USING THE INTERNET AS AN ACCESS TO LEISURE: A STUDY OF MEETUP

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USING THE INTERNET AS AN ACCESS TO LEISURE: A STUDY OF MEETUP

A Thesis

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Abstract

of

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Statement of Problem

Meetup is a world-wide online network that has used the face-to-screen medium of the Internet to support face-to-face social leisure experiences and to build community involvement. This work was developed to investigate Meetup as an innovative social networking tool that targets increasing face-to-face human interaction. It addressed the demographics of users of Meetup and the social and personal development implications of its use.

Sources of Data

Using Maslow’s Theory of Motivation and Human Needs and Sherbourne and Stewart’s functional components of social support as a guide, the researcher developed a survey instrument targeting demographics of users and the components of functional and social support members may be obtaining through using Meetup for social leisure. Data was collected through an online survey using Survey Monkey. Individuals who participated were invited to the online survey through their Meetup organizers.

Conclusions Reached
Meetup is an Internet based networking tool that is effectively offering face-to-face social leisure and in doing so, it offers its members the opportunity to meet social needs. This global network was found to provide Belongingness Needs (Level 3), Esteem Needs (Level 4) and Self-Actualization Needs (Level 5) from Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, for its members.

_______________________, Committee Chair
Katherine Pinch, Ph.D.

_______________________
Date
DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my spiritual Father, Ralph Davis, whose constant connection and purposeful inclusion provided me with the tools to live a fulfilled life and to walk the Navajo Beauty Way.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Jeanie Williams and Rasha Salama for their commitment to my completion of this work. Jeanie effectively worked to provide me with instrumental support and Rasha worked to provide informational support. Both of these dear friends encouraged me continually, provided emotional support and they continue to build upon my “social capital” with their love and support. I have received so much more than a degree because of their continued efforts.

I would like to thank Katherine Pinch for her time and attention to the “body” of this work and for her information support. Your knowledge will go with me into my future in Recreation and Community Collaboration.

I would also like to thank Meetup for changing my life, for opening my world up and for providing me with the opportunity to lead and to serve.
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

Since its inception in the 1990s, the Internet has grown as a means of communication. The Internet affects every area of our daily lives. We use the Internet at work to communicate for business purposes, it is used to maintain social connections and it is used to gain access to entertainment through online games for all ages. It spans the areas of marketing, business, education, vacationing, and personal relationships.

Technology and the Internet are being used for face-to-screen (f-t-s) interactions. Through f-t-s interactions, individuals are being provided with health care support as well as fostering companionships and building relationships. Brennan, Ripich, and Moore (1991) and Wright (2000) show evidence that the quality of life of individuals is improved when an individual gains social support and companionship using online technology. Research has addressed the benefits of face-to-screen (f-t-s) networks, also known as Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) (Brennan, Ripich & Moore, 1991; Wright, 2000). Face-to-screen communication and CMCs are Internet tools that meet some level of human needs.

In the study by Brennan, et al. (1991), people living with AIDS (PLWA) were concerned about their anonymity. They had a need for anonymity to ensure a level of privacy and feelings of security. This need was met through face-to-screen interactions with health care professionals and other PLWA. Other benefits obtained by people living with AIDS revealed that logistical issues were alleviated and there was an increase in social support as well as information for self-care. Measures of social isolation,
depression and cognitive function alerted the nurses, in this study, to the importance of “including information regarding maintaining social contacts and coping with depression (Brennan et al., 1991, p. 6).” Brennan et al. also found that when online interaction is continued, participants were able to obtain a sense of community.

Wright’s (2000) study revealed that information was accessible to participants, and feelings for connectedness or social community were obtained (p. 101). Wright found that older individuals who spend more time communicating on the Internet per week were more satisfied with their exclusively Internet support network than those who spent less time online (p. 113). Although face-to-screen does meet a level of human needs, there are questions as to whether it meets them adequately or fully. Wright states that in face-to-screen situations there is a slower rate of social penetration and a lack of non-verbal cues (p. 102). Body language and non-verbal cues allow for the added communication of feelings and subsequent understanding. Social penetration takes longer when the main means of communication is face-to-screen.

Now there is a new trend emerging. Meetup is a growing network that uses the Internet to move people from face-to-screen (f-t-s) online interactions to face-to-face (f-t-f) leisure experiences for meeting social needs. The inspiration for developing Meetup resulted from a combination of witnessing New Yorkers after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and reading the book about the decline of community gathering: Bowling Alone by Putnam (2000). The founders of Meetup, Scott Heiferman, Matt Meeker and Peter Kamali, knew they could develop an Internet site to help like-minded people find each other, set up meetings and build social interaction. Meetup’s founders are using the
Internet, a large portion of social interaction for many users, to address areas of social penetration and community building. Meetup, attempts to enable users us to meet the need for connection, intimacy and community by offering them the potential for building relationships regardless of placement or social class.

Mundy (1998) posed that the fundamentals of Leisure Education are to help people develop attitudes, knowledge, skills and behaviors for satisfying leisure (p. 4). To support individuals’ social needs and to develop community connections, with the assistance of the Internet, Meetup was created. This new trend in our culture is enhancing our opportunity for social networking. Meetup is also providing a rich source of leisure experiences that lead people toward face-to-face social interactions. The founders of Meetup realized that the technology of the World Wide Web was an excellent tool for accessing leisure and for gaining access to a large number of people. Meetup’s mission is to revitalize local community in America


Need for the Study

Leisure and work have evolved over time. During the Pre-literate Era of society, work and leisure were fused together (Edginton, Jordan, DeGraaf & Edginton, 1995, p. 55). In the Agricultural Era, a distinction arose between a working class and a leisure class. Within the timeframe of the Agricultural Era the influence of Christianity brought about the Protestant work ethic. Work was viewed as good and idleness was viewed as sinful (p. 61). In the time of the Industrial Era of society, time was clock driven. There was a clear distinction of work time and leisure time. Standards of living were improved
and social reform focused on providing productive leisure activities. “Leisure became a means for compensating for dissatisfying work experiences” (p. 66).

This time is marked also by the development of the Play Movement and the Park Movement. The Play Movement was marked by a series of events in Boston, New York, Chicago, Providence and Philadelphia, where provisions were made for places to play, specifically for children (Rainwater, 1922, p. 50). The Park Movement was started in the early 1900s when attention was being given to providing public playgrounds for the physical and relational recreation of individuals (Mero, 1909, p. 22). The era of Technology is our current time in society. In this era, leisure has become a process of assisting in the development of human resources; creativity, networking, companionship and personal development through leisure (Edginton et al., 1995, p. 78). This time is marked by a greater emphasis on life satisfaction as well as personal and spiritual fulfillment. Perceptions of leisure lean towards a more holistic view. Holistic leisure encompasses all areas, insomuch as each life experience presents an opportunity for leisure (Edginton et al., p. 79).

Weiskopf (1982) said, “leisure’s role is to be enjoyable to the individual, as well as constructive to society. Leisure must provide some satisfaction to people’s basic needs. Leisure must serve a rehabilitative or therapeutic function” (p. 11). Whatever the era, there is a human need that seeks out leisure experiences. Now, leisure experiences are being enhanced through online technology and online social organizations. There is a need to understand the relationship between technology and leisure participation.
Various studies have examined the benefits of face-to-screen communication (Brennan, et al., 1991; Wright, 2000). In this age of technology, Internet communication is enabling individuals to move from face-to-screen communication toward face-to-face interaction. Meetup is an innovative Internet site that provides an access to leisure experience by using face-to-screen to build face-to-face social capital. Meetup enables the individual to connect to others with similar interests in person, provides access to leisure opportunities and further builds upon social networks.

Very little research has been conducted on Meetup or other Internet sites that support face-to-face leisure meetings. Little is known about the extent of Meetup’s use and its social impact on users.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the demographics of users of Meetup (an Internet social network site that is dedicated to building community through face-to-face interactions) and the social and personal development implications of its use.

**Research Questions**

This study was guided by these questions (1) What is the demographic of Meetup’s members? (2) Why are members joining and utilizing Meetup? (3) How often do members participate in face-to-face social meetups? (4) Are there barriers to participating in meetups? (5) How has participating in these leisure experiences impacted member’s lives? (6) What types of activities are accessible using Meetup? and (7) How satisfied are members in regards to using the Internet to meet social needs?
**Definition of Terms**

**Computer Mediated Communication** – CMCs are online communities.

**Computer-Supported Social Networks** – CSSNs computer networks that are becoming social networks (Wellman, Salaff, Dimitrova, Garton, Gulia and Haythornthwaite, 1996).

**Face-to-face** – people interacting with each other, in person (f-t-f).

**Face-to-screen** – people contacting people through online computer interaction (f-t-s).

**Leisure** – consists of relatively self-determined activity, experience that falls into one’s economically free-time roles, that is seen as leisure by participants, that is psychologically pleasant in anticipation and recollection, that potentially covers the whole range of commitment and intensity, that contains characteristic norms and constraints, and that provides opportunities for recreation, personal growth, and service to others. (Weber, 1949, as cited in Kaplan, 1975, p. 26).

**Meetup** – is an online social network that was created in 2002. It is a world-wide community of groups that support face-to-face interactions through the medium of the Internet.

**Satisfaction** – fulfillment of a need or want (Merriam-Webster).

**Social Support** – information leading the subject to believe s/he is cared for and loved, esteemed and a member of a network of mutual obligations (Cobb, 1976, p. 300).

**Social Capital** – fellowship, good will, sympathy and social intercourse among individuals and families that affect the productivity of individuals and groups (Putnam, 2000, p. 19).
Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will review the aspects of leisure that relate to the benefits to humans in the areas of social capital, dimensions of satisfaction, human needs and social identity. It will endeavor to examine studies of social support through online communities and understand the need for social support and the cultural implications of the Internet for meeting social support and leisure.

Components of Leisure and Social Capital

According to Mundy (1998) leisure is experience oriented, internal and psychological (p. 4). Individuals have the ability to affect the quality of their lives in a positive or a negative way during their free-time (p. 16). Kelly (1982) refers to a common element of leisure “that each occasion has been chosen with some satisfaction anticipated” (p. 4). Mundy and Odum (1979) suggested that “during leisure, the individual has the freedom to choose meaningful avenues of human experience that are, at that moment, compatible with his or her inner feelings and needs. [Leisure allows the individual] to be freely, uniquely and beautifully one’s real self” (as cited in Weiskopf, 1982, p. 4). According to Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993) leisure is believed to have beneficial consequences for psychological well-being and health (p. 111). Farina (1969) suggests that self-actualization is the goal of leisure. Leisure’s role is to provide feelings of freedom and self-expression through activity, in order to strive for one’s full potential as a human being (as cited in Murphy, p. 65). Leisure therefore, is personal, it is an
access to improving one’s life and it is most often satisfying to the participant. Leisure is an opportunity that requires taking action.

According to Kelly and Freysinger (2000) leisure has a variety of definitions based on philosophy, culture and personal preferences. They describe the various conceptual approaches to leisure that have been developed and used over time. Leisure has been described as Discretionary Time. That is, “time beyond that required for subsistence, maintenance, rest and other necessities of living” (p. 14). Leisure as Activity cannot be defined by specific activities because there is a relationship or perception that the individual has toward the activity that makes it leisure or not leisure. For example, “is swimming leisure at the beach but not as a health assignment after a heart attack?” (p. 15). Therefore, the category of Leisure as Activity carries with it some ambiguity as it is not merely a list of activities. Kelly (1982) defines leisure as “activity chosen in relative freedom for its qualities of satisfaction” (p. 2). Edginton, Jordan, DeGraaf, and Edginton (1995) explain that attitudes toward leisure were once viewed as frivolous activity and that attitudes have changed to a view of leisure “as a central focus in life that helps individuals define their self-concept” (p. 4). Leisure as a State of Mind has two definitions. One is deGrazia’s (1964) State of Being which is geared toward feelings of freedom and self-fulfillment. The other is Neulinger’s (1974) view which is based upon the individual’s attitude. Leisure activities are those that provide experiences which are determined by the individual’s perceptions (as cited in Kelly & Freysinger, 2000, p. 15). Leisure as the Quality of Action involves choice and self-contained meaning. Leisure as a Dimension of Life is viewed as “being done primarily for the experience.” Clearly,
there are many approaches to defining leisure. The Holistic view of leisure combines free-time, perceptions of leisure activity, state of mind, quality of action and the dimensions of life (as cited in Edginton et al., 1995, p36-38).

Gray and Greben (1998) state that participation in recreation activities is characterized by feelings of mastery, achievement, exhilaration, acceptance, success, personal worth and pleasure, all qualities that build upon self-concept (as cited in Kraus, 1998, p. 51). Leisure is linked to social experiences that fulfill human needs. There are many aspects of human needs which are developed through leisure experience. Leisure provides development in the areas of physical, emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual human domains. These areas of human needs and the individual’s drive to realize his full potential are essential aspects of the leisure experience. An individual’s full potential is derived from a series of self-evaluations and social identities that originate in social interaction. Feelings of mastery and achievement are, in turn, important aspects of psychological well-being.

Abraham Maslow, the founder of humanistic psychology and the creator of the Hierarchy of Human Needs, viewed human needs as a succession of increasing ability to master essential characteristics and to move toward self-actualization or the fullness of human potential. Maslow perceived that individuals pursue meeting their needs through making advances in the physical, social, emotional and spiritual domains and that, as these areas are developed, an understanding of the self emerges.

The more we penetrate and understand these aspects of leisure experience as a quality of action, a self-concept builder and as a restorative benefactor to life, the more
we begin to understand the disposition of an individual who pursues leisure. We glance into the area of self-determination and we begin to see how Maslow’s Hierarchy parallels leisure experience and its benefits. Csikszentmihalyi (1990) investigated elements of enjoyment that contributed to the “flow” experience. He stated that “the quality of life depends on how we feel about ourselves and about what happens to us.” He stated that to “improve life one must improve the quality of experience” (p. 44). When an individual is effecting change in their leisure circumstance, they are using self-determinism to enhance their experience of life. Here we see that the quality of self-determinism is a precursor to building upon or enhancing the individual’s life experience. Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993) said “it is important to realize that self-determination disposition is both a cause and an effect of leisure. Leisure requires self-determination and it results in self-determination” (p. 120).

Elements of positive social interaction, information support, emotional, instrumental and affectionate support are functional components of social capital and support as defined by Sherbourne and Stewart (1991). Social capital is a major factor in meeting human needs in daily life and through leisure experiences. For the purposes of this study, I use Weber’s (1949) definition of leisure;

Leisure is a self-determined activity that falls into one’s free-time roles and is perceived as leisure. It is psychologically pleasant to anticipate and recollect. Leisure provides opportunities to recreate, experience personal growth and provide service to others (as cited in Kaplan, 1975, p. 26).
An added benefit to leisure is its health buffering effect as well as its ability to alleviate life stresses. Coleman and Iso-Ahola (1993) identify two mediators to life stress (p. 112):

1. Leisure based social support
2. Leisure generated self-determinism

Out of Weber’s definition and in concert with Coleman and Iso-Ahola’s benefits, we can make the connection that self-determination is required for access to leisure experience as well as to offer buffering effects that curb life stresses. In terms of Meetup, when an individual joins a group online, they are employing conscious self-determination. Joining and participating are the necessary actions to build social capital and enhance the probability of meeting human needs. Meetup encourages participants to engage in and enjoy leisure activities by moving them from face-to-screen interactions toward face-to-face social situations. Meetup endeavors to be an effective leisure tool that serves to meet the human need for interaction, companionship, relaxation, entertainment and more.

Though leisure can be individual or solitary, a huge aspect of leisure is social. Leisure is time utilized to experience places, have social and spiritual experiences as well as to develop personal skills and challenge abilities. Leisure has evolved from philosophical contemplation by the upper class to “free time.” Pierce (1980) suggested that there are four dimensions that provide satisfaction in both leisure and work environments. They are; intimacy (formed through relationships), relaxation, achievement (building skills, improving self-esteem) and power (as cited in Edginton, et al., 1995, p. 11). Kraus (1998) stated that the primary function of leisure is to enrich the Quality of Life (as cited in Edginton, et al., 1995, p. 12). Understanding that there are a
variety of views of leisure helps us to recognize correlations between the social aspect of leisure experience and its importance to the development and well-being of humans.

Social Networks & Human Needs

Abraham Maslow developed a model of self-actualization that is referred to as the Hierarchy of Human Needs. He is considered to be the founder of Humanistic Psychology. During his education, Maslow had the opportunity to observe the Blackfoot Indians. This experience transformed his life and his outlook on human beings. While observing the Blackfoot Indian people he saw that they were generous, worked cooperatively and they were non-competitive. He believed these to be admirable qualities. In formulating a psychology of human nature, Maslow observed that social structures can either build upon or warp and suppress human nature. Using the Humanistic Approach he conceptualized the Hierarchy of Human Needs in which self-actualization is the culminating principle. Maslow (1968) stated that good environmental conditions which enhance the individual and build upon the structure of obtaining one’s needs, starts with the natural environment, social support system and physiological environment (p. 84). When the basic needs are met, humans can move up through the other levels of obtaining needs. Each level on the Hierarchy is part of the building block that supports healthy self-esteem and allows for the movement upward toward self-actualization needs (Hoffman, E. (Ed.) 1996).

Maslow developed the Theory of Motivation and Human Needs. In it, there are five levels of human needs, starting at the base of the pyramid, they are:
Level 1; Biological and physiological needs; food, shelter, warmth, sleep and so on.

Level 2; Safety needs; protection, law, order, stability, limits.

Level 3; Belongingness and love; relational needs, affection, family, work groups.

Level 4; Esteem needs; status, achievement, reputation.

Level 5; Self-actualization needs; the areas of personal growth and development or the pursuit of an individual’s full human potential.

Maslow’s understanding of these building blocks provides a framework for observation. The first four levels on the Hierarchy are said to be the necessary building blocks that an individual requires in order to move up through the levels toward self-actualization. Base needs must be met before higher needs are pursued. Level 3 on the Hierarchy of Needs is the level most affected by face-to-face social participation. Level 3 is equivalent to the social capital that Putnam (2000) relates as, “connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them” (p. 19). Hence, social capital that provides an access to affectionate support, emotional support and positive social interaction create a sense of belonging and fulfills human needs.
Maslow was concerned that in an Industrial Society, human needs would not be fully met. To meet man’s need for intimacy, he hypothesized about how a group of 20 to 40 people could meet together regularly. Maslow believed that, with regular contact, man could develop bonds of trust and intimacy. With trust and intimacy developed, man could have a more fulfilling life.

Cobb (1976) reviewed several studies in which “social support” was found to be “protective” (p. 310). Cobb identified that there was hard evidence that adequate social support can protect people in crisis. Emotional support by others was found to improve birth weight and alleviate depression, affecting physical and psychological areas of human development. Cobb measured social support as a moderator of life stress. Cobb defines social support as information leading the person to believe that:
1. he is cared for and loved
2. he is esteemed and valued
3. he belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation (p. 300)

According to Cobb, not only are support systems stress-relievers in the emotional sense, but they can moderate stress on the body as well. Support systems offer psychological well-being and physical wellness. He observed that, “as life progresses, support is derived increasingly from other members of the family, then from peers at work and in the community” (p. 301-302). The protective aspect of social support can be regarded as a building block to the quality of life. Moderating forces can be viewed as an enhancement of life satisfaction.

After the Industrial Revolution, people were dispersed or displaced from their primary familial relationships. They moved away from families to be closer to work and to be able to support their own families. Distance led to a disconnection from families and communities. Soon after the Industrial Revolution, automobiles and airplanes made the long distances less of a constraint in maintaining familial relationships. With advances in technology, distance became less of a factor in preserving family ties.

We are now well into the Twenty First Century. Internet and communications technology are an expanded version of the community we once knew. This World Wide Web is our global community. This network can and is being utilized to foster the basic human construct of social groups. It is being used to support the human need for togetherness, belonging and intimacy as well as to further leisure experiences. There is a
rise of face-to-screen and virtual communities like Facebook and Twitter. The question arises: Are face-to-screen interactions meeting belongingness needs?

From the perspective of Cobb (1976), Maslow (1968) and Putnam (2000), social networks are valuable social contacts that affect the productivity of groups and individuals. In today’s culture of increased Internet use, finding outlets for a sense of belongingness, meeting relational needs, and finding face-to-face social opportunities are necessary factors in meeting Belongingness and Love needs and furthering the individual’s progression up the Hierarchy toward esteem and self-fulfillment needs.

In *Toward a Philosophy of Leisure*, Farina (1969) expressed a view of leisure “as a state or condition of being free from the urgent demands of the lower needs.” Leisure was understood as freedom to express oneself through activity in order to strive toward one’s full potential. Farina suggests that self-actualization is the goal of leisure (as cited in Murphy, 1975, p. 65). If self-actualization is the goal of leisure, then it would stand to reason that leisure is an effective tool to meeting human needs and impacting the process of human development toward self-actualization. Being engaged in leisure and being engaged in the community are fundamental in building a life of health and happiness:

“Of all the domains in which I have traced the consequences of social capital, in none is the importance of social connectedness so well established as in the case of health and well-being. Scientific studies of the effects of social cohesion on physical and mental health can be traced to the seminal work of the nineteenth-century sociologist Emile Durkheim, *Suicide*. Self-destruction is not merely a personal tragedy, he found, but a sociologically predictable consequence of the
degree to which one is integrated into society – rarer among married people, rarer in more tightly knit religious communities, rarer in times of national unity, and more frequent when rapid social change disrupts the social fabric. Social connectedness matters to our lives in the most profound way.” (Putnam, 2000, p. 326)

So profound was the demonstration of Americans as one “community,” after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, that Meetup’s creators were inspired into action. Their mission was to provide a venue to support the building of community. They chose to use our present culture’s main access for information; the Internet.

**The Structure of the Internet**

Growing use of technology and the development of the Internet play an important role in people’s daily lives. In the 1960’s ARPANet, a decentralized military computer-based communication network was developed by the U.S. Government (Fuchs, 2008, p. 121). This was the beginning of the Internet as we know it today. In general, this was a system of computers that communicated with other networks. Its basic function was to protect, offer defense of the homeland and to build high-tech machines. This system of computers then evolved and was developed into Internet-based applications like Email, Usenet and LISTSERV. Computers and technology have been advancing more and more since that time. Businesses utilized the Internet so that work could be done more effectively. People within the company could easily communicate with others in the company and tasks could be simplified and time could be saved. The Internet has also entered the realms of marketing and consumerism.
In 1990, Tim Berners-Lee created the World Wide Web (WWW). The WWW is the form of the Internet that is widely known and used for communication, business, marketing and social networks by people, globally. The use of online social networks has also developed over the years. The Internet was used for social support, communication, marketing, distance learning, as well as to gain access to recreation and leisure services. Online Leisure, in the form of computer games, vacation destinations, automated ticketing and other reservation systems provided social networking and information access.

Educational Institutions have utilized the Internet as a means to gain students who may live outside of their vicinity. Degrees can be obtained through online classes, without ever having to step inside a classroom. Even a small High School on the Navajo Reservation, has been using the Internet to support learning experiences of students by offering college level courses online since the mid 1990’s. High School students receive college credit at Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, Arizona affording students the opportunity to start college level coursework before graduating from High School.

With the increased use of computers in the workplace, a need arose for workers to be able to communicate with large groups within the work structure. The Intranet was created as a tool for increased productivity and efficiency at work. Soon this new technology was expanded with the aid of Microsoft. Its expanded use in personal realms spread ten times faster than land line telephones. The telephone took 70 years for market penetration whereas the Internet took 7 years to penetrate the market (Putnam, 2000, p. 168). Over the years, the use of computers sparked the insurgence of digital mediums
throughout the world. The WWW reached further and further to more countries all over the world. Today, there are around 1.8 billion computers linked to the World Wide Web (as cited online Internet World Stats).

**Impacts of Technology on Social Networking**

The Internet has moved beyond mere technological advances and work related uses and it has penetrated the areas of social relations. It is being used in support groups where the individual is not inhibited by distance of other members or social insecurities and where this medium may provide a buffer zone or a safety net, which allows for some level of anonymity. Nohria and Eccles (1984) refer to Computer Mediated Communication in both positive and negative ways. They stated that face-to-face encounters provide a depth and speed of feedback that is impossible in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC). CMCs may inhibit collaboration and trust that is developed through personal contact, facial cues and body language (as cited in Putnam, 2000, p. 175). Leung and Lee (2005) studied social support and leisure activities and its effects on the quality of life. In their article called, “Multiple determinants of life quality; the roles of Internet activities, use of media, social support and leisure activities,” they provide evidence of improved quality of life for individuals who used an online social support system (p. 164). Leung and Lee hypothesized that social support is positively associated with quality of life: Internet activities (especially for sociability) are positively associated with social support; and social Internet activities are positively associated with quality of life (p. 165). Leung and Lee studied the impact of social support, leisure activities and standard of living in relationship to the quality of life (p. 163). Their
findings indicated that people who have a strong social support when they need it, also enjoy a high quality of life. Three of the four main categories of Internet activities - fun seeking, sociability and information seeking - were significantly related to the emotional and informational dimension of social support (p. 171).

Sherbourne and Stewart (1991) provide a list of the functional components of social support. They surmised that functional support is the most important type of support and that there are various types of functional support. The various types are:

1. **Emotional** support which involves caring, love, and sympathy
2. **Instrumental** support providing material aid or behavioral assistance and referred to by many as tangible support
3. **Information** support offering guidance, advice and information
4. **Affectionate** support involving expressions of love and affection
5. **Positive social interaction** (social companionship) which involves spending time with others in leisure and recreational activities

These support areas are the areas where human needs come into focus (as cited in Leung & Lee, 2005, p. 164).

Wright (2000) studied the use of technology for providing social support. He investigated the ways individuals use technology for social support. His study involved an online questionnaire that was linked to the SeniorNet webpage. The focus of his study was on older adults’ use of technology and how this may benefit relational satisfaction and psychological well-being (p. 101). His review of the literature covered two models of social support; the buffering model and the main effects model. In regards to the
buffering model, social support was linked to reduction of stressors and improvement of immune system and alleviating depression. The main effects model is linked “directly” with social support as a reducer of stress and improvements in psychological well-being (p. 104). Wright’s investigation showed a distinction between social support and companionship. He stated that “companionship has been found to contribute to psychological well-being by buffering stress on a daily basis” (p. 104).

The Main Effects Model asserts a direct relationship between social support and physical and psychological outcomes. Main Effects occur more in companionship relationships. Motivations for seeking social support and motivations for seeking companionship differ. In seeking out social support, the individual has a desire to obtain help with personal problems or emotional stress. The social support is intended to restore psychological equilibrium in times of stress and helps the individual to deal with negative affect (frustration, anger). Social support can be used as a buffer for a specific issue and to obtain validation and empathy. On the other hand, comparing social support to companionship is sought after a stressor occurs because of a desire to experience interpersonal rewards, positive affect and stimulation. Companionship is for the sake of enjoyment and it may boost well-being beyond the baseline. Companionship contributes to well-being by buffering the effect of stress on a daily basis. Companionship acts as a general buffer (Wright, 2000, p. 103-104).

Brennan, Ripich and Moore (1991) had a four month pilot study, in which they developed the ComputerLink network for home care support to persons living with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) and AIDS-Related Complex (p. 3).
This network provided nurses with a way to serve this population at home and to increase their patient’s ability to care for themselves at home. AIDS and ARC participants gained a communication pathway that enabled them to post questions anonymously, participate in dialogue about their illness with others via a bulletin board and view other recently answered questions (p. 7). The impact on patients spanned areas of information, emotion and behavior. Participants who utilized the system were afforded larger amounts of information about their illness, a connection to others in their situation and participants chose to reach out encouragingly to newcomers to help them adjust to this ‘safe space’ (p. 12). Kraut & Attewell (1993) stated that Computer Supported Social Networks flow of information generates access to new information and thus increases the probability of finding those who can solve problems (as cited in Wellman et al., 1996, p. 219). This illustrates that Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) can provide information support and social companionship despite the limited presence of social face to face relationships. Here we have two aspects of support being met through CMCs. What is missing from CMCs is receptivity of emotional support, instrumental support and affectionate support.

**Virtual Communities: Face-to-Face and Face-to-Screen**

Computer Mediated Communications are a form of virtual community. Facebook and Twitter are also new forms of virtual community. Taylor (2008), he asks “are we really more connected?” and “do social networks really make us more connected as human beings?” Taylor labels Twitter a lightweight social network. Taylor stated that Twitter fulfills some of people’s desires to be connected, especially since people can use
it with their mobile phones. Taylor describes MySpace as the online site that redefined *friendship*. These online sites can be correlated with Facebook, where people add new ‘friends’ online, some of which they have never met. In these online venues, people connect in abstract ways through an intellectual world.

As a result of the Internet and Computer Mediated Communication, are we less socially engaged? Or simply engaged in something else? Communication is a prerequisite for social and emotional connections. The Internet enhances our ability to communicate. Does the flow of communication on the Internet foster social capital and genuine community? “Social capital is about networks and the Net is the network to end all networks” (Putman, 2000, p.171).

In both Brennan, Ripich, and Moore’s (1991) and Wright’s (2000) studies, face-to-screen support were regarded by participants as a valuable medium. Brennan, et al. found that virtual community that was provided to People Living with Aids (PLWA), provided participants with access to larger amounts of information and was an outlet for feelings and experiences. PWLA’s became quickly affiliated with the user group (p. 12). Needs for information, self-care and social support were met. Having distance provided a level of safety and anonymity to some participants. Kinds of support provided by the Internet were: social, emotional, business and network related.

These studies focus on social networking that is face-to-screen. In these situations there is a lack of non-verbal cues (McCormick, 1982) and social penetration occurs at a slower rate than it does with face to face experiences. According to Wellman et al. (1996) valuable non-verbal cues are lost when there is a limited social presence in
face-to-screen interactions. Communicators akin to verbal cues, body language, nuances of facial expression and so forth are lost. Without such aspects of social interaction, communication online may consist of more ideas being offered, less centralized leadership and people may communicate in a more aggressive way (Wellman et al., 1996, p. 218).

The Internet has taken up permanent residence in our lives. There are many uses for the Internet. In our changing society, with the evolution of technology and its ability to connect us in a global community, there are many advantages in using this technology to foster social capital. It has taken several innovative and creative minds to access this medium and to endeavor to build upon the individual’s social need for intimacy. Using the Internet as a support structure “allows relationships to develop on the basis of shared interest rather than to be stunted…by differences in social status.” (Hiltz & Turoff, 1993). Kaplan, Cassel and Gore (1977) provide information on the necessary conditions of relationships that provide an opportunity structure for meeting supportive needs, they are;

1. *anchorage* - the shortest path to others
2. *reachability* - the largest number of contacts with the fewest number of steps
3. *density* - connectedness
4. *range* - number of direct contacts

These aspects of relationship are viewed as key conditions for meeting supportive needs (p. 54).
Companionship is made up of messages that bestow a sense of being connected to a group and being provided with support. For this reason, individuals feel that there are others who enjoy their presence, so they evaluate themselves as a valuable part of something bigger (Wellman & Wortley, 1990). Wellman and Wortley ask the question; *Are online communities enough to create intimacy and fulfill other aspects of social needs?*

**The Development of Meetup**

When the creators of Meetup.com witnessed the tragedy of 9/11, they observed people reaching out to one another, beyond their normal comfort zones, to support one another in community. Scott Heiferman, Matt Meeker and Peter Kamali were inspired by the events after 9/11 and the book Bowling Alone by Putnam (2000). They decided to develop a tool to further build upon. Scott, Matt and Peter’s combined creativity resulted in the development of Meetup. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Meetup). Meetup was founded in 2002 and its mission is to revitalize local communities and to help people around the world self-organize. “Meetup’s founders believe that people can change their personal world, or the whole world, by organizing themselves into groups that are powerful enough to make a difference.”

(http://files.meetup.com/10359/Who%20founded%20Meetup.pdf)

(http://www.meetup.com/about/). Meetup’s mission is in direct alignment with the goals of the field of Recreation and Leisure Studies. Members of Meetup are the *masters of their own realm*, they get to choose their groups, act through their own self-determination and create from their own interests. Members can participate in activities that meet their
time constraints. Because the individual has to join, we can assume that participants are moved by an internal need for socialization and that they choose their activities because it provides some form of pleasure or some form of personal growth and service to others. Weber (1949) referred to leisure as a self-determined activity which falls into the individual’s free-time and is perceived as leisure. Weber views leisure as psychologically pleasant to the individual and that leisure potentially covers a wide range of commitment and intensity, that contains characteristic norms and constraints, and that provides opportunities for recreation, personal growth, and service to others (as cited in Kaplan, 1975, p. 26).

Meetup is the world’s largest growing network of local groups, with 6.1 million members worldwide and 180,000 monthly Meetups. Meetup makes it easy for anyone to organize a local group or find one of the thousands already meeting up face-to-face. It uses the medium of face-to-screen to get people out into face-to-face social situations, which in turn meets people’s needs. Meetup’s success since its inception in 2002 is evident in the numbers of members and groups that are facilitating local social gatherings. Meetup groups have a wide range of interest topics (28,000) which members can gain access to and join. Each of these groups provides members with potential face-to-face Leisure and Recreation experiences.

Meetup provides members with an online social network, which connects them to local groups in their own communities and all over the world. Members can access information through a search engine by topic or location. When a member creates an account, they can choose what topics the system alerts them to. For example a member
can choose to be alerted if a new hiking group is created. The Meetup system will then send out automatic emails regarding topics of interests of its members. Members can control what is sent to them as well. They can receive as much or as little information as they choose. Members have the ability to email each other and organizers and they can choose to protect the privacy of their personal email. Members have access to bulletin boards within the groups of which they are members.

Meetup hosts 1,151 hiking groups around the world, with 424,007 members attending hiking events in over 20 countries. There are 2,461 dining out groups, with 672,432 members attending events in 27 countries. Of the “dining out” groups, Washington, D.C. hosts the largest group with 7,879 members. There are 2,028 meditation groups, with 166,539 members attending events in 28 countries. Information about groups and locations is available at http://www.meetup.com/about.

Although Meetup has been in operation for only eight years, it is having a global impact. Meetup effects the lives of many people. Little or no research has been done to investigate the impact of participant’s motivations and experience for participating in Meetups.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Since very little research has been conducted on using the Internet to gain face-to-face leisure interactions, this exploratory study on Meetup was descriptive in nature. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the research methods used for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the demographics of users of Meetup (an Internet social network site that is dedicated to building community through face-to-face interactions) and the social and personal development implications of its use.

Research Questions

This study was guided by these questions (1) What is the demographic of Meetup’s members? (2) Why are members using Meetup? (3) How often do members participate in face-to-face social Meetups? (4) Are there barriers to participating in Meetups? (5) How has participating in these leisure experiences impacted member’s lives? (6) What types of activities are accessible using Meetup? and (7) How satisfied are members in regards to using the Internet to meet social needs?

Selection of Participants

Participants were recruited by contacting several local Meetup organizers by way of email. Members were directed, through communication from their respective organizers, to the online survey and asked to voluntarily participate in the survey. Specifically, the organizers of the following groups were contacted directly: Downtown/Midtown, Sacramento Sufi, A1 Sushi Lovers, True Yoga for Everyone, Love
Works! Keys to Successful Relationships, Sacramento Trailmix, Sacramento Hiking Meetup Group, This Year I Will Be My Most Divine Self, Eclectic Spirituality, Living the Secret, An Eclectic Taste, Fat Tire Cycling, A Bunch of Fanatics for Fun, People Who Really Build Things!, Addicted to Adventure and the Sacramento Drum Circle. The survey link was also posted on the researcher’s Facebook page as well as on the Meetup fan page of Facebook. The above named Meetup groups were chosen because they include a variety of recreation and leisure area topics. These Meetups comprise the areas of social interaction, physical development, intellectual learning, spiritual growth, active lifestyle, adventure, creativity, culture, civic engagement and personal enjoyment. These types of groups may provide some understanding as to which manner of Meetup groups are popularly chosen by members and which types of groups could be impacting areas of meeting human needs.

*Confidentiality*

The sole method of gathering personal data was the use of SurveyMonkey.com. The use of Survey Monkey ensured that the surveyants were provided with an effective level of confidentiality by encrypting data. Survey Monkey offers enhanced security options called Secure Sockets Layer (SSL) encryption. SSL is a protocol of protection that sends and receives documents privately, using the Internet. The SSL encryption captured the surveyants’ responses and hid their IP addresses.

Participants of the survey were asked to provide their consent by answering a question on the first page of the survey, agreeing to the level of confidentiality that Survey Monkey was providing. This voluntary survey met the standards maintained by
Data Collection

An invitation was sent to Meetup members through their organizers (see Appendix A). Respondents were directed to the online link https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Meetup_Survey. The survey was available for participants from May 4, 2010 to May 16, 2010. There were 156 respondents, of which 1 respondent disagreed to the terms of confidentiality on the first question. Using Survey Monkey’s filtering tool, this respondent was filtered out of the survey responses.

Survey Instrument

The questions that were formulated were specifically related to the work of Sherbourne and Stewart (1991, as cited in Leung & Lee, 2005). Sherbourne and Stewart described the various types of functional support that can be derived through social contact. The survey questions were developed by merging the concepts of social support by Cobb, the functional components of social support by Sherbourne and Stewart and Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs. The multiple choice answers were designed to generate an understanding of the levels of support that participants may be experiencing as a result of using Meetup as a leisure tool as well as to learn which types of leisure experiences are most attended.

The various types of support include; emotional support, instrumental support, information support, affectionate support and social companionship. The researcher’s
basic premise was that Meetup meets human needs through providing face-to-face leisure and social experiences. The survey instrument is included as Appendix B.
Chapter 4

RESULTS

Meetup is an Internet tool that provides people with a means to move from face-to-screen leisure to face-to-face leisure experiences. This study utilized a non-experimental descriptive research method (Berg & Latin, 2008). The survey questions were developed to extrapolate information regarding participants’ personal experience and the subsequent impacts in relationship to their desired goal for joining Meetup. A descriptive study was chosen because there was a lack of empirical research related to using the Internet to build face-to-face leisure participation.

**Research Variables**

**Demographic Variables**

The demographic variables extrapolated through the online survey included information about participant’s age, ethnicity, gender, income level as well as participants’ motivations for joining Meetup. These variables were measured by questions numbered two through seven on the demographic survey (see Appendix B).

**Model Variables**

Several conceptual models guided the researcher’s development of questions. They are; Maslow’s Theory of Motivation and Human Needs (1968), Putnam’s (2000) investigation into our physical and civic well-being, and Sherbourne and Stewart’s (1991) functional components of social support.

Maslow’s work provides a framework of human growth and the development toward self-actualization. Putman’s work highlights the importance of social contact for
building community. Sherbourne and Stewart categorize five areas of functional support; *emotional* support which involves caring, love, and sympathy; *instrumental* support represents material aid or behavioral assistance and is referred to by many as tangible support; *information* support is the offering of guidance, advice and information; *affectionate* support includes expressions of love and affection; *positive social interaction* (social companionship) which involves spending time with others in leisure and recreational activities. These variables were measured by questions five through seven and nine through eleven of the survey (see Appendix B).

The following tables provide information about the sampling of Meetup members and the demographic and motivational responses.

**Table 4.1 Age**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Female Response Count</th>
<th>Male Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 to 25</td>
<td>3.2%</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 to 35</td>
<td>23.2%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 to 40</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 to 55</td>
<td>47.1%</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56 to 65</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66+</td>
<td>2.6%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>answered question</strong></td>
<td><strong>105</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 4.1, the sample consisted of 105 (67.7%) female respondents and 50 (32.3%) male respondents. Of the 105 female respondents, 64.4% of them were between the ages of 41 to 55. There were no female respondents in the 66+ range on the survey. Of the male respondents, 52% of them were between the ages of 41 to 55. There were no male respondents in the 18 to 25 range on the survey. The majority of
respondents, both men and women, were between the ages of 41 and 55 (47.1%) or 73 participants. Gender is listed in Table 4.3.

**Table 4.2 Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Native American</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alaska Native</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White (Non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino American</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(East) Indian</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 4.2 the survey revealed that there was a predominance of White (Non-Hispanic) participants. Specifically 125 of the 155 respondents (80.6%).

**Table 4.3 Gender**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>67.7%</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a predominance of female respondents to the survey. Though information about gender was gathered, it cannot be ascertained from this if more females participate in Meetup or if the survey was simply more attractive to females.
Table 4.4 Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 to $25,000</td>
<td>16.8%</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$26,000 to $50,000</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$51,000 to $85,000</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$86,000 to $125,000</td>
<td>19.4%</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$126,000 to $200,000</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$201,000 and up</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 155

In terms of income, the majority of respondents 32.3% (50) were at the income bracket $51K to $85K annually, with 27.7% (43) earning $26K to $50K annually.

Table 4.5: Motivation Factor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>as an individual</td>
<td>91.6%</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>as a couple</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with a friend</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with my family</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 155

As seen in Table 4.5, the survey revealed that the majority of participants joined Meetup as an individual. Specifically 142 respondents of the 155 users sought out leisure experiences and made strides toward building social capital by utilizing Meetup’s social networking site.
Table 4.6: Reason For Joining

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to reduce boredom</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to develop friendships &amp; meet people</td>
<td>89.7%</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to meet people of the opposite sex</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for relaxation</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to escape routine</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical fitness or exercise</td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to learn something (intellectual stimulation)</td>
<td>41.9%</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to foster creativity</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to obtain social status</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to teach &amp; share my skills and knowledge</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional development (economic interest/networking for business)</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to challenge my skills</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be part of a social community</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 155

Other responses indicated:

1. to find vegetarian people
2. reduce stress
3. to interact with new people (I have worked with the same people for ten years with extremely low turnover and no interaction with the public)
4. spiritual quest
5. I moved to a new city and wanted to meet people
6. meet people with similar interests
7. meet different people other than current social circle
8. to find new activities around town
9. to give something back to the world.
As reflected in Table 4.6, the survey revealed that Meetup participants’ main reason for joining were to *develop friendships and meet people*; as stated by 139 respondents (89.7%), as well as to *be part of a social community*; 101 respondents (65.2%). This information is directly focused toward the building of social capital as heralded by Putnam (p. 410). Respondents had a wide range of reasons for participation. Choices for participation ranged from a desire for social capital, personal development as well as inner fulfillment. Of the responses in the “other” category, 5 responses addressed social contact as a reason for joining. This would increase the percentage of those joining to gain social contact to 92.9% (144). These motivational outcomes correspond to Maslow’s Hierarchy and his understanding of human growth and development.

**Table 4.7 Attendance**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How often do you participate?</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x per week</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x per week</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x per week</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1x per month</td>
<td>29.7%</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2x per month</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3x per month</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

answered question 145

skipped question 10
Table 4.7 reveals that participation at Meetups range from; *not attending at all* to *daily attendance*. The majority of participants stated that they attend 1 time per month; 29.7% (43).

**Table 4.8 Barriers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>location (distance)</td>
<td>49.7%</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>transportation</td>
<td>8.4%</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>desired topic not available</td>
<td>17.4%</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>financial constraints</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time (conflict in schedule)</td>
<td>72.3%</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>family obligations</td>
<td>18.1%</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lack of confidence</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quality of experience</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*answered question* 155

Table 4.8 reveals that there are a variety of barriers to participation at Meetups. The main barrier stated was time/conflict in schedule, by 72.3% of the surveyants. The second most common reason for non-participation was location/distance.
### Table 4.9: Impact on Areas of Life

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Outstanding (5)</th>
<th>Very Good (4)</th>
<th>Good (3)</th>
<th>Not So Good (2)</th>
<th>Needs Improvement (1)</th>
<th>Not Applicable</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social relationships (interpersonal/friendships)</td>
<td>21.4% (33)</td>
<td>33.1% (51)</td>
<td>37.7% (58)</td>
<td>3.9% (6)</td>
<td>2.6% (4)</td>
<td>1.3% (2)</td>
<td>154</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical (body/health)</td>
<td>9.6% (14)</td>
<td>21.9% (32)</td>
<td>41.1% (69)</td>
<td>2.7% (4)</td>
<td>6.2% (9)</td>
<td>18.5% (27)</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service</td>
<td>5.6% (8)</td>
<td>9.8% (14)</td>
<td>34.3% (49)</td>
<td>4.9% (7)</td>
<td>9.6% (14)</td>
<td>35.7% (51)</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual (knowledge/learning)</td>
<td>8.9% (13)</td>
<td>25.0% (38)</td>
<td>45.9% (67)</td>
<td>6.8% (10)</td>
<td>3.4% (5)</td>
<td>8.9% (13)</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness of surroundings</td>
<td>11.7% (17)</td>
<td>28.3% (41)</td>
<td>40.7% (69)</td>
<td>4.8% (7)</td>
<td>2.1% (3)</td>
<td>12.4% (18)</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>9.0% (13)</td>
<td>17.9% (26)</td>
<td>27.6% (40)</td>
<td>7.6% (11)</td>
<td>5.5% (8)</td>
<td>32.4% (47)</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic (new job/networks)</td>
<td>1.4% (2)</td>
<td>4.3% (6)</td>
<td>18.4% (26)</td>
<td>8.5% (12)</td>
<td>13.5% (19)</td>
<td>53.9% (76)</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*answered question 155  
skipped question 0*
As seen in Table 4.9, the principle components of experience were ranked using a 5-point scale with an added category of not applicable:

(1) = needs improvement
(2) = not so good
(3) = good
(4) = very good
(5) = outstanding

Not applicable

Responses revealed that 142 of the 155 respondents perceived social relationships as good 37.7% (58), very good 33.1% (51) or outstanding 21.4% (33). When these three rankings are combined a number of one hundred thirty (130) respondents rated social relationships as Good (3), Very Good (4) or Outstanding (5). This expresses a significant impact to social capital as an impact on the lives of participants.

Table 4.9 also shows that surveyants rated Physical Body benefits as good 41.1% (60), very good 21.9% (32) and 9.6% (13) outstanding. In the area of Intellectual (knowledge and learning) impacts, surveyants rated this area as good 45.9% (67), very good 26% (38) and outstanding 8.9% (13). Areas of impact span a variety of personal experiences and these ‘areas’ also correspond to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs.
Table 4.10 Rate Your Primary Meetup

Meetup Benefits Analysis

Rate your own experiences with your primary meetup group that you participate in.

type of meetup

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
<th>Spiritual/metaphysical</th>
<th>Active/adventure</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Civic engagement</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ratings</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

rating

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Outstanding (5)</th>
<th>Very good (4)</th>
<th>Good (3)</th>
<th>Not so good (2)</th>
<th>Needs Improvement (1)</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ratings</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.10 was designed to extrapolate information about the primary Meetup group that participants were attending and the quality of their experience. Type of Meetup groups included; social, physical, learning, enjoyment, spiritual/metaphysical, active/adventure, cultural, technical, civic engagement and other. Respondents stated that their main leisure group was social, 48% (74). Over 90% of those surveyed stated their experience in the face-to-face leisure to be Good (13%), Very Good (48%) and Outstanding (38%).
### Meetup Benefits Analysis

Rate your experiences with your secondary meetup group that you participate in.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>type of meetup</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Physical</th>
<th>Learning</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
<th>Spiritual/metaphysical</th>
<th>Active/adventure</th>
<th>Cultural</th>
<th>Technical</th>
<th>Civic engagement</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ratings</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>rating</th>
<th>Outstanding (5)</th>
<th>Very good (4)</th>
<th>Good (3)</th>
<th>Not so good (2)</th>
<th>Needs Improvement (1)</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ratings</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Name of Meetup group that you are rating

- answered question 115
- skipped question 40

---

Table 4.11 Rate a Second Meetup You Attend
Table 4.11 represents participants who are active in more than one group. This question was a repeat of the previous question and the purpose of this question was to determine how many respondents participated in more than one group and to learn if there was a dominant second type of leisure participation. Responses indicated that the social category of leisure participation was dominant 27.7% (43).

Table **4.12**: Personal Experiences (Participant’s Perceptions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What are some of your personal experiences in participating in your Meetup groups? (mark all that apply)</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excitement</td>
<td>56.1%</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge gained</td>
<td>59.4%</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civic engagement</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boredom</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social contact</td>
<td>85.2%</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td>43.2%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills acquired and honed</td>
<td>32.3%</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**answered question** 155  
**skipped question** 0

Other responses:

1. Friendships gained
2. Challenge of getting and staying in shape
3. Learned about events that I never knew existed
4. Great friends!
5. Meeting People, new to area.
6. Meet interesting people I would not have met otherwise
7. Increased confidence & social skills
8. Physical Exercise
9. Changes you life for the better, very amazing

Table 4.12 shows that 85.2% (132) participants rated that they experienced social contact at their Meetup and that 43.2% (67) also rated belongingness as a personal experience result of attending Meetups. Within the “other” category, 5 respondents made comments that would be categorized within the area of social contact such as; friendships gained, great friends, meeting new people and met interesting people. This would increase the percentage of social contact to 88.4% (137).

Table 4.13 Rate Meetup as a Leisure Tool

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Answer Options</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding (5)</td>
<td>42.6%</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above Average (4)</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (3)</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below Average (2)</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor (1)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don't have enough information to evaluate</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13 reveals that participants rate their face-to-face leisure experiences with Meetup as Above Average (40.6%) and Outstanding (42.6%). Responses here show that this mass media tool for developing social contact is highly rated as effective by participants.
Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As referenced by Maslow’s research into the psychology of human development, the first four levels of the Hierarchy of Human Needs are the necessary building blocks that an individual requires in order to move up the Hierarchy, toward self-actualization. When looking at the impact to Meetup participants, the data revealed that face-to-face leisure through Meetup was found to meet the human need for social contact. Meetup members stated that a main reason for joining was to meet people and develop friendships (139) 90%. The data revealed that a desire for replenishing social contact was evident and prevalent by users of Meetup. Meetup participants were also seeking to meet esteem needs and self-actualization needs as revealed by the desired outcomes. Surveyants stated that they desired social status, professional development, physical fitness, fostering creativity as well as challenging personal skills.

The data reveals that social contact is a motivational factor as well as an experiential outcome of participation in face-to-face leisure through Meetup. Relating this data to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, the survey reveals that participants are obtaining a sense of belongingness (Level 3), they are being provided with a sense of productivity (Level 4) and they are experiencing meaning (Level 5). Participants are pursuing meeting their needs through making advances in the physical, social, emotional and spiritual domains of life. As stated by Edginton et al. “an optimal lifestyle is the integration and balance of the physical, mental, emotional, intellectual, social and
spiritual aspects of a person” (p. 12). Here the work of Maslow is expressed also as an outcome in the field of Leisure Services.

In relationship to the work of Sherbourne and Stewart (1991), four of the five areas of functional support were found to be present for participants. The personal experiences of participants revealed that participants perceived gains to; 1) emotional support; 2) informational support; 3) affectionate support and; 4) positive social interaction. The area of instrumental support was not represented by the survey choices.

**Implications for Future Research**

The researcher recommends further research into the area of face-to-screen social leisure activities in relation to face-to-face social leisure that is obtained by Meetup members. Is there a difference between face-to-screen and face-to-face? Are human needs being met in both face-to-screen and face-to-face social leisure experiences?

The researcher recommends further research in the area of Barriers to Participation. The survey revealed that participants experienced barriers in many areas including; time conflict (72.3%), location/distance of leisure activity (49.7%) and financial constraints (22.6%). It is suggested to gain an understanding of these barriers as well as to investigate possible internal barriers to participation.

**Implications for Parks and Recreation**

Meetup has grown to extend globally and it has over 7 million members. Evidence of the far reaching development of Meetup reveals that individuals are utilizing the Internet to increase their social leisure experiences. This mainstream technological tool has the potential to rocket Parks and Recreation to a new dimension. The Meetup
phenomenon reveals that people are not only accessing leisure activities, they are creating leisure experiences, leisure based interest groups and building community involvement. Leisure professionals should access this well of self-actualization and collaborate to further build programs that meet the needs of community members.

**Summary Tables**

Table 5.1 summarizes this information as related to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs and Question six of the survey: *What are your main reasons for joining Meetup?* Information gathered shows that participants are experiencing meeting belongingness needs, esteem needs and self-actualization needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs</th>
<th>Main Reasons For Joining</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td>to develop friendships and meet people</td>
<td>139</td>
<td>89.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to meet people of the opposite sex</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>38.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to be part of a social community</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>65.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>physical fitness and exercise</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>45.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to learn something</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>41.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>for social status</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to teach and share my skills</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>17.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>professional development</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>to foster creativity</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>23.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>to challenge my skills</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>16.10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As seen in Table 5.2, 34.3% (49) participants rank Community Service as Good, 9.8% (14), Very Good and 5.6% (8) Outstanding. Table 5.2 also shows that Spiritual and Intellectual levels of perceived experience are ranked by 51% (79) and 76% (118) members respectively.

**Table 5.2 Factor Analysis of Maslow’s Hierarchy of Human Needs**

Rate the area of life where you experience an impact (mark all that apply)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Social Relationships (interpersonal/friendships)</th>
<th>Good n</th>
<th>Very Good n</th>
<th>Outstanding n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 3</td>
<td></td>
<td>58</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 4</td>
<td>Community Service Economic (new job/networks)</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 5</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intellectual</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3 represents the functional components of social support as outlined by Sherbourne & Stewart (1991). The area of *instrumental* support was not represented in the personal experience areas because response items on the survey did not represent this category of support.
Table 5.3 Question 12: Personal Experiences (Participant Perceptions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Functional Support</th>
<th>Personal Experiences</th>
<th>Response Count</th>
<th>Response Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Freedom</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>25.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>70.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excitement</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>56.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>43.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>59.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>32.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>Social Contact</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>85.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belongingness</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>43.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Social Interaction</td>
<td>Civic Engagement</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Social Contact</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>85.20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.3 shows that 43.2% (67) of participants perceived belongingness as a personal outcome of participating in Meetup’s face-to-face leisure groups. Esteem needs as shown by 59% (92) surveyants who rated that they obtained knowledge and 32% (50) who rated that they gained skills (see Table 5.3). This corresponds to Sherbourne and Stewart (1991) and functional support in the area of Information support. Level 4 needs of esteem, status, responsibility and reputation are being experienced as indicated by the areas of physical fitness, learning something new, social status, teaching, and professional development. For the purposes of this representation, belongingness is listed under both Emotional and Affectionate support.
APPENDIX A

Invitation to Survey

Dear Meetup Participant,

I am working to complete my thesis in Recreation Administration at CSUS. My thesis is on the use of Internet networking to gain access to leisure experiences. I would appreciate your participation in my online survey. The survey will take approximately ten minutes of your time. All information is confidential. The survey is located at this address:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Meetup_Survey

Thank you for assisting me in completing my Master's research.

Peia Edgerly
APPENDIX B

Demographic Survey

Dear Meetup Participant:

The purpose of this survey is to compile demographic information about the Leisure experiences of Meetup members. There are 13 questions, which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

By completing this survey, you are agreeing to participate in this research project.

Your responses will be kept confidential to the degree permitted by the technology used. However, no absolute guarantees can be given for the confidentiality of electronic data. After completing this survey, the researcher (myself) will be unable to remove anonymous data from the compiled database, should the participant wish to withdraw it.

Thank you for taking the time to support my thesis completion by providing your leisure experiences and information about how Meetup may impact your life.

Sincerely,
Peia Edgerly

1. I have read the above and understand the terms.
   - I agree
   - I disagree

Body of Survey:

1. What is your age range?
   - 18 to 25
   - 26 to 35
   - 36 to 40
   - 41 to 55
   - 56 to 65
2. What is your ethnicity?
   - Native American
   - Alaskan Native
   - Asian American
   - African American
   - Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   - White (non-Hispanic)
   - Hispanic or Latino American
   - Middle Eastern
   - (East) Indian
   - Other (please specify)

3. What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female

4. What is your current income level?
   - 0 to $25,000
   - $26,000 to $50,000
   - $51,000 to $85,000
   - $86,000 to $125,000
   - $126,000 to $200,000
   - $201,000 and up
5. How did you come to join Meetup?
   - As an individual
   - As a couple
   - With a friend
   - With my family
   - Other (please specify)

6. What is your main reason for joining?
   - To reduce boredom
   - To develop friendships and meet people
   - To meet people of the opposite sex
   - For relaxation
   - To escape routine
   - Physical fitness or exercise
   - To learn something (intellectual stimulation)
   - To foster creativity
   - To obtain social status
   - To teach and share my skills and knowledge
   - Professional development (economic interest/networking for business)
   - To challenge my skills
   - To be part of a social community
   - Other (please specify)
7. How often do you participate?
   - None
   - 1x per week
   - 2x per week
   - 3x per week
   - 1x per month
   - 2x per month
   - 3x per month
   - Other (please specify)

8. Are there barriers to your participation in Meetup groups? (mark all that apply)
   - Location (distance)
   - Transportation
   - Desired topic not available
   - Financial constraints
   - Time (conflict in schedule)
   - Family obligations
   - Lack of confidence
   - Quality of experience
   - None
   - Other (please specify)

9. Rate the areas of your life where you experience an impact (because of attending meetups).
- Social relationships (interpersonal/friendships)
- Physical (body/health)
- Community service
- Intellectual (learning/knowledge)
- Awareness of surroundings
- Spiritual
- Economic (new job/networks)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outstanding (5)</th>
<th>Very good (4)</th>
<th>Good (3)</th>
<th>Not so good (2)</th>
<th>Needs improvement (1)</th>
<th>Not applicable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

10. Rate your own experiences with your primary Meetup group that you participate in.

- Type of meetup
  1. Social
  2. Physical
  3. Learning
  4. Enjoyment
  5. Spiritual/metaphysical
  6. Active/adventure
  7. Cultural
  8. Technical
  9. Civic engagement
10. Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Not so good</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Rate your own experiences with your primary Meetup group that you participate in.

- Type of meetup
  1. Social
  2. Physical
  3. Learning
  4. Enjoyment
  5. Spiritual/metaphysical
  6. Active/adventure
  7. Cultural
  8. Technical
  9. Civic engagement
  10. Other

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outstanding</th>
<th>Very good</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Not so good</th>
<th>Needs improvement</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. What are some of your personal experiences in participating in your Meetup groups? (mark all that apply)

- Freedom
- Satisfaction
- Excitement
- Knowledge gained
- Civic engagement
- Boredom
- Frustration
- Social contact
- Belongingness
- Skills acquired and honed
- None of the above
- Other (please specify)

13. How do you rate the overall quality of Meetup as a Leisure tool?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outstanding</td>
<td>(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above average</td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Below average</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t have enough info to evaluate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REFERENCES


Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs table taken from here online September 28, 2010:


Meetup at a glance (2005). Taken online May 25, 2010:


Survey Monkey online survey posted at [https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Meetup_Survey](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/Meetup_Survey)

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