**The Impact of Ownership Type on Citizens’ Service Engagement**

**Abstract**

**Purpose –** Traditionally some public services have been provided at a reduced cost for greater access opportunities among disadvantaged citizens, but is this the case under service externalisation? And if service accessibility is no longer prioritised by external agents in delivery, does this impact the participation of disadvantaged citizens? These are the research questions addressed by this exploratory study in the context of a public sector sport and leisure service.

**Design/methodology/approach –** Secondary objective data is used to capture different ownership types that coexist in service delivery, the cost of access (£) to sport and leisure opportunities provided by these ownership types, and the level of inclusion of specific citizen segments between these ownership types. Multivariate analysis of variance with a post hoc test is used to examine if significant differences exist between ownership types.

**Findings –** Policy-makers should not attach normative values to ownership types for perceived greater access to sport and leisure opportunities. Contrary to common assumption, private ownership reports the highest levels of inclusion across most citizen segments, including the recreationally disadvantaged, despite their pricing being significantly higher than public ownership.

**Originality/value –** The move to increased service externalisation and away from traditional public ownership is expected to result in certain service priorities such as social welfare being degraded in search of revenue. Yet whether an instrumental or normative driven pricing strategy is implemented, the inclusion of disadvantaged citizens does not appear to be significantly impacted.

**Keywords** Pricing; Social inclusion; Participation; Stakeholders; Ownership