

Constraints to Attend Events across Specialization Levels

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This paper examines the constraints to attend events & festivals across recreation specialization segments.

Design/Methodology/Approach: In-depth interviews with salsa dancers from three salsa specialization levels were carried out.

Findings: Specialization level acted as a predictor of salsa event attendance and there appears to be an event career associated to progress in salsa dancing specialisation, which eventually branched out to a tourist career. Moreover, there was a relationship between the types of constraints and recreation specialisation level, with participants negotiating constraints frequently in order to ensure event attendance.

Research limitations/Implications: The interviews were carried out on participants in a mid size town in Southern England, where the range of competing leisure activities is limited. In addition, the study focused on one recreational activity and one type of events.

Practical implications: Several implications for the marketing of events & festivals can be drawn. First, marketers of salsa events should tie closely with providers of salsa classes and marketers of salsa classes need to provide opportunities for salsa dancers to attend events. Second, marketing strategies aiming at helping recreationists overcome constraints should be different according to the level of specialization. Third, given the nature of constraints faced by the less experienced recreationists, efforts to attract individuals earlier in the specialization path may be fruitless.

Originality/value: This paper is one of the first to explicitly examine the relationship between specialization and constraints to perform behaviors associated to a recreational activity.

Key words: Constraints, Recreation Specialization, Event Career, Travel Ladder, Event & Festival Attendance

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INTRODUCTION

The recognition that consumers are not all alike is an essential assumption of the marketing concept. The need to break down consumers in groups has led to the development of segmentation as an important area of study within marketing. Breaking down the market in groups is driven by the objective of maximizing homogeneity within segments and heterogeneity between segments (van Raij and Verhallen, 1994). A substantial part of the segmentation literature focuses on two issues (e.g. Steenkamp and Hostede, 2002; Correia *et al.*, 2009): the selection of segmentation basis, and how to best divide consumers across segments. With regards to the first, many variables have been used including demographic, psychographic and behavioral (Beane and Ennis, 1987; Wedel and Kamakura, 2000). Among these, some segmentation variables are static, that is, they do not change over time (e.g. gender), others are dynamic (e.g. age) and others are potentially dynamic, changing over the course of a person's life (e.g. benefits sought and brand loyalty). For the marketer it is important to understand the how consumers' patterns of decision and consumption evolve along with changes over time.

Recreation specialization is one such potentially dynamic segmentation variable. Recreation specialization (Bryan, 1977) suggests that participants in a leisure activity progress in a specialization path over time, with each level of specialization involving unique characteristics which differentiate one level from another (Bryan in 1977; Ditton *et al.*, 1992). Recreation specialization research suggests that the more individuals take part in a leisure activity, the more likely they are to organize their lives around the activity (Ditton *et al.*, 1992). Consequently, participants partake in subsequent behaviors that are relevant to their activity (Burr and Scott 2004), such as the purchase of products and services required to perform, or as a complement to fully enjoy the recreational activity. Examples include the purchase artifacts and the attendance of events & festivals (referred to as 'events' throughout this paper) themed around the recreational activity, the latter being the behavior explored in this paper. Previous research suggests that each specialization level tends to be associated to unique forms of behavior and experience, which makes them natural segments to study by marketers (Scott and Thigpen, 2003; Ninomiya and Kikuchi, 2004; Kim *et al.*, 2008; Maple, Eagles and Rolfe, 2010; Park and Kim, 2010).

The effective marketing of products, services and experiences to recreationists requires a detailed understanding of how (progression in) specialization affects their purchase and consumption. The concept of leisure constraints was put forward specifically to help understand the reasons underlying participation in leisure activities (Jackson, 1993), such as event attendance. In their review of past studies in leisure constraints, Godbey *et al.* (2010) concluded that different constraints have been identified across socio-demographics such as age, gender, income and geographical location segments. Thus it can be argued that exploring the relationship between constraints and segments based on personal variables, such as recreation specialization, merits academic attention. In fact, brief references in the literature can be found that suggest level of participation/specialization as

a desirable segmentation variable in the context of constraints research (Samdahl and Jekubovich, 1997; Getz, 2007; Godbey *et al.*, 2010). Despite suggestions that increased specialization (or experience) is an important influence on the range of activities individuals decide to do, the relationship between specialization and constraints to perform behaviors associated to the recreational activity has not been explored to any detailed extent. Therefore, this paper aims to examine the constraints to attend events across levels of specialization.

This study was developed in the context of salsa dancing (the recreational activity) and attendance of salsa events (the recreational activity related behavior). Salsa dancing is one recreational activity which has gained significant regular participation virtually in every corner of the world. Originating in Cuba, salsa has been described as having become a ‘*global phenomenon*’ (Skinner, 2007, p.3). Salsa dancers usually participate regularly in local salsa classes where they attempt to improve their salsa dancing skills. As salsa dancing continues to grow in popularity, a vibrant and dynamic salsa events scene has emerged. These events do not have a competitive profile; instead, they feature a number of classes for different dancing styles or techniques, and for each class there is usually an a-priori definition of the specialization level expected. These classes are following by freestyle dancing which allows participants to practice their skills and socialize. Salsa events are usually paid, however some smaller (one evening only) events only charge for classes, with entrance to the freestyle stage free of charge.

While there are no restrictions as to whom can attend, there tends to be a self-selection exercise, whereby only those with a minimum of salsa dancing skills attend salsa events. Thus, participants at salsa events tend to be mainly, if not exclusively, in the category of ‘active participants’ (Handelman, 1982). Given the participant nature of salsa events, attendees at such events are likely to be drawn from existing salsa dancers. While developed in the context of salsa and salsa events, the methodology employed and results obtained in this study may also be useful to researchers and practitioners attempting to understand participation in other events attracting recreationists/active participants.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leisure Constraints

Leisure constraints have been researched extensively over the past twenty years (Godbey *et al.*, 2010). Hinch *et al.* (2005) explain that the earliest models were based upon the assumption that the presence of constraints purely blocks subsequent participation in a leisure activity. In other words, earlier constraints theories have assumed that once constraints are encountered they cannot be overcome (Searle and Jackson 1985, Godbey 1985). The narrow focus on certain constraints was criticised by Crawford *et al.*, 1991) who believed that the sole use of questionnaires as data collection methods meant that many constraints were overlooked. With the increasing use of qualitative approaches, researchers began to reject earlier assumptions (Stodolska and Jackson 1998). For example, it was possible to find out that the presence of constraints did not necessarily

block participation (Drakou, Tzetzis and Mamantzi, 2011). The model proposed by Crawford and Godbey (1987), considered by Hinch *et al.* (2005) as a major conceptual breakthrough, ascertained that as well as constraints affecting participation (Structural), they also affect the preference to participate in two ways, defined as Intrapersonal and Interpersonal constraints. Intrapersonal constraints are inner directed as they are associated to the individual's psychological state and attributes which influence personal preferences and motivation. Interpersonal constraints are outer directed and result from the interaction with other individuals within the social group. Structural constraints act as a barrier between preference and participation. These include time, money and opportunity (Crawford and Godbey, 1987).

These three constraints have been examined extensively (Konstantinos and Tsorbatzoudis, 2002; Alexandris *et al.*, 2008; Andronikis *et al.*, 2006; Jun *et al.*, 2008; Konstantinos and Carroll, 1997; Nyaupane *et al.*, 2004). However, in 1991 Crawford, Jackson and Godbey acknowledged that the 1987 model did not explain how the three constraint categories interlinked. Therefore, they developed the hierarchical model, which suggests that leisure participants negotiate constraints in a sequential manner. It presents a hierarchy of constraints which begin with intrapersonal constraints as the most powerful dimension and first to be overcome, and end with structural constraints as the least powerful and fastest to be overcome (Crawford *et al.*, 1991). The initial assumption that the constraint constructs are encountered and overcome sequentially has received a great amount of criticism (Nadirova and Jackson, 2000). Some researchers have supported the sequential hierarchy (Raymore *et al.*, 1993), but empirical testing has revealed discrepancies. Intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints were found to affect participants differently depending on the leisure activity (Gilbert and Hudson, 2000).

A number of studies have focused on the importance of one of the constraint constructs over others. Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997) argued that people rarely think in terms of constraints and claimed that social relationships are the 'driving force' of leisure behaviour. They proposed that interpersonal relations underpin leisure behaviour so accordingly interpersonal constraints could not simply be one of the three 'equally important' types of constraints. Similarly, Getz (2007, p. 245) stated the importance of interpersonal constraints as influences on event attendance, '*it is unlikely to think that people would attend events alone*'. In contrast Gilbert and Hudson (2000) rarely identified interpersonal constraints, holding that constraint dimensions differ depending on the type of activity (McCarville and Smale 1993). Gilbert and Hudson (2000) studied skiers and argued that it is possible that intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints are overcome as soon as participation begins. Godbey *et al.* (2010) now maintain that leisure constraints do not necessarily have to begin with intrapersonal constraints but can take any form.

The concept of constraint negotiation was first proposed by Crawford *et al.* (1991) as part of their sequential hierarchy. Further development by Jackson *et al.* (1993) highlighted that constraints are not solely barriers to participation, but can be negotiated. Mannell and Kleiber (1997, p 341) define negotiation as '*the strategies people use to avoid or reduce the impact of constraints and the barriers to leisure participation and enjoyment*'. While

Jackson (2003) based his theory around six propositions, which in themselves are possible research questions around the subject, there has been little research on constraint negotiation. One of the few exceptions is Hubbard and Mannell's (2001) study which supported the propositions. They found constraints created a negative effect but participants often found themselves negotiating them.

The Recreation Specialization concept

The concept of specialization was introduced by Bryan in 1977 and expanded in 1979. It proposed that individuals follow '*a continuum of behavior from the general to the particular*' (Bryan 1977, p. 175). In essence, the longer a person participates in a leisure activity, the more interested and 'specialized' that person becomes (McFarlane, 2004). The continuum can be broken down into any number of levels. For example, when conducting his research on anglers, Bryan (1977) found four levels of specialization; furthermore he established that the anglers at each level had their own attitudes, behaviors and characteristics. The concept of specialization allows perceived homogenous groups to be segmented along specialization levels, which in turn can assist with marketing, management strategies and organization (Valentine, 2004).

Bryan (2000) further conceptualized that as people advance to higher specialization levels, they move into '*leisure social world reference groups*' (Bryan, 2000, p 2). Salz, Loomis and Finn (2001) define groups of social worlds as having shared identification as a result of similar attitudes, beliefs and experiences. The concept of specialization has been developed from a social world's perspective (Ditton *et al.*, 1992), and redefined as '*the process by which recreation social worlds segment and intersect into new recreation sub-worlds, and the subsequent ordered arrangement of these sub-worlds and their members along a continuum.*' (Ditton *et al.*, 1992, p1). This re-conceptualization has been used in studies which have attempted to go further and explain other behaviors as a result of being at a particular level of specialization or sub-world. For example Choi, Loomis and Ditton (1994) investigated substitutability as a result of level of specialization. The redefined, sub-worlds concept is relevant to studies like the one reported in this article as it aims to investigate the behaviors of people that arrive as a result of them being in a particular sub-world.

Bryan (1977, 1979) mainly used behavior to define specialization; many researchers have equally used behavior as a main dimension (Burr and Scott, 2004; Oh and Ditton 2006). However, there are many factors which have been used as dimensions to recreation specialization. Other than behavior, the two most commonly used dimensions are affective (McFarlane, 2004; McIntyre and Pigram 1992) and cognitive (McFarlane, 2004). Additional dimensions that have also been included as dimensions to specialization include centrality to lifestyle (Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000, Miller and Graefe, 2000), involvement (Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000), skill and knowledge level (Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000; Burr and Scott 2004; Miller and Graefe, 2000; Oh and Ditton, 2006), expenditure level (Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000), commitment (Burr and Scott, 2004; Oh and Ditton, 2006), participation (Miller and Graefe, 2000), equipment (Miller and Graefe, 2000) and types of

activity (Ninomiya and Kikuchi, 2004). The concept of specialization has been used to investigate attitudes and behaviors towards factors external, but related to the leisure activity. Research has included perceptions about crowding (Kuentzel and McDonald 1992), attitudes about substituting other leisure activities (Choi *et al.*, 1994), attitudes toward resource management (McIntyre and Pigram 1992) and activity types (Miller and Graefe, 2000). In this study, the concept of recreation specialisation is explored in the context of event attendance.

Segmentation in events and festivals

A recent review by Tkaczynski and Rundre-Thiele (2011) highlighted event segmentation as one of the main topics within event & festival consumer behavior. The typical event segmentation study is of a quantitative nature and focuses on segmenting attendees to an event (or small range of events) using a range of variables. A second stage involves validating the segmentation procedure by examining differences across segments. A wide range of segmentation bases have been used in events & festivals research. Motives are amongst the most frequent segmentation variables (e.g. Lee, Lee and Wicks, 2004; Chang, 2006; Li, Huang and Cai, 2009). Other variables include past experience (Wooten and Norman, 2008), personal values (Hede, Jago and Deery, 2004), satisfaction (Smith, Kyle and Sutton, 2010), activities (Kim et al, 2007; Yan et al, 2007) and demographic characteristics (e.g. Lee, Lee and Wicks, 2004). Event research has only loosely used variables related to the recreational activity associated to the event as segmentation variables. Oakes (2010) segmented festival attendees based on their preferences [for music], while another study (Burr & Scott, 2004) looked at the relationship between recreation specialisation and event attendance without clearly defining specialisation segments.

Event segmentation research usually involves externally validating the segments, which is achieved through comparing the segments across a number of variables that were not used for segmentation purposes (Moital et al., 2009). Many of these variables tend to be of the demographic type such as gender, age, education, marital status and income (e.g. Lee, Lee and Wicks, 2004; Li, Huang and Cai, 2009; Yan et al, 2007). A few studies have also looked at psychological variables, such as motivation (e.g. Chang, 2006; Yan et al, 2007; Smith, Kyle and Sutton, 2010) and satisfaction (e.g. Hede, Jago and Deery, 2004). Getz, Andersson and Carlsen (2010) pointed out that while constraints have been a major topic in events research, one important research priority was to compare constraints across different segments. This study addresses such priority by examining constraints across specialization groups/segments.

METHODS

Jackson and Scott (1999) argued that leisure constraints have too often been studied quantitatively and that as a result constraints are often either incorrectly assumed or ignored. In order to examine the relationship between leisure constraints and recreation specialization in their ability to determine event attendance, it was important to identify all

the constraints encountered by salsa dancers. Consequently, more flexible methods than those offered in quantitative research were required and therefore qualitative data collection was employed. Using qualitative data collection did not constrain the research by assuming a pre-defined range of constraints (Patton, 2002). As there are varied criticisms surrounding the importance of one constraint over another, this study did not make a-priori assumptions with regards to a pattern of constraints from the outset. In fact, the interview brief did not include specific questions about each type of constraint. Instead, interviewees were asked a general questions about what prevented (or could prevent) them from attending salsa events, followed by questions probing for clarification of a point or expansion of constraints. Additionally, it also facilitated the identification of the mechanisms which led to an explanation for the relationship between constraints and event attendance, rather than merely describing its existence (Lin, 1998). The constraints model was used a-posteriori to organize the data collected and frame the discussion on constraints to event attendance.

As far as the strategy for choosing levels of specialization and individuals in each level is concerned, interviewees were selected from a pool of salsa dancers attending weekly salsa classes in a Southern England town. Salsa classes have regularly been taking place in this town every Wednesday, and more recently on Thursdays too. Wednesdays attract around 200 salsa dancers divided across 4 levels of specialization: beginners, improvers, intermediate and advanced. Thursdays' feature classes for beginners to improvers and intermediates only. After classes there is free practice time both days. These specialization levels reflect how able an individual is with regards to salsa dancing, thus providing a good (and natural) basis for segmenting salsa dancers according to specialization level.

Judgment sampling was used (McCormick and Hill, 1997), with a total of 12 salsa dancers interviewed. Although in this case there were four class levels in salsa dancing, beginners can consist of dancers who attend for the first time and others that have been there for a few weeks only. Consequently, only participants in the upper three class levels were considered for participation in the study. An equal number of interviewees (four) from each level were interviewed, equally divided between males and females. Ultimately, six males and six females were interviewed across the three specialization groups.

Despite salsa dancing being the important common characteristic which all participants should have, steps were taken to ensure that interviewee variability was reduced in other areas. This was done in order to ensure that specialization was concentrated on as the explanatory variable for the constraints as much as possible. Firstly, all the participants had access to an income or wage. Similarly, all participants were over the age of 18 as it can be argued that those under the age of 18 do not have sufficient income to take up leisure activities and activities surrounding them such as events (Godbey *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, all participants lived near the town where they (frequently) danced salsa. This prevented the location or classes from becoming the focal point and ensured that participants were only referring to constraints regarding event attendance. The data was collected by the use of a Dictaphone which was kept out of sight, so interviewees would

not be distracted. This ensured the information was accurately repeated when the interview was transcribed (Jennings, 2001).

Miles and Huberman's (1994) interactive model, which suggests three stages in data analysis; data reduction, data displays and conclusion drawing, was employed as a means of analyzing the data. Initially, the data was reduced by coding it into themes and categories (Jennings, 2001). Conclusions were drawn by comparing the themes and demonstrating the relationships found. The principles laid out in the leisure constraints model were used as a means of displaying data. More specifically, respondents' answers were classified according to four main themes: intra-personal, interpersonal and structural constraints, and constraint negotiation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Event Attendance

Table 1 summarizes the results on event attendance according to level of specialization. Nine out of the twelve participants had attended a salsa event at some point. From the three who had never been to an event, two participants were at improver level and one at intermediate level. However, like those who had been to events before, all three have stated they would like, and consequently are planning, to attend events in the near future. Six participants began to attend events at improver level, - as aforementioned the improver level is in fact the second level in salsa dancing - and two at intermediate level. Bryan (1979) argued that at the second level of specialisation participants look for validating their achieved level of skill by searching for greater challenges. This could explain the tendency to start event attendance at this stage.

TABLE 1: Event attendance across levels of specialisation

| Participant Event attendance | Improver | | | | Intermediate | | | | Advanced | | | |
|---|----------|----------|--------|----------|--------------|-----|--------------|--------------|----------|---------------|----------|----------|
| | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Number of salsa events attended | 0 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5+ | 10+ | 10+ | 10+ |
| Level at which attended the first event | - | Improver | - | Improver | Improver | - | Intermediate | Intermediate | Improver | Improver | Improver | Advanced |
| Location of events | - | Local | - | Local | Local | - | Local | Local | National | International | Local | National |
| Planning to attend a salsa event soon | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes | Yes |

The number of events attended by each participant tends to correspond to their level of specialization; this is also evident in the location of the events attended. This indicates that there appears to be an event career associated to specialization which tends to start at improver or intermediate level. This career could eventually progress to an event-tourist career, whereby those with high levels of specialization travel to events, including events abroad, whilst those in the improver and intermediate groups have only attended local events. These patterns of event participation further suggest that the more specialized participant seeks more specific and hard to attain attributes in their activities, which is supported by a Bryan's (1977) definition of recreation specialization as a continuum which is reflected in activity setting preferences.

Constraints to attend salsa events

The constraints theory states that intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints are encountered in a sequence. In the interviews, participants were asked what had prevented them from attending salsa events, if they believed there would be a point when they no longer would have such constraints and whether their friends' constraints influenced their own. Table 2 summarizes the constraints identified by the participants when considering event attendance.

TABLE 2: Constraints to attend salsa events

| Participant | Indicator | Improver | | | | Intermediate | | | | Advanced | | | |
|---------------|---|----------|---|--------|---|--------------|---|--------|---|----------|----|--------|----|
| | | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | | Male | | Female | |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| Intrapersonal | Not knowing what to expect | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Lack of skills of physical ability | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Confidence | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Interpersonal | Friends opinions create constraints | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | No one to go with | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Not knowing enough people there | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Relationships (partner not wanting to attend) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Structural | Accessibility | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Cost | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Lack of health | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Work commitments | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | Time | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Intrapersonal Constraints

The improver level was the only group to discuss experiencing a number of intrapersonal constraints. This is consistent with Crawford *et al.* (1991, p7) hierarchy model which claims that intra-personal constraints '*condition the will to act, or the motivation for*

participation'. The following first two quotes are from two participants in improvers who exhibit intrapersonal constraints, one being a lack of interest and the other not knowing what to expect from an event. The third quote is from a participant who was at intermediate level, which expresses the constraint of not having the physical skills or ability required to participate in salsa events when she first attended them.

(I've not gone to events) 'Uh, because I've not been coming that long and hum yeah just not really got that into it I think; not quite yet' (Participant 1 – Improver)

'Unless it's to do with knowing exactly what it involves and what it's about, where it is would probably influence me as to whether or not to go' (Participant 3 – Improver)

'I haven't attended because I was a beginner until recently and I hadn't really learnt that many salsa moves. I wouldn't have gone to those events because I probably wouldn't have felt confident enough to go, Umm. There's lot's of people that go that I like, really advanced salsa dancers' (Participant 8 – Intermediate)

However, two intermediate and two advanced participants felt intra personally constrained through a lack of confidence when attending events. Participant 9 commented that the level at events tends to be high, which puts pressure on everyone to perform at a high level. According to him, *"if more of the lower levels went I would then go. It's confidence more than anything"*. These findings suggest that intrapersonal constraints can be found at any level of specialization. Confidence was also mentioned by participant 10 who visited an image consultant and made heavy investments in clothes for salsa in order to increase his confidence. This was two and a half years into his salsa participation when he was already at advanced level. This could indicate that some constraints are always present but individuals take measures such as buying new clothes in order to negotiate the confidence constraint.

Interpersonal Constraints

Constraints can arrive as a result of reference group attitudes and behavior (Crawford and Godbey 1987). Most of the participants at improver level and all at the intermediate level stated that their friends' constraints to attending events influenced their own, whilst all of the members at advanced level said that they have been to an event on their own. Participants at the improver level tended to feel constrained by having no one to attend the events with. Participant 1 stated that *'I don't know, maybe in a couple of months perhaps I might, if I learn a few more moves I'd be happy to, happy to go along by myself'*. This participant further elaborated that *'for a bigger event I think I would prefer to go with somebody that I already knew'*, suggesting that the size of the event affects the presence of interpersonal constraints. Participant 4 emphasized (the lack of) confidence to attend events on her own due to low levels of confidence that come with a low skills level:

'Because I'm only an improver, I am not at the stage I don't think to be going to these things on my own so I think if my friends weren't coming then, unless I could drag anyone else along, any other friends, I probably wouldn't go because I don't feel that I am confident enough and at the stage to go and do things on my own'.

According to flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997) when perceived challenge is greater than perceived skills, an emotional state of anxiety will result. Salsa dancing at events is a visible activity, which compounds the pressure to perform at a high standard to avoid public embarrassment. Perhaps these individuals anticipate going through high levels of anxiety. Having someone known at the event, whether someone they went with or someone they meet there, works as a means of reducing the level of anxiety, perhaps through encouragement and support. This contention appears to be supported by Participant 2, who stated that *"it's a lot easier to make a fool out of yourself in front of people you know"*.

Interestingly, two members from the advanced group also mentioned that they felt constrained to attend larger events such as salsa congresses if they had no one to go with them. This relates to Ditton *et al.*'s (1992) study in sub worlds, who argued that the more specialized an individual is, the more likely they are to be an insider in their salsa sub-world and have *'likely to develop close friendships, in part due to their previous experience in the social world and their high frequency of participation'* (Ditton *et al.*, 1992, p6). By attending a larger congress, which usually attract salsa dancers from the whole of the country and even abroad, advance level participants could feel out of their sub world (by not knowing other attendees), thus feeling interpersonally constrained.

In summary, interpersonal constraints can be identified at all levels of specialization. As Crawford *et al.* (1991) suggested, they can prevent both preference for and subsequent participation in event attendance. It appears that for improvers a perceived low skill and experience when compared to the challenge they perceived to be associated to participating in salsa events, prevents recreationists from having the confidence to go alone to salsa events. This supports specialization as 'sub worlds' as the improvers do not have the experience and frequency of attendance that the intermediate and advanced level participants have. Ditton *et al.* (1992, p6) define improvers as 'strangers' and characterize them by their *'lack of social relationships in the social world'*. In other words, the improvers have not built up relationships with other salsa dancers like the intermediate and advanced dancers have, therefore they exhibit the constraint of not knowing others at events. The more advanced go through the same process when it comes to attend larger or farther afield events. While all levels face interpersonal constraints, it is evident that the participants show a tendency to try to negotiate these constraints, in particular the advanced group who have all attended events alone.

Structural Constraints

Overall, the majority of constraints identified at the advanced level were structural constraints. They also have the most structural constraints than those with lower specialization. This supports the constraints hierarchy which states that structural constraints are the most distant. The structural constraints identified were accessibility, lack of health, cost, work commitments and time. Becker (2009) suggests that although these constraints were identified, the participants' ability to overcome the more difficult constraints such as intrapersonal and interpersonal means that they already have a commitment to attend salsa events; therefore their ability to overcome structural constraints becomes easier. Illustrated below are quotes from the participants giving examples of their structural constraint negotiation.

'Maybe money but I would hope that its the type of thing that I would find money to do because I enjoy it so much' (Participant 4 – Improver)

If I really wanted to go then I guess I would regardless. The Izzi Bar events are quite good at the moment. They are quite well attended' (Participant 12 – Advanced)

In a similar fashion, time was identified by five of the participants as an important constraint to event attendance. All the participants were at the improver and intermediate levels and all felt intrapersonally constrained by their friends' constraints. This is illustrated by Participant 7 (Intermediate) who stated that *'There's a limited amount of hours you can give to a social activity and not everyone can be available at that time. So we had to miss some social events due to those things'*. This demonstrates a relationship between lower levels of specialization and intrapersonal and structural constraints. If a participant was in the improver and intermediate groups and felt that his/her friends' opinions and constraints influenced their own, he/she would have not yet gained the confidence to go alone. As a result, participants encounter time constraints as they place other things as more important such as being with friends or family. In short, participants at lower levels of specialization were more likely to experience and not be able to negotiate structural constraints as a result of not having negotiated through intra-personal and interpersonal constraints first. This further supports Crawford *et al.*'s (1991) sequential hierarchy.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between recreation specialization and constraints as they relate to event & festival attendance. Broadly speaking, this study makes a novel contribution to the literature by not only using a segmentation variable that has seldom been used in event segmentation research (recreational specialization) but also by examining constraints across different (specialization) segments. Assessing this relationship can inform marketing strategies so that events themed around recreational activities can be tailored to specific segments based on specialization level. To determine the extent to which such relationship exists, the recreational specialization and leisure

constraints principles were used to guide a study on the constraints to attend salsa events encountered by salsa dancers at three levels of specialization. In the way, it was also possible to investigate the existence of an event career associated to specialization progression. The results were then analyzed and six main themes emerged.

Firstly, this study found that specialization level can act as a predictor of event attendance. The majority of participants began attending events at improver level (second level), indicating that they had gained a level of skill and experience before attending their first event. This concurs with the specialization literature which states that as individuals progress through specialization levels, their leisure activity begins to become more central to a person's life. Ditton *et al.* (1992) concluded that as a participant becomes central to their sub-world or 'culture', other aspects of their lives revolve around it too. This could include choice of spouse, location of work and, as shown in this study, event attendance.

A second theme emerging from the analysis was that of an event career associated to progress in specialization. Level of specialization appears to be able to predict not only whether or not a participant is likely to start attending an event, but also the type of event attended. In this context, size and distance appear to be important event features considered. A participant with low specialization is more likely to start attending a small, local event. Similarly, advanced participants will feel less constrained to attend larger events farther away from home. Previous research has suggested travel experience (Oppermann, 1995) and family life cycle (Pearce, 1993) as critical factors in shaping travel careers. This research suggests recreation specialization as a third factor influencing travel patterns. The use of travel experience has been received much criticism. For example, according to Ryan (1998), "it simply cannot be sustained that length of years is really a suitable proxy for experience, for individuals learn at different rates" (p. 950).

By using stages of recreational specialization, a valid measure of 'experience' is employed since actual levels of specialization reflect the accumulated learning. In support of the travel career model, it appears that as salsa dancers progress in specialization, their motivation with regards to event attendance changes. Presumably, they are looking for higher/different challenges and perhaps extending their social network of salsa dancers. In practice, this is materialized in wanting to attend more distant and/or larger events. However, event career progression is also shaped by recreationists' ability to negotiate constraints. This is a further contribution to travel career theory in that it suggests constraints as one 'inter-related force' (Ryan, 2005, p. 953) influencing event attendance behavior.

A third theme focused on the nature of constraints and how level of specialization influenced constraints. Intrapersonal, interpersonal and structural constraints were identified at all levels of specialization. However, highly specialized participants were far more likely than others to experience structural constraints of a specific nature. Similarly, participants at lower levels of specialization exhibited higher amounts of intrapersonal and interpersonal constraints. Godbey *et al.* (2010) assert that this is due to the order of importance of constraints. They maintain that intrapersonal are the most important constraints and always encountered first, as they control the desire to want to attend an

event. In a similar vein, Ditton *et al.* (1992) assert that participants at low specialization are not established in their social world, and so have not yet built relationships with other participants causing interpersonal constraints.

Whilst this explains some of the findings, it is important to note that Samdahl and Jekubovich (1997) observed that the sequential hierarchy is not absolute. The results of this study appear to concur with such perspective in that intrapersonal constraints were observed at the advanced level many of which still felt a lack of confidence in their ability to perform at the desired level when attending events. This could be explained as advance participants sought larger events and also events in other countries. As these are new experiences outside of their immediate 'social world' it could explain why the advanced group have to go through the constraints once again. It also suggests that constraints could appear in a cycle depending on the type of event that is attended. Jackson *et al.* (1993) explained that structural constraints are the easiest to overcome, as the advanced group were more likely to experience structural constraints, it could explain reasons for continued participation in salsa events.

A fourth theme was the role of constraint negotiation in facilitating event attendance. Participants were found to have negotiated constraints frequently, in order to ensure event attendance. Level of specialization was found to be an important factor in whether or not constraints were negotiated and which constraints were negotiated. For instance, the advanced participants who showed high levels of skill and commitment were also able to easily negotiate constraints such as not wanting to attend events or not knowing anyone there, due to the high level of commitment already invested in salsa. On the other hand, male participants with low specialization that placed higher importance over other activities and could not discuss salsa with friends, found it difficult to negotiate the intrapersonal constraint that their friends' opinions influence their own. Additionally, advanced level participants found that once they were able to get to know more people at salsa they found it easier to develop skills enabling them to progress in specialization. Consequently, it allowed them to negotiate the constraints and many participants mentioned that they had even attended events alone.

A fifth and final theme was the interaction between specialization and constraints. The results show various patterns of interaction between event attendance, salsa specialization and constraints to attend salsa events. These include the intra and interpersonal constraints encountered at low specialization levels which can be negotiated via event attendance leading to progression in specialization. Similarly, being highly specialized can lead to easy negotiation of constraints which lead to event attendance. Becker (2009) found similar results when conducting research on participants who take part in wine related activities. She concluded that the interrelation of all the concepts constitute a cyclic framework between specialization and constraints. The results differ from Crawford *et al.*'s (1991) framework which proposed that the negotiation of constraints lead to either specialization or non specialization. Instead, constraints should be viewed as a cycle between specialization and constraints, thus, constraints do not cease once a participant is highly specialized.

Implications for practice

The results of this study have important implications for providers of recreational activities and events. First, participation in the recreational activity and event attendance enjoy a mutually beneficial relationship. On the one hand salsa events draw their custom from existing salsa dancers; on the other the opportunity to participate in salsa events is intrinsically related to progression in specialization. Attending events is perceived as a means of enhancing skills and competences as well as developing or consolidating social relationships. The recognition of this symbiotic relationship means that the marketing of salsa events should tie closely with providers of salsa classes and marketers of salsa classes need to provide opportunities for salsa dancers to attend events.

A major concern for any manager of salsa events is to work through the barriers preventing participation by designing marketing strategies that contribute to removing such barriers. Although constraints are present at every stage of specialization, the nature of those constraints and the recreationists' ability to negotiate them vary across specialization levels. Therefore, marketing strategies aiming at helping recreationists overcome constraints should be different according to the level of specialization. Given the nature of constraints faced by the less experienced recreationists, efforts to attract individuals earlier in the specialization path may be fruitless. These novice salsa dancers perceive the level of salsa at events (i.e. the challenge) to be much higher than their skills. One could argue that the solution could be to include classes for novices in the design of the event program (thus narrowing down the gap between skills and challenge). However, a major constraint, which is much more difficult to overcome through marketing initiatives, is the fact that their salsa social world is not supportive enough. Thus, marketing efforts are likely to be more successful if they are centred on those who have a reasonable level of experience and have had the time to develop social relationships with other salsa dancers.

Limitations and further research

Given the pivotal role interpersonal constraints appear to play in event attendance, one area future research could be looking at the interpersonal influence processes that lead to changes in the 'confidence' element and (peer) pressure to attend or not to attend. The interviews were carried out on twelve participants in a mid size town in Southern England, where the range of competing leisure activities is limited. For recreationists enjoying a greater range of leisure opportunities, the importance of each constraint and how they are negotiated could differ due to a higher probability of motivational conflicts. Thus, future research could include a larger sample drawn from different geographical locations. One other obvious limitation is that the study focused on one recreational activity and one type of events. Future research could focus on different types of recreational activities and their associated events. Future research could also investigate how event marketing can aid constraint negotiation. For instance, whether marketing campaigns set to alleviate constraints directed at each level of specialization results in higher attendance.

Additionally, given the apparent relationship between specialization and constraints, future research is encouraged to incorporate the specialization component more when studying constraints to participate in leisure activities. The contention that specialization is a critical variable influencing event behavior (Burr and Scott, 2004) is further supported and therefore future studies on event behavior should carefully consider the specialization of attendees. Finally, an examination of the relationship between event and destination decision making is warranted further research.

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