

## CHOICE ARCHITECTURE FOR HEALTH, FITNESS, AND RECREATION

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### ABSTRACT

The topic of choice architecture in this paper addresses the strategy of influencing the choices people make as participants in health, fitness, and recreation activities. The projected scarcities of Time, Authenticity, and Trust identified by Lewis and Bridger (2000) are variables that help to explain the trend of accelerated expectations by consumers and the trend toward individualism in services reported by Penn (2007) as well as the increasing emphasis on lifestyle reported by Cordes and Ibrahim (2003). Participants in health, fitness, or recreation activities may orient to participation as an achievement behavior with a sense of obligation and a focus on outcome or as a leisure-based behavior with the use of choice and an orientation to experience (Dixon, 2003). Recent survey work by Ott (2010) explored the value of time and attention for consumers and yielded the identification of four categorical reasons or criteria that help people determine a benefit for their consumption—**Motivation, Habit, Convenience, and Value**. The authors of this paper felt that these four categories for reasons or criteria were limited to the context of achievement as presented by Ott (2010). The authors of this paper included information that would “share” these four categories of criteria or reasons for initiating activities in health, fitness, and recreation as leisure-based behaviors. The four categories can function as **shared criteria** or reasons for participation in both the context of achievement and the context of leisure-based behaviors. As a result, professionals in health, fitness, and recreation services have eight different criteria or reasons to offer participants as benefits of participation for a better quality of life or sense of accomplishment. The use of these shared criteria or reasons for participation represents a type of “choice architecture” for professionals to consider in motivating participants in health, fitness, and recreation activities.

Professionals who deliver health, physical education, and recreation services develop and organize programs that will result in active participation. Ideally, activity programs can benefit levels of health, fitness, and the quality of life by addressing weight management, the incidence of diabetes, the incidence of heart disease, and reducing the incidence of injury. Thaler and Sustein (2008) introduced the term “Choice Architecture” to describe strategies that help people make positive or purposeful choices. For example, businesses may use an architectural design for the building location of restrooms in order to facilitate encounters between workers and potentially increase productivity during a workday. School cafeterias can arrange food items and arrangements to encourage healthy eating choices. Merchants may package products, label orders with personal names, and market messages to encourage choices for drinking bottled water, individualized coffee, or “Just Do It” apparel. Thaler and Sustein (2008) asserted that any person who makes decisions uses a type of “choice architecture”.

The use of choice architecture by health, physical education, and recreation professionals could improve the participation preferences of people in health, fitness, and recreation activities. Professionals in health, physical education, and recreation services could benefit by understanding the factors or reasons that influence choices by adults, parents, and children for physical activity. Lewis and Bridger (2000) identified three factors they believed influence the types of choices people will make. The three factors are characterized as scarcities because Lewis and Bridger (2000) concluded that people want more of these factors in order to make choices in the future. Professionals in the fields of physical education and recreation could design future services with an awareness of these scarcities in order to make choices for physical education and recreation activities more attractive to people with busy lifestyles and limited resources.

### The Influence of Future Scarcities on Choice

Lewis and Bridger (2000) surveyed and identified three projected scarcities that were suggested to influence market behavior (use of choice) by consumers. The three scarcities were Time, Authenticity, and Trust. Time is considered to be a scarcity for the future

because many people surveyed by Lewis and Bridger (2000) reported that they were constantly busy and lacked enough time in their daily lives. Professionals in physical education and recreation services probably encounter many consumers who lament the lack of “enough time” as a resource for pursuing health-related activities and hobbies. Time was also observed to be important because the use of technology was accelerating the expectations for people. With respect to health and fitness today, people are communicating more quickly with high speed technology services, downloading entertainment and information instantly on the internet, and subject to advertisements for rapid fitness and weight loss changes from programs, food products, and equipment. Overall, the future management of time as a resource will have a significant influence on the choices people will make for fitness, health, and recreation activities. In addition, many consumers will feel competition for their time from the workplace and experience a fast pace of life supported by advanced technology. Authenticity was reported as important because the issue of choice in marketing transactions appeared to have value for individuals. In other words, the use of “one-size-fits-all” approaches were being replaced with individualized services (Penn, 2007). For examples, internet sales operations have increasingly greeted shoppers using their names and reminding them of their previous purchases. Certain coffee vendors have been deliberately writing customers’ names on their drink containers. And, the use of “personal trainers”, at home and at small and large fitness facilities, has become more common and are utilized by participants from different socioeconomic levels, as well as those with different training goals and expectations. Health, fitness, and recreation service professionals have increasingly served people who have personal goals, individualized workout music on their Ipods, self-quantification programs on their computers, and even preferences for brands of activity equipment or apparel (Penn, 2007). In the future, physical education, fitness, and recreation professionals could enhance their services by stressing individual benefits and personalizing interactions with consumers as efforts to address the perceived scarcity of authenticity. The third scarcity, identified as trust, was deemed a significant part of transactions because the belief in a product or service translated to an individual prediction and automatic choice for participants. There has been the use of “branding” and an emphasis on the demonstrated value of products and services, which work to shape decision-making for participants. Celebrity endorsements, promised time-frames for results, and convenience of

use for benefits are still common in advertised services and products addressing health and fitness (Ott, 2010). For health, fitness, and recreation services, trust meant that participants may be predicted to choose activities, products, and services as part of their lifestyles. Professionals in physical education and recreation services could enhance future services if participant feedback is based on individual goals, rather than generic results. In other words, physical education and recreation professionals may want to shift their program evaluations to customer satisfaction models, rather than limiting their assessments to organizational goals in order to establish personal relationships with customers. It is possible that consumers may have more optimism for predictions if they are orienting to individual aspirations for fitness or experience, rather than to normative standards. The use of these three scarcities to guide the marketing strategies of services was referred to by Lewis and Bridger (2000) as “psychographics” (as opposed to demographics) because professionals who are advocating or marketing products and services recognized that people were orienting to a sense of economy. A sense of economy suggests that consumers consider how services and experiences could be better. According to Lewis and Bridger (2000), professionals are no longer able to rely on factors such as gender, occupation, or income levels (demographics) to predict the decision-making patterns of customers. Instead, the availability of credit and the assessment of benefit have resulted in more attention to the motivations of individuals and the recognition of different experiences available to participants (Cordes & Ibrahim, 2003).

### **Parallel Paths of Experience**

Most people remember their educational experiences as a combination of academic work and social experiences. Even after a formal education is completed, many people relate to their obligated time and their time based in leisure differently. Dixon (2007) illustrated two parallel paths of experience as achievement and leisure-based experiences. The context of achievement originates with obligation and is characterized with the quantification of time, orientation to an external message, the use of rituals for standardization, and the use of linear paths of experience to meet goals or objectives. For example, many academic classes or jobs mandate attendance, quantify time to determine worth or compensation, orient to an organization structure for decisions, use standardization as a ritual for settings or occupations limit choices, manage time, specify work behavior, and value predictable outcomes.

In contrast, leisure-based behaviors originate with choice, de-emphasize the “Cinderella Effect” of time limits, orient to a personal preference message, use individualized rituals to enhance an experience, and often digress to non-linear paths of experience. For example, when people date or go on vacation, they begin with choices. People who enjoy their leisure often try to ignore time constraints by focusing on the experience to determine satisfaction, instead of deadlines or outcomes. People in leisure often modify their experiences around their individual preferences by making choices or requesting alternative experiences. Given the number of people who buy season passes, persist for long periods of time at hobbies or video games, or view movies more than one time, there appears to be a disregard for efficiency in favor of extending the experience. In summary, achievement and leisure-based behaviors as paths of experience originate differently and exist in a parallel fashion within the lifestyle of individuals. People are often challenged to manage both the achievement and leisure-based paths of experience. For example, a person may choose a fitness activity, recreation game, or musical instrument with the intent to achieve weight loss, change a physical appearance, or develop a skill. In achievement experiences, there is often a focus on the outcome to determine the satisfaction for an individual. In contrast, there are people who choose activities like dancing or dining for the pleasure of the experience, not the focus on outcome. Obviously, one activity can offer different paths of experience. However, experiences can be different based on how people orient to the experience for participation. In general, people determine a balance for the way they orient to participation in activities. Rather than argue that one orientation is better than another, professionals can benefit from recognizing that one orientation

(achievement or leisure) may be more motivating for an individual. Professionals can modify their service delivery to address the motivational preferences of the individuals they serve. Both achievement and leisure-based experiences are common to most people regardless of age, gender, or occupation. Recognizing that achievement and leisure-based experiences operate in parallel paths can help health, fitness, and recreation professionals to individualize their services, consider alternative reasons for participation, and motivate participants for activity.

### Shared Criteria (Reasons) for Influencing Choices in Experience

Recently, Ott (2010) surveyed people and identified four factors that reflect the use of time and attention by consumers. Ott (2012) suggests that successful communication and sales to consumers will require sufficient consumer time and sustained attention. Physical education and recreation professionals frequently recommend the regular use of time and sustained attention for health benefits and satisfying leisure. Professionals who deliver services to customers can benefit from predicting the use of time and attention by individuals. According to Ott (2010), the four factors for use as criteria that influence the use of time and attention by consumers were labeled as **Motivation, Habit, Convenience, and Value**. These four factors can serve as criteria for planning the successful delivery of services because Ott’s survey work indicates that consumers look for one or more of these when making choices for services. According to Ott (2010), consumers willingly devote large amounts of **time** when they feel motivation. Consumers with motivation are often pursuing desired goals or objectives. For example, people could aspire to improve their health, their appearance, their level of

fitness, etc. Ott (2010) points out that the consumer’s orientation to **habit** also receives large amounts of time but there is little attention given to the habitual acts. Consumer habits can be illustrated by the number of things people do every day without much thought such as cooking, cleaning, taking out the garbage, and other chores. Ott (2010) suggests that the consumer orientation to **convenience** is illustrated by time-saving benefits such as shopping at convenience stores, eating at fast-food restaurants, using Fed-Ex for deliveries, and internet shopping. The consumer orientation to **value** can also be illustrated with time-saving benefits but with an orientation to the lowest prices. Ott (2010) suggests that the practice of shopping for the cheapest prices in wholesale stores, at bargain airlines, or at large stores can occur with little time and attention and may be characterized as a “no brainer” activity. Overall, Ott (2010) is suggesting that consumers respond to a motivation (outcomes they desire), act out of habit, seek convenience, and assign value when making choices. However, the terms that Ott (2010) identifies could have additional applications if they are applied to the leisure behaviors witnessed in physical education and recreation activities.

The authors of this paper have observed that the four factors presented by Ott (2010) readily explain the use of time and attention for consumers who appear to be consuming as a form of achievement. In relation to motivation, consumers have goals they need to meet, so they need to do “important” tasks done. In relation to habits, people choose to do what is necessary-but-tedious, so they routinely allot large amounts of time to paying their bills and maintaining their households but use organizational strategies to minimize the attention needed to complete the tasks (e.g. automatic deposit, on-line payment of bills). In relation to convenience, time-

-saving is a chosen outcome associated with the use of convenience stores and the practice of fast-food dining. In relation to value, loyalty and choice of the cheapest sources (Southwest Airlines, Walmart, Costco) requires little attention and little time to make purchase decisions. However, the four factors of **Motivation, Habit, Convenience, and Value** can also be considered to influence choices within the context of leisure-based behaviors that occur in physical education and recreation activities. In the context of leisure-based behaviors, people can be motivated to choose hobbies or art activities or games where they willingly allot large amounts of time and attention. In leisure-based activities, consumers may choose to spend large amounts of time and attention to get the most benefits from the activity. Not choosing to spend adequate time in a recreation activity might involve leaving a movie early or shortening a vacation, which would diminish the experience. In contrast, reducing your work effort or the time required to complete a job while receiving the same rate of pay can mean more productivity or a better rate of compensation. In leisure activities, habits can occur as “maintenance” activities or regularly scheduled activities that are protected blocks of time that are enjoyed as part of a lifestyle. Unlike the habits described by Ott (2010), there can be large amounts of time and attention (interest) chosen for use with regularly-scheduled dating, gaming, sports events, dining, and musical performances. The habits described by Ott (2010) such as taking out garbage or cleaning may receive large amounts of time but do not stir the passion of the participants. The use of convenience in leisure-based activities is also different than the issue of convenience in achievement activities. In leisure-based activities, a participant may utilize convenience and choose to allot more time to participation. For example, many people choose to create home workout areas or home movie theatres for convenience, instead of going

to a gym or theatre in the city. As a result, the travel time that would have been lost in a trip to-and-from a destination can permit more time to be allotted to an activity participants enjoy. Thus, choosing convenience in leisure-based activities can increase accessibility and permit the use of more time and attention. It should be noted that the benefit of convenience described by Ott (2010) identifies less-use-of-time as an outcome. Finally, leisure-based activities are often perceived as having value because of the experience, not the price paid. There are many leisure-based events such as organized runs, triathlons, theatre performances, concerts, and fine-dining settings that involve significant monetary costs. Many people choose to spend large amounts of money for the purchase of recreational vehicles, musical instruments, camping gear, antique autos, and other hobbies. In contrast, the benefit of value described by Ott (2010) is attributed to a cheap price or bargain. The authors of this paper attribute the limited descriptions of the four labels for choosing services or products used by consumers as a result of Ott’s audience of business entrepreneurs-a context of achievement. The authors of this paper are suggesting *that the shared use of the four criteria* for achievement and leisure-based behaviors may help professionals to recognize four reasons for each path of experience participants may use to choose services or activities in health, fitness, or recreation. In other words, participants may prefer an orientation to achievement or leisure and use one or more of the four factors identified by Ott (2010) as criteria or reasons for choosing and maintaining participation. Examples could include participants who are referred or directed to health or fitness activities for achieving medical outcomes. Consumers addressing health issues may use the four criteria as reasons (motivation, habit, convenience, and value) to choose participation and achieve a solution to a health problem. In cases where participants are looking for pleas-

ure and a better quality-of-life, the four criteria as described above may also be shared as alternative choices for leisure-based behaviors. Professionals could consider the four criteria to promote physical education or recreation activities that would be initiated and maintained for pleasure across time as a lifestyle.

## Conclusion

The topic of choice architecture in this paper addresses the strategy of influencing the choices people make as participants in health, fitness, and recreation activities. The projected scarcities of Time, Authenticity, and Trust identified by Lewis and Bridger (2000) are variables that may help to explain consumer choices in the future. The projected scarcities help to emphasize the trend of accelerated expectations by consumers and the trend toward individualism in services and lifestyle reported by Penn (2007) and Cordes and Ibrahim (2003). Professionals in physical education and recreation services may want to distinguish the context of achievement from the context of leisure as choices when relating to consumers. Participants in health, fitness, or recreation activities may orient to participation as an achievement behavior with a sense of obligation and a focus on outcome or as a leisure-based behavior with the use of choice and an orientation to experience (Dixon, 2003). Recent survey work by Ott (2010) explored the value of time and attention for consumers and yielded the identification of four categorical reasons or criteria that help people determine a benefit for their consumption-Motivation, Habit, Convenience, and Value. The authors of this paper felt that these four categories for reasons or criteria were limited to the context of achievement as presented by Ott (2010). The authors of this paper included information that would “share” these four categories of criteria or reasons for initiating activities in health, fitness, and recreation as leisure-based

behaviors. The four categories can function as choices for participation in both the context of achievement and the context of leisure-based behaviors. As a result, professionals in health, fitness, and recreation services have four different reasons to offer participants as potential benefits of participation for a better quality of life or sense of accomplishment. The use of these reasons for participation represents a type of “choice architecture” for professionals to consider in motivating participants in health, fitness, and recreation activities.

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