of twelve...
managers said that the dress code around their respective clubs is a casual dress code. This means that casual dress shorts, and polo shorts are acceptable attire. Out of the 12 managers, 10 of them said that their club allows jeans regularly. Only two of the managers mentioned that they still follow a strict dress code, which consists of a coat or jacket when it comes to eating in the dining room. These two managers stated that the strict dress code was primarily enforced in the dining rooms and ballrooms, especially during dinner.

Technology is something that clubs have had to adapt to over the years. In this study the managers were asked if they think that members are going to want more technology than previous members brought into the club. All but one manager said that technology is a key asset to their club. Almost all of the managers said that their clubs have full wireless Internet access. Half of the managers said that all of their billing and clubs announcement/ newsletters are done online. Each manager said that their club allows cell phones. However, they all have certain areas where cell phones can be used and where they cannot be used. The dining room was a place where six of the managers said they do not allow cell phones. Three of the managers stated that their club has a Facebook page. Another three of the managers said that their clubs have a conference centers that consisted wireless internet, projectors for presentations, a conference desk, and a call center.
Demographic Factors

All the managers were asked if they thought perusing potential members with a single marital status would be beneficial for the club industry (Table 3). Five of the club managers said yes, while seven of the managers said they did not think it would have an impact at all on their club. However, two of the managers made the statement that they felt all members were important.

Managers were asked if they thought the recruitment of generation Y was important. Ten out of the 12 managers said they thought that this generation was very important to the club industry because “they are the up and coming generation and future to the club industry.” Club managers were then asked if they were taking different approaches due to the fact that generation Y is having such an impact on society. Three of the managers said it was important to have technology facilities available. Another six said that it is important to highlight certain amenities such as golf, dining, tennis, locker room, and technology facilities. But a third of the managers (n=4) stated that generation Y is a generation that “wants things now.” One manager went on to state that generation Y is “The hardest generation to connect with.”

The managers were asked if they felt women members helped in the recruitment of potential female club members. Eight of the managers said that they thought they would help with recruitment of potential female managers, while four of them said no. Out of those four who said no, two of them were female.
The next question brought different results. Managers were asked if they felt that current women managers helped in the recruitment of potential women managers. Ten of the managers said they do believe women managers’ help in the recruitment of potential women members.

Managers were then asked what they do to help potential women members feel welcome. The managers stated that they do a variety of things to help promote women to their club such as setting up women’s night out for the club or setting up women’s athletic events at their club. Three of the managers stated that they have membership packages strictly set up for women.

The next series of questions were asked had to do with the reduction of staff in the private club industry (Table 4). All managers were asked if they had to reduce the number of staff in the past couple of years. Of all the clubs interviewed surprisingly only half of the club managers (n=6) said they had to reduce the number of their staff, with three of them saying that they have expanded staff. Four of the club managers felt that reducing staff would hurt in the recruitment of new members.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

According to Barrows and Ridout (2010) only 45 academic research articles were published on the private club industry between 1994 and 2005. This study contributes to the private club industry research by exploring club member recruitment strategies. The purpose of this qualitative study was to identify strategies being used or planned by club managers to recruit new members into clubs, thereby enabling financial stability and the ability to maintain club facilities and amenities desired by members. Surprisingly club managers interviewed for this study reported using traditional recruitment methods. Most clubs were seeking members through existing relationships of their current members—friends, family, or business associates.

For clubs to remain successful, especially in northeast Ohio, where there are a large number of private clubs, maintaining a stable membership number is critical. Therefore new ideas need to be thought up on how to recruit new members. One of the club managers interviewed for this study stated that their club has nearly three members a month pass away. This means that they could lose up to 36 members a year if they do not gain any members. Another club manager stated that the current average age of their member was in the 80 plus range. With the club industry losing a generation in the future they need to find more ways to replace the members they are losing.
Some of the club managers discussed importance of changing around their current fees—i.e. initiation fees and monthly fees. However, club managers did not describe recruitment strategies that could be considered innovative and new. Ferreira and Gustafson (2006) stated that during economic downturns, clubs and their managers will have to come up with marketing strategies that will include discounted initiation fees, providing incentives for member referrals, and become aggressive in implementing membership candidates, while at the same time changing the product the club has to offer.

Many of the club managers stated that they had to make a change in their initiation fees. While most of them have been lowering their fees, there was one club that was able to raise their initiation fees. This club was able to raise its initiation fee because it has a waiting list of members to join. Another club manager reported their club eliminated the initiation fee. The club manager did not agree with this approach because it lowers the perceived value of the club. Nevertheless, more club managers are finding ways to make it more affordable to join their clubs. Back and Lee (2009) stated that initiations fees for a membership package were as high as 250,000 dollars in some clubs. In this study one club manager suggests that many of the clubs need to reevaluate their initiation fees and figure out what the worth of their club is to perspective members. Giving high value to members will make club operators monitor and reduce the perpetual gaps between members’ and their actual expectation states Back and Lee (2009).
As stated by York (2002) the single most important aspect for private clubs is the objective to make their membership enjoyable and satisfying while doing so at a rate that is affordable to them. The club managers interviewed for this study identified several club amenities as well as technology services desired by current and prospective members.

In this study most of the club managers stated that their clubs had fitness facilities. The managers who mentioned that their club did not have fitness facilities realized the importance of them. Fitness facilities offer another thing that makes a club membership more valuable. In addition many of the fitness facilities can help members promote and maintain their health in an environment they are comfortable. According to Flegal, Carrol, Ogden, & Curtin (2007) over 30% of most age and sex groups are considered obese in the United States. Not only are fitness centers important but if clubs want to be serious about fitness, they could also develop nutrition programs that could co-exist with their fitness facilities. For example, clubs could implement nutrition programs for members, where the food and menu choices would come from the kitchen/chef of their current club, or if they would incorporate a strength program that would focus workouts that would give this member’s golf or tennis game a slight edge. One club manager stated that since this club does not have the space to construct a fitness center that they obtained memberships from the fitness center down the street. The monthly club membership fees were structured to include the cost of the nearby fitness center.
Partnering with a local business allowed the club to offer this desired amenity without creating additional expenses to the club.

Fitness centers are not the only thing clubs are developing. Littman (2012) states that one club in northern Florida has been using the sport of paddle boarding to attract and retain members for a while. Stand up paddle boarding is the hybrid of surfing and kayaking. According to Littman (2012) stand up paddle boarding is one of the fastest growing sports (water or land) and it is a sport that anyone from a young teen to hip 60 plus year old can participate in. An innovation like this is what many clubs need to create, it is new, unique and is very trendy. Private clubs cannot only get their current members to participate in a recreational activity, but they can sell the idea to the newest generation Y member. Club managers in the present study stated that they wanted a variety of options, and they want activities involving family members.

A club in southwest Ohio figured out that between all their members there were more than 600 children associated with the club (Andruss, 2012). With this number surrounding children, the club decided it needed to utilize this to the best of its abilities by initiating a tennis and paddle ball program for the children. They made the courts smaller so they would become more suitable for the smaller athlete (Andruss, 2012). Several managers reported in this study that amenities involving families are important to them. More clubs need to find their strengths so they can evolve their future. Many clubs have the resources; they just need someone to make the idea happen. Turner (2012)
states that the US is becoming more liberal, more diverse and more inclusive and that it is
time for clubs to take on this approach.

Another innovation that members are starting to see in clubs is more time efficient
golf rounds. A manager in this study noted women members and family groups desired
faster golf rounds. These members wanted to enjoy golf without spending half the day at
the golf course. According to Deegan (2012) a country club in Las Vegas has now
implemented a golf program where they require players to finish their golf rounds in a
three and a half hour time period. Another golf course in South Carolina implemented
summer golf rounds that would be completed in less than three hours (Deegan, 2012).
These golf rounds would consist of shortening the round to 12 holes of golf, rather than
completing the typical 18. New golfing rules may be established that would make the
pace of the round more time efficient (Deegan, 2012). While this article expresses how
golf friendly climates are starting to implement quick rounds, this trend is impacting
northeast Ohio, because a couple managers in this study stated that they were looking
into quicker golf rounds.

Not only does technology have such an impact on the day-to-day business world,
but it has an effect on the private club industry as well. Clubs managers reported that
technology services are another service expected by club members. Many members of
country clubs are constantly doing business through different sources of technology they
have on hand, such as smart phones, laptops, and smart books. Technology is something
that has not been around the private club industry very long, but as this study shows technology is something clubs cannot do without. The private club industry has made changes to many things, including technology.

The club managers who participated in this study were asked about demographics in relation to membership recruitment. With more women working than ever before, club managers should not have a problem getting women to join. However, one club manager did say they do believe it is easier for women to participate and make decisions in the club industry more than they did before. Many club managers believe this is because women are now the primary decision makers of the family.

Singles in the club industry did not seem to be considered by several of the interviewed club managers when thinking about new members. While many clubs have a single membership packages they need to focus on something else besides golf rounds and dinner packages. Clubs need to a find way to promote functions that involve members with a single marital status. The amount of people entering marriage has been dropping drastically in the past 25 years in the United States and the marriage rate is currently at its lowest rate ever in recorded history, states Stevenson & Wolfers (2007).

Although in this study the club managers were not asked about single or married membership in relation to same sex couples, this emerging issue merits discussion. All private clubs have a type of membership that allows husband and wife to enjoy the club together with one membership cost. However, there has recently been discussion about
allowing same sex couples to share a spousal membership. For years, it has always been that same sex partners were not recognized under the same memberships plan, they were recognized as a member’s guest. The same thing comes into play in an article published by Marcia Turner in (2012b). This is the newest group of potential members with a wide range of resources. Turner (2012b) reports that “as clubs look to expand their target markets the gay and lesbian community emerges as an under deserving prospective audience. With more than 900,000 same sex couples in the US (which does not include single gay and lesbian Americans), pursuing this population seems to make a lot of sense.” The buying power for the gay and lesbian population is astronomical, states Turner (2012b), reaching more than 835 billion in the United States in 2011. Turner (2012b) goes on to states that same-sex relationships represent the proverbial Pandora’s box of the private club industry, even in cities that contain many gay and lesbian couples.

Nearly all of the managers interviewed for this study indentified generation Y as the member of the future. The biggest concern that club managers are having is attracting generation Y. Club managers seem to understand what generation Y is all about even though they are still learning what they want. They expressed that generation Y wants things now and technology at their hands. One of the club managers stated that Generation Y is the hardest generation to connect with. The problem is that many managers did not seem to have a definite strategy on how they want to approach this generation. While managers may still be trying to figure out generation Y, there needs to be more structure towards the approach. In an article by Taylor (2012), a club in
Pennsylvania created an entertainment subcommittee that specifically focuses on the generation Y members at their club. Taylor (2012) went on to say that the club connected with the generation Y members through e-mail and texts, no more paper mail. They also connected younger members with each other because they like to be with a social group in their own age, and have planned more events outside because this generation likes to be outside. This club now has a membership retention rate of 100% for generation Y members (Taylor, 2012).

Social media outlets seem like the quick fix clubs could use when recruiting generation Y members. Marcia Turner (2012a) discussed why private clubs are not using social media outlets, and explained that many clubs are not using social media because it takes away from the privacy that the club is trying to sell itself on. In a statement made by Turner (2012a), general managers believe that many of their current members are not part of Facebook. If the private club industry wants to be successful in recruiting new members, they need to give a little to get a little. Turner (2012a) states that Facebook has over 500 million users, which is 1 and 13 people worldwide. Clubs can share the way they want to their clubs to be perceived through Facebook and show their followers what their club has to offer.

Finally clubs managers were asked about staff reduction for cost cutting purposes. If membership numbers drop, then club income also drops and cost cutting becomes necessary. When it comes to eliminating staff to cut costs, many private clubs try to be
discreet. About half of the managers said they had to eliminate staff to help their budget.

One manager agreed that eliminating staff is something that can never be a good thing, but understand why managers and their clubs needed to do it. This manager went on to say that clubs could survive by doing this, as long as they do not cut their front line workers that would make it noticeable to current members. Another manager went on to say that eliminating staff is something that clubs can deal with, as long as it does not affect their front line workers. Front line workers would be considered as the workers that members see all the time. However, Ulicney (2011) states that the most important item an employee can know is the name of a member. This shows the importance of the top front line workers that the manager was talking about. If members start noticing the elimination of employees they see all the time, then they might notice that their club is cutting staff for financial reasons and ultimately membership and membership recruitment can be affected.

**Implications**

The private club industry is a subject that has very few academic research articles published. From 1994 to 2005, only 45 research articles focusing on private clubs were published in academic journals in North America (Barrows & Ridout, 2010). This study contributes to the research by examining membership recruitment strategies of club managers in northeast Ohio. In spite of literature that suggests managers should be creative and innovative in attracting members, this study showed managers were relying
on traditional recruitment approaches and had limited strategies designed for unique club members. Generation Y is the next wave of society. Club managers are going to need to increase their understanding of this generation’s characteristic and develop recruitment strategies approximately tailored for them. Club managers of the future are going to need to be more proactive in their recruitment efforts and in developing membership packages, and amenities that attract new members.

**Limitation**

This study has the following limitations.

1. Results from private clubs managers outside of northeast Ohio may differ from the ones interviewed in this study.

2. The interview questions were written for the private club industry, therefore these questions are not appropriate for most standard business settings.

3. Data was obtained via recording device. The interviews were not transcribed, however the recordings were listened to multiple times and stopped or replayed to record the data.

4. The size of the sample was 12; therefore the results could vary with a larger sample size.
5. Each interview was conducted in a similar way because one researcher did all the interviews following the interview questionnaire. The same researcher categorized the interviews into themes. A second reviewer of the tapes was not done, and therefore it is unknown if a second researcher would have confirmed the same themes.

**Future Research**

While this research have examined what strategies managers are taking to develop, examine, and build their membership base in northeast Ohio, future research can explore further questions that may be unanswered.

Future research can build on this study by

1. Future researchers could use this study to develop a quantitative study that could include a greater number of club managers over a larger geographic area. This could help the researcher find regional differences in membership recruitment strategies or differences based on demographics of the managers or the club.

2. Although yachting, athletic, and city club managers were interviewed for this study, most of the respondents were from country clubs. Additional research could be done to identify potential unique recruiting issues in specialized clubs such as yacht, athletic, and city clubs.
3. Future research on generation Y should identify motivators that would influence members of generation Y to join private clubs. In this study managers did not identify specific strategies to recruit generation Y but mentioned the importance generation Y is going to have in the future of the private club industry.

4. Identifying managers and clubs that pursue innovative recruitment strategies rather than traditional membership recruitment strategies will enable research on characteristics of these managers and clubs. The managers in this study have managed in clubs an average of 20 years. Therefore, it is unknown if less experienced managers or unstable clubs would use more innovative recruitment strategies.
APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM
APPENDIX A

KENT STATE UNIVERSITY CONSENT FORM

Dear (Club Manager),

I am working on my Master’s in Hospitality and Tourism Management and am currently seeking to collect data for my thesis entitled *Membership Recruitment in the Private Club Industry*. I have been a member of the student chapter of CMAA for five years and have worked in the country clubs for seven years. My interest in this research stems from my association with the club industry.

This e-mail is for the purpose of seeing if you would be willing participate in this study by agreeing to a phone interview that would help me to collect data for my thesis. The data collection is a series of 15 questions that covers topics pertaining to recruitment of club members in the private club industry. The interview will be a phone interview that should last approximately 20 minutes. Each interview will be recorded using audiocassette and your name and the name of the club will remain confidential by limits of the law. Since there has not been much academic research done on the private club industry, I hope you will consider taking this opportunity to support academic research in the private club industry. This study is entirely up to you and there will be no negative implications for you if decide not to participate.

For more information concerning this research study, you can contact me by phone at 740-359-3276, or by contacting my thesis advisor, Dr. Barbara Scheule at 330-672-3796. This project has been approved by the IRB at Kent State University. If any further question are needed please contact Dr. Peter Tandy, acting Vice President of Research, Division of Research and Graduate Studies at 330-672-2704. Your help is greatly appreciated. A brief summary of results will be provided to those who participate. I will be calling you within the next few weeks to see if I can count on you to participate.

Respectfully,

Ryan O’Donnell
APPENDIX B

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT IN THE PRIVATE CLUB INDUSTRY
APPENDIX B

MEMBERSHIP RECRUITMENT IN THE PRIVATE CLUB INDUSTRY

PI: Ryan O’Donnell

Questions for Phone Interview or Private Club Managers

1) How long have you worked in the club industry?

2) What is your current age?

3) What strategies are being taken by your club to recruit new members?

4) How many clubs have you worked at?

5) What strategies is your club taking differently than other clubs?

6) In recruiting new members do you feel that they are looking for certain amenities more than others right now?
   a) Can you explain?

7) With the many clubs changing their dress codes, do you feel that potential members are looking at this as a recruitment issue?

8) Do you think that new members in your club are going to want technology more than members previously brought into your club?
   a) For example: Wireless internet, ability to use cell phones, smart phones, and so forth.
   b) How do you feel that technology can influence potential members to join?
9) Do you feel the drawing of members who have a single marital status would be beneficial to your club when it comes to the recruitment of new members?
   a) What are your thoughts on singles as opposed to married couples or families in the club industry?

10) Do you think that the recruitment of generation Y (people born between 1977-1995) is important for country clubs? With the impact that generation Y is having on society, do you see your club taking different strategic approaches to recruiting these members?
   a) What might these approaches be?

11) Since 1970 the percentage of women managers in the country clubs has risen 16 percent, do you think women club members have an impact on the recruitment of new members?
   a) Do you feel that women managers help in the recruitment of potential members or female members or families in your club?

12) What strategies have you and your club implemented to make potential women members feel more welcome in the club industry?

13) Recently, many clubs have had a reduction in membership, which have caused them to reduce the number of staff. Do you feel that with the reduction of staff members it will become a factor when recruiting new members? Is this going to affect the quality of your service towards potential members?
14) Some clubs have lowered initiation fees to attract and recruit new members. What is your thought on this?

a) Has your club done anything significant with initiation fees to bring in new members?

15) Do you have any additional thoughts about member recruitment in today’s society or membership recruitment in future?
APPENDIX C

AUDIO TAPE CONSENT FORM
APPENDIX C

AUDIO TAPE CONSENT FORM

NAME OF STUDY

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

I agree to participate in an audio-taped interview about the strategies used by private club managers in northeast Ohio to recruit new club members. I agree that Ryan O’Donnell may audio-tape this interview. The date, time and place of the interview will be mutually agreed upon.

____________________________________________________________________________

Signature      Date

I have been told that I have the right to listen to the recording of the interview before it is used. I have decided that I:

_____ want to listen to the recording           _____ do not want to listen to the recording

Sign now below if you do not want to listen to the recording. If you want to listen to the recording, you will be asked to sign after listening to them.

Ryan O’Donnell may / may not (circle one) use the audio-tapes tapes made of me. The original tapes will only be listened to by the principal investigator and potentially the thesis advisor, Dr. Barbara Scheule if assistance is needed with transcription.

_____ this research project _____ publication _____ presentation at professional meetings

____________________________________________________________________________

Signature                        Date

Please return signed consent to:

Address: Ryan O’Donnell/ Barbara Scheule
Kent State University
316 White Hall
P.O. Box 5190
Kent, Ohio 44242

Or Fax at 330-672-3063
APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW LOG
APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW LOG

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Q.3,5: Recruitment Strategies

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Q.6: Amenities

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Q.7: Dress Code

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members.

ability to have technology at hand 0 1 0 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 0

meeting people they know 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Changing of society 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1

Utilize the locker room 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0

Yes, we need newer family in the clubs 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0

highlight certain items 0 0 1 1 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0

Q.11: Women in the club Industry

| positive | 1 1 1 1 1 0 0 1 1 0 0 1 |
| no, women don't recruit women | 0 0 0 0 0 1 1 0 0 1 1 0 |
| it about who is trying to make the sale | 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 |

Q.12: Women

| positive having women managers | 1 1 1 1 1 0 1 1 1 1 1 1 |
| setting up women membership packages | 1 1 1 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 |
| women have bigger influence than they did in | 0 0 1 1 0 0 1 0 0 0 0 0 |
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### Q.14: Initiation Fees

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<tr>
<td>under 5,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>raised it</td>
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<tr>
<td>reducing group rates</td>
<td>0 1 0 0 0 0 0 1 0 0 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>discouraged by it</td>
<td>1 1 1 1 1 0 0 0 1 0 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>0 0 0 0 1 0 0 1 0 0 0</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Q.16: Additional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More employment changes than ever</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>being proactive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having good facilities and enjoying the club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Log Key**

- GM-General Manager
- CHM= Clubhouse Manager
- MD= Membership Director
- 0=Manager did not discuss this topic
- 1= Manager discussed this topic
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Table 1

*Membership recruitment strategies and initiation fee structures reported by club managers.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager Responses&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Strategies used to recruit new club members</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members recruit their friends</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referral of new members by current members</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of members’ family</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of members’ children through legacy&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt; special packages</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduction in initiation fee</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting strategies are limited in private clubs by 501C non-profit status</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment of business clients and business affinity groups</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek new members from the community</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special membership terms that allow no fee payment during slow times</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special pricing of membership fees for members transferring clubs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Select new members from existing waiting list to join the club</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Issues related to initiation fees and membership recruitment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lowering initiation fees is a discouraging trend</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower initiation fees suggested as a strategy to attract new members</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation fees have been lowered at club</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation fees are dependent on your market of potential members</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creation of reduced initiation fee with a group rate</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiation fees have been increased</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Sample size = 12.

<sup>b</sup>Legacy Memberships refer to discounted memberships for immediate family members.
Table 2

*Private club amenities, policies, and services perceived by club managers to be desired by prospective members.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager Responses&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Club amenities</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fitness facilities</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offer a variety of options for members such as dining, golf, tennis, aquatics, fitness, and other opportunities for members to enjoy club</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities involving family members</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remodel and updated facilities</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business amenities such as a full business center</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace of play for golf rounds is reasonably quick</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customizing golfing experience for various members’ desires</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dress code policies</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard-cut, presentable jeans can be worn in clubhouse (not including golf course)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual clothing can be worn in clubhouse</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress codes that suit members’ wants</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintain dress code for club that reflects traditional or more formal/business attire (e.g. jackets worn during dining hours)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology services</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members want technology access and services</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wireless internet in the club</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acceptable to use cell phone throughout club house (with exception of dining)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication and billing done online (e.g. bills, newsletters, announcements)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teleconferencing and video conference capability in club</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Sample size = 12.
Table 3

Demographic factors related to membership recruitment reported by club managers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager responses&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Members with single marital status</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not perceived to be an important group to market membership to</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, perceived to be an important group to market membership to</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All members are important</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Generation Y</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Up and coming members in the private club industry</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived to be a generation wanting things now – don’t want to wait</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A generation that wants technology at their hands</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Should highlight certain club features for this generation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recruitment of female club members</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female managers have a positive influence on recruitment of female members</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female club members positively influence the recruitment of female members</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female clubs members do not influence the recruitment of female members</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create membership packages for female members</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female managers do not influence the recruitment of female members</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females influence household decision to join club</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup>Sample size = 12.
Table 4

*Private club managers’ perspectives on the staff reduction and membership recruitment.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manager Responses</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff size have been reduced</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A reduction in staff size will not have an impact on member recruitment</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff size have been expanded</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Front-line, long-term employees need to be retained for member satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Sample size = 12.*