

Proposing Leisure Activity Participation and Its Antecedents: A Conceptual Model

Shih-Hsiu Lin

Graduate School of Health Science, Management and Pedagogy,
Southwestern University, Cebu City, Philippines

ABSTRACT

This study proposes a conceptual model of leisure activity participation. In the model, leisure activity participation is directly influenced by participation intention, facilitating conditions and perceived usefulness. In the meantime, participation intention is directly affected by effort expectation, perceived critical mass, leisure activity expectation, perceived enjoyment and social influence. Furthermore, leisure activity expectation is directly driven by both perceived critical mass and perceived enjoyment. All the model paths in our conceptual model is proposed to be positive except the one being negative between effort expectation and leisure participation intention. Finally, the managerial implications and conclusions of the study are provided.

Keywords: *Leisure activity participation, participation intention, facilitating conditions, perceived usefulness, perceived enjoyment.*

INTRODUCTION

Tinsley and Eldredge (1995) have emphasized leisure as a key component of life-career development, indicating that people fulfill the role of the leisure for a greater portion of the life span than any other major life role. Despite this, counseling psychologists' knowledge of leisure stands in marked contrast to their knowledge of the relations between individuals and their occupations. Prior evidence indicates that leisure pursuits can affect individual competence and social relationships and have consequences for long-term adjustment (Mahoney et al., 2001). More specifically, some perspectives of individual functioning associated with leisure activity participation include social relationships with peers, social status and persistence in the social system, and experience with the mental health systems (Mahoney et al., 2001). Nevertheless, little is known about the key determinants of leisure activity participation.

Tinsley (1978) and his associates (Tinsley et al., 1977; Tinsley and Johnson, 1984) presented that leisure activities differ in the needs that they satisfy. Hence, the needs satisfied by participation in a leisure activity are one of the most essential psychological attributes of the activity. Although prior evidence corroborating the need-satisfying properties of leisure activities has been forthcoming from many scholars (Tinsley and Eldredge, 1995), the usefulness of this information is limited by the lack of an effective scheme for leisure activity participation.

An approach is to obtain information from participants about the needs gratified by participation in a specific leisure activity. Pierce (1980) cluster analyzed the satisfactions that respondents obtained from work and leisure and examined the extent to which these satisfactions were available in six leisure activities. Previous research demonstrates that leisure activities have no influence or a negative influence on adjustment (Mahoney et al., 2001). For example, transient and solitary leisure activities may be included in the leisure assessment (e.g., seeing a movie, watching television, hanging out with friends) (Mahoney et al., 2001). Another example, Tinsley and Johnson (1984) cluster analyzed 34 leisure activities, and Tinsley et al. (1985) cluster analyzed 18 leisure activities using data obtained from respondents 55 years of age or older. These investigations demonstrate the feasibility and potential benefits of this approach, but each examined only a small, nonrepresentative sample of leisure activity participation. To complement previous studies, this research extended this line of their investigation, proposing a conceptual model of leisure activity participation based on information about the psychological needs that are gratified by participation among people in a society.

Conceptual Model and Propositions

Drawing on the UTAUT model (Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2008), this study proposes a model of leisure activity participation (see Figure 1). In the proposed conceptual model of this study, leisure activity participation is directly influenced by participation intention, facilitating conditions and perceived usefulness. In the meantime, participation intention is directly affected by effort expectation, perceived critical mass, leisure activity expectation, perceived enjoyment and social influence. Finally, leisure activity expectation is directly driven by both perceived critical mass and perceived enjoyment. All the model paths in our conceptual model is proposed to be positive except the one being negative between effort expectation and leisure participation intention.

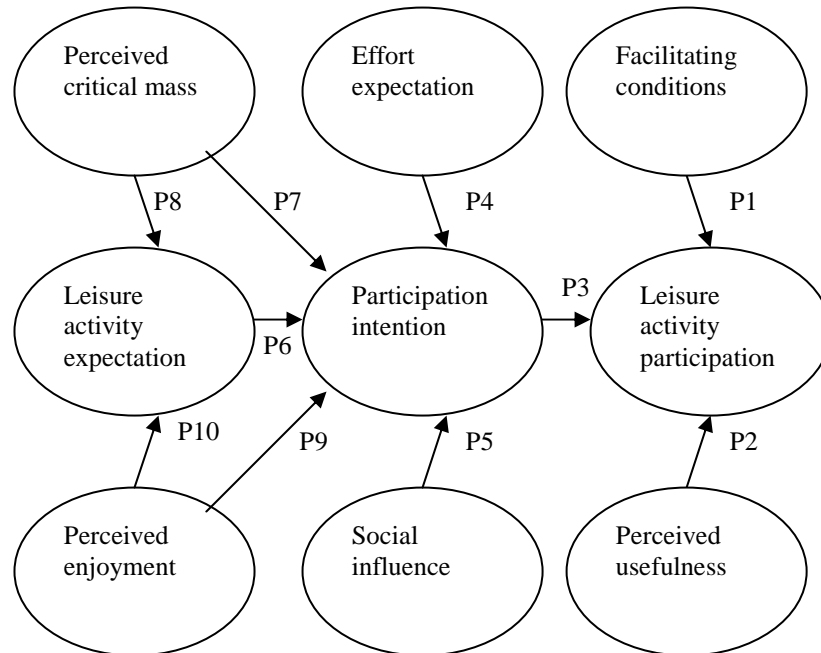


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

Facilitating Conditions and Leisure Activity Participation

Originally seen as external controls associated with the environment (e.g., Terry, 1993; Triandis, 1980), facilitating conditions are defined in this study as the extent to which an individual believes that environmental infrastructures exist to prop his or her leisure activity participation. That is to say, this research construct is considered to include various environmental resources that are available to remove barriers to successfully achieve leisure activity participation of an individual (Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2008). Particularly, facilitating conditions are the “objective factors” and “out there” in the environment (Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2008; Triandis 1980), which several judges or observers can agree make such an act as leisure activity easy to participate in. People without environmental resources to participate in leisure activities naturally result in insufficient leisure activity participation, suggesting that leisure activity participation is positively driven by facilitating conditions (e.g., gyms). Indeed. People require necessary resources to participate in leisure activities or take exercises. For example, athletes would be unable to perform their sports behavior due to a lack of sports facilities, which prevents the behavior from being realized, indicating that facilitating conditions are required to participate in leisure activities (or sports exercises). Consequently, the proposition is derived as below.

P1: Leisure activity participation is positively influenced by facilitating conditions.

Perceived Usefulness and Leisure Activity Participation

Perceived usefulness is related to the instrumentality of a particular leisure activity. For example, people may feel that a particular leisure activity is useful because frequent participation in such activities help people to keep in good shape and health. The theoretical support for perceived usefulness comes from Davis et al.’s (1992) motivational

model. This model suggests extrinsic motivations such as perceived usefulness is a core motivation of human behavior. Extrinsic motivation such as perceived usefulness pertains to achievement of an extraneous goal such as physical gains at leisure activities. Hence, extrinsic motivation to participate in leisure activity can be represented by people's perceived usefulness, since the primary goal of taking leisure activities is to improve, for example, people's health. For example, when people think that a particular leisure activity is useful for improving their physical strength, they are likely to become active in participating in such activity, displaying a positive relationship between perceived usefulness and leisure activity participation. Hence, the proposition is stated as below.

P2: Leisure activity participation is positively influenced by perceived usefulness.

Participation Intention and Leisure Activity Participation

This study extends the intention-behavior perspective in previous literature (e.g., Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2008) to leisure activity participation as a key consequence of the leisure behavioral intention. In other words, leisure activity participation is proposed as a direct function of leisure participation intention. Indeed, People seldom take any action if they have no intention to do particular things or to participate in specific activities. For example, when people have strong intention to participate in future sports activities (e.g., the World Women's Volleyball Championships), they are likely to become active in frequently joining such sports activities, indicating the positive relationship between participation intention and leisure activity participation. Therefore, the proposition can be developed as below.

P3: Leisure activity participation is positively influenced by participation intention.

Effort Expectation and Participation Intention

Effort expectation is the expected degree of ease associated with the leisure activities by individuals (e.g., Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2008). Even if some leisure activities are sometimes not considered difficult to people in general, most people such as elders still need to adjust their participation in leisure activities that are new to them. Thus, when individuals expect free of mental effort regarding new leisure activities (considered low effort expectation), their participation intention is more likely to increase than that of others with high effort expectation. That is to say, individuals' participation intention may be discouraged in the first place when they perceive that lots of efforts are required for participating in some leisure activities in the future. Consequently, the proposition is derived as below.

H4: Participation intention is negatively influenced by effort expectation.

Social Influence and Participation Intention

Social influence in this study is defined as the degree to which people perceived that important others believe them should participate in some leisure activities. In other words, social influence is similar to the subjective norm in the theory of reasoned action (Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2008). Social influence that represents certain perceived pressure to participate in some leisure activities reflects the extent to which individuals of a social network influence one another's participation intention (Venkatesh et al. 2003). Such an influence perceived by individuals is exerted through messages that consequently facilitate to form their perceptions of the value of a leisure activity (Fulk and Boyd 1991; Fulk et al., 1987), strengthening their participation intention. Individuals who are influenced by their friends or relatives regarding particular leisure activities are likely to strengthen their intention to participate in such activities. Thus, the proposition is derived as below.

P5: Participation intention is positively influenced by social influence.

Leisure Activity Expectation and Participation Intention

Leisure activity expectation in this study represents the degree to which people believe that participating in specific leisure activities would benefit themselves. Leisure activity expectation in this model may be seen as a similar kind of benefit expectation. Similar to the phenomenon in which benefit expectation is the strongest predictor of intention and remains significant in previous research, people's participation intention is thus driven by their high levels of leisure activity expectation that displays substantially extrinsic motivation to individuals' participation intention (e.g., Davis 1989, 1992; Venkatesh et al. 2003). The phenomenon regarding the influence of leisure activity expectation on

participation intention is consistent with the expectation theory of motivation (Vroom 1964), in which individuals evaluate their future consequences of potential leisure activity and base their intention on the desirability of the activity. Therefore, the proposition is developed as below.

P6: Participation intention is positively influenced by leisure activity expectation.

Perceived Critical Mass and Participation Intention

The importance of perceived critical mass has been indicated in previous research that people may participate in specific leisure activities according to a subjective perception of the critical number of current activity participants in the society (e.g., Lou, Luo, and Strong 2000). Significantly applied to the diffusion of interactive communication media (Markus 1987), perceived critical mass reflects individuals' perception about a small segment of the population that chooses to make big contributions to the collective sports action (e.g., Oliver et al., 1985). For example, when people feel that most of their friends or colleagues frequently participate in baseball games, their intention to follow suit is likely boosted, resulting in a positive relationship between perceived critical mass and participation intention. Hence, the proposition can be stated as below.

P7: Participation intention is positively influenced by perceived critical mass.

Perceived Critical Mass and Leisure Activity Expectation

Perceived critical mass is specifically important to leisure activities (e.g., baseball, tennis, or basketball) because the activities often require collectively social interdependence between two or more players simultaneously. An individual sports player is unable to experience the benefit of some leisure activities if he or she cannot socially interact with many others in such leisure activities that are prevalent in the society. People would expect a particular leisure activity highly if they perceive that such activity is popular among their friends or relatives, suggesting a positive relationship between perceived critical mass and leisure activity expectation. The propositions are thus derived as following.

P8: Leisure activity expectation is positively influenced by perceived critical mass.

Perceived Enjoyment and Participation Intention

Perceived enjoyment in this study can be defined as the excitement and happiness derived from people's participation in a leisure activity. Perceived enjoyment represents the ability of a particular leisure activity to deliver an expressive and self-fulfilling value to its participants (e.g., Van der Heijden, 2004). This construct has been demonstrated to influence people intention toward particular leisure activities as an intrinsic motivator, even when perceived usefulness is an extrinsic motivator (e.g., Davis et al. 1992). A theoretical support for perceived enjoyment comes from Davis et al.'s (1992) motivational model. This model suggests intrinsic motivation as a key motivation of human behavior. That is, intrinsic motivation such as perceived enjoyment refers to the personal fulfillment derived from that behavior. The intrinsic motivation is captured in perceived enjoyment, since many contemporary leisure activities such as table tennis and badminton often deliver a fun and enjoyable experience to their participants, further strengthening their participation intention. For that reason, the proposition is provided as below.

P9: Participation intention is positively influenced by perceived enjoyment.

Perceived Enjoyment and Leisure Activity Expectation

Perceived enjoyment has a strong effect on people's participation intention toward hedonic actions (e.g., leisure activities) and their leisure activity expectation, since the expressed intent of such actions is to maximize people's enjoyment or entertainment from their participation (e.g., Childers et al., 2001). Conversely, if hedonic actions are perceived as being low in perceived enjoyment, then people are less likely to develop high levels of expectation toward the leisure activities, suggesting a positive relationship between perceived enjoyment and leisure activity expectation. Collectively, the propositions can be stated as below.

P10: Leisure activity expectation is positively influenced by perceived enjoyment.

CONCLUSIONS

This study demonstrates that perceived critical mass and perceived enjoyment are potent determinants that can ultimately enhance leisure activity participation through leisure activity expectation and other mediators. Our model and propositions suggest that people's leisure activity expectation is not arbitrary, but rather based on key attributes of a voluntary social context, including perceived critical mass and perceived enjoyment. The perceived critical mass in this study is considered an extrinsic value resulting from the perceived referent others of an individual's social circle and from the "other" side of a social context (e.g., Lin and Bhattacharjee, 2008), whereas perceived enjoyment is considered an intrinsic value resulting from "self" side of a social context. It is essential to distinguish between the two alternative types of social effects, given that for leisure activities, both "self" and "other" sides may influence people's expectation and intention towards particular leisure activities.

The proposed model of this study bring on several implications for leisure service providers in managing leisure activity. First, given the significant effect of perceived critical mass and perceived enjoyment on leisure activity expectation, management responsible for offering leisure service to leisure participants should be cognizant of and consider the social context (e.g., critical mass) and personal context (e.g., personal enjoyment) in their rollout plans. First, they may provide participants with demonstration leisure programs that emphasize how leisure activity facilitates the establishment of social relationship in a modern society, leading to their enhanced influence of perceived critical mass on leisure activity expectation. Besides, they should survey the critical mass perceived by leisure activity participants so as to design their leisure activity or service properly. That is, the more relatives or friends people have to participate in specific leisure activities, the stronger their leisure activity expectation is thus strengthened.

The test results of this study provide preliminary evidence that people who receive strong social influence are likely to have strong participation intention for leisure activities. This phenomenon suggests that management value word-of-mouth broadcasted by social affiliation of potential leisure participants, which may impact their participation intention highly. Besides, this model implies that the amount of participation intention towards leisure activity counts heavily on the amount of social influence they receive in a real world and of effort expectation they have in mind. In other words, people have to realize that they cannot have sufficient leisure activity participation if they are seldom affiliated with social others in a real world that may also provide advices and recommendations about leisure activities. Some people who are mostly isolated from others in a real world and wish to participate in leisure activities are very much mistaken, because leisure activity participation is related highly to social influence in a society.

Accordingly, this study also offers a clear picture as to the antecedent process of leisure activity participation through participation intention and leisure activity expectation. That is, those who expect highly about leisure activity are likely to have strong intention for participating in it. Since learning to participate in new leisure activities may be uneasy to some people, any combination of technical difficulty, personal anxiety, and activity complexity can negatively influence participants, as they perceive lots of mental efforts taken for participating in new leisure activities. Therefore, leisure service providers should monitor the effort expectation messages of leisure participants and provide incentives for initial participants to experience new leisure activities so as to minimize the negative effect of effort expectation on participation intention, given that previous research concluded that the effects of effort expectation decrease with experience (e.g., Venkatesh et al. 2003).

Facilitating conditions that are positively related to leisure activity participation suggests their direct role in influencing participants' decision in joining leisure activities. The finding for the relationship between facilitating conditions and leisure activity participation provided an additional support for the Triandis model (Triandis 1977, 1980), suggesting the importance of external conditions such as the access to technical assistance, and so on.

In summary, this study can be further expanded by future research that extends this model to empirically study leisure activity participation via long-term observation with sample of working professionals such as business employees or university professors, etc. Researchers can take note of these shortcomings of this study in planning any future research work.

REFERENCES

- Childers, T. L., Carr, C. L., Peck, J., & Carson, S. (2001). Hedonic and utilitarian motivations for online retail shopping behavior. *Journal of Retailing*, 77, 511-535.
- Davis, F. D., Bagozzi, R. P., & Warshaw, P. R. (1992). Extrinsic and intrinsic motivation to use computers in the workplace. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 22(14), 1111-1132.
- Davis, F. D., Bagozzi, R. P., & Warshaw, P. R. (1989). User acceptance of computer technology: A comparison of two theoretical models. *Management Science*, 35(8), 982-1003.
- Fulk, J., & Boyd, B. (1991). Emerging theories of communication in organizations. *Journal of Management*, 17(2), 407-446.
- Fulk, J., Steinfield, C. W., Schmitz, J., & Power, J. G. (1987). A social information processing model of media use in organizations. *Communication Research*, 14(5), 529-552.
- Lin, C. P. & Bhattacharjee, A. (2008). Learning online social support: An investigation of network information technology based on UTAUT. *CyberPsychology & Behavior*, 11(3), 268-272.
- Lou, H., Luo, W., & Strong, D. (2000). Perceived critical mass effect on groupware acceptance. *European Journal of Information Systems*, 9(2), 91-103.
- Mahoney, J. L., Stattin, H., & Magnusson, D. (2001). Youth recreation centre participation and criminal offending: A 20-year longitudinal study of Swedish boys. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 25(6), 509-520.
- Markus, M. L. (1987). Toward a 'critical mass' theory of interactive media: Universal access, interdependence and diffusion. *Communication Research*, 14(5), 491-511.
- Oliver, P. E., Marwell, G., Teixeira, R. (1985). A theory of the critical mass. I. Interdependence, group heterogeneity, and the production of collective action. *American Journal of Sociology*, 91(3), 522-556.
- Pierce, R. C. (1980). Dimensions of leisure: 1. Satisfactions. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 12, 5-19.
- Terry, D. J. (1993). Self-efficacy expectancies and the theory of reasoned action. In Terry, D. C., Gallois, C. and McCamish, M. (Eds), *The Theory of Reasoned Action: Its Application to AIDS-Preventive Behaviour*, Pergamon, Oxford.
- Tinsley, H. E. A. & Eldredge, B. D. (1995). Psychological benefits of leisure participation: A taxonomy of leisure activities based on their need-gratifying properties. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 42(2), 123-132.
- Tinsley, H. E. A. (1978). The ubiquitous question of why. In D. J. Brademas (Ed.), *New Thoughts on Leisure* (pp. 86-99). Champaign: University of Illinois.
- Tinsley, H. E. A., Barrett, T. C., & Kass, R. A. (1977). Leisure activities and need satisfaction. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 9, 110-120.
- Tinsley, H. E. A. & Johnson, T. L. (1984). A preliminary taxonomy of leisure activities. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 16, 234-244.
- Tinsley, H. E. A., Teaff, J. D., Colbs, S. L., & Kaufman, N. (1985). A system of classifying leisure activities in terms of the psychological benefits of participation reported by older persons. *Journal of Gerontology*, 40, 172-178.
- Triandis, H. (1977). *Interpersonal Behavior*, Brooks/Cole, Monterey.
- Triandis, H. (1980). Values, attitudes, and interpersonal behavior. In M. M. Page (Ed.), *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation, 1979: Beliefs, Attitudes, and Values*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln, NB, pp. 195-259.
- Van der Heijden, H. 2004. User acceptance of hedonic information systems. *MIS Quarterly*, 28(4), 695-704.
- Venkatesh, V., Morris, M. G., Davis, G. B., & Davis, F. D. (2003). User acceptance of information technology: Toward a unified view. *MIS Quarterly*, 27(3), 425-478.
- Vroom, V. 1964. *Work and Motivation*. Wiley and Sons, Inc., New York, NY.