

R3 AND THE OUTDOOR RECREATION ADOPTION MODEL



INTRODUCTION

Participation rates in many outdoor activities are changing. Demographic changes, competing hobbies and interests, and shifts in popular American culture have all contributed to the decline in participation rates of several outdoor pastimes. Currently, champions of the outdoor recreation community are focusing their efforts to strategically increase participation in hunting, angling, and the shooting sports through a national movement referred to as “R3.”

R3 (recruitment, retention and reactivation) describes everything from a specific program to an organization’s entire strategic vision to engage and serve customers.

The goals of R3 efforts are simple and two-fold:

- 1) Create new participants in an outdoor activity
- 2) Increase participation rates of current outdoor participants

True R3 efforts focus on the needs of individuals and the process required to ensure their adoption of, and continued participation, in a new outdoor activity. This outdoor-specific adoption process is referred to as the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model (ORAM), and is based on more than fifty years of research documenting why and how certain activities or ideas are adopted by people and cultures. The ORAM illustrates, in a linear fashion, the steps an individual moves through as they learn about, try and then adopt a new activity or behavior and can be used to understand the difference between recruitment, retention and reactivation.

By understanding the ORAM and the processes critical to an individual’s adoption of an activity, R3 program managers and organizations can build strategies that effectively engage individuals in outdoor recreation and increase the reach and impact of their R3 efforts. To learn more about the ORAM and R3, join the professional R3 community at

www.nationalR3plan.com.



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DEFINITION OF R3

While there is no formal definition of recruitment, retention and reactivation, each can be described, in relation to their role in the ORAM, as follows.

RECRUITMENT

The focus of recruitment efforts is engaging new participants in an outdoor activity, and spans the awareness, interest and trial stages. Recruitment efforts include those designed to enhance exposures and reduce barriers to initial participation and trial.

RETENTION

Retention efforts focus on those individuals who have experienced a trial, made the decision to continue pursuing the activity, and/or may have been participating in the activity for some time. Thus, they have been “recruited.” These individuals have likely begun or completed forming a self-identity that embraces the activity and may or may not face multiple challenges to continued participation.

REACTIVATION

Reactivation describes the process in which the individual lapses in their participation for a period of time due to a variety of reasons. Reactivation efforts focus on providing a targeted suite of support and resources designed to help reactivate and retain an individual in a particular activity.



The Steps of the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model

RECRUITMENT



AWARENESS

The first step of an individual's path to adopting an activity is for them to become aware of it as something relevant to them. On a personal level, as this awareness is established, an individual determines if this new activity is interesting enough to make them want to learn more about it. They may not have considered this activity as an option for them in the past, so introductory programs or informational resources that cultivate their interest and motivation are necessary and are extremely useful in this stage.



INTEREST

An awareness of a new activity, if aligned with an individual's values and motivations, can ignite a personal interest as the individual begins to understand the activity and how it might fit with their lifestyle, identity and community. Fostering this interest through experiences catering to skill and knowledge development relevant to the activity (i.e. tasting game meat, target shooting with a firearm or bow, etc.) and appealing to their personal motivations, will build and increase the confidence needed for the individual to try the activity for the first time.



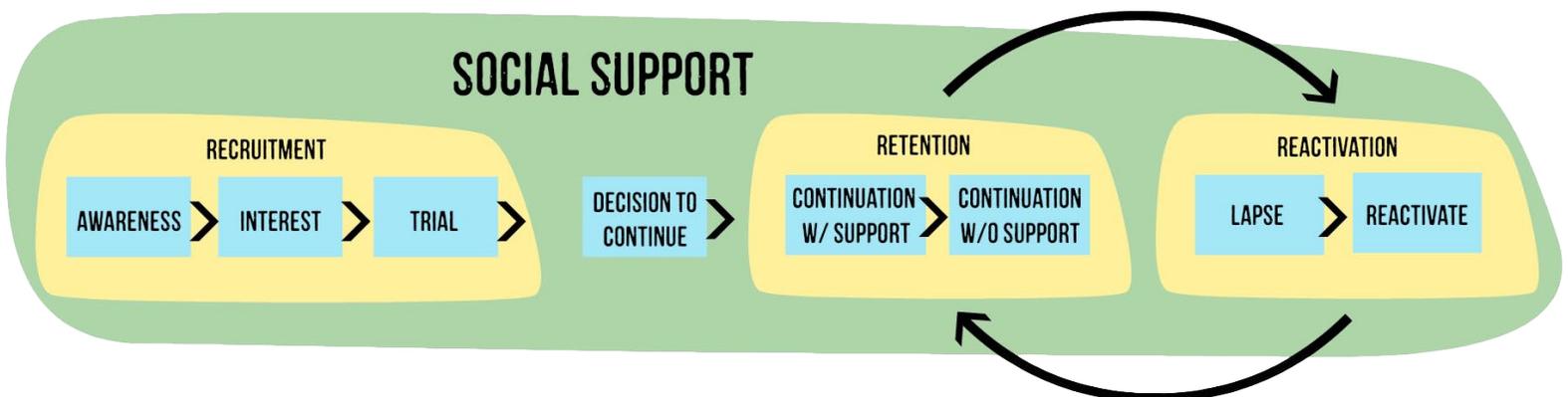
TRIAL

If an individual develops enough confidence in their ability to try the activity, and are personally motivated enough to do so, they may seek out a trial opportunity. For hunting, this frequently involves a mentored hunt. For target shooting, this simply involves some time at the range. Ultimately, this step provides the first opportunity for the individual to contrast their expectations, assumptions, and even hesitations with a personal experience. This new personal experience allows the individual to assess if this activity is, or is not, something they wish to continue.

DECISION TO CONTINUE:

This decision represents a solidification of an individual's opinion of the new activity they just tried. The trial of the activity either confirms (perhaps exceeds) their expectations or it disappoints them. The personal experience they gained in the previous step, and the potential self-identity that may have been challenged, provides the perspective necessary for them to decide if this new activity is for them or not. This decision to continue and the personal experience that drives it, separates the recruitment stage from the retention stage.

Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model



To learn more about the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model, watch a video found here: www.cahss.org/oram

The Steps of the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model

RETENTION



CONTINUATION WITH SUPPORT

For those that decide to continue, the next step is extremely critical. Some research indicates that an individual is more likely to desert the activity than adopt it if needed resources are limited or not available. In other words, if the new participant does not have support in the form of information, next steps, continued learning opportunities, or social support, they are more likely to drop out of the activity. Developing their confidence, skills, and motivation to participate following an individual's decision to continue should be top priorities for those implementing R3 efforts.



CONTINUATION WITHOUT SUPPORT

An individual who has moved to this step has, at some level, accepted the activity as a part of their lifestyle. Participants have formed or adjusted their self identity to accept the activity as a part of what they do and perhaps who they are. While they still require resources and information, they are motivated enough to often find what they need. However, this is not to say that these individuals no longer need R3 efforts or interventions. Social support, new learning opportunities, and additional skills are important to their continued and increased participation. People's lives change and their participation in an activity are frequently impacted by competing priorities. This "Continuation Without Support" can last for varying amounts of time depending on the individual.

REACTIVATION



LAPSE

At any time during the "Continuation Without Support" stage, an individual can lapse. There are two types of lapse; short-term and long-term. Short-term lapses occur due to predictable life changes (i.e. going off to college, moving to a new state, having a child, etc.). R3 efforts that remind people why hunting and shooting sports are relevant to them, such as campaigns that provide reminders for license purchases or share updates on new hunting or target shooting information, are tactics that can be used to help reduce the duration or frequency of the short-term lapse. Long-term lapses often impact individuals who tried the activity but never found the next steps or resources they needed to continue, or individuals who were long-term participants, but stopped due to a significant life change (i.e. military service, loss of friends or family to go with, physical disability, etc.). Generally, a long-term lapse is harder for a participant to overcome.



REACTIVATE

In both short- and long-term lapses, R3 efforts by an organization or individual are usually needed to get a lapsed participant active again. These efforts are frequently different than those used in recruitment because by this point, an individual is far more invested in the activity than an individual just starting out. Those organizations or individuals working on reactivation issues need to recognize this difference and address the unique barriers facing those who have lapsed.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Elemental to the process of adopting a new activity or behavior is the presence of a social support network that encourages an individual's participation. If this support system is not in place, and the individual does not have a community that can provide a positive reinforcing environment, it is highly likely that they will not adopt the activity for the long term. Therefore, it is critical that R3 administrators incorporate or address this element in EVERY R3 strategy or tactic they implement, and ensure that a social network is available for that individual as they move through the adoption process.

Beyond the Model

APPLICATION OF THE MODEL

The ORAM can be extremely helpful to R3 practitioners in identifying where their efforts address a participant's progress through the adoption process, in developing more effective R3 strategies, and in implementing comprehensive R3 efforts. For example, if the majority of an organization's R3 efforts only provide hunting knowledge, skills, and a first trial, we might assume that the participants of those efforts are likely in need of "next steps" and additional resources to continue along in the process of becoming a hunter. Similarly, if an organization has no efforts targeting individuals who may have lapsed, their recruitment efforts may be limited in their long-term effectiveness as recruited or retained hunters continue to lapse over time. In these and other strategic applications, R3 practitioners can use the ORAM to "map" their efforts. This mapping process can help to identify where gaps may exist in their R3 efforts, to strategically link individual R3 efforts together, and to prioritize needs for the new R3 efforts and resources. By understanding these concepts, R3 practitioners will greatly improve the impact of their efforts to continue the outdoor heritage.

NATIONAL R3 COMMUNITY

The Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model is a core concept, serving as a foundation for many R3 efforts being implemented nationwide. To learn more about R3, the ORAM, and how other professionals are managing their R3 efforts, join the National R3 Community at www.nationalr3plan.com.

NATIONAL HUNTING AND SHOOTING SPORTS ACTION PLAN

The goal of many R3 efforts is to build a pathway that spans the entire Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model, allowing a participant to find an activity and then continue to become an avid participant. Generally, one organization does not have the resources or time to build a successful pathway by themselves. It will take the effort of many entities - state and federal fish and wildlife agencies, industry professionals and non-government organizations working together to build a pathway that successfully recruits, retains and reactivates participants in hunting and the shooting sports. For this reason, the Council to Advance Hunting and the Shooting Sports and the Wildlife Management Institute led an effort to develop a national strategy to help identify, coordinate, and align resources for national R3 efforts. The National Hunting and Shooting Sports Action Plan is the product of that effort. To learn more about the Plan and the related recommendations for R3 efforts, please visit www.nationalr3plan.com.



To learn to use the Outdoor Recreation Adoption Model to map R3 programs, watch a video found here: www.cahss.org/mapping-r3-efforts



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