Recreation and leisure in promoting social inclusion: A reflection of documented theory

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Abstract

Recreation, leisure and tourism is an essential part of human life and different forms of recreation are shaped naturally by individual interests but also by the surrounding social construction. Participating in recreation, leisure and tourism is a healthy alternative for positive behavior, which leads to opportunities for learning and living a balanced, productive life. The purpose of this reflection piece is to discuss the contributions of documented theory on how recreation and leisure can be used to promote social inclusion. From the perspective of different scholars, recreation is expressions of excess energy, channeling it into socially acceptable activities that fulfill individual as well as societal needs; recreation also provides satisfaction and pleasure for the participant without compulsion. Empirical examined theory will be advocated and theoretical development of recreation, leisure, and tourism will be reflected on. In this paper essential ways of dealing with social challenges through recreational activities will be discussed. Descriptive analyses of documented theory will be done, also indicating some of the recreational activities and the effective way of dealing with social-inclusions will be discussed.

Keywords: Recreation, leisure, social inclusion, theory, reflection, motivations

Introduction

There are many benefits that come from recreation, such as the development of character, self-identity, and understanding of a communal setting. Various scholars define recreation activities as like reading, playing or listening to music, watching movies or TV, gardening, hunting, hobbies, sports, studies, and travel. Theories perception is that, work is supported by recreation which is useful to "recharge the battery" so that work performance is improved (Ellis, 1993). Human life activities may be work for one person and recreation for another. Over time recreational activity may become work, and vice-versa. Work is an activity generally performed out of economic necessity and useful for society and organized within the economic framework. Recreational activities can be performed for economic benefit and this can be used as a strategy to deal with the challenges which are faced by the society; however it should be pleasurable and may be self-imposed (Pigram, 2006) Many recreational activities in European countries are organized for community as a way of dealing with health related issues., Recreation is an activity of leisure, leisure being discretionary time. The "need to do something for recreation" is an essential element of human biology and psychology. Recreational activities are often done for enjoyment, amusement, or pleasure and are considered to be "fun".

Social inclusion is the way in which talents and capabilities of children are developed and enhanced so that they are all given the opportunity to realise their potential. The term social inclusion basically defines economic and individual rights.

Reflection on theory

Volumes have been written about theory including recreation and leisure, what it is and what it means. Theory attempts to explain why facts are, what they are. Theory gives insight into what can be or has been observed. Theory is an explanation of the relationship between variables that leads to the right kind of questions to ask about facts and phenomena (Coalter, 1999). Babbie (2003) explained that, "Social scientific theory has to do with what is, not what should be". He further stated that theory aims "to determine the logical and persistent patterns of regularity in social life". Theory exists in different scopes. Most theories used in recreation and leisure management are middle range theories, meaning that they are limited and modest in their scope. Many recreation and leisure authors and researchers have suggested how theory is essential for healthy lifestyles, professional growth and quality services (Bedini & Wu, 1994; Devine & Wilhite, 1999; Ellis, 1993; Henderson, 1994). Reflection is a complex process, which is well-recognized to contribute to greater depth of understanding and learning (Boud, Cohen & Walker, 1993; Moon, 2006; Lay & McGuire, 2010; Wolf, 2010). Reflection is the second stage of the perpetual cycle and is followed by conceptualism, then action. Reflection is more than simply pausing to think about an experience from time to time (Rolfe et al., 2001; Thompson & Thompson, 2008).

Jenkings (2006), reflects on the needs to engage in recreation, He states that recreational activities are a: need to rest and relax, need for sunlight, need for regressive behaviour, need for self-evaluation, need for self-esteem, prestige and confidence, need for social interaction, need to spend time with relatives and friends, need to indulge in nostalgia, need for education, to indulge in curiosity, need for novelty and needs underlying tourists' shopping.

Figure 1.1. The decision process in recreation involvement Source: Jenkings, 2006.
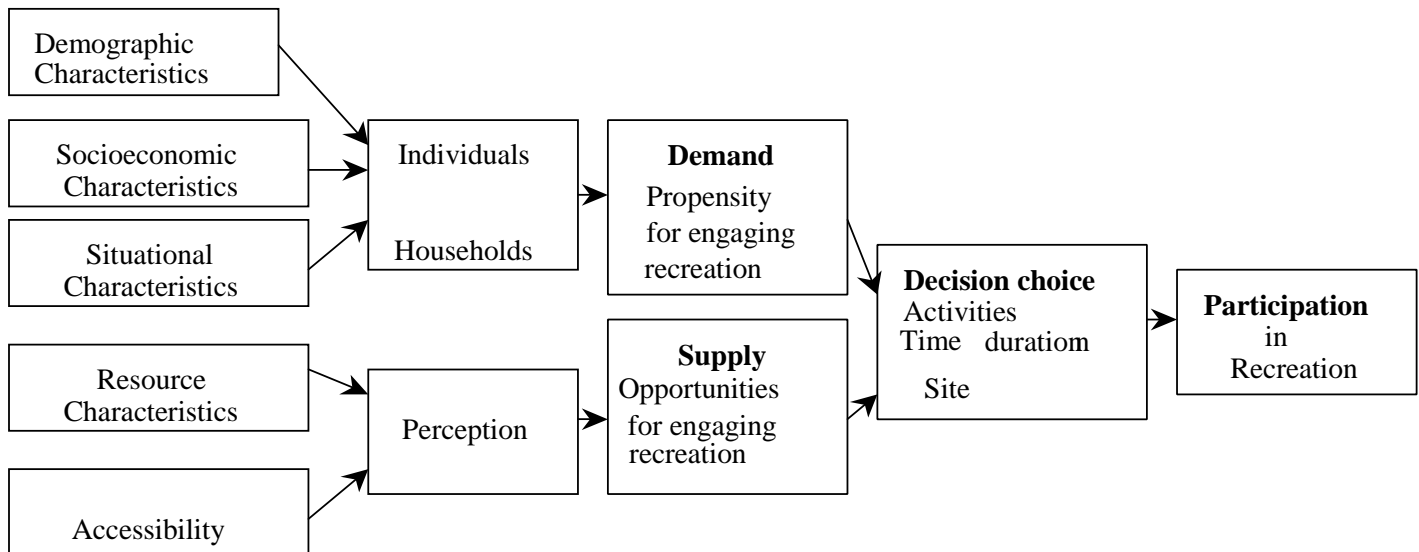
A simplified explanation of figure 1.1. is that to participate in recreation is decision based on an individual, the potential demand and propensity for recreation and supply of opportunities to be realised as the need to engage in recreation is grouped according to demographic, socio-economic, situational, resources and accessibility characteristics. It is very complicated to dictate the measure of decision making; the diagram illustrates the external factors which facilitate the

choices done. The reality with getting involved in recreation and leisure is merely participation that is positive related to social status and the prestige of one's occupation (Torkildsen, 1999)

Recreation can happen in urban arears, in the country-side or it can be water based. It is important for recreation activities to be managed. Management is needed in different fields and so also in leisure, recreation and tourism. Management is firmly connected to people and therefore it is very important that there are trained people in the field of recreation so that societal challenges are dealt with in our communities. Management of recreation activities is needed to achieve social objectives, for the community and to promote a healthy living style (Torkildsen, 2012).

There is a need to link planning for recreation with tourism and protected areas; however goals, functions and purposes of these three elements have to be developed. Tourism will have to take on more holistic attitudes rather than purely focusing on a narrow functional promotional emphasis. It is in the expansion of choice by providing a broad range of opportunities for recreational use and satisfaction of the recreation participants that essential contribution will be made in identifying strategies of dealing with challenges. The aim of recreation should be providing a wide range of functional and aesthetically pleasing environment. New forms and settings need to be kept as open and flexible as possible**.**

The role of recreation in promoting social inclusion

In this paper the role of recreation is reflected using theory on the benefits of participating in recreation. Participation in recreational activities can contribute to an improved level of quality of life. Participating in sports, joining clubs , taking music and dance classes is a way of dealing with challenges that are faced by society, these classes will assist young people to be able to participate in their communities, learn skills and socialize beyond their families boundaries(cited by the Council on Social Development(CCSD, 2001). According to Donnelly (2002), participating in recreational activities need to be organized in a safe environments to save participants from withdrawing from the social settings; the programmes should clearly state the philosophy of non-violence behaviour. Donnelly (2002) states the programmes and opportunities of participating in recreation and leisure activities. The opportunities need to display competence among participants who are members of groups, the programs should allow participants to integrate with the community members, display skills that allow them to show their self-esteem and have a sense of being part of the community at large. He further states in literature that social networks should be used to facilitate and support members in groups, this will at some stage promote communication and conflict resolution skills. The programs should provide direct support and guidance to participate in moral and economic decisions in their everyday lives and be involved in decision making processes.

By getting involved in recreational and leisure activities, hope for the future will be created. Participants should be able to deal with challenges and be exposed to a wide range of possibilities and visions for their lives (Coakley, 2002). Recreational programmes create capacity for social inclusion (Coakley, 2002). Researchers have identified that defining and measuring social inclusion remains a concept that needs to be dealt with; the emphasis of their findings was that without inclusion recreation cannot occur, however real benefits derive from social control motivated programmes, potentials have been released from children and youth barring good education and showing sincere leadership abilities. Coakley (2002) indicates that the main support for inclusion processes is found in settings where young people are part of a club structure that is non-hierarchical, and where activities are not exclusively based on power and performance models.

Donnelly and Coakley (2002) have identified the cornerstones of social inclusion:

1. **Valued recognition**: recognition being respect on individuals and groups. Children's development need to be recognized, the disabled and support of gender and cultural differences must be valued and recognised, they indicate that there should be universal programs like common health care and support of community schools.
2. **Human development**: there must be nurturing of talents, skills, capacities and choices of children and adults to be able to live life with satisfaction. Programs for human development that include; community child care, recreation for children, separating of people and elimination of boundaries should be core for social inclusion.
3. **Involvement and engagement**: Families and the community should have a right and necessary support to make decisions affecting one-self, there must be youth engagement in community life, parental input in decisions affecting their children. Citizen engagement in municipal policy decisions and democratic political participation.
4. **Proximity**: sharing social and physical space, provide opportunities for interaction, reducing of social distances between people, this includes sharing public space such as parks and libraries, integrated schools and classrooms.
5. **Material well-being**: there must be material resources to allow children and their parents to participate fully in community life. This includes being safe and having adequate income.

Baud-Bovy and Lawson (2002) give a description of the different categories of recreational activities and further state that boundaries between recreation and tourism are indistinct since both activities often share the same environments and facilities and compete for space and finance. The concepts recreation , leisure and tourism have an overlap however Hall and Page (2007) conclude that recreation and tourism should be viewed as part of a wider concept of leisure.

Table 1. Categories of recreation activities

Category of activities	Examples
Having a high school content	Entertainment, eating out, drinking in bars, party going, visiting friends and relatives etc.
Taking place within the home	Watching TV, leisure use of computers, reading, listening to music, gardening, exercise etc.
Sports, as participant or spectators	Football, swimming, tennis, golf, darts gymnastics etc.
Cultural, educational and artistic interests	Concerts, visiting theatres, exhibitions, museums, attending non-vocational classes etc.
Leisure tourism involving overnight stay	Longer distance travel, tours, weekend breaks, holidays and vacations etc.
Informal outdoor recreation	Driving for pleasure, day excursions, walking, picnicking etc.

Baud-Bovy and Lawson (2002)

The motivation to participate in recreation

Motivation is referred to as a psychological or biological need and want, this includes integral forces that arouse direct and integrate a person's behavior and activity (Yoon and Uysal 2005). Fluker (2004), further defines motivation as a process of internal psychological factors which are: needs, wants and goals. These factors generate an uncomfortable level of tension within the

minds and bodies of individuals who may eventually lead to actions of releasing tension and satisfying their needs.

Motivation has been divided into four basic categories by (Nickerson, 2007):

- **Cultural motivators** that are a desire to know and learn more about music, food, architecture, art, folklore or religion of other people
- **Physical motivators** are directly related to health
- **Interpersonal motivators** are motivators of all and include two extremes: visiting friends and relatives or escaping from family and friends
- **Status and prestige motivators** like the need for recognition, attention, appreciation and good reputation.
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All these motivators according to Nickerson (2007) will lead to recreational activities. The external motivators according to Yoon and Uysal (2005) pull and push motivators. Push motivators are related to internal or emotional aspects. Pull motivators are connected to external, situational or cognitive aspects.

In recreation it is said that people that part in different activities because they want to satisfy a particular need or want. People have different needs and expectations and as a result they have different motivations to engage in recreation activities. It is important therefore to understand the different motivations of people to participate in recreation.

Descriptive discussions

Jackson (2009), states that recreation is proven to flow through so many aspects of personal lives like improving depression levels, building self-esteem and confidence, reducing tension, anxiety, and encouraging personal growth. Recreation is a healthy part of each individual's own life and can be enjoyed by everyone. The benefits of recreation are not only positive to the community of today, but to the society of tomorrow. According to NRPA (2019) recreation evolves physical, mental, and social health related benefits that result from participating in recreational activities.

Sport as recreation is one of the most effective and practical ways of planting the seeds of peace in our communities: "A physically fit person is less prone to injury, and is less likely to experience depression". Literature reveals that in most of the European countries, many communities use parks for recreation, these parks provide after school and summer child care, this has caused children to improve in their grades (NRPA, 2019). When young people feel good about themselves they operate more effectively and productively in their communities, families and schools, this is in support of this papers discussion, revealing how recreation can be a solution to social challenges. Self-esteem is built through adventurous reaction activities. Adventure programs teach the importance of trust, appropriate risk taking, supportive social interaction and personal challenge while creating valuable life long memories.

Recreational activities in communities, schools and families need to be promoted and be regarded as a solution to the challenges which are on-going in our societies, challenges like obesity of children, stress, and reducing of contagious diseases. An American psychologist, Poll (2019), he states that 59% of people claimed that they feel great stress at least once a week due to work and other challenges they encounter. The report is that they often experience high levels of stress however positive and enjoyable recreation experiences have helped decrease stress and

psychological tensions (Poll, 2019) Leisure activities provide people with the opportunity to expel energy and emotion not being released in other aspects of their lives. Other psychologists found that activities such as a walk give a boost to the immune system that lasts two or three days. Each additional mile walked or run by a sedentary person would give him or her an extra 21 minutes of life (Poll, 2019).

The promotion of one tree, one garden, by a family planted should be non-stop because protecting the environment is essential for our lives and planetary sustainability. Trees help deal with the serious pollution problem caused by the use of fossil fuels as they absorb carbon. Trees and clean water are essential elements for the protection of humans and animals. A trend towards natural environment based recreation activities indicates strong emphasis and learning. Gardening is at an all-time high in popularity (Pigram, Jenkins, 2006). Working with living plants, and seeing them grow and mature brings personal satisfaction and relaxation to people.

The importance of recreational activities has been studied in various aspects of life. One of the most prevalent aspects of life studied with importance of leisure satisfaction is for people with psychological problems. When a person experiences stress at work, through depression, leisure satisfaction may ease the stress regardless of the situation. Stress in the workforce is a common issue many people face in their lifetime, however, recreational activities may help lower a person's stress levels and increase their satisfaction(Poll, 2019) When someone engages in enjoyable recreation and leisure activities, their moods tend to increase, which in turn, allows them to better accept everyday stresses. When faced with difficult job situations one must be able to achieve adequate free time to truly enjoy their leisure activity of choice. Another important aspect of recreation and leisure is the type of activity performed, whether is it an active or passive activity. In a study was conducted by Walker and Shafer (2011) they found indications of the importance of recreation and leisure activity. Passive leisure activities were suggested to give workers an ability to "escape", which could end indepressive moods. However, workers participating in active leisure showed considerably higher levels of mental health.

There is an increasing need of promoting recreational facilities and activities in our communities, the social need of recreation should thus be at the top of the list in all agendas and a continued discourse for the benefiting of our children and of value to the society should be maintained. With recreation strong within our society, it is possible to reduce crime rates and vandalism, teach positive conflict resolution skills, and generally influence positive attitudes and behaviors.

The National Recreation Park Association (2019), states that economically, recreation attracts business expansion and relocation. Recreation can obviously contribute to a productive work environment, along with having enhanced real estate values and tourist attractions. Environmentally, recreation can help to protect natural resources and open spaces and in return enhance air and water quality through the planting of trees and the conserving of resources for sustainability and development. Basically it is evident that recreation improves overall community livability.

Content Analysis

Looking at the current trend of theory, it was evident that the government of South Africa needs to be more accountable and have an input in the decisions affecting the communities in particular where very little is documented on recreation involvement. Recreation is more dominant and effectively implemented and documented in European and other international countries (Nkwanyana, 2019). Theory revealed that there is moderate growth in family-oriented activities such as for example camping, swimming and trails walk, and this is more individual culture

dominated. There is an increase in technology driven activities amongst the youth which is causing a decrease in recreation participation (Pearce, 2005).

Participation in recreational activities is regarded as expenditure growing. Most popular activities are done on private land (Hall & Page, 2006). Travelers are searching for exotic, unfamiliar and unpredictable activities hence look for destinations to participate in recreation. What is becoming popular is casino gaming as a legitimate form of entertainment, however examined theory indicates that travelers are more interested in improving themselves intellectually, emotionally and physically which does not happen in casino gaming. Another aspect of interest for people will be goals of making money, a desire to be promoted at work, acquiring new material possessions such as new phones, clothes, houses and cars rather than spending time and money on recreation activities in private places.

On a positive note, there is an increase of economic value of camping, picnicking motor-biking and hiking, these are forms of recreation activities that travelers participate in. Content examined reflected that; the development of recreation facilities and activities will make domestic tourism services easier, there will be new rural tourism market opportunities caused by a swing away from resorts destination, and such a swing will likely be profitable for recreation. Recreation will be more effectively marketed and managed and this will likely bring about a better balance in one's life and work activity.

It was revealed through the studied content that generally more attention has to be paid to collaborative tourism planning with recreation, development and promotion in place and these should be integrated within a community or region and be visible in the planning programmes of NGO's. Most of the content which is documented has shown that participating in recreation will increase the quality of one's life and reduce the challenges faced in many communities.

Conclusion

Recreation is alive and important in just about every aspect of our society, on a personal, economic, environmental, and cultural level; it should not be overlooked or stepped over by government or any of the private nor public sectors because of demand for economic growth. Recreation is more than fun and games, it develops what our great nation will become, and locally keep us all safe and healthy. This is why the benefits of recreation are not only positive to the community of today, but to the society of tomorrow.

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