

The FUNNEL CHART illustrates how we select among leisure alternatives. Potential Leisure activities enter at the top of the funnel. Steps in the process of selecting an alternative are shown as levels in the funnel. Constraints are shown as filters between levels. The decreasing cross sectional area of the funnel indicates we may be capable of investigating several activities at stages but only a few at later stages. Time required to go "through the funnel" is typically dependent upon the financial requirements of the activity. The size of the PARTICIPANTS RESERVOIR represents the capacity of the infrastructure (facilities by the activity) and support structure (clubs, coaches, referees, leagues, web sites, newsletters, suppliers, retailers) for

Once an activity is encountered with one of our senses we have an AWARENESS of it. We tend to prefer certain types of activities such as sports, home based (reading, crafts), motorized vehicles, or nature activities. If the activity fits one of our leisure preferences and does not involve anything we fear (heights, flying, water, darkness) we begin to gain KNOWLEDGE about it. We screen activities for our demographics (sex, age, income, marital status), our physical characteristics and abilities (sex, size, strength, age, disabled), and local availability. If we don't see others who look like us participating, if our body is not "up to" the physical requirements of the activity, or the activity is not available locally we will usually stop our investigation. We also mentally filter when purchasing leisure items as gifts for others. Those who cease to progress at a filter are DEFECTORS.

The next step is PARTICIPATION in the activity. In some cases we may only visualize ourselves participating. The quality of the first few experiences determines if we continue to progress toward LIKING the activity. We begin to compare it to other alternatives (alternatives) and to develop PREFERENCES for it. Some activities require actions many may consider hassles that consume money and must be done before or after participation in the activity. Hassles may include purchasing a fishing license, paying use fee, cleaning fish, gassing up a boat, flushing a marine drive, backing down a launch ramp, marina fees, buying two strokes and frequent repairs. If we and our family continue to have good experiences with the activity, we decide if the activity is worth the time, money, and hassle required. If it is, we develop a CONVICTION to purchase the needed equipment or services and participate more fully. High ticket items will often require approval of our spouse and making financial arrangements. Some time consuming activities may be put off until more leisure time is available. When the decision to buy is reached we begin SHOPPING for options. Suppliers of new or used equipment or services. Brands, models, and options are compared to select the attributes needed. We include soft side issues such as warranty, service, and financing. Some general shopping is usually done at earlier stages but major shopping decisions are made at this time. If the proper equipment or service is available at a fair price we will PURCHASE

After acquiring the equipment or service we become NORMAL PARTICIPANTS in the activity. Typically 15 to 25% of the normal participants develop a zeal for the activity and desire to commit additional time and resources to it. They purchase the latest equipment, subscribe to magazines, join clubs, talk with others about the activity, encourage others to join in the activity, help others in equipment selection, and account for almost 75% of the participation in the activity. This RECREATIONAL SPECIALIZATION often begins to focus on a specific area of the activity such as fishing for a specific species like trout or bass. A few become skilled PROFESSIONALS, like in professional bass fishing. Once in the professional or recreational specialization groups, individuals may regress to a prior level. Some participants will EVAPORATE (cease to participate) from a leisure activity due to age. Others may be driven off by overcrowding of the facilities or support structure. For example, water access issues impact boating participation.

Surveys can be conducted to estimate the number of people in a specific population (club, college, town, county, state) at various levels of the funnel at a given time. The results can be used to forecast participation, equipment, and facility needs. Marketing associations, equipment manufacturer's, and sports organizations can use the chart to identify and implement methods to help people through the various filters (reduce DEFECTORS) and to help them move through faster. These methods are called FACILITATORS. For example the boating industry currently has a Grow Boating program to increase awareness and a dealer certification program to improve the "dealer experience".

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