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### PAPER TITLE:

North American Idols: Visitor Management Frameworks and Recreation Research

### PAPER ABSTRACT:

North American visitor management frameworks and recreation research paradigms are frequently the envy of recreation researchers and managers in Europe and around the world. In many countries, initiatives have been started to explore the applicability of these frameworks, and an ever increasing number of recreation studies follow the theories, concepts and methods originally developed in North America. In Europe their popularity spread first to Great Britain and Scandinavia, but lately, other European countries also follow that trend. Inevitably questions arise about the applicability and suitability of these methods in many European settings, where the smaller scale of administrative units, national boundaries, and cultural as well as natural landscapes constitute additional management challenges, and prevent the unconditional roll-out of frameworks over a large homogeneous area. Against this background, I will critically present the most popular frameworks and discuss their respective components for their applicability - or lack thereof - in Europe.

Similarly, the dominant recreation research paradigms also deserve closer scrutiny, both in their relevance to these frameworks, as well as in their more general application. I will argue that classical direction of outdoor recreation research in North America has been influenced heavily by a social psychology lens and lately several qualitatively oriented post-modern perspectives, while other relevant theories and methods are rather absent from the standard recreation literature. However, several niches have been identified by other academic disciplines and their results are frequently published in journals that the "classical" recreation researcher and even less so the recreation manager rarely consults. I will conclude with the observation that over the last 10 years new societal needs in Europe have sparked a range of different recreation research activities in Europe, providing fledgling scientists with opportunities to establish themselves innovatively, and more importantly to pursue their research without the same paradigmatic baggage as North American colleagues might encounter.