University of Sunderland

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Customers Value Seeking Practices
in Public Sector Health and Fitness Clubs

Thesis Submitted by

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Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of

the Requirements of the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, Michael Cassop Thompson declare that this work has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

M Cassop Thompson

Customers Value Seeking Practices

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Michael Cassop-Thompson

ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with how customers seek value in public health and fitness clubs. Although the study of value takes many discursive avenues, value as *practices* are investigated in the present research. To establish the value seeking practices of public health and fitness club customers, data was collected via an ethnographic study. This involved the researcher attempting to view the practices of the public health and fitness club customers through their lens. Therefore, the researcher immersed himself in the study context for a period of five months as a participant observer. In addition, twenty in depth interviews with public health and fitness club customers where conducted. This combination of methods provided rich and detailed data for analysis. The data was viewed from an interpretive perspective and was subsequently coded using open, axial, and selective coding principles. The findings led to the identification of three key themes: practices concerning customers joining and committing to the health club, practices relating to the facilitation of customers performances within the health club, and the customers own visible performance practices. Within each broad theme, many sub-practices are identified and explained. The empirical data suggests that customers seek particular practices that give them value however these do not always match the provider's requirements. It is further suggested that disjuncture's between the customers and the providers practice could be viewed as the customer proposing practice for service development. Overall, the thesis extends existing research by providing new insights into customer's value seeking practices in public sector health and fitness clubs and proposes a new model of value practice as a means of service development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally, my family have been very understanding and supportive. I have spent most evenings and week-ends researching my topic. This has significantly impacted upon their lifestyle, but has the positive effect in that it provides a good example to my children concerning the importance of education and lifelong learning.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This introduction consists of seven main sections. Firstly, the research background is introduced. This contains essential underpinning information that heavily influenced the nature and form of the thesis. Secondly, the context for the present study is presented. Namely, the academic subject area within which the thesis is located. Thirdly, the significance of the health and fitness sector in terms of its development and importance to the service economy is identified. Fourthly, the research approach adopted for the thesis is discussed. Fifthly, the research aim, objectives, and research questions are explicated. Sixthly, the contributions to knowledge are documented. Finally, the structure of the thesis is explained.

1.2 Research Background

This thesis is the culmination of almost ten years work. The original thesis as conceived at the inception of the research was concerned with the evaluation of service quality. Primarily, the research questions were related to identifying and modelling the key determinants of service quality in public health and fitness clubs. This was to address an idea by Gronroos (1990, p.35) that suggested:

"When the service provider understands how the services will be evaluated by the users, it will be possible to identify how to manage these evaluations and how to influence them in a desired direction."

To understand how service was evaluated by customers, research questions were developed to establish how customers of public health and fitness clubs evaluated service quality. The importance of addressing this issue was that service quality was deemed then, as it is now, a key factor in influencing customer's service quality evaluations. These are purported to lead to customer satisfaction and loyalty. In addition, the effects of customers positive service evaluations were claimed to result in organisational advantages (Pantouvakis, 2010). These can be broadly identified as: gaining a competitive advantage (Athanasopoulou, 2008; Ladhari, 2009; Durvasula et al., 2011), fostering customer loyalty (Bennet and Bove, 2002; Reicheld and Sasser, 1990), ensuring profitability (Buzzell and Gale, 1987; Hallowell, 1996; Hesket, et al., 1994), and encouraging positive customer attitudes and behaviour towards

the organisation (Chen, 2007). Therefore, how customers evaluated service quality in public health and fitness clubs as a research topic appeared to be suitable selection.

The original research progressed as intended and after a suitable period of reviewing the service quality literature and developing research questions and a methodology, the first phase of two rounds of data collection commenced. The research approach at that time can be generally categorised as being based upon realist, objectivist, positivist, and primarily quantitative methods. During the first phase of the data collection, customers were interviewed in an attempt to generate insights into aspects of service quality they deemed important when they used public health and fitness clubs. The qualitative interviews were to provide the raw data for building a conceptual model of public health and fitness club service quality. This phase of the research although using qualitative data would justify their collection and analysis by claiming mixed methods within the realist paradigm (see for example, Johnson and Christenson, 2012). This model was to be scientifically tested using a second round of quantitative data collection and analysis methods. This approach to model building is commonly used in service quality research (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry 1985; 1988; Tsan 1999). As it turned out, this first phase of data collection was to be a watershed moment for the research for this thesis.

As the data collection unfolded the responses of customers did not mesh with the realist, objectivistic, positivistic approach to the research. Indeed, customers responses appeared to socially constructed and influenced by a great many factors not addressed by realist paradigms. Of course, the possibility exists that this was simply a failure of the research. For example, the interviews where the problem began to materialise could be downplayed as the incorrect techniques applied to elicit the desired responses. Zikmund and Babin (2010, pp. 475-477; 486) explain at length how "*trained*" "*skilled*" "*specialist*" interviewers must elicit responses by "*probing for the answers*". They claim that this will evoke, and help clarify answers, and allow the research participant to produce a "*deeper response*". Bryman (2010) appears to agree, he views the collection of analysable data to be an artefact of the appropriate collection methods. These views however lack an exploration of the alternative more interpretive approaches to data collection and analysis, and I began to be increasingly uneasy regarding the realist research paradigm I had initially adopted. Simultaneous to this data collection dilemma, I was becoming more aware of literature that questioned realist paradigms. Through extensive reading of other researchers who had encountered similar difficulties to mine, I began to doubt the ability of a realist ontology to provide worthwhile

research insights. This is best illustrated by considering the work of Crawford (1995) and O'Shea (2000). Although writing about overhearing the gender and language conversations of individuals, Crawford (1995) found that these interactions did not fit into neat categories suggested by existing research:

"Increasingly I began to feel that research on gender and talk needed to be reframed and reformulated" (Crawford, 1995, p.2).

O'Shea (2000) also found that the conventional realist research methods he was using for his Ph.D thesis became problematic. The primary data he was collecting did not appear to be relevant in his research area. Ultimately, after many years work he discarded his realist mode of research for a hermeneutic approach. Others have found similar difficulties. For example, Gummerus (2011, p.6) writing her thesis concerning customer value commented:

I grew increasingly uneasy about the ability of quantitative techniques to reveal what was really going on……I felt that measurement of certain predetermined aspects could not reveal how customers experienced value"

Just as Crawford (1995), O'Shea (2000), and Gummerus (2011) discovered, the present research found - whilst using the traditional dominant realist paradigm - that the world and social life within it, may be more difficult to understand than first appearances suggest. Therefore, the researcher started to consider alternatives to the realist paradigm.

The result of the original research's failure to collect data suitable for eventual theory building and testing led to the researcher considering how knowledge is conceived, accumulated, and disseminated. Ultimately, this resulted in forays into ontology and epistemology. This resulted in a fruitful immersion into philosophical literature that continues to the present day. More practically, this journey has subsequently produced a very different thesis to the one originally envisaged at the start of the research. Therefore, the present thesis adopts a socially constructed, interpretive, ethnographic research paradigm. This sits more comfortably with the researchers' experience of the research literature and the empirical evidence encountered by the researcher during the entire research process.

1.3 Locating the Thesis

The thesis - as originally intended - remains located in the academic subject of marketing. Marketing is now an established subject area which has developed both consistently and discursively over the last one hundred years (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Hollander et al. 2005; Ambler, 2006). The consistent aspects of marketing are claims that it can be applied to a diverse range of activities including those falling under the rubric of, for profit and not for profit, organisations (Kotler and Levy, 1969; Brassington and Pettitt, 2006), it can be considered a scientific endeavour (Peter and Olsen, 1983), it is concerned with winning and keeping customers, it is customer centric, and it is established both academically within the educational sectors and pragmatically within the business world (Hunt, 2011). The discursive aspects relate to views that contemporary marketing as not being relevant to sectors such as social causes, sport, the public sector, industry, and experiences. In particular, service marketers of the 1960's, 1970's, and 1980's felt compelled to emancipate themselves from what they saw as the constraints of goods dominant marketing (Shostack, 1977). That is, marketing based on *"neo classical economics"* (Vargo and Lusch, 2011, p.1306). Early marketers such as: Regan (1963), Judd (1964), Rathmell (1966; 1974), Shostack (1977) Thomas (1978) Bateson (1977) and Berry (1980) viewed services marketing as fundamentally different to traditional marketing. This notion was based upon services being viewed as having different fundamental characteristics than goods. These differences were intangibility, inseparability, heterogeneity, and perishability. This resulted in service marketers developing their own definitions (Gummesson, 1987), classifications (Lovelock, 1983), and service design and management systems. In particular, much work from this early period of services marketing developed the areas of service quality and service satisfaction as major research specialism's within the own right.

Fragmentation into sub-disciplines to address the short comings of general marketing is not only applicable to service marketing, but also to other areas within the marketing domain. In fact, there remains little within the overall marketing domain that has not fragmented into specialised sub-domains (Wilkie and Moore, 2003). Although this may result in new and interesting avenues for research, it also results in a discursive subject area that has little relevance to either academics or practitioners as a means to apply marketing. The subject area is in need of a unifying concept to provide a nexus for reconciling the disciplines fragmentation.

Developing a unifying concept could be an exciting development for marketing. Contemporary value researchers are attempting to place the concept of value at the forefront of marketing as this unifying concept (Woodhall, 2003; Brock Smith and Colgate 2007; Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007)**.** This is claimed as being a concept around which marketing can coalesce (Boksberger and Melsen, 2011; Ruiz et al., 2008). Notable examples of research in this area includes of the work of: Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2008; 2010), Voima, et al., (2010), Edvardsson et al., (2011), Gummerus (2010; 2011), Gummesson (2008), Korkman (2006), Korkman et al., (2010), and one of the pioneers of service marketing Gronroos, (2006; 2008a; 2008b; 2011). The change of emphasis towards value as a unifying concept is typified by the American Marketing Associations current definition of marketing that has evolved from:

"Marketing is the process of planning and executing conception, pricing, promotion and distribution of goods, ideas and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational goals." (American Marketing Association, 1985 cited in American Marketing Association Press Release, 2008, p.1).

to its current form which stresses the value centric nature of contemporary marketing

"Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large" (American Marketing Association, 2007 cited in American Marketing Association Press Release, 2008, p.1).

Marketing has clearly moved from a service quality/service satisfaction focus to a value focus. Gummerus (2011) highlighted this very point in explaining why her Ph.D thesis took value as the focus of her research. She felt that although quality had been one of the main focal points of service marketing study, the recent surge of interest in value had demonstrated that this was the key concept for study at this juncture (Wikstrom et al., 2010). For Gummerus (2011) quality has been replaced by the broader notion of value in contemporary marketing. Interestingly, Christian Gronroos one of the original pioneers of service marketing and service quality is now prolific in value research (see for example: Gronroos, 2006; 2008a; 2008b; 2009; 2010). Others researchers share the view that value is the key marketing research concept (see for example: Vargo and Lusch; 2004; 2008; Gummesson et al., 2011; Sanchez et al., 2009; Korkman, 2006). This is the view adopted by the present thesis.

1.4 The Economic Value of the Health and Fitness Sector

The areas covered in the present research are important topics for study. The value of the service sector is that in Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, services account for more than two thirds of economic output (Ng et al., 2007). In addition, the sector is of greater significance to these economies than physical goods (Fernandes, 2008; Korda and Snoj, 2010). In central Asia and Eastern Europe, the service sector accounts for almost half of all output (Fernandes 2008). Overall, the service economy is claimed to be the new economy, where not only economic change has occurred, but also developments such as technological and social change (Lundvall, 2001; Ng, Maull, and Smith 2009). Whether these movements are beneficial or detrimental from a holistic view point are left for discussion elsewhere (see for example, Buera and Kaboski, 2009).

According to the KeyNote Leisure Outside the Home Market Report (2010) the UK leisure sector saw consumers spending approximately £96.4bn on leisure related activities in 2009. This included both inside and outside the home endeavours. Of course, this spending covers many diverse areas such as television, cinema, gambling, and eating and drinking (ibid). However, outside the home activities - which includes pursuits such as swimming and health and fitness - account for approximately £60.4bn of the total spend (ibid). This health and fitness sector provides the context for the present study.

The global health and fitness club industry has a turnover of $68.2bn, 122,473 health club facilities, and 117.5 million members (IHRSA Report 2010 cited in KeyNote Health Clubs and Leisure Centres Market Report, 2010). The global market can be further segmented to establish that Europe has 46,736 health and fitness clubs and 40.7 million members. Narrowing this information further it is found that the UK has revenues of $5,759 million, provision of 5,795 clubs, and these are used by 734,000 members (Ibid). At present this represents a lucrative mature market with major health and fitness club giants such as David Lloyd, and Virgin Active well established within the sector. The Keynote Health Clubs and Leisure Centres Market Report (2010) also contains market predictions and trends. These suggest that although significant market growth is not expected in the next five years, increasingly differentiated provider offerings, advances in new technology, and demands for healthy lifestyles should continue to stimulate the demand for health and fitness provision in the UK and beyond. Therefore, the health and fitness club sector appears to be an established and significant sector for study.

1.5 The Research Approach

The research approach is rooted in an anti-realist, social constructionist, ontology and epistemology. This stance was the result of philosophical reflection and how the nature of reality and knowledge production may be understood (Williams and May, 1996). Once this decision was made, the research methodology becomes a consequence of this higher level decision. For example, it effectively rules out methods relating to realist objectivistic paradigms. Therefore, the research was informed by anti-realist and social constructionist worldviews. This resulted in a research design that considered various methods of data collection and analysis. Eventually, an interpretivist methodological framework was adopted. This included using an ethnography methodology which utilised participant observation and semi structured interviews to collect data. The research adopted the open, axial, and selective coding process of Strauss and Corbin (1998) to analyse the data. It provides an account that can be assessed according to the principles associated with this type of research. Namely, *"credibility, precision, and coherence"* (Charmaz and Bryant, 2011, p.294). It is noted however, that some question the appropriateness of evaluative criteria being applied to interpretive research. For example Smith and Hodgkinson (2005, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.917) term the use of evaluative criteria *"neo realist"*. Despite this, Denzin and Lincoln (2005, p.910) - after an extensive literature review - concur with the view of Charmaz and Bryant (2011) and suggest that "*plausibility….credibility… relevance"* are an appropriate means to assess interpretive research. This thesis identifies with these terms as being the means to assess this thesis, although it does recognise the "*politics and power"* at work in criteria of this nature (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.930).

1.6 The Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

The overall aim of the research is to investigate how value is attained by customers of public sector health and fitness clubs. Therefore, this aim inspired the following research questions:

1. What are customers value seeking practices in public sector health and fitness clubs?
2. How can customers value seeking practices in public sector health and fitness clubs be explained?

The research objectives were to:

1. Identify the philosophical stance underpinning the research
2. Identify current theories relating to how customers attain value
3. Identify a means by which customer value seeking practices can be researched most effectively
4. Identify customers value seeking practices in a public sector health and fitness club
5. Devise a method for explaining customers value seeking practices
6. Devise a means for service development

1.7 Contribution to Knowledge

The thesis has eight main contributions to make to knowledge and understanding of customer value seeking. These contributions are placed into academic and practical categories as follows.

1.7.1 Academic

The thesis:

Expands existing knowledge concerning value as practices;

Is the first study within the health and fitness sector to research customer value seeking practices within public health and fitness clubs;

Identifies what specific value seeking practices are adopted by customers of public health and fitness clubs;

Explains customers value seeking practices within public health and fitness clubs;

Develops a model which views customers value seeking practice in public health and fitness clubs as a result of a dialectic process.

1.7.2 Practical

Liberates managers from inappropriate paradigms relating to customers value seeking;

Provides new insights from which to view the management of customer's value seeking practices within public health and fitness clubs;

Provides a model from which to view customers as the proposers of value seeking practices.

1.8 Structure of the Thesis

This section contains summaries of each chapter addressed within the thesis. It attempts to set the scene for the reader. The chapters addressed in the thesis attempt to: identify the underpinning philosophy of the thesis through philosophical reflection, review and identify gaps in the extant value literature, provide a methodology for creating an authentic account, provide findings via a three chapter approach of Commitment Practice, Facilitating Practice and Performance Practice, conclude by summarising the key findings and areas for future research. Each of these chapters are explained sequentially commencing with the philosophical reflections chapter.

1.8.1 Chapter 2 Philosophical Reflections

This chapter seeks to explore questions pertaining to the philosophy of the research. The starting position is based upon a preliminary study of philosophy that suggests philosophy must precede research (Ayikorua, 2009; Alvesson, 2002; Burrell and Morgan, 2008). Therefore, the philosophical reflections chapter considers: the importance of philosophy, the characteristics of philosophy, the key philosophical perspectives, and the philosophy of the current thesis. The chapter - as a result of the philosophical reflections - roots the thesis as a work which falls within the anti-realist, social constructionist paradigm. This differs from many research projects which appear to match the research conducted to the most convenient paradigm available (Peacock, 2004; Stronach and Heywood, 2005 cited in Somekh and Lewin, 2005). For this researcher this is a flawed approach which does not question the underpinning assumptions of their adopted paradigm. Hence, this thesis is based upon selecting the most convincing philosophy prior to embarking upon the research. This results in research which can defend its philosophical stance.

1.8.2 Chapter 3 Literature Review

This chapter is concerned with the thesis topic of value. It explores existing research concerning: the key concepts, theories, and models pertaining to value, the limitations of

the existing work, and the gaps in knowledge for the thesis to exploit. Commencing with the marketing context the chapter considers another four key areas of the value literature. Firstly, value as a focal point for service research outlines that the value concept is gaining traction in terms of its position as a nexus of service research. Secondly, value as perspectives is considered. This includes some preliminary discussions regarding value as a *polysemic* concept (Gallarza and Gill, 2008, p.6), and also where value is located is considered from value as exchange, value as use, value as signs, and value as context positions. Thirdly, the major discourses take selected ideas from the previous two areas identified to create distinct literatures which can be identified as: the goods discourse, the experiential discourse, the resource based discourse, the practice discourse, and the customer discourse. Finally, gaps in the literature relating to customer practices, and some gaps pertaining to customers' lifeworlds are identified as being available to extend existing research. Primarily, customers' value seeking practices have had relatively little research in the service industry. Therefore, this provides an opportunity to explore customers' value seeking practices. This research is applied to the context of public health and fitness clubs where no known research of this type exists.

1.8.3 Chapter 4 Research Methodology

The research methodology explicates the decisions taken, and the processes adopted by which data was collected and analysed to provide answers to the research questions. This chapter is underpinned by four main considerations. Firstly, after specifying research aims, questions, and objectives, a rationale for the use of social constructionism is provided. Secondly, the methodological framework of interpretivism is discussed. Thirdly, the research methodology identifies ethnography and its associated methods of participant observation and semi-structured interviewing as being the most appropriate means of data collection. Finally, the coding processes of Strauss and Corbin (1998) have been adopted for the data analysis. Throughout the research methodology, rationales for the use of methods selected have been provided. Similarly, evaluating the strengths and limitations of these methods has been undertaken. This is to ensure that the painstaking efforts to construct a credible methodology were communicated. The outcomes of the application of the methodology were findings relating to Commitment, Facilitating, and Performance Practices. In addition, a research finding, the dialectic model, was explained in this chapter.

1.8.4 Chapter 5 Commitment Practice

The Commitment Practice chapter identified that in being committed to a health and fitness club customers carry out specific joining and attendance practices. These practices were then explained in terms of influences that were suggested from the empirical data collection and analysis process. The customers value seeking was also explained in terms of a being a dialectic process between the provider and themselves. The final part of the Commitment Practice chapter identified fractures between the customers value seeking practice and provider expectations. This allowed customers as value seekers and potential proposers of practice to be explained (Gidhagen et al., 2011). This resulted in several proposals for service development to be identified.

1.8.5 Chapter 6 Facilitating Practice

The Facilitating Practice chapter follows logically from the Commitment Practice chapter. That is, if customers are committed to a health and fitness club they must be facilitated in their value seeking. The data collection and analysis identified that Prerequisite Practice, Induction Practice and Movement Practice were key in facilitating customers' value seeking practice. As with the previous chapter, each individual practice is explained in terms of what the empirical data suggested. Again, the customer/provider dialectic identified a number of areas proposed by customers as being of value, but these did not fit with current provider expectations. These constitute the potential areas for service development.

1.8.6 Chapter 7 Performance Practice

The final findings chapter identifies the Performance Practice customers carry out within the health and fitness club. Once again these were the results of the empirical data collection and analysis. These practices are usually highly visible practices. Despite this, the explanations pertaining to these practices often reveal hidden but important issues. The main key sub-practices of this chapter are Fashion Practice and Exercise Practice. This chapter reveals that in the former practice customers seek value from equipment and clothing worn, and in the latter various types of Exercise Practice such as Cardio Practice or Specialist Practice fulfils their value seeking behaviour. Once again within these explanations customers proposed alternative practices which could be viewed as proposals for greater

value seeking. These were identified - as in the previous chapters - as potential areas of service development.

1.8.7 Chapter 8 Conclusions

This chapter draws together the main themes of the overall research process. The conclusions summarise the key outputs gleaned from the Philosophical Reflections, Literature Review, Research Methodology, Commitment Practice, Facilitating Practice, and Performance Practice chapters. The conclusions also provide information regarding the thesis' contribution to knowledge. Furthermore, the limitations of the research process are highlighted, and areas for further research suggested. Finally, the conclusions end with some personal reflections concerning the researchers journey through the process of producing the thesis.

Chapter 2

PHILOSOPHICAL

REFLECTIONS

2   PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTIONS

2.1 Introduction

Starting has to start somewhere (Almond, 1995), and according to Richards (1999) knowing where to start is the most difficult task within the writing process. For the present thesis, this dilemma was easily conquered. As the research unfolded, it became clear that consideration must first be given to the philosophical basis of the thesis (Heron, 1981; Easterby Smith et al., 2008; Tribe, 2009). Indeed, according to Russell (2010) good research must be preceded by a thorough philosophical enquiry: predominantly considering the assumptions underpinning the research effort (Capaldi and Proctor, 1999; Crawford, 1995); Flowerdale and Martin 2005; Saunders et al., 2009).

To achieve appropriate coverage of the underpinning philosophy of the present thesis, this section is divided into four principal areas:

1. The importance of philosophy
2. The characteristics of philosophy
3. Key philosophical perspectives
4. Philosophy of the current thesis

The chapter concludes by summarising the key issues addressed by the philosophical reflections chapter.

2.2 The Importance of Philosophy

From the outset this section provides a fundamental argument regarding the need for philosophical reflection to precede all else (Higgins, 2005). That is, the foundations of the research must be rooted in philosophical reflection. That is *"taking nothing for granted"* (Cottingham, 1996, p.xxi). This section also recognises that philosophical reflection encompasses not only the orderly, but the diverse, and the non linear (Hannam, 2009). The argument made here is that philosophy must be first (Ayikorua, 2009). This is prior to any contemplation of methodology or methods (Gergen and Gergen, 1993). Alvesson (2002) concludes that blindly following conventional paradigms is inadequate for good research.

Therefore, philosophy must consider differing worldviews to avoid naive compliance to the dominant hegemony of the day (Cottingham, 1996). These hegemonies are argued by Foucault (1977) to be potentially dangerous, controlling and repressive. Certainly, research should not be embarked upon without philosophical reflection. Falzon (2002, p.12) comments:

"to refuse to take things for granted, to think things through for ourselves, is crucially important for our intellectual independence".

Many "successful" research efforts appear to omit, sidestep, or be unaware of philosophy (Ayikoru, 2009). Perhaps some feel it is not a requirement of doctorial or indeed any research (Tolman, 1959 cited in Capaldi and Proctor, 1999). This is despite strong evidence which suggests that researcher's should question - philosophically - the assumptions underpinning their work (Flowerdale and Martin, 2005; Williams and May, 1996; Russell, 2010; Seale et al., 2004). Burrell and Morgan (2008, p.X) point to a problematic situation within organisational studies whereby some researchers do not appear to consider philosophical issues to be of relevance. These researcher's "frames of reference" are expected to imply the underlying philosophical assumptions. Peacock (2004) suggests that this is unacceptable and cites the discipline of economics whereby, in some cases, the methods used - in the absence of explicit details - are the only way of predicting the researcher's philosophical assumptions.

Ayikoru (2009) comments that despite the importance of the philosophical stance, much research lacks consideration of, or a formal written exposition of, the philosophical foundations relating to their contents. Stronach and Heywood (cited in Somekh, and Lewin, 2005, p.116), claim that research that follows researcher's initial *"inclinations"* is potentially creating implicit obstacles which precludes the exploration of various avenues of thought. Russell (2010, p.50):

"if what we infer is to be true, it is just as necessary that our principles of inference should be true .... The principles of inference are apt to be overlooked because of their very obviousness – the assumption involved is assented to without our realizing that it is an assumption. But it is very important to realize the use of principles of inference, if a correct

theory of knowledge is to be obtained: for our knowledge of them [principles of inference] *raises interesting and difficult questions"*

In simple terms, Russell is claiming that if the principles by which a subsequent inference is made are not subjected to philosophical scrutiny, then these inferences are inhibited by a bounded thought process (Simon, 1957). This strongly suggests that some research has philosophical weakness. This failing is evident in the Ph.D thesis of Priola (2001). For her, the choice of philosophical approach is guided by the Evered and Louis (1991) principle of the:

"researchers personal training, cognitive style, preference, and the particular referents and exemplars the researcher has available" (Priola, 2001, p.3).

After detailing and "analysing" her research training, her former Ph.D supervisors engineering background, her current supervisors interpretive leanings, and her score on a cognitive style questionnaire, she concludes that she is a methodological *"chameleon"* (Martin, 1990, pp.42-43) stating:

"Could there have been other [sic] *choice rather than an aggregation of different approaches"* (Priola, 2001, p.4).

Priola (2001) is used as an example of making a philosophical choice without deep philosophical reflection. Unfortunately, the unconscious choices made by Priola (2001) nudge her into using realist objective approaches when making this choice. For example, to aid her decision making process she utilises what are clearly realist assumptions regarding one of the processes by which to make the choice – the cognitive style questionnaire. The use of quantitative questionnaires to uncover a philosophical bent is clearly an oxymoron. O'Shea (2000, p.236) cautions against this pointing out that unconscious assumptions results in "*world*[s] *caught in time, unchanging, known and safe".* With this in mind, the present thesis considers philosophical schools of thought to inform the philosophy selected. Often messy, overlapping, and contradictory, philosophical reflection is not a journey easily navigated. Crotty (1998, p.1) explains:

"Research students and fledgling researchers – and, yes even more seasoned campaigners often express bewilderment at the array of methodologies and methods laid out before their

gaze….to add to the confusion the terminology is far from consistent….one frequently finds the same term used in a number of different sometimes contradictory, ways"

This quote - although talking about methodologies and methods - can be appropriated to fit a number of philosophical themes. These include: metaphysics, ontology, epistemology, and theoretical perspectives. Therefore, when considering philosophy in relation to the present thesis, three particular problems are apparent. Firstly, a consistent model detailing the route from philosophy to method does not exist (Seale, 2004). Secondly, differing philosophical categories and terminology are used by differing authors to explain the same items (Martin and McIntyre, 1995; Crotty, 1998). Finally, some highly regarded texts – on occasion – create confusion with weak explanations and interpretations of the subject matter pertaining to philosophy (Yeung, 1997; Seale, 2004). Therefore, the work in the present thesis uses a model to orientate the thesis through this categorical and terminological milieu. This model is shown in figure 1 below.

Figure 1 The Research Process
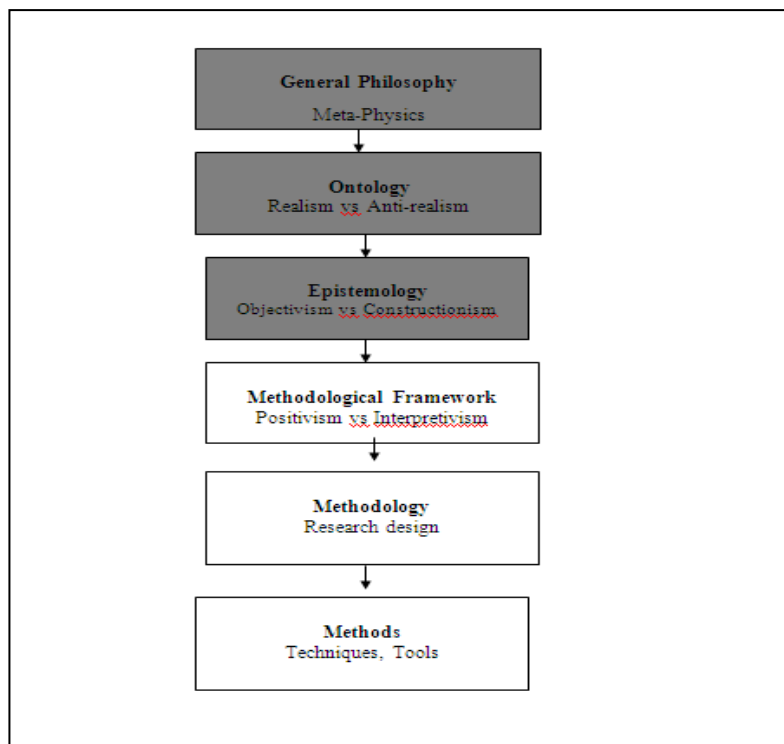
The shaded boxes in figure 1 relate to the areas addressed in this philosophy chapter. The latter three boxes (not shaded) - though recognised in this chapter - are not addressed in

depth until the research methodology chapter. The model is also designed to deliver a cohesive and linear framework. This is to orientate the present thesis from conception to termination; albeit within the constraints of the subject matter not being particularly amenable to either linearity or cohesion (Cottingham, 1996). Potter (1996, p.9) indicates that the use of a *"conventional mode of presentation"* may be appropriate to guide work of a discursive or unconventional nature. He argues that although this can and will be viewed as contradictory, all writing may be deconstructed in one way or another. Therefore, the presentation of this model is merely used a convenient means from which to view the process of the research for this thesis (Potter, 1996; Richards, 1999).

2.3 The Characteristics of Philosophy

Philosophy is a broad, but very important area (Godfrey-Smith, 2003). Philosophy reflects upon questions and issues relating to areas such as knowledge, being, existence, values, ethics, religion, reason, logic, aesthetics, politics, morals, society, the mind, art, and language (Hitchcock, 2004; Schroder, 2005). For Falzon (2002) philosophy is concerned with seeing the world without preconceptions. Scruton (1994) suggests that philosophy is about developing and asking questions. However, these questions are quite distinct in nature. They are "*distinguished by their abstract and ultimate character*" (Ibid, p.3). Grayling (1995, p.1) agrees; he states that philosophical questions should be propelled " *in a direct assault*" - towards "*knowledge, truth, reason, reality, meaning, mind and value*". For Warburton (1995) the development, direction and use of philosophical questions constitute the process of philosophy. In simple terms then, philosophy concerns asking intellectual questions directed at the ideas and concepts relating to both the physical, the non physical, and the supernatural.

In a sense, the questioning of philosophy exemplifies its character (Francks, 2003). Philosophy is concerned with formulating and attempting to answer abstract higher level questions (Falzon, 2002; Godfrey-Smith, 2003). One should note however, that philosophical questions do not necessarily have to produce answers, and the questions do not have to be justified in the scientific sense (Diamond, 2001). But it does require deep reflection in relation to all discourse (Solomon, 1995; 2005). Without philosophy there would be nothing (Kenny, 2006). Philosophy provides many avenues to facilitate a more resonant understanding of the social world (Solomon, 2005). Philosophy can have a confirming or

undermining aspect to it, and also a multiplicity of other potential "outcomes" (Best and Kellner, 1991; Losee, 2001). In addition, philosophy can be directed at itself in the form of meta-physics (Godfrey-Smith, 2003). That is, questioning philosophy philosophically (Falzon, 2002). Early Wittgenstein (1922) questioned philosophy, philosophically. For him philosophy was concerned with language (Pears, 1971; Sluga and Stern, 1995). The language formed meaningful pictures of facts that reflect the world (Popkin and Stroll, 1993; Carey and Read, 2000). In layman's terms: what you see is what you get – facts (Hamilton, 2001). Aesthetics, religion, arts, etc, cannot be pictured as they are not facts. So they remain inexpressible by language (Munitz, 1981). They are outside of language and from Wittgensteins, (1922) point of view: nonsense. He states:

*It will only be in language that the limit is can be set, and what lies on the other side of that limit will be nonsense (*Wittgenstein cited in Munitz, 1981, p.178).

These outside language ideas can only be shown - not expressed in words**.** Dancer Isadora Duncan (cited in Mintzberg and Westley, 2001, p.89) touched upon a similar theme when she stated *"If I could say it, I wouldn't have to dance it"*. Similarly, Klagge (2001, p.54) has commented that some things "*can only be shown and not said".* Early Wittgenstein is concerned with what can, and cannot be said (Munitz, 1981). So for early Wittgenstein, philosophy had no purpose. The facts were the facts, and anything not a fact (beauty, love, value statements) could not be expressed with language, so philosophers should not be seduced to attempt what was ultimately futile (Hamilton, 2001). He purported that philosophy lay beyond language – it was therefore, inexpressible. Despite Wittgenstein's (1922) powerful work, his later work rejected the notion of language reflecting reality as pictures (Pears 1971; Hamilton, 2001). For "later" Wittgenstein (1953) philosophy remained a misconception. But now he suggested that philosophy was a language game (Pears, 1971; Carey and Read, 2002). Language, he now said, did not capture reality (Sluga and Stern, 1999). Languages grammar, rules, and structures impose reality. Munitz (1981) likens this to Kantian a priori categories of the mind, except in this case it is the language that creates reality. The result of this is multiple language games. For Wittgenstein, the key was to understand these underlying structures, rules, and grammar to avoid these misconceptions, as he sees it, of philosophy (Sluga and Stern, 1999). Wittgenstein views the philosopher's role as using words and language not as reflecting the meaning of something, but as guides to understand how meanings are structured and used within language games (Gergen and

Gergen, 1993). The main difference between early and late Wittgenstein is that language is not something that expresses facts. It should be considered as a structure, a grammar, or a rule set that should be investigated (Genova, 1995). Language has multiple uses and is simply an imperfect device for communication (Munitz, 1981). Therefore, for Munitz (1981, p.271) Wittgensteins thrust is that:

"Philosophical problems arise due to the misapplication of the rules of ordinary language".

In simple terms, the role of philosophy - according to later Wittgenstein (1953) - is to study language structures, rules, and grammar " *to call attention to the* [language] *misuses through patient diagnosis of the resulting order* (Pears, 1971; Munitz, 1981, p.271). This for Wittgenstein is philosophical endeavour. Taylor (1984) however views philosophy as having different characteristics. He states that philosophy is an important process that is undertaken and which promotes:

"the redescription of what we are doing, thinking, believing, assuming, in such a way that we bring our reason to light more perspicuously, or else make the alternatives more apparent, or in some way or other are better enabled to take a justified stand to our action, thought, belief, assumption. Philosophy involves a great deal of articulation about what is initially in articulated" (Taylor 1984, p.18).

However, caution must be exercised. The assumption that answers follow questions would be unwise approach to characterising philosophy. Philosophy has been described by Smart (1971) as asking questions to which there may or may not be answers. Almond (1995) agrees. For her, the character of philosophy is also not about answers – but questions. Questions that do not have necessarily have absolute answers (Radford, 1996). For Rorty (1979) this lack of answers does not constitute failure. He views questioning - sometimes without producing answers - as an integral part of making philosophical progress, commenting that:

"If somebody scratches where it itches does that count as progress? If not does that mean it was not an authentic scratch? Not an authentic itch? Couldn't this response to the stimulus go on for quite a long time until a remedy for itching is found" (Wittgenstein cited in Rorty, 1979, p.vii).

Rorty's (1979) words resonate for this thesis. The philosophical questioning of the thesis metaphysical, ontological, and epistemological foundations is progress over and above "many" research works (Burrell and Morgan, 2008). In addition, it provides protection from attacks directed at an achilles heel of metaphysical, ontological and epistemological weakness (Geirsson and Losonsky, 1998). On the other hand, not all agree that the character of philosophy can be justified as a truth seeking, knowledge accumulating enterprise (Levine, 1993). For example, those falling under the rubric of post modern philosophers (i.e. Foucault, Derrida, Baudrillard, Lyotard), would not agree that philosophy in this form is a legitimate activity. For them, philosophy in this form - as a process or activity - is a waste of time: a futile quest for a reality that ultimately does not exist (Kirk, 1999). Rorty (1985) also doubts that philosophy seeks truth. A truth that corresponds to reality. He claims that realist philosophy is characterised by the need to maintain European hegemony which uses *"appeal to reason"* to justify itself (Rorty, 1985, p.11)*. For Rorty philosophy of this is type erroneous. Rorty (1985, p.12) identifies himself as a *"pragmatist"*. Denying philosophy as being able to discover truths; he believes in philosophy which delivers a consensus, and with which those: "*who share enough of ones beliefs to make fruitful conversation possible*" (Rorty, 1985, p.13).

Rorty (1985) argues that pragmatists do not have to appeal to reason, or anything else to support their views. Whilst Rorty is symbolic of a number of post modern critics whom put forward alternative means of philosophising, some such as Derrida (1967 cited in Drolet, 2004) go even further denying even the possibility of philosophy (Temple, 1999). According to Drolet (2004, p.23), Derrida characterised philosophy as a mere *"conjuring trick"*. For Derrida, close reading of texts allows deconstruction to take place (ibid, p.24). Derrida, highlights deconstruction by showing contradictions and flaws within texts (Coward, 1990). Therefore, previous philosophers constructions are dismantled by the deconstructionist Derrida (Drolet, 2004. p.23). He argues that all philosophy, including his own, can be characterised as being without meaning (Burman and Maclure, 2005).

In drawing together the dichotomy between philosophy as a process of questioning and philosophy as an irrelevance, some would say a fantasy or "*quibbling over the meaning of words*" (Warburton, 1995, p.3), a question could be posed as: how can the present thesis proceed? If it is accepted that philosophy is a process which can question, and in some cases provide answers and understanding (Radford, 1996), then clearly this process may continue

ad infinitum. On the other hand, if one adopts a deconstructionist position then philosophy - arguably - stops. It is fiction making. Despite this, Burman and Maclure (2005, p.288) claim that even Derridarian type philosophy may continue. They state that this situation is:

"not necessarily a paralysing one....instead of pretending the position of disembodied knower....we can attempt research stories that highlight the ambiguities and instabilities of the identities of research and researched, and attend to the shifting convergences and contests of respective agendas that are structured within any encounter. At stake is the impossibility of attaining that secure place of 'knowledge' that characterised the modernist methodological and interpretive project."

In simple terms, the Deconstructionist disciple continues to research, highlighting the flaws and fictions of "research", and *that* is the point. Philosophy is concerned with putting into action thought processes which attempt to provide new insights into understanding. Morten, 2004, p.xii) notes: *"You will not understand philosophical theories....unless you have struggled with the questions".*

Therefore, at this juncture, for the present thesis, the context within which the philosophical questions have been posed can be elaborated. This is addressed in the next section.

2.4 Key Philosophical Perspectives

A very basic argument resulting from metaphysical categories is that of realism versus anti-realism (Divers, 2004). In a sense, most of the metaphysical categories (for example, realism, post modernism, pragmatism, idealism, existentialism, etc) could be placed on a continuum between realism and anti-realism. Perhaps an interim example lying between these two "opposites" could be idealism. Of course, the placement will differ from philosopher to philosopher depending upon their philosophical stance. This is shown in figure 2 below.

Figure 2 Continuum Of Philosophy

23
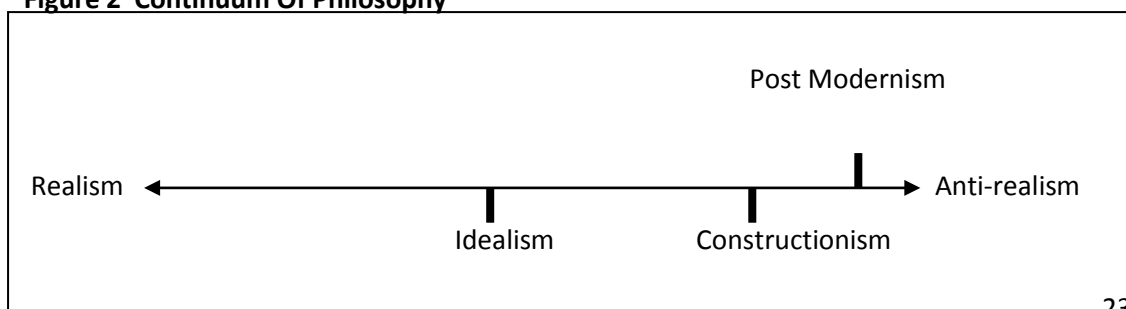
The foundations of realist philosophy can be traced back to the ancient Greeks. The work (circa 287bc) of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle resulted in notions of logic, reason, and rationality (Moshman, 1994). For realists - although differing on some details - reality is a real, absolute, concrete, attainable, objective, entity. This view is that reality exists independently from concepts, thought, and senses (Walden, 2004; Kirk, 1999). For example, from the realist viewpoint a rock exists in the world regardless of whether humans inhabit that world or not. That is, it displays the universal features of "rockness", and the rock is independent of human cognition (i.e. it exists regardless of humans). So powerful is this philosophy that it is seen by many as *the* totalising philosophy absorbed into, and emanating from, all aspects of contemporary life (Potter, 1996). Realists believe the reality is represented as it actually is – real (Levine, 1993). Reality is there "in space" simply waiting to be discovered (Ashley, 2006). The later rationalists, followed by enlightenment philosophers considered methods of observing this reality. These discourses and early Wittgenstein work provided the platform for the later Vienna circle logical positivists (Hanfling, 1981). Bringing the realist discourse up to date sees the likes of Bertrand Russell refining the realist viewpoint, whilst further along the contemporary realism continuum, critical realists such as Harre (1986) and Bhaskar (1994) are proposing new variants of realism, whilst remaining faithful to the its core principles.

According to Bunnin and Tsui James, (1996) idealism (Kant) concentrates on experience (the without) and a priori coding - in the mind - of experience (the within). Although ultimately tending towards anti-realist, this is not in the Sartre existential sense of nothing (no within or without). It views experience as being placed into pre-existing (a priori) categories in the mind (Warburton, 1992). This latter point worthy of further discussion. The idealist perspective of reality differs from the realists. According to the idealists reality does not exist independent of the mind. For them, reality is constructed by the mind (Werkmeister, 1980). Using the rock example, the human perceives the rock and the mind constructs an image of a rock via - a priori - categories. Each mind will construct different rocks therefore, a real rock as such does not exist. Just an ideal presentation of it (Guyer, 1992). This results in a worldview that suggests that experience can only be interpreted via the a priori (before) mechanisms that already exist in the mind (Wood, 2005). Anything falling outside the categories will be made to fit into a particular category (perhaps inappropriately).

For constructionists, they believe in the potential for multiple realities which are subject to construction between the object and the observer (Gergen and Gergen, 1993). This view would pertain to the notion that reality is constructed according to various processes impinging upon the constructor. This could be – for example – individual processes or social processes. The latter falling under the category of social contructionism. According to Berger and Luckmann (1991, p.13): *"reality is socially constructed and the sociology of knowledge* [epistemology] *must analyse the process in which this occurs"*.

For constructionists then, reality is not a fixed entity. It is transitory, negotiated multifaceted, and positionally diverse, and it is produced from individual, social, cultural and historical processes (Burr, 1995). Gergen and Gergen (1993, pp.2-5), highlight that although constructionism is not a unified discipline, three main strands can be detected and should be considered as impacting upon constructionism: *" the communal origin of knowledge"* *"the centrality of language"* and *"the ideological saturation of knowledge"*. This results in a constructionist view that see reality as not an entity - out there - waiting to be discovered, but as a constructed observer/object reality.

For post modernists, they see philosophy from another perspective. Prior to considering this worldview though, the terms modernism and post modernism need to be differentiated. In defining these key terms a concise explanation is sufficient for the present thesis. Two main strands of post modernism can be also established. One view is that modernism provides a platform from which postmodernism emanates; a foundation. Alternatively, it is also viewed as representing a significant rejection, break, opposition, or a move away from modernism. (Powell, 1998, p.7) comments: *"people who think about such things as postmodernism don't agree whether postmodernism is a break from modernism or a continuation of modernism or both"*.

In theorising about post modernism, many view it as being a reaction against realist views of logic, reason and rationality. Olsens (1967) views were paraphrased by Bertens (1995, p.21) who states:

"Western culture wilfully closes itself against true experience, against life's authenticity, because of its orientation on rationalism, with its obsessive and relentless intellectualisation of human experience".

Therefore, post modernism discourse of this ilk leaves behind a straight jacket of logically reasoned real objects, rational dictates, and totalising systems of thought. These types of totalising discourses are found in areas such as politics, social systems, knowledge production, and scientific doctrines. Post modernism opts for more eclectic worldviews. Helvacioglu (1992, pp.8-9) comments that post modern philosophy is: *"open, playful….deconstruction* [ist]*,… [it has a] plurality of universes….disjunctive worlds….*[and is] *opposed to rigidity, coherence, and structure".*

For post modernists then, it appears that it is an accepted tenet that reality escapes specificity, control, and the totalising meta-narratives of the realists (Helvacioglu, 1992; Lyotard, 1984). The post modernists have a far reaching scope. Drolet (2004) considers this scope and develops his discussion to consider the content of postmodernism. He suggests that postmodernism is a critique of the *"enlightenment"* and its subsequent realist approaches (Drolet, 2004, p.2). For Marcel (1963) post modernism ranges from the disputing modernism, to the more esoteric:

"Far from reasoning about experience we listen to it. As musicians might listen to voices joined with them in producing a symphony, we listen to what for us is a grand symphony of being" (Marcel, 1963 cited in Crotty 1998, pp. 211-212).

Here Crotty (1998) is alluding to the inability of conceiving a real reality. Some post modernists (Derrida, 1967) go further, denying not only reality, but even the interpretation of the non-real. In the present thesis, the oxymoron of the interpretation of the non real left for other philosophers to ponder.

2.5 Philosophy of the Current Thesis

The stance taken for the present Ph.D research considers the two positions of philosophy, – realist and anti-realist as being inconsummensurable with each other (Harre and Krausz, 1996; Williams and May, 1996). Despite this, regardless of whether or not reality or even philosophy does or does not exist, and whether questions and/or answers have relevance, a common theme is that during philosophy a process of scholarly activity takes place. Scholarship being defined as *"learning"*, *"erudition"*, *"research"*, and *"study"* (Oxford English Dictionary; Veal, 2006). Rosen (2000) highlights that Aristotle suggested that individuals

value knowledge - in and of itself - regardless of its utility. Therefore, even though they may deny its existence, even the most hardened post-modern accounts will entail philosophical knowledge (ibid). The point has to be made that philosophy - in whatever form - is liberating. Even in the event that one's philosophy leans toward nihilism this does not have to be constricting, rather it is emancipating. Freeing one from the shackles of that which is not true.

A question that the previous section suggests is: how can a researcher choose their philosophical stance? For the present thesis, how to choose without being tautological was difficult. O'Shea (2000) terms this an Archimedean position. However, "this deciding question" is crucial for continuation of the present thesis. A rationale for the selection of philosophy to underpin the subsequent work is required. In paraphrasing Beer (1972, p.18) this higher level decision results in lower level work that is a consequence of the former decision. In simple terms, everything from this point in the thesis is a consequence of the philosophical decision relating to whether the research is realist or anti-realist (Williams and May, 1996). The decision for the present thesis is to be social constructionist (anti-realist) this was based upon consideration of the philosophical perspectives addressed earlier in this section, and a consideration of the ontological and epistemological basis of the thesis.

The ontological context provides a meeting point between the overarching philosophical considerations, and the actual thesis's knowledge production. Ontology is narrower in scope than the general philosophy considered previously in this section (Matthews and Ross, 2010). Ontological and subsequently epistemology enquiry in this thesis consists of a number of philosophical questions relating to ontologically "what there is" in terms of knowledge, and epistemologically how "what there is" is constituted in terms of being able to acquire that knowledge (Laurence and McDonald, 1998). The ontological and epistemological foundations of this thesis (or indeed any thesis) influence the knowledge production (Ayikoru, 2009; Priola 2001). According to Heron (1981, p.21) a researcher's first priority is to question *"what kind of explanation of my own research behaviour I am committed"*. Johnson and Duberley (2000) view this research behaviour as influencing how the research is conceived and conducted, how the research methods are selected, and how the thesis should be evaluated for credibility and rigour. Therefore, the knowledge produced within this thesis is underpinned by two questions, one ontological and one epistemological:

1. What is reality? – an ontological question,

and

2. What is knowledge? – an epistemological question

(Blakie, 2000).

or to put it in its simplest form, Trigg (1989, p.ix) argues: what reality is like and how we conceive it are always separate questions. On the other hand, Crotty (1998) suggests that a distinction does not need to be made between ontology and epistemology. This is because, for Crotty (1998), the concepts of ontology and epistemology overlap. Therefore, delineation of the concepts is not required as discussion of one of the concepts implies coverage of the main tenets of the other. Developing a defence against the view that ontology and epistemology are isomorphic, Peacock (2004) and others, (see for example Burrell and Morgan, 2008) argue that a lack of a clearly specified ontology and epistemology results in a conformity of approach. In turn, this produces very narrow and ephemeral research - a type of research myopia. For Peacock (2004) and Lawson (2003) research without an explicit ontology and epistemology, results in findings that lack credibility. Using ontology as an example, a researcher may be attempting to use methods to capture a reality that – if they questioned their own ontological perspectives – does not exist. Therefore, it is reasonable to suggest that without ontology and epistemology being addressed individually, researchers are inadvertently designing into their research potentially serious flaws. To avoid this in the present thesis these two issues are tackled separately to protect the thesis from attacks that may result from ontological and epistemological weaknesses (Geirsson and Losonsky, 1998).

The contemporary dominant - but contestable - ontological paradigm is the realist worldview (Manicas, 1987). That is, reality is external (to the mind) and a world of material objects exists. Independence and existence being the key features of the realists world. A third feature that may be added is objectiveness. That is, independent of our minds, objects exist. Some objects have been discovered, others remain undiscovered, perhaps unknowable to our knowledge accumulation devices - an epistemological issue (Devitt, 1984). A strength of taking a realist approach is that if there are independent existing objects, then researchers can attempt to identify, capture, and study these entities This thesis disputes that claim as erroneous. Developing this point, arguments against realism

include those that can be broadly grouped as anti-realists: For example, amongst others: post structuralists, existentialists, constructionists, and post modernists provide opposition to the realist viewpoint. For example, post structuralist Foucault (1977), questions the very ideas used to represent reality. He felt that the ideas themselves were little more than – existing hegemonies - socially constructed artefacts. Similarly, the post modernist Lyotard (1979 cited in Bennington and Massumi 1984, p.9) questioned the grand narrative of realism, and claimed *who decides what knowledge* [and reality] *is?"* Going further, another post structuralist, Derrida (1967) questions realism by deconstructing any text or theory showing how the grounds and assumptions upon which it is based contain irreparable flaws. Subsequently, the decision to select anti-realism as the present thesis ontology remains. The argument for this is that the selection is based upon a thorough investigation of philosophy and ontology, and the criticisms, and limitations this invokes against realism. This reflective, scholarly, intellectual process continues to support the selection of the anti-realist ontology.

Epistemology for the present thesis concerns how knowledge for this thesis may be produced and apprehended. Epistemology attempts to define what we can know and what we cannot. Crotty (1998) suggests that communicating epistemology is necessary to ensure the credibility of the research process. Clough and Nutbrown (2002) agree. They suggest that epistemological clarity results in methodological *transparency* (Clough and Nutbrown 2002, pp.28-29). According to Greco and Sosa (1999, p.1) epistemology is a theory of knowledge which seeks to address three main questions: "*what is knowledge ?" "what can we know?"* and "*how do we know what we know?".* These questions however, are not mutually exclusive. The answering of one of the questions usually contains aspects of the answers to the other questions (ibid, p.2). Therefore, generally questioning ones epistemological basis (for example: how do we know what we know?) results in the removal of a researchers taken for granted assumptions about what the researcher conceives as social reality. It is easy to demonstrate how a lack of an underpinning epistemological foundation can lead a researcher astray. Selltiz et al., (1976, p.4) outlines a scenario where:

"a man and his son are involved in an automobile accident. The man is killed and the boy, seriously injured, is rushed to hospital for surgery. But the surgeon takes one look at him and says 'I am sorry, but I cannot operate on this boy. He is my son"

Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005, p.12) commenting upon the above state:

"students many of them do not understanding the catch. We unconsciously believe that the surgeon is always a man and therefore do not consider that the surgeon can be the mother of that boy….scientific research often challenges these non-conscious ideologies and beliefs by scrutinising them. Challenging old beliefs, turning things upside down and creating new beliefs is not always comfortable"

In the example just provided, these authors basically argue that scientific research can lead to systematic results based upon *"logic and not beliefs"* (Ghauri and Gronhaug, 2005, p.13). They claim that a scientific process results in correct conclusions being drawn. However, in their haste for a justification of science, Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) fail to question their own epistemological position. That is, why do they think that "science" (in the realist, objectivist, positivistic, sense), is authentic in capturing the social world. Many (Derrida, Lyotard, etc) would argue that the Ghauri and Gronhaug (2005) scientific version of recording the social is severely flawed. The point being made here is that although the accident example given is very illustrative, the necessity of epistemological questioning is essential throughout any researchers work. In Ghauri and Gronhaugs (2005) book: "Research Methods in Business Studies" they fail to follow their own advice. Nowhere in their book is their epistemological stance outlined in any great explicit detail. This results in a book that can be attacked as being the result of unconscious beliefs relating to realist scientific dogma. This is the very thing - unconscious beliefs - they caution others to avoid! This is due to an absence of epistemological consideration.

So to produce knowledge, epistemology can look to the types of perspectives available to those attempting capture knowledge. Generally, the ontological realist would be considered to be following an objectivistic epistemology. This epistemology emphasises the independence of the researcher from the object of the study (Crotty, 1998; Smith, 1998). In objectivistic studies, theory driven hypotheses are developed and tested, outcomes are *posited* (Crotty 1998, p.20), and quantifiable results sought. Knowledge is developed using objective and replicable empirical investigations. These uncover empirical facts (Vadum and Rankin, 1998). This epistemology is directly tied to a realist world view. As Crotty 1998, p.5) states, objectivistic researchers claim:

"objectivism is the epistemological view that things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experience. that they have truth and meaning residing in them....... careful (scientific?) research can attain that objective truth and meaning".

Furthermore, the characteristics of objectivism include:

- Reality resides in the object – hence it can be uncovered and measurably evaluated

- Reality is outside human minds. It exists whether humans perceive it or not

- Reality is not open to multiple interpretations. It is consistent and true

- Reality is discovered by the detached rationale observing researcher

- The necessity for value free judgements by the researcher is essential to maintain a distinction between the object and the observer

(Sarantakos, 2005).

The proponents of the social constructionist epistemology - within an anti-realist ontology - take a different view of how knowledge is acquired. They see limitations within the objectivist epistemology. They view the acquisition of knowledge as being socially constructed and not absolute (Capaldi and Proctor, 1999; Crotty, 1998). The meanings uncovered in the data are not discovered. They are constructed between *subject and object* (Crotty, 1998. p.45). For constructionists, meaning is uncovered and interpreted - there are no "objective" outcomes. Crotty (1998, p. 47) proposes that constructionist studies cannot be considered to be *"true"* or *"valid"*. Despite this, constructionists claim they have an important contribution to offer research (Burr, 1995). Predominantly, that is the understanding of social phenomena. The veracity of the interpretation is not assessed via objectivistic principles. It is evaluated according to how the research was conducted and the credibility of the account. This credibility of the account is assessed according to the principles of whatever research method is being adopted. For the present thesis, reality as a social construction is the dominant epistemology. This epistemology has the following constructionist features:

- Reality is constructed

- Reality is created by people through meaning

- Reality is subject to multiple competing interpretations

- How meaning is constructed is the locus of research study

- Meanings are fluid   (Sarantakos, 2005).

Social constructionism puts the processes of construction of meaning as being inherent in culture, society, and socialisation (Sarantakos, 2005). That is, the generation of meaning is the result of interactive social life. These meanings become embedded within cultural life, and continually negotiated and renegotiated. Socialisation teaches people about constructed meaning, and this has led some to claim that we are born into realities already historically constructed (Straus and Corbin, 1998).

2.6 Conclusions

The chapter commenced by outlining the need to fully discuss the philosophical background of the present thesis. It proposes that prior to any research being conducted philosophical reflection should be primary in the researchers thinking. Therefore, to facilitate this process the philosophical reflection was based around four key areas:

1. The importance of philosophy
2. The characteristics of philosophy
3. Key philosophical perspectives
4. Philosophy of the current thesis

The importance of philosophy argued for the need for philosophical enquiry to be placed first in the thesis (Flowerdale and Martin, 2005). The discourse highlighted the discursive views pertaining to philosophy, and the necessity of avoiding naive adherence to taken for granted conventional wisdom (Alvesson, 2002). The section argued for philosophical reflection to allow the researcher to tease out differing world views which may inform research. It was highlighted that this is often ignored in many research efforts (Burrell and Morgan, 2008). This results in research that can be criticised as being ontologically and epistemologically flawed (Crotty, 1998). To conclude the section it was identified that a single unified model to guide the researcher from philosophy to methods was not available (Seale, 2004). Therefore, a model was proposed to guide the present research.

The characteristics of philosophy considered the scope and content of the discipline. Philosophy's breadth includes: knowledge, being, values, religion and many other diverse topics (Schroder, 2005). Questioning figures heavily as a philosophy characteristic. Despite this, it was noted that these questions do not necessarily have to provide answers (Diamond,

2001). The questioning is *the* point. Questions targeted towards philosophy as an endeavour can be termed metaphysics. An example from Wittgenstein was used to illustrate this type of philosophical questioning, however the section also took into account the views of other philosophers such as Rorty and Derrida. For the latter, philosophy could be characterised as having no point. For Derrida philosophy can be deconstructed to show it is a flawed endeavour. Despite this, the present thesis adopts the approach of Burman and Maclure, (2005) who argue that philosophy can attempt explanations as ends in themselves. This results in knowledge for the researcher that, without philosophy, would be otherwise unavailable to them.

The key philosophical perspectives were then discussed. This consisted of a discussion relating to realism and anti-realism. These were proposed as opposite ends of a continuum (Williams and May, 1996). Other illustrative locations on the continuum were idealism, constructionism and post modernism. Each was discussed in turn. Realists believe that reality exists independent of the mind, and researchers uncover and discover this reality (Walden, 2004). Idealists believe that although a reality exists, this reality is mediated through a priori categories in the mind (Bunnin and Tsui James, 1996). Therefore, it moves towards the anti-realist as reality is constructed by these categories. Constructionism moves further in that reality is constructed not by a priori categories, but through individual or social processes as the subject and object interact (Gergen and Gergen, 1993). Post modernists doubt the existence of any reality whether objective or constructed. They react by attempting to fracture existing doctrines by exposing meta-narratives as fallacies (Lyotard, 1979). They take an eclectic approach to explaining reality, and some go further in disputing philosophy itself. Overall though, it was suggested that philosophy is about seeing the world differently and bringing to light new ways of viewing the world (Solomon and Higgins, 1988).

The final section explicated the philosophy underpinning the current thesis. The section suggested that realism and anti-realism were mutually exclusive (Williams and May, 1996). The selection of the philosophy was considered important, as the choice made would influence other choices relating to ontology, epistemology, and later choices concerning research methodology and methods (Williams and May, 1996). The choice of the ontology was a consequence of the philosophical question concerning: what is reality? The ontology selected was anti-realism which led to an epistemological stance of constructionism. That is,

reality is constructed between the object and subject, and meaning is interpreted by the researcher (Burr, 1995). The specific epistemology was social constructionism which includes social and cultural influences upon the construction of meaning.

Overall the philosophical reflections chapter has attempted to consider the underpinning assumptions relating to how the research will be conducted. An influencing factor was the consideration that the choice of philosophy dictates subsequent decisions relating epistemology and research methodology (Beer, 1972). This appeared to be confirmed by the choice of an anti-realist ontology which informed the selection of constructionism and social constructionism. Despite this, other selections were available (for example post modernism). For the present thesis however, a social constructionist approach is adopted. This will produce a thesis which will be one account amongst a number of competing accounts (Firat and Schultz, 1997). Therefore, it is hoped that the thesis will provide a credible account which can be assessed via the principles of anti-realist social constructionist research evaluative criteria.

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

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3   LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Literature from the subject area of marketing was utilised to study the research topic; value. However, where the research required it, literature from other subject areas were also adopted. This was to provide a multifaceted consideration of value. To aid the thesis intelligibility this review is influenced by four key questions identified by Gash (2000):

- What research already exists in the study of value?
- What are the key themes emerging from the literature?
- What are the main limitations of this existing work?
- What research gaps exist in the literature for the present thesis to exploit?

Therefore, the structure of the literature review is designed to address these areas. The literature review considers:

- The marketing context: this section addresses how marketing is one of the subject areas at the forefront of value research (Ple and Cáceres, 2010). The development of marketing is charted from its economic foundations to its current fragmented state (Wilkie and Moore, 2003). In this section value is taken as a *"point of departure"* (Holbrook, 1991, p.107), and the influence of service marketing upon this departure point is explicated (Gilmore, 2003). The section concludes by re-emphasising how marketing has evolved whereby value is now considered to be of paramount importance to the subject area (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).
- Value as the nexus of service research: the concept of value has a long history (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). However, more recently value as an overarching concept for unification of marketing has been proposed (Woodhall, 2003; Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007; Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007)**.** In contemporary marketing, value is considered the locus of study for academic research (Gallarza et al., 2011). This is due to customers seeking service which is of value to them in their lifeworlds (Gummerus, 2011) Furthermore, value is viewed as being a source of competitive advantage for organisations (Porter 1985; Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007), and value creation is considered a significant contributor towards economic

prosperity (Moran and Ghoshal, 1999). This results in marketing being targeted toward understanding the value concept to exploit the opportunities this knowledge provides (Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007; Chatain, 2010).

- Value Perspectives: this section commences by identifying value as a multiple meaning concept. It is identified that marketing academics have no definitive meaning or consensus for the term value (Mikkonen, 2011; Ravald, 2009). A discussion is then explicated regarding where value is located, the processes used to create value, and whether value creation and determination are dichotomous or simultaneous processes (Gummerus, 2011).

- Value Discourses: the preceding discussions inform various discourses which combine various sources to provide coherent, if contradictory, approaches to value creation and determination. This section identifies five main discourses. Namely: the goods discourse, the experiential discourse, the resource based discourse, the practice discourse, and the customer discourse. Each discourse provides insights for value research, and represents the dominant literatures within the subject area.

- Value Types: customer value is suggested as being composed of a range of value types. These value types sought by customers include many overlapping components such as *"efficiency"* value (Holbrook, 1996, p.3) and *"utilitarian"* value (Gallarza and Gill, 2008, p.7). However, more distinct value types sought by customers are evident. For example, *"symbolic"* value (Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007, p.8) or "*escapism*" value (Verhagen et al., 2011, p.201). Whilst it is possible that customer may only seek value of one type, it is also possible that a number of value types may be aggregated to form what Woodhall (2003, p.24) terms a *"gestalt".* This section explores the types of value which may form this gestalt.

- Rationale for the selection of literature gaps to exploit: this section concludes by re-visiting Gash's (2000) four key questions. A special emphasis is placed upon the final question which concerns gaps in the literature to exploit.

3.2 The Marketing Context

The study of value for this thesis is set within the academic context of marketing. This subject area is currently at the forefront of research into this topic. Ple and Cáceres (2010) conducted an electronic EBSCO search for the term value creation. This resulted in approximately half of all the results being identified as marketing related. Furthermore, the

historical basis of this theses - a service quality study - was originally conceived within the marketing subject area. However, during the service quality research, significant changes in the literature became evident (see for example, Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This rendered the concept of service quality as a somewhat peripheral activity, and value became the primary focus for marketers (Gallarza et al., 2011; Gallarza and Gil, 2008; Ruiz et al., 2008; Hosany and Witham, 2009). This resulted in a change of emphasis for the thesis which moved from quality to value to reflect this significant shift.

The development of contemporary marketing is generally regarded as a formalisation of activity that has been carried out for hundreds, if not thousands of years (Hollander et al. 2005; Ambler, 2006). It is currently viewed as a subject area that has continually evolved and developed through various stages (Gummesson et al., 2011; Kumar et al., 2009). Firstly, in the early 1900s concepts were developed relating to exchange in the market place (Fuchs, 2011). Secondly, the 1920s-1950s established the infrastructure of marketing theory through the publication of journals, books, and academic courses. This period also consolidated marketing topics such as: the means of distribution, exchange mechanisms, functions of marketing, pricing, and the utility of advertising (Wilkie and Moore, 2003). Finally, the 1950s and 60s were the periods that really cemented marketing as a major management force (Kumar et al., 2009). This era has been called a paradigm shift in marketing thought. Key aspects of this shift were a focus towards managerialism, and *"behavioural and quantitative sciences"* for marketing's development (Wilkie and Moore, 2003, p.117). This has resulted in marketing being accepted – paradigmatically - within both the business and academic communities (Gallarza et al., 2011).

The corpus of literature in contemporary marketing is problematised by the fragmentation of the discipline into various sub-disciplines such as: consumer behaviour, macro-marketing, marketing strategy, place marketing, marketing research, marketing ethics, social marketing, marketing communications, E marketing, relationship marketing, and service marketing (Tamilia, 2009). It appears that new avenues for marketing study continually emerge (Levy, 2006). Wilkie and Moore (2003, p.116) comment: *"An examination of today's research cannot come close to capturing the total expanse of thought in the marketing domain."*

Mindful of this expanding, fragmented, specialised, marketing domain, this review addresses the topic of value by proposing it as a key *"point of departure"* within contemporary marketing literature (Holbrook, 1991. p.107). In addition it should be recognised that value is also heavily influenced by service marketing thought (Gummerus, 2011). Service marketing was a reaction to marketing's historical evolution which was had its foundations rooted in economics and goods based marketing (Gummesson, 2007). Services as being different to goods started to gain traction in the early 1980's (Gilmore, 2003). Concerned with "*breaking free from product* [goods] *marketing*" (Shostack, 1977, p.73) and identifying "*services marketing is* [as] *different*" (Berry, 1980, p.24), this conceived a new approach for marketing: one that included the notion that service marketing was the converse of goods marketing (Berry, 1980; Judd, 1964; Rathmell, 1966; Rathmell 1974; Regan, 1963, Shostack, 1977, Thomas, 1978).

The plethora of research output during the period of the 1980s-present established the new subject area of services marketing (Gilmore, 2003). This gave prominence and dominance to the idea that services were different from goods. The primary differences being incompatible characteristics, namely: intangibility (Bateson, 1977) inseparability (Carmen and Langeard, 1980), heterogeneity (Parasuraman et al., 1985) and perishability (Zeithaml, 1985) of services vis a vis goods. Simultaneously, differing conceptualisations, definitions, and a host of differing approaches to the marketing and management of services were developed during this period. These issues – which are vigorously debated and contentious - continue to inform contemporary service marketing (Lovelock and Gummesson, 2004; Keh and Pang, 2010). Despite service marketing being established as its own subject area, many marketers resist the notion that services significantly differ from goods, and their opposition has been enduring (see for example, Levitt, 1972, 1981; Baker, 1981; Wyckham et al., 1975; Moeller, 2010). For Keh and Pang (2010) whether the goods/services distinction is maintained depends upon the offering provided. For them, some services require the differences to be retained. Others are less comfortable with these distinctions (Moeller, 2010). In their seminal article – *"Evolving to a New Dominant Logic for Marketing"* - Vargo and Lusch (2004, p.1) directly enter the goods/services debate. Ruling out the notion of service marketing as being different, they suggest that all marketing needs to break free. They state:

"We argue that instead of service marketing breaking free from goods marketing, it is all of marketing that needs to break free from manufacturing-based model of the exchange of output"

(Vargo and Lusch 2004b, p.325)

Vargo and Lusch (2004 a, b; 2006, a; 2010) argue for the integration of both goods and service theories. Diverging from goods based language, Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2006; 2008; 2011) opt for a new language called service dominant logic (S-D logic). This new approach is based upon the view that service marketing developed due to the inappropriateness of goods based logic for service industries, however they also claim that the inadequacies of the service marketing paradigm led service marketers down inappropriate paths:

"we advocate that the strategy of differentiating services from goods should be abandoned and replaced with a strategy of understanding how they are related. Service is the common denominator in exchange, not some special form of exchange (i.e.., what goods are not); as a number of scholars (i.e. Gummesson 1995; Kotler 1980) have noted, both goods and services render service" (Vargo and Lusch, 2004b, p.334).

This work by Vargo and Lusch (2004) is credited with propelling value to the forefront of contemporary marketing thought (Woodruffe and Flint, 2006). S-D logic provided a significant impetus for the study of value within service research (Wooliscroft, 2008). S-D logic throws marketing's focus firmly upon the concept of value (Wikstrom et al., 2010; Babin and James, 2010), and value from this perspective is viewed as the co-creation efforts of the customer, the provider, the network, or the value constellation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Normann and Ramirez, 1993; Lusch et al., 2010; Sindhav, 2011).

3.3 Value as the Nexus of Service Research

The study of value has a lengthy history. The ancient Greeks (i.e. *"Aristotle")* discussed value, whilst more recently "Adam Smith*…..David Ricardo…..and Karl Marx*, explicated value in exchange (Woodhall, 2003, p.3). The latter also differentiated between value in exchange and value in use (Boztepe, 2007; Humphreys and Grayson, 2008). Contemporary marketing

literature has placed value centre stage when it comes to considering service and how customers experience it (Boksberger and Melsen 2011; Gummerus, 2011; Voima et al., 2010; Babin and James, 2010; Svensson, 2006). Woodhall (2003, p.2) states that value is *"a newly dominant concept"* and the S-D logic work of Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2006; 2008; 2010; 2011) has elevated the notion of value to the forefront of service research (Gummesson et al., 2011)*.* The notion of value as a *super-ordinate concept* has upstaged previous dominant research areas such as service quality, service satisfaction, and relationship marketing (Gallarza et al., 2011, p.186; Prahalad and Ramswarmy 2004; Gallarza and Gil, 2008; Ruiz et al., 2008; Gummerus, 2011; Hosany and Witham, 2009; Humphreys and Grayson, 2008), An example of this is provided by Macdonald, et al., (2010, p.3) who observe: "*service quality is often……. obsessed with what the provider delivers, as opposed to the value the customer gets*".

In addition, service quality, satisfaction, and relationship management concepts are viewed as unstable (Hardie 1998; Rigopoulou et al., 2008; Mikulic and Prebezac, 2011; Schmitt, 2003). One of the criticisms of the current conceptualisations is that they produce: *" mixed results"* "*ignore customer characteristics*" *implicitly treat all customers as identical"* (Anderson et al., 2008, p.366), and "*conceptualise customer relationship management as targeting and managing the 'right' customers"* (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004, p.6). These predominantly firm centric notions of value are not sustainable.

Value has attained priority of late as being the claimed as the nexus of the marketing effort (Gallarza et al., 2011). Although this is nothing new (see for example, Alderson, 1957; Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) the work of Vargo and Lusch (2004) has cemented value as a key research domain. In fact, value is claimed as being the basis upon which marketing functions (Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007). That is due to the belief that customer will use that which is of greatest value to them (Gummerus, 2011). Value is also seen as a key research topic due to its ability to gain a competitive advantage for the organisation (Porter 1985; Gallarza et al., 2011). Woodruff (1999, p.139) suggested that value is "*source of competitive advantage.... beyond quality"*. That is, customers attaining more value from a particular organisation are likely to generate greater revenues for that business (Pynnonen et al., 2011). This *differential advantage* being based upon the customer's recognition of

superior value (Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007, p.7). This results in organisations being able to attain a greater share of the market than their competitors (Gallarza and Gill, 2008). Furthermore, a value focus suggests that organisations may be able to capture more of the value they create (Chatain, 2010). The importance of value is the recognition that customers use that lens to seek service which meets their requirements (Witell et al., 2011). Value creation can also be viewed in the broader context whereby new creation results in economic growth for *"the organisational economy"* (Moran and Ghoshal, 1999, p.390).

Value has gained prominence as being a broader more encompassing concept than quality, satisfaction, and relationship management, and one which may even provide marketing with a unifying concept as a nexus for reconciling the disciplines fragmentation **(**Woodhall, 2003; Brock Smith and Colgate 2007; Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). The move from a quality, satisfaction, and relationship management focus is reflected in mainstream marketing's change of emphasis towards value. This is typified by the American Marketing Association current definition of marketing. This definition has evolved from a producer to a customer focus in the 1930s, to an exchange and satisfaction focus the 1980s, then a value delivered via relationship marketing focus of the early 2000's. In its most recent development, value is stressed in a broader context that emphasises value constellations involving a network of recipients (Ple and Caceres, 2011). This is shown in figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Evolution of Value

As adopted by the National Association of Marketing Teachers, an American Marketing Association predecessor organization: [Marketing is] the performance of business activities that direct the flow of goods and services from producers to consumers

1935

2004

Marketing is an organizational function and a set of processes for creating, communicating, and delivering value to customers and for managing customer relationships in ways that benefit the organization and its stakeholders

1985

[Marketing is] the process of planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods and services to create exchanges that satisfy individual and organizational objectives.

2007

Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering, and exchanging offerings that have value for customers, clients, partners, and society at large.

(Source: American Marketing Association Press Release, 2008, p.1)

Marketing has clearly moved from a service quality, service satisfaction, and relationship marketing focus to a value focus (Gummesson, 2006). Notable examples of research in this area includes of the work of Holbrook (1999; 2005; 2006), Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2007; 2008; 2010; 2011), Voima et al., (2010), Edvardsson et al., (2011), Gummerus (2010; 2011), Gummesson (2008), Korkman (2006), Korkman et al., (2010), Heinonen et al., 2010) and one of the pioneers of service marketing and service quality: Gronroos, (2006; 2008a; 2008b; 2011). Gummerus (2011) highlighted this value centric notion in explaining why her Ph.D thesis studied value as the focus of her research. She felt that the recent surge of interest in value had demonstrated that this was the key concept for consideration at this juncture (Wikstrom et al., 2010). Similarly, Sheth and Uslay (2007) hailed marketing's move toward a value focus and called for further research into the concept.

3.4 Value Perspectives

One of the key aspects of studying value is the notion that value is *polysemic*. (Gallarza and Gill, 2008.p.6; Gallarza et al., 2011.p. 182). For example, Gallarza et al., (2011) provide no fewer than twenty eight challenges of value research each with their own particular - in some cases mutually exclusive - emphasis. Boztepe (2007, p.55) outlines that the value literature has no clear meaning or *"consensus"* (Mikkonen, 2011; Ravald, 2009). The concept also has subtle nuances that can result in very differing perspectives of value (Woodruff, 1997). For example, notions such as value in exchange (Ali-Yrkko, 2011), value in use (Gronroos, 2008b), sign value (Baudrillard, 2006), and value in context (Heinonen et al, 2010; Gronroos, 2011) are all prominent value discussions, but have very differing meanings in the literature. In addition, value as created, co-created, and those who do not differentiate the two - the prosumption and produsage camps - compete for attention. Then whether value is created and determined separately or simultaneously also interlocks with the previous discussions (Gummerus, 2011). These fundamentals are combined into various discourses as to what value pertains. However, three preliminary discussions are necessary prior to explicating these value discourses.

3.4.1 The Location of Value

The first preliminary discussion which influences the wider discourses is the notion of where value is located. This can be viewed as a specific point where value is found (Prahalad and Ramswarmy, 2004). The key points are:

- Exchange value: this view is usually associated with *"the delivery of value"* by the provider (Frow and Payne 2011, p.225). That is, the *"point of sale"* benefits a customer gains in exchange for the price paid (Humphreys and Grayson 2008, p.3; Glyn et al 2011). In this view value is seen as being embedded in a commodity which is produced and distributed to an end consumer (Gebauer et al., 2010). This ties in with the idea of value being able to be added within the chain of production (Ali-Yrkko et al., 2011; Porter, 1985). Exchange value could be viewed as an enduring economic anachronism that sees providers focussing upon adding value to products rather than viewing how value emerges for the customer (Gronroos, 2011; Kowalkowski 2011; Witell et al., 2011).

- Use Value: Vargo and Lusch (2004) move beyond value in exchange, to emphasise the notion that value is realised in use. Humphrey and Grayson (2008, p.3) succinctly encapsulate value in use as being realised only when *"use or consumption"* takes place. That is, value is not simply exchanging things, but value emerges whilst using things.

- Sign Value: some move further in suggesting that value emerges from sign value (Baudrillard, 2006). Value in this view is that products are consumed for what they signify regardless their exchange or use value (Boztepe, 2007). For example, some artefacts have little exchange or use value but may signify customers association towards a particular desirable genre. Venkatesh et al., (2006, p.257) also views value as being interwoven with the *"symbolism"* and meaning customers associate with service. In this view the location of value is in symbols and meaning. It is interesting that the likes of Achrol and Kotler (2006) and the heavily cited Gummesson, (1995) claim that customers purchase service. In the sign value viewpoint, customers purchase not service per se, but symbols and meaning (Woodruff and Flint, 2006).

- Contextual Value: Heinonen and Stranvik (2009) view value as something that must be understood by viewing the broader contextual lives of customers. Heinonen et al., (2010, p.539) view value as *"being experienced before, during and after the*

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service". Hence, value in use in customers lives and how they live their lives seeking value should be the focus of attention. That changes the point of value to contextual. Voima et al., (2010, p.9) concur, also suggesting value is found by customers in context:

"Value is not isolated since the reality of the customer is interconnected to the realities of others. Value is therefore embedded in the dynamic, collective and shared customer realities, which even the customer cannot always orchestrate"

Gronroos (2011) views context as a stable phenomenon. Therefore, despite agreeing that context is important he proposes that: *"value in use is dependent on the context, abbreviated to value in use" (*Gronroos, 2011, p.18). This is contradicted somewhat by Chandler and Vargo (2011) who take a similar view to Heinonen and Stranvik (2009) and Voima et al., (2010) in that they view context as in a state of constant flux as networks of actors interact. However, the Chandler and Vargo (2011) view of context also differs from Voima et al., (2010) in that the latter views the context as the customers overall specific lifeworld, whereas the former could be any context. Chandler and Vargo, (2011, p.36) do however, point out they are viewing context from *a "meta layer"* hence its breadth of coverage. They go on to state that specific contexts should be defined for the location of value. This supports the notion of context in the Voima et al., (2010) version. The Voima et al., (2010) version however is specifying a particular customer centric context.

Although the above perspectives can be said to relate to where value emerges, the literature is fragmented on this subject and clear demarcations between these various terms are not forthcoming (Gummerus, 2011; Mills et al., 2010). Added to this confusion is that fact that value is *socially constructed* (Voima et al., 2010, p.5; Edvardsson et al., 2011, p.327) is always *tempora*l and *spatial* (Heinonen 2006, p.380), may be subject to customers changing *what they value"* (Flint et al., 2002, p.102), and influenced by *"a complex whole where several actors and resources are involved"* (Ravald, 2009, p.2) or what Normann and Ramirez (1993, p.65) term *value constellation*[s]. Despite this, differing perspectives relating to value are both emancipating and enabling. Ultimately, understanding these subtle differences and overlaps will result in *"a deeper understanding of customer value"* (Woodruff, 1997, p.141).

3.4.2 Value Processes

The processes from which value is created is the second preliminary discussion. The term value creation does suggest that specific procedures or techniques for innovation may be the lens from which to view value creation. However, value creation in the marketing literature is more akin to specifying the value creating architecture rather than the specific steps to value creation such as: *"how to find good ideas"* (Berkun, 2010, p.88) or *"user friendly design tools that enable users to develop new product innovations"* (von Hippel and Katz, 2002, p.821). Therefore, this preliminary section takes the overarching perspective. That is, it identifies the competing perspectives relating to the appropriate architecture from which value emerges (Gronroos, 2011).

Adner and Kapoor (2010, p.306.) outline an architecture whereby the organisation is part of an overall *"ecosystem".* They view the organisation as the co-ordinator of internal and external actors various activities that will allow the delivery of value to customers. Using goods dominant language they speak of value chains, and upstream and downstream activities. Echeverri and Skalen (2011, p.351) term this *"non interactive value formation".* This view is very much producer centric, and under increasing scrutiny by those who see value as co-created between customers and providers, networks, and value constellations. Norman and Ramirez (1993, p.65) call this approach *"outmoded"* and suggest a move from a *"value chain to a value constellation".* Value is:

"not produced in factories and then consumed by customers; it is co-created by economic actors who exchange a variety of resources that go beyond goods and money" (Michel et al., 2008, p.154).

Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2006; 2008; 2011) outline that for them value is co-created. One or more parties in the value creation process – for example, a producer and consumer – bring their own resources (skills, knowledge, etc) to co-create value (Ng et al., 2011). This moves away from viewing the producer as the deliverer of value to one in which two or more parties interact via their resources to create value. Lusch et al., (2011) illustrate the broadening of value co-creation to include networks. This view which is heavily influenced by Norman and Ramirez (1993) who suggest that value co-creation is the result of a network of *"social and economic actors"* working together (Lusch et al., 2011, p.21; Michel et al.,

2008). The similarity between value networks and value constellations has resulted in some using the terms "*networked value constellations*" or interchanging networks and constellations terminology due to their isomorphism (Gordijn et al., 2011, p.1). For some, the terms of value creation and value co-creation lack relevance. It simply reinforces a focus upon a provider and customer dichotomy (Tofler, 1980; Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010; Bruns and Schimdt, 2011).

The tendency to dichotomise the notion of producer and consumer has led to some attempting to define new lexicons to reflect the interplay and meshing of terms such as produsage (Bruns and Schimdt, 2011) and prosumer (Toffler 1980). For example, Ritzer and Jurgenson (2010, p. 1) use Toffler's (1980) term *"prosumption"*. Toffler states:

"Prosumption involves both production and consumption rather than focussing on either one" (Toffler, 1980, p.280)

Basically, this notion concerns customers creating (producing) their own value. Humphreys and Grayson (2008) highlight how through consumption the customers produce themselves. For example, driving a Ferrari as a consumption experience symbolically produces a new person; a person of wealth, importance, and status. Therefore, consumption and production mesh inseparably. In a narrower context a producer cannot produce value in advance of usage. Therefore, the customer has to find value in use. That is, they must use something for it to be of value: by using it they help create value (Humphrey and Grayson 2008). Gidhagen et al., (2011, p.394) concurs suggesting the idea that the customer proposes value requirements for themselves, and hence may be viewed in a *"value proposing role"* . Wikstrom et al., (2010, p.28) makes a similar point suggesting customers as the *"value specifier"*. Cole (2011) cites Bourdieu (1986) and explains how consumers will attempt to produce conditions that relates to their consumption. Therefore, this could be viewed as there being no distinction to be made between value co-creation parties. Despite this, it does bring to the fore the notion that customers may be the proposers of value in their own right, rather than as part of value co-creation. Bruns and Schmidt (2011, p.1) agree stating *"new terms ….can act as a creative disruption enabling us to take a fresh look at emerging phenomena".*

3.4.3 Value Creation and Determination

The final preliminary discussion concerns whether value is created and then determined, or whether this process is simultaneous. Taking the former, this could be conceptualised as having two main facets: *value creation* and *value determination* (Gummerus, 2011, p.14). This tends to fall in line with some of the key discourses which shows value creation and determination separately, whilst others do not discriminate between the terms. Gummerus (2011) shows this notion in terms of creation, determination, and time as customers experience service within their contextual lifeworlds. This is depicted in figure 4 below.

Figure 4 Value Creation and Determination
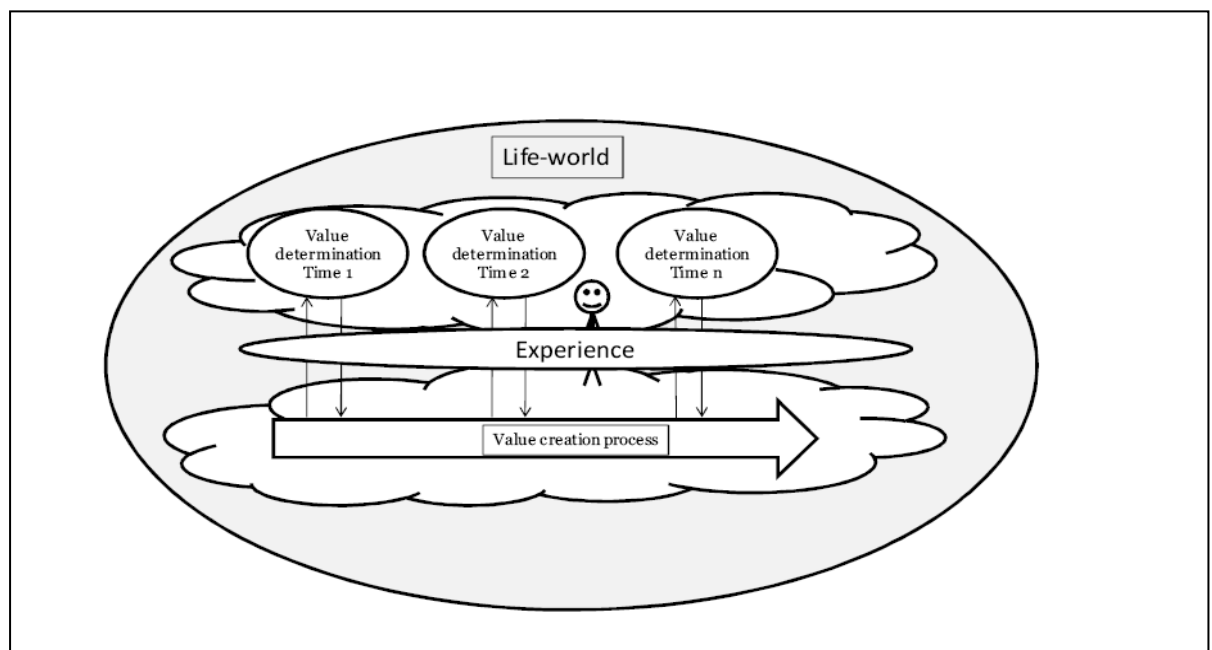
(Source: Gummerus, (2011, p.18).

This model is helpful in terms of illuminating the potential dichotomy (or lack of it) between value creation and value determination. For example, using a producer goods perspective - what Vargo et al., (2006, p.29) term "*a goods dominant logic*" - if a physical good was viewed as having value added to it, from their perspective this would be value creation. If the good was then displayed, the value to the customer would be determined when they purchased it (get/give value determination) (Tronvall, 2008). This would be an easy distinction to make between creation and determination. On the other hand, if value was

being created within an interaction between a service employee and a consumer, value could be created and determined simultaneously during the interaction between them (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006). The reader should note that this is a simple preliminary perspective. One that is contentious depending upon how value is viewed. For example, if the view of Heinonen et al., (2010) is taken, then value cannot be added to a physical product. That is, if customers do not value what is added, it has no value, therefore from this perspective the notion of value added is redundant. Another view from a resource based perspective is that value is potentially created as combinations of resources are *"deployed"*, however this value only exists if the "*potential*" is *realized* (Moran and Goshal 1999, p.p.392-393; Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Despite this, the intention here is simply to show the distinction between creation (wherever it is created) and determination (however it is determined). For the purposes of this literature review it is tentatively proposed that value is created and subsequently determined. However, it is also recognised that this could be simultaneous (Korkman 2006), and as such may represent a false distinction. It is used in this thesis as a method of convenience rather than a concrete dichotomy.

3.5 Value Discourses

These influencing concepts required explanation because some are complementary and some mutually exclusive. However, developing from these notions or combinations of them, several overarching value discourses can be discerned (Edvardsson et al., 2005; Gummerus, 2011; Korkman 2006). These various combinations of concepts are subsumed under general heading of value creation discourses. This value creation is in terms of broad value creation processes where value emerges (Gronroos, 2011), rather than specific procedures of value creation in terms of innovation. The key value discourses are the goods dominant discourse, the experiential discourse, the resources based discourse, the practice discourse and the customer discourse. These discourses may be viewed as the major avenues of research concerning the nature of customer value.

3.5.1 Goods Dominant Discourses

Based on the historical notion of exchange (Tronvall, 2008), value as part of the production process has long been a feature of goods dominant literature (Vargo and Lusch 2004;

Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011). That is, production embeds value " *into units of output"* (Vargo 2011, p.212) This is the view that value is inherent in the object (Holbrook, 1999) or that value is added to the goods as they travel through the value chain (Porter, 1985). Upon leaving the value chain the goods are ultimately consumed by the customer and the value is then destroyed (Gummesson, 2008; Gronroos, 2011; Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011). The goods dominant logic of value added is frequently been applied to services. This views value as created by producer of the service prior to, or within the service experience (Lepak et al., 2007; Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

The concept of value as designed into a production process as a linear (Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011) process and exchanged for something else of value has been questioned (Ballantyne et al., 2010). This not only includes the purported differences between goods and services, but also the nature of the processes of interaction inherent in services. Turnbull (2009) suggests that it is not companies who decide whether they have produced value, but customers (Heinonen, et al 2010). Value can only be created in the process of interaction (Ballantyne and Varey 2006; Vargo and Lusch 2004; Gronroos, 2006) rather than historical notions of value in exchange (Wittell et al., 2011). This exchange notion is now considered somewhat outdated following the work of: Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2006b), Korkman (2006), Heinonen and Strandvik (2009), Heinonen et al., (2010), Gronroos, (2006), Gummerus (2010), Gummesson (2007), which includes notions of customers as co-creators of value (Vargo and Lusch 2008), value creation as practices (Korkman, 2006), and value creation as solely customer created (Heinonen and Strandvik, 2009).

Goods dominant determination of value is usually associated with two cognitive strands; get/give and means end.

- Give/Get: Traditionally, value in exchange has been determined via the idea that you get something and you give something (Babin and James 2010; Gallarza and Gil, 2008). For example, you get value embedded in products in exchange for money (Monroe, 1990; Moliner, 2009; Kord and Snoj, 2010).   Heinonen and Strandvik (2010, p.34) comment: "*value has been modelled as a trade off between benefit and sacrifice*" (Zeithaml, 1985; Voima et al., 2010; Rust and Oliver 1994; Sandstrom

et al., 2008; Gronroos, 2009) That is, what you attain for the sacrifice you give (Holbrook, 1982; Gallarza and Gil, 2008). This notion has been modelled as:

"Customer value = perceptions of benefits/Total cost of ownership" (Christopher, 1997 cited in Brodie et al., 2008, p.142).

The get/give approach has also been termed as a *transactional posture* (Brodie et al., 2008.p. 145). This could be also viewed as *"marketing to"* rather than *"marketing with"* customers (Brodie et al., 2008, p.140). That is, customers are passive dupes who have pre-prepared products marketed to them. It is a *"present value"* perspective where marketers attempt to persuade customers that benefits exceed costs when they make purchases (Slater and Narver, 2000, p.120).

- Means End: Zeithaml (1988) was first to gain prominence in applying means end theory to quality and value determination. Stressing the rational nature of means end, she stated:

"The means end approach to understanding the cognitive structure of consumers holds that product information is retained in memory at several levels of abstraction" (Zeithaml, 1988, p.5).

Subsequently, Korkman (2006) cites; Gutman (1981), Gardial et al., (1994), Woodruffe and Gardial (1996), Woodruffe (1997), and Khalifa (2004) as supporting the notion that means end is the customers rational evaluation of a range of means leading to a desired end. An example of this would be product attributes. For example: a machines ability to clean a car that ultimately leads to the customers to the desired end for a clean car. This would ultimately end in the customers valuing the car more highly than when it is dirty.

Get/give and means-end are classifications within which customers process information in the brain cognitively and rationally to apprehend the value of an exchange (Voima et al 2010; Korkman 2006; Gummerus, 2011 Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This results in rationally determined value emanating from the information processed (Sanchez-Fernandez et al.,

2009). Despite this, the customer as a cognitive interpreter of stimuli has been criticised. Turnbull (2010, p. 1) suggests that value is a broader more esoteric notion to apprehend then get/give and means end imply. He suggests that cognitive rational processing perspectives fall short on Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982, p.132) proposal that *"fantasies, feelings and fun"* maybe integral hedonistic elements in determining value.

Woodall (2003) also emphases the subjective nature of value. In his review of value he identifies that value may differ from individual to individual, may be the result of deep desires, may be a multifaceted concept, and thus beyond the scope of rational determination. An overriding theme from Woodall's (2003, p.24) work is that value determination may be *"gestalt".* Korkman (2006) outlines similar idea when studying value as practice. Korkman (2006, p.25) deems this necessary due to limitations of other conceptualisations such as get give and means end. He suggests that the cognitive approach is too narrow and omits – amongst other things – *"affective responses"*. Overall, Holbrook (2006, p.211) outlines that cognitive interpretation and economic value as but one "*sub-species"* of value. He concludes that value is a much richer concept than such simplistic notions as get give and means end would suggest.

3.5.2 Experiential Discourses

Value through experiences is an outcome of research conducted during the 1980s and 90s (Prahalad and Ramswamy, 2004; Gentile et al., 2007). Key contributions from Hirschman and Holbrook(1982), Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), and later Pine and Gilmore (1998; 1999) established the experiential view. Other notable contributors to this perspective includes: Mathwick (2001); Schmitt (1999; 2003); Prahalad and Ramswamy (2004) and Caru and Cova, (2003, 2007). Despite this, the experiential view is often - incorrectly - attributed to Pine and Gilmore (1998; 1999) in sections of the academic literature.

The experiential perspective views value as being created in the experiences in which customer participate (Lee et al., 2010). It moves beyond exchange notions and contrasts

with the dominant rational economic explanations (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982) The experiential perspective considers the customers subjective views of experience. Pine and Gilmore, (1999, p.98) used the terms the *"experience economy"* to highlight that contemporary customers sought value from experiences rather than "*commodities*", *"goods"*, or *"services"* (Johnston and Kong, 2011*)*. Experiences consist of customers participation and connectivity within *"four realms of experience":* entertainment, education, esthetics, and escapism (Pine and Gilmore, 1998, p.102). The intention is to invoke customers to recall pleasurable experiences rather than simply using goods or services (Mathwick et al., 2001). This provides *"consumption experiences"* that *"are rich in value"* (Mathwick et al., 2001, p.41).

A key contributor to the value as experiential discourse is Holbrook (Brown, 2005). In fact, Holbrook (2006, p.213) claims, with some justification (Brown, 2005; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009) that his work explicated some 20 years previously:

"has since flowered into a virtual cottage industry in consulting circles….and on the marketing seminar circuit…..Latter day authors such as Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999) have given scant credit to the origin of this idea that CV (customer value) resides inn [sic] *a consumption experience".*

Holbrook represents consumer research into value in an unadulterated sense. He eschews management concerns (see for example: Holbrook 2005 (Spring), 2005 (Fall), 2007, 2008) and his research seeks to understand and report consumption experiences as ends in themselves (Brown, 2006). According to Brown (1996, p.165) Holbrook's work is a response against *"reductive minded managerialism"* which ignores experiential aspects of value creation. His work on value is based upon the definition that value is created during *"interactive, relativistic, preference, experience* [s]*"* (Holbrook, 1994, p.27; 1999, p.5; 2005, p.46) which results from:

 "playful leisure, sensory pleasures, day dreams, esthetic, enjoyment, and emotional responses" (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982, p. 132).

Each component of Holbrook's definition (Holbrook*,* 1994, p.27; 1999, p.5; 2005, p.46) may be explained separately. Interactive value may be viewed from a subjective/objective or both perspective. Interactive value is the *"relationship between some subject (a consumer) and some object (a product)" (*Holbrook, 2005, p.46). The relativistic component entails a comparison between objects of evaluation that is of a personal nature to each consumer and dependent upon the contextual situation of particular consumers. Preference relates to what the customers favour in an evaluation. Finally, experience value is not concerned with specific objects or features, but the overall experience. This explanation of value from experiences endures. It is a much cited justification for value, experiences, and value from experiences discourses (Sanchez-Fernandez et al., 2009).

Schmitt (1999, p.xiii) identifies value from experience as consisting of differing potential elements. These are *"sensory", "affective", "creative", "physical", "behaviour*" and *"lifestyle*", and *"social-identity*" experiences". Experiences can also be applied to non traditional contexts. Lund et al. (2005 cited in Trine 2010, p.5) call these *"mega trends*" where experience encompasses a wide diversity of industries. For example, Gaggioli (2005, p.36) relates experiences to include technology systems. She claims that in the future customers and technology will interact to the point that an experience of this nature will be *"lived".* Similarly, Andrews and Drennan (2007) consider experiential value of mobile phone technology, and they provide a definition which is applicable to experiential value generally:

*"how the consumer experiences consumption objects embedded in their social worlds that is structured by interpretive frameworks that they apply to engage the object" (*Andrews and Drennan, 2007, p.3018).

Boswijk et al. (2005) develop Pine and Gilmore's (1999) notion of value from experience to ten characteristics. Namely, experience:

"including all one's senses"….one's sense of time is altered….one is touched emotionally….the process is unique….there is contact with the 'raw stuff' the real thing…. one does something and undergoes something….there is a sense of playfulness….one has a feeling of having control….there is a balance between the challenge and one's own capacities….there is a clear goal" (Boswijk et al., 2005, p.2).

Arnould and Price, (1993, p.25) move beyond experience to view value as being found in extra ordinary experience. They view extra ordinary experience as containing the element of *"newness"* with high emotions and *"unusual events"* and interpersonal interactions being catalysts for creating "*joy and valuing*" (Arnould and Price, 1993, pp. 25, 41). This view also ties in with Pine and Gilmore's (1999) claim that the next stage of the experience economy is the transformation economy. That is predicted to arrive when experiences become commodified. Thus, value is found in transformations where the individual is changed (transformed) by experiences. However, the focus is not upon the experience but the individual and how they can be transformed, and how this provides value for them.

Overall some core components of experiences are refined into a succinct definition by Gentile et al., (2007, p.397):

"The customer experience originates from a set of interactions between a customer and a product, a company, or party of its organisation, which provoke a reaction (La Salle and Britton, 2003; Shaw and Ivens, 2005). This experience is strictly personal and implies the customers involvement at differing levels (rational, emotional sensorial, physical and spiritual) (La Salle and Britton 2003; Schmitt, 1999)"

The experiential view of how value is created is not without criticism. Turnbull, (2010, p.1) calls customer experience *"ill defined"*. Others have made similar claims (see: Gentile et al., 2007; Tynan and McKechnie, 2009). Johnston and Kong (2011, p.5) state that research into customer experience - from which value is acquired by the customer - is still in its "*infancy*". Johnson and Kong (2011, p.6) also make a valid point that experience is often associated with "*entertainment*". However, for them experiencing service whether positive or negative is inescapable. A more significant problem for the experience perspective relates to the idea that all service should evolve to be extraordinary experiences. This is in the sense of the dominant definitions of experience perpetuated by the likes of Pine and Gilmore (1998; 1999) and Schmitt (1999; 2003).

Holbrook (2001) calls the approach of mainstream experiential perspective as being little more than a mouth piece for modern capitalism. He views the value seeker as being

"steamrolled by the corporate juggernaught" (Holbrook, 2001, p.152). This results in experiences that are little more than superficial, and driven by marketing propaganda to promote a particular view of what is desirable. Bryman (2001) makes similar points relating to the Disneyfication of society. He cites services such as "*Hard Rock Café, Planet Hollywood…..Rainforest Café*" as being typifications of the Disney approach to experiences (Bryman, 2001, p.29). Although this type of experience may give the customer value, this is not necessarily good for society as Disney has been associated with condoning and promoting: *"sexual stereo types*" and*" individualism"* (Bryman, 2001, p.28). Ritzer (1993; 1998) makes similar points relating to the McDonaldization of society.

Gentile et al., (2007) identify that the experience perspective although receiving enthusiastic support by managers, the reality is quite different. Few organisations actually implement what "*many companies claim in their statements of intent"* (Gentile et al., 2007, p.396). Johnson and Kong (2011) claim this is possibly due to a dearth of research relating to how to actually create experiences. Their work however does appear to fall into the trap of suggesting that all that organisations should provide experiences, something which Holbrook (2006) opposes with vigour. In a brutal attack on mainstream experience literature, Holbrook (2006) devastates its poor theoretical underpinnings and lack of empirical support. He also criticises the view that all services should aim at creating entertainment type experiences. Nevertheless, on balance, the experiential nature of value has much to offer service research and practice. This due to the focus it places upon the more emotional aspects of experience. This has produced many insights into value creation, of which Holbrook is a major contributor (Brown, 2005).

In determining experiential value, Holbrook (1994; 1999) offers a typology. The overall typology has three overarching dimensions: the degree to which value is extrinsic or intrinsic, self oriented or other orientated, or active or reactive. These overarching dimensions consist of various types of value (see section 3.5). For Holbrook (1994; 1999) value is determined via gestalt assessment of his typology. His work has been described by Sanchez-Fernandez et al., (2009, p.97) as: *"the most comprehensive approach to the value construct because it captures more potential sources of value than do other*

conceptualisations". Woodhall (2003) also views determination of value via this overall assessment of individual value types.

Holbrook's work is not immune to criticism though. Smith (1996) suggests that the literature used by Holbrook was sparse in developing his conceptualisation. This does appear to be somewhat unfair, as Holbrook (1994) extensively cites previously literature. However, to Smith's (1996) credit he does concede that Holbrook (1994) calls for more research into the conceptualisation of value. Subsequently, Smith (1996) himself sets about exploring the nature of value in relation to ethics. Sanchez-Fernandez et al., (2009) - although supporters of the Holbrook typology - suggest that flaws are apparent in three key areas. This impacts upon the experiential approach in general and in determining value specifically. Firstly, the typology is complex, and this therefore makes apprehending value problematic. Secondly, the categories within the typology are not clearly defined, and overlapping value types appear to be evident (Sanchez-Fernandez et al., 2009). Finally, empirical attempts to apprehend value are limited by the selection - for study - of only a small number value types from the Holbrook typology . That is, few attempts have been made to fully utilise the entire typology.

Brown (2011) a loyal supporter of the experiential perspective criticises the common introspective (auto ethnography) approach to determining value undertaken by academic researchers. He suggests that this approach to studying value is perceived by others as little more than a peripheral endeavour. Indeed, not taken seriously by mainstream academia (Tiwsakul and Hackley, 2011). Directly assaulted by Wallendorf and Brucks (1993) the experiential introspective approach to determining value is stated as lacking methodology authenticity. Although this appears somewhat harsh, Brown (2011, p.6) ingeniously states it is time for experiential introspective researchers to *"wake up and smell the coffin".* By this Brown (2011) suggests that the value introspectors have much to contribute to value research, but not in its present form. Brown (2011, p.5) recommends a *"re-branding"* of introspective research with a suggested name of *"pragmatic marketing".* He contends that this name would give this introspective research a more credible image.

Generally, the determination of value in the experiential perspective does not progress beyond suggestions of gestalt evaluations (Woodhall, 2003). Gentile et al., (2007, p.397) outline that many types of value are usually combined to create an *"holistic gestalt".* The closest they get to specifying the process by which this takes place is to claim it is the comparison between "*customer expectations"* and "*stimuli"* from various *"interactions"* during the experience (Gentile et al., 2007, p.397). This type of determination process has been frequently criticised in the service quality literature (see for example: Buttle, 1996), and there appears little evidence of its veracity in determining value. Fiore and Kim (2007, p.423) suggest that value determination is based upon a *"stimulus - organism - response"* to determining experiential value. This model basically involves psychological cognitive and affective evaluations of stimuli from which value is thus determined. Turnbull (2010) views experiences as being phenomenologically determined by customers. This results in their determination of value. For Gaggioli (2005) the determination of value by customers is made utilising only partial available information. That is, from a wide variety of stimuli value is subjectively perceived (Gaggioli, 2005). Despite this, Helkkula (2011) lament that the need for a substantial review of existing experiential literature is required. Helkkula (2011) attempts to fill that gap herself but does not develop her review to include how value is determined. This may not be the problem it first appears. As noted in section 3.4.3, value creation and value determination are not necessarily separate entities. These concepts may be isomorphic .

3.5.3 Resource Based Discourses

The resource based view of value creation is focused upon the firm, customers, and customers and firms networks combining in interactions so that value is jointly co-created through the application of resources (Ngo and O'Cass, 2009). As value creation is key to gaining a competitive advantage, the resource based view takes a "*market with"* rather than a "*market to"* approach (Brodie et al., 2008, p.145; Ngo and O'Cass, 2009). This resources based view of value creation has been brought to the fore in marketing by Vargo and Lusch (2004). Despite this, the resource based view of value creation does have a lengthy history.

Vargo and Lusch (2004) sketch the history of the resources based view of value creation. Starting in the 1700s they move through to more contemporary literature which outlines that nature of resources as potential value creators (ibid). Prahalad and Hamel (1990, p.7) advocate that resources may be combined into distinct competencies, which they term *"embedded skills"* for achieving competitive advantage. Barney (1991, p.101) specified that firm resources included: "*assets, capabilities, organisational processes, firm attributes"*, information, and "*knowledge".* Grant (1991) outlined that resource advantages need to be capable of longevity, not easily imitated, transferred, or replicated. The resource based view of value creation is the ability of the organization to integrate *"individual specialized knowledge"* for this purpose (Grant, 1996, p.375). At this early point in the evolvement of the resource based view, the focus was firmly on the firm and inward looking. However, Prahalad and Ramswarmy (2004) documented further developments in their paper *"Co-opting the Customer Competence".* This paper charted "*collaboration"* and networking amongst companies, but moved the discussion to include customers as potential resource contributors and thus value creators (Prahalad and Ramswarmy, 2004, p.79):

"The competence that customers bring is a function of the knowledge and skills they possess, their willingness to learn and experiment, and their ability to engage in an active dialogue….recognition that consumers are a source of competence forces managers to cast an even wider net: competence now is a function of the collective knowledge available to the whole system – an enhanced network of traditional suppliers, manufacturers, partners, investors, and customers" (Prahalad and Ramswarmy, 2004, p. 80-81)

Vargo and Lusch (2004) are largely credited with bringing together diverse themes into a single cohesive logic which they called service dominant logic (S-D logic) (Holttinen, 2010; Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2006, 2008; 2010, 2011, Ballantyne et al., 2010; Gronroos, 2009; Gronroos and Ravald 2010; Gummesson and Polese, 2009; Cesaroni and Duque, 2010). That is, the creation of a unifying *"conceptualisation and framework"* for marketing (Vargo and Lusch 2010, p. 1). Heavily influenced by the resource based view, Vargo and Lusch (2004a,b; 2006, a, b; 2010), Vargo and Morgan (2005), and Vargo (2007; 2009) view S-D logic as the co-creation of customer value. The organisation, customers, and networks interact via the resources they each posses to co-create value (Ballantyne and Varey 2006). Co-creation of value occurs in use when: *"an individual consumes (or uses) a product (or service), as opposed to when the output is manufactured"* (Andreu et al., 2010, p.241).

The notion of co-creation of value is a move away from goods logic to a service logic. That is, the former is a dated perspective that views the organisation as the producer of value and the consumer as a destroyer of value. Co-creation of value is a process of mutual value creation for both sides (Ng et al., 2011). The early development of Vargo and Lusch's (2004, p.6) S-D logic concerns service (singular) being: *"the application of specialised skill and knowledge is* (as) *the fundamental unit of exchange"*.

S-D logic originally developed eight foundational premises (Vargo and Lusch 2004; Kalaignanam and Varadarajan, 2006). However, these were later modified and developed (Vargo and Lusch 2006; 2008) to their present form. These are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Ten Foundational Premises

	Premise	Explanation/Justification
FP1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange.	The application of operant resources (knowledge and skills), "service," is the basis for all exchange. Service is exchanged for service.
FP2	Indirect exchange masks the fundamental basis of exchange.	Goods, money, and institutions mask the service-for-service nature of exchange.
FP3	Goods are distribution mechanisms for service provision.	Goods (both durable and non-durable) derive their value through use – the service they provide.
FP4	Operant resources are the fundamental source of competitive advantage.	The comparative ability to cause desired change drives competition.
FP5	All economies are service economies.	Service (singular) is only now becoming more apparent with increased specialization and outsourcing.
FP6	The customer is always a cocreator of value.	Implies value creation is interactional.
FP7	The enterprise cannot deliver value, but only offer value propositions.	The firm can offer its applied resources and collaboratively (interactively) create value following acceptance, but can not create/deliver value alone.
FP8	A service-centered view is inherently customer oriented and relational.	Service is customer-determined and cocreated; thus, it is inherently customer oriented and relational.
FP9	All economic and social actors are resource integrators.	Implies the context of value creation is networks of networks (resource-integrators).
FP10	Value is always uniquely and phenomenological determined by the beneficiary.	Value is idiosyncratic, experiential, contextual, and meaning laden.

(Source: Vargo and Akaka, 2009, p.35).

S-D logic attempts to provide a new paradigm for marketing in general and value specifically (Achrol and Kotler, 2006; Shaw et al., 2011). S-D logic is overarching in that its premises have

subsumed both the goods and services schools of thought (Tokman and Beitelspacher, 2011). The thrust of S-D logic is concentrated upon value resulting from the application of operand and operant resources (Ngo and O'Cass, 2009). More specifically, both producers and consumers bring operand and operant resources to co-create value (Williams and Aiken, 2011). Operand and operant resources are defined as:

"Operand resources….resources on which an operation or act is performed to produce an effect…. operant resources, which are employed to act on operand resources (and other operant resources)" (Vargo and Lusch 2004a, p.204).

Together operand and operant resources and the premises of S-D logic are used to develop value propositions, with value only realised - in use - during the consumption of service (Ng et al., 2011). In this view value is potentially created   (value propositions) in resource combinations, and only realised when the customer determines value (Lusch et al., 2010). Vargo and Lusch (2004, pp.1-2) summarise SD logic as a move from the:

"Exchange of tangible goods (manufacturing) and toward the exchange of intangibles, specialized skills and knowledge, and processes (doing things for and with), which we believe points marketing toward a more comprehensive and inclusive dominant logic, one that integrates goods with services and provides a richer foundation for the development of marketing thought and practice".

A key point to be made concerning Vargo and Lusch (2004) is that the perspective is an inclusive macro view of marketing where value plays a coordinating role. From the commencement   to the conclusion of their seminal paper value features prominently (Woodruff and Flint, 2006). Vargo and Lusch (2004) talk of marketing's imperative being the:

 "creation of utility" (p.5), competitive advantage resulting from competence making a disproportionate contribution to customer perceived value" (p.5), " value is defined by and co-created with the consumer" (p.6)," value in use" (p.6, 7) " competitive advantage is the ability to conceive the whole value creating system and make it work" (p.9), " the consumer is always involved in the production of value" (p.11) "the focus is….value creating processes" (p.11) and *"making it easier for consumers to acquire customized service solutions efficiently through involvement in the value creating process" (p.13).*

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The S-D logic perspective has gained widespread attention in marketing literature (Gummesson et al., 2010). SD logic has also been applied to a variety of industries and contexts (see for example: Vargo and Morgan, 2005; Vargo and Lusch 2004b; Lusch et al., 2006; Lusch et al., 2006; Vargo 2007; Lusch et al 2007; Vargo and Lusch 2007; Lusch et al. 2010; Vargo 2009; Vargo and Lusch, 2010a; Vargo and Lusch, 2010b). In addition, Edvardsson et al., (2011) suggest that S-D logic outperforms goods logic (G-D logic) in the creation of valuable services. However S-D logic's veracity is contested and dissent is evident. Both value as co-created and realised in use has received criticism (Brown, 2011; Heinonen et al., 2010). For example, one criticism relates to the heavy involvement of the producer in value co-creation. That is, the S-D logic implies that equal weight be applied to studying both the customer and the provider: they are equal partners in the value generating processes (Vargo and Lusch 2004). Voima et al., (2010) disagree that value is equally co-created. They suggest that value is customer dominant, and value requires a broader contextual perspective than S-D logic promotes. This more expansive view includes: value as being realised in the consumers reality, and value as including social and experiential facets. Gummerus (2011) terms this; value creation in the customer's lifeworld.

Gronroos (2008) also provides counter argument. He outlines that the change from the original Vargo and Lush (2004) notion that value is co-produced, to their 2008 version that value is co-created has been accepted without question. Gronroos (2008) feels that this is inappropriate due to the theoretical and practical consequences of this ambiguous change. For Gronroos (2008) the customer is the creator of value and the company is the facilitator of customers value creation processes. Gronroos (2008, p.300) terms this service logic, and differentiates itself from SD logic by virtue of: *"a service and goods-centred approach to understanding customers are different in nature, the term service logic is preferred over the terms service dominant logic".*

For Gronroos, the differences between goods and services still remain - for marketing - as key departure points. Significantly though, Gronroos - one of the original service quality pioneers - research interests now firmly focus upon value as the locus of study (see for example: Gronroos, 2009; 2011). Gronroos (2011) notion of value is service as a *"value*

supporting process" and goods as *"value-supporting resources"* (Gronroos, 2008b, p.300). He explores two main areas of value creation. The provider side logic and the customers logic. Gronroos (2008b) suggests that the interaction that the provider has with customers provides opportunities for value creation (Ballantyne and Varey 2006). On the other hand, customers use their operand and operant resources (Vargo and Lusch 2004) in conjunction with the same from the provider side to create value for themselves. He claims this is customer service logic.

Vargo and Lusch (2008, p.9) view S-D logic as a perspective for viewing service at a *"paradigmatic level"* (Cesaroni and Duque, 2010). They continue to promote S-D logic as facilitating new ways of viewing value creation (Vargo and Lusch 2010a; 2010b; Vargo, 2011). This stands in contrast to those still trapped in G-D logic, and as such has greatly influenced the study of value and marketing. A final point to note is the claim that S-D logic has the ability to not only influence marketing, but the way in which society is viewed. This ties in with Kotler and Levy's (1969) marketing is everything view, and broadens the notion of value to all aspects of organisational and social life.

In capturing how value is determined, it needs to be re-emphasised that in the resource based S-D logic view value is created via resources combinations contributed by networks of actors (Lusch et al., 2010): *"It is not the resources per se, but the ability to access, deploy, exchange, and combine them that lies at the heart of value creation"* (Moran and Goshal, 1999, p.409).

This leads to the development of value propositions or potential value creation (Scutz, 2011). Whether value is present for the customer or not is determined *uniquely and phenomenologically* during use (Vargo et al., 2008, p.148). By this, Vargo and Lusch (2008) explain that they see phenomenology and experience as interchangeable terms when value is determined. The key is that in the resource based view, value is only proposed as being created. Actual value occurs if customers determines it thus. That is, when they perceive value (Plé, and Cáceres, 2010).

Woodruff and Flint (2006, p.187) agree that value in this perspective is phenomenologically determined, however they question: *What is customer value as a phenomenon like?* Answering their own question they refer to Holbrook's (1994) definition – which ultimately results in an holistic evaluation of many types of value. Richins (1994) views this determination of value as realised in the meanings of experience. This ties in with other literature that attempts to explicate the determination of value (see for example, Baudrillard, 2006; Boztepe, 2007;. Venkatesh et al., 2006).

3.5.4 Practice Discourses

A theory of practice is an interesting avenue for departure for research into value creation (Rindell et al., 2011). The thrust of this approach is to place the emphasis on practice as the unit of analysis (Korkman, 2006; Holtinen 2010; Rasche and Chia, 2009). Practice theory is said be made up of two separate strands of practice theorists (Postill, 2010). The first strand consisting of the likes of Bourdieu, (1977); Foucault (1979); and Giddens, (1979; 1984): the second strand including Schatzki (1996; 2001), Reckwitz (2002) and Warde (2005). According to Reckwitz (2002, p.244) – who draws from the various works of first strand of theorists, practice theory provides a new lens from which to view the *everyday* and *lifeworlds.* This unit of analysis stands in contrast to typical approaches related to either "*homo economicus*" and "*homo sociologicus*" (Reckwitz, 2002, p.244). The former being society is the product of individual intention, whilst the latter is the society is socially constructed.

Practice theory has become popular across a wide range of academic subjects (Schatzki, 2001). These subjects include: philosophy, social theory, ethnomethodology, cultural theory, project management, accounting, marketing, and strategic management (Schatzki 2001; Rasche and Chia, 2009). Practice theory as proposed by the likes of Reckwitz (2002, a, b), Schatzki (1996), and Shove and Pantzar (2005) is claimed to be neither objective (homo economicus) nor subjective (homo sociologicus). Reckwitz (2002, p.244) states: *"my point of departure is that practice theories provide a specific form of what I will label 'cultural theories'".* Practice theory therefore is a sub-field of cultural theory which is concerned with the underpinning structures of the social. Reckwitz (2002, p.243) moves on to explicate practice theory as *"a conceptual alternative"* to the studying the social realm. This entails

viewing the social as contained and reproduced within the practice. Put simply, the practice comes first (Randles and Warde, 2006). This reverses the traditional view of the mind and body as thinking and carrying out practices. This practice theory lens views practices as shaping the social realm. Schatzki (2001, p.50) states that *" social order is established within the sway of social practices."* Reckwitz (2002, p.253) agrees that "*the social is located in practices".* Similar to Reckwitz (2002) for Schatzki (2001) the social is the result of the practice. For clarity one can ask two pertinent questions:

Are practices socially constructed?

or

Do practices construct the social?

Of course, for the practice theorists such as Reckwitz (2002) and Schatzki (2001) taking their inspiration from the likes of Wittgenstein (1922; 1953), Bourdieu (1977), Foucault, (1969), and Giddens (1979), the answer is firmly on the latter. Korkman (2006) claims to adopt this version of practice theory for his Ph.D thesis researching value as embedded in cruiseship practices. He claims that practice theory within services research, by and large, has not been embraced. Therefore, literature within this context is sparse. Korkman (2006) applied practice theory to a leisure context; cruiseships. He outlined - citing Reckwitz (2002) - that studying value from a practice theory perspective would facilitate a move from cognitive dominant modes of service marketing research. In Korkman's (2006) thesis he claims to be following practice theory, but in actual fact does not investigate the underpinning structures of practices, but instead appears to use *a practice lens* to identify and explain *what* practices took place within his field of study; cruiseships (Feldman and Orlikowski 2011, p.2). This approach although not strictly following the tenets of practice theory did result in some interesting findings. These insights provided much to the "value as embedded in practices" discourse which was the foci of his research.

Korkman's (2006, p.47) basically uses existing theory and his own empirical research to identify five overarching - enabling practice - elements from within which embedded value is found by cruise ship passengers. These elements are shown in figure 5 below.

Figure 5 Components of Practice
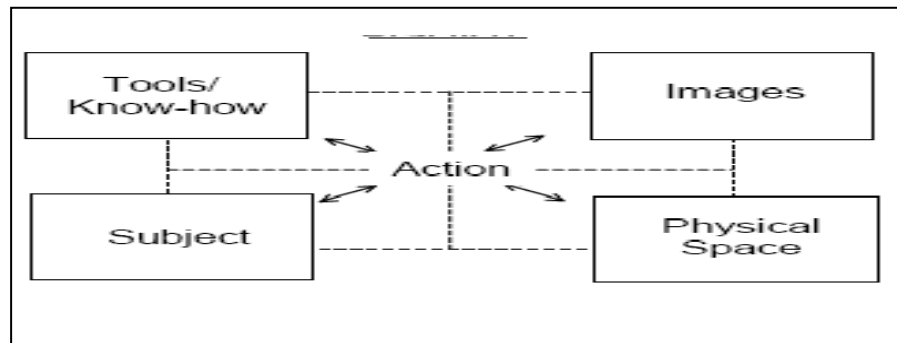
<div align="right">(Source: Korkman, 2006.p26)</div>

This model proposes that practices embedded with value are enabled by:

- A subject: The subject is someone carrying out a practice. Practices can be carried out individually or in unison with others. Korkman (2006) stresses that practices can be led by varying individuals during value seeking practices.

- Tools and Know-how: This is material or immaterial resources used by consumer to carry out practices. One could liken this to SD logics' operand and operant resources (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) to be utilised in value seeking practices.

- Images*: "Symbolic meanings embedded and influencing the practice"* (Korkman 2006, p.26) via which value seeking takes place. For example, in a health club the image of hiring a personal trainer for exercise guidance may extend beyond the consumer receiving   exercise instruction. The image of the hirer may extend to symbolic meanings of the consumers' ability to afford this service in terms of wealth, status, and power.

- Physical space: For Korkman, (2006) physical space represents a space were practices can be enabled. He cites the cruise ship deck as where the practice of strolling can be established as being embedded with value.

- Action: If no action takes place, then a practice could not be carried out. Actions allow value to be sought. It *"engages"* the other elements of the subject, the know-how, the images, and the physical space, to constitute the practice of value seeking (Warde, 2005, p.138).

The above model leads to a definition of value seeking as: *"more or less routinized actions which are orchestrated by tools, knowhow, images, physical space, and a subject who is carrying out the practice"* (Korkman 2006, p.27).

Korkman's (2006, p.47) research is based upon four premises which he inductively developed. These are:

1. *Customer value is embedded in practice*
2. *Customer value is neither objective nor subjective*
3. *Customer value is formed in practice*
4. *Customer value is enhanced through intervention*

Two key questions: what is value? and how is it conceptualised? are directly addressed by Korkman (2006, p.49) as:

"Value is embedded in the practices of the customer in a similar manner as a number of authors propose that customer value is embedded in the processes of value creation (Normann, 2000; Storbacka and Lehtinen, 2001; Gronroos, 2005). The difference is therefore that the practice is not a process of creation, but a systemic context of doing something in which value is formed in the interaction between subject and object while doing, In this case the value is not only up to the customer, but it is embedded in the larger context of practice. The customer can thus not determine customer value, as he is only part of the unit of analysis and seldom has the competence of the whole system of the practice".

With this conceptualisation value is found in practice and value can only be viewed by considering consumers and practice as observed from the outside. The "value as found" notion is an interesting departure which does not differentiate between creation and determination. Practice theory does have relevance for the study of value (Prendergast and Roberts, 2009). Firstly, that value is to be found within the practices of the consumer is a fundamental shift in existent value research (Shove et al., 2007). Secondly, although on occasion value is not specifically explicated, the underpinning assumption is that consumers partake in practices that provide value for them (Warde, 2005). Thirdly, this approach provides a new avenue for research in which practice becomes the focal point of the

research effort, rather than the historical customer and/or provider studies (Korkman, 2006).

The theoretical limitations of practice theory are acknowledged by one of the key proponents of the approach. Reckwitz (2002, p.257) indicates that practice theory:

"Hitherto, it has not offered a theoretical 'system' which could compete in complexity with Parsons homo sociologicus….if one is looking for a systematized 'new speak', practice theory and the tentative praxeological remarks of Bourdieu, Giddens, late Foucault, Latour, Butler or Taylor might not be the first place to look".

Schatzki (2001) and Holttinen (2010) indicate that the practice theory is fragmented, and as a result many formulations of it are apparent. Barnes (2001) agrees, he views the field of practice theory as being flawed even at fundamental level. That is, it is not made clear exactly as to what practice theory actually pertains. In addition, Barnes (2001) claims its scope is not clearly specified. Randles and Warde (2006) see practice theory as discursive, and highlight contrasting and often contradictory approaches. Warde (2005, p.135) criticises that practice theory fails to consider the *"social processes involved in the creation and reproduction of practices".* Skalen and Hackley (2011) agree viewing marketing as socially constructed and outlining their view of the practice lens which tends towards socially constructed practices. Of course, a voluminous literature exists which views the study of practices to be a social constructionist research undertaking. For example, speaking of organisational practices Mumby and Mease (2011) highlight that the firm is built around both fragmented and cohesive practices that are socially constructed. In this view, although the practice lens changes, the practice is still the unit of analysis. It has simply moved the nature of the study to viewing practices as principally socially constructed rather than already existing as primary practices. In the former, social construction comes first (Berger and Luckman, 1966), whilst in the latter practices come first (Schau et al., 2009). Holt (1995) also follows constructionism to identify practices of baseball spectators. His research, amongst others provides a direct link to social construction and ethnographic approaches to the study of practices.

In determining value through practice, Holtinnen (2010) discusses the notion of value creation as different than previous notions of the concept, be that goods logic exchange, experiential, or S-D logic, but does not make a clear distinction between value creation and value determination other than to lean toward experiential types of value holistically evaluated. However, practice theory does seek to move beyond the brain of customers as the value creator and determiner, to view actual practices of customers within their contextual and behavioural lives (Ng et al., 2011). This symbolises a significant shift in viewing value. Korkman (2006, p.3) confirms this by explaining: *"Customer value is not perceived, experienced, cocreated, or created, but….formed in a dynamic way in the practices of the customer".*

Therefore, the general aim of practice theorists is to provide a view of value that sees the concept as embedded in the practices of customers (Shove and Pantzer, 2005), and value is experienced within the practice conducted. To apprehend value within these practices is not something that should be driven by the customers voice (Pole and Lampard, 2002). This suggests that it is of limited value to ask customers what is value? and how did they determine it? In determining value, consumption should viewed as a practice: That is, customers seek and utilise practices that have value for them, and this can only be established by studying their practice (Warde, 2005)*.*

3.5.5 Customer Discourses

The customer discourse focuses upon understanding the customers life at a very deep level (Heinonen et al., 2010). The key to this discourse is that it moves away from the customers interaction with the service, to the broader notion of the customers lifeworld (Gummerus, 2011). That is, how customers integrate service to support their lives *"independently orchestrated activities"* (Heinonen., et al., 2010, p.535). Wikstrom et al., (2010) suggests this is necessary as customers make all the decisions within their value creating networks relating to how they acquire and use resources. Therefore, customers should be the value creation unit of analysis. Wikstrom et al., (2010) purported that the organisations role is one of supporting customers to create value. This also moves value creation from the producer to the customer (Gidhagen et al., 2011). The customer perspective attempts to understand

customer as the locus of study, and attempts to research and uncover the intangible and invisible processes that create and lead to value for them (Strandvik, 2010). Heinonen et al., (2010, p.2) propose in contrast to S-D logic that value is: *"not always actively and mutually created".* Heinonen and Stranvik (2009, p.34) suggest that S-D logic should be replaced by customer dominant logic (C-D logic) where: *"service providers are seen as supporting customers value creation.... rather than seeing the customer as a co-creator of value."*

Rooting their proposals firmly as building upon existing service quality research, Heinonen and Strandvik (2009) attempt to develop the value discourse by proposing the model detailed in figure 6 below.

Figure 6 Four Dimensional Model of Value

Source: Heinonen (2004)
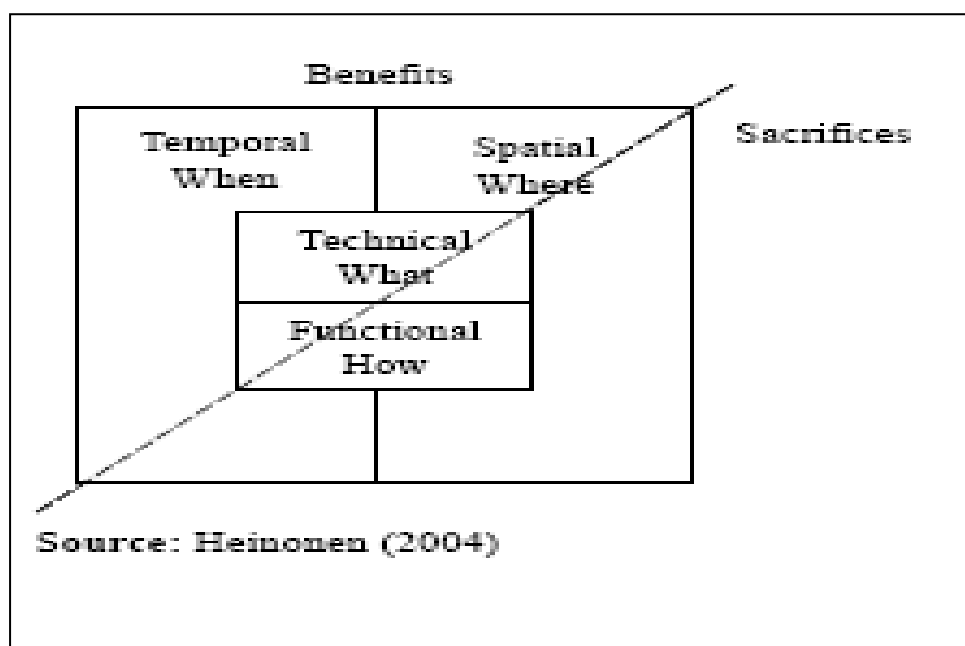
Heinonen and Strandvik's (2009, p.45) model focuses upon the technical and functional components - traditionally found in service quality research - that lead to value creation (see: Gronroos, 1984) They add temporal and spatial aspects for a more comprehensive model of value creation. They state:

"the four dimensional model of customer perceived value is theoretically driven and anchored in extensive research in service quality and customer perceived value. It organises

the value creating aspects into a logical and coherent structure. The framework gives possibilities to systematically consider different value-generating aspects that have not earlier been recognised.... the model explicitly considers the influence of time and place on service value".

Heinonen et al., (2010, p.542) develop this discourse by proposing the premises shown in figure 7 below. These premises are shown in comparison to S-D logic premises.

Figure 7 Customer Dominant Logic

		Provider-dominant logic	CD logic
	Co-creation		
	Involvement	Customer involved in co-creation	Company involved in customer activities
	Control	Company controls co-creation	Customer controls value creation
	Value-in-use		
	Visibility	Focus on visible interactions	Also considers invisible and mental actions
	Customer experience		
The provider-dominant vs the CD logic of service	Scope	Formed within the service	Emerges in customers' life
	Character	Extraordinary and special	Also mundane and everyday

Ng et al., (2011) also firmly view the customer and their context as being the focal point of research. Although Heinonen et al., (2010) recognise that the customer has always been the target of marketing efforts (citing: Levitt, 1960; Drucker, 1974), this was as passive recipients of value as embedded in units of producer output. However, marketers have traditionally limited the customers role to simply a needs, wants, expectations, and voice paradigm (Korkman, 2006). Heinonen et al., (2010, p.534) attempt to address this gap by firmly building upon the work of Holbrook (2006), Gronroos (2008b), Penaloza and Venkatash (2006), and Schembri (2006) to propose that a customer dominant logic (C-D logic) is required:

"we suggest that that the focus should be on what customers are doing with services and service to accomplish their own goals. The difference is subtle but important......The primary issues is not the offering as such, whether it is seen as an outcome (physical good, service, solution) or a process (service interaction) or both, but rather the customers life and tasks

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that the offering is related to. Hence the customers logic should be the foundation of a CD marketing logic".

Strandvik et al., (2012) outline that a small number of researchers - citing Gronroos (2008) and Heinonen et al., 2010 - are pioneering this view. Voima et al., (2010) building upon work by Heinonen et al., (2009, 2010) who claim that the customers perspective as a starting point is qualitatively different from goods, experiential, resources, and practice perspectives. Voima et al., (2010) develop the experiential work of Holbrook (1996; 1999) and are influenced by Heinonen et al., (2010) stating:

"Value is not isolated since the reality of the customer is interconnected to the realities of others. Value is therefore embedded in the dynamic, collective and shared customer realities, which even the customer cannot always orchestrate" (Voima et al., 2010, p.9).

Only a few years prior to these Voima et al., (2010) conclusions, Woodruffe and Flint (2006, p.187) suggested that it needed to be established: "*how and why customer value judgements occur".*

It appears the questions posed by Voima et al., (2010) and Woodruffe and Flint (2006) are not yet answered. However, as recent conceptual and empirical research builds the insights generated are both fascinating and discursive. Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo (2007) - after an extensive literature review - conclude that a lack of academic consensus as to the nature of value still remains evident. Voima et al., (2010, p. 2) state current research seeks an *"ontological core"* which is missing from past and contemporary value research. Therefore, within the customer discourse the search for value creation continues within the life of the customer (Voima et al., 2010).

Without an ontological core, a question to be asked is: how is value in this customer perspective apprehended. According to Voima et al., (2010) the determination of value may not be co-created. It may simply be a result of customers value creating and determining for themselves. Hence the focus upon a customer. These creations are located in the *"cumulated reality of the customer"* (Voima et al 2010, p.2).   Value is also socially

determined and results from the experience of the consumer. The key to explaining value determination for Voima et al., (2010, p.4) is that the starting point is *"the customers reality and life".* This is proposed to be the Heinonen's (2004) model which addresses: *what, how, where, and when* value is formed and these are *"socially constructed"* (Voima et al., 2010, p.5). From there, the determination of value is *"subjective, embedded in practices"* and *"accumulated and continuously restructured"* in consumers' *"reality".* This results in a negotiable, ever changing, world of value determination.

3.6 Value Types

Value as created and determined are treated as an isomorphic concepts in this section. So that types of value identified can be meaningful regardless of whatever lens is used to view them. Therefore, the terminology value as *found* will be used hence forth. The term *"value emanates"* (Wikstrom et al., 2010, p.18) would have similarly sufficed. Woodhall (2003, p.10) suggests that value is a pre, post and *"transaction specific"* and *"dispositional"* phenomenon. This ties in with value as apparent in broader contexts (Heinonen et al., 2010). Within this context various types of value are evident. That is, there is not a single type of value that customers seek (Smith, 1996).

Types of value identified by Holbrook (1996, pp.3-5) are: *"efficiency"*, *"convenience"*, *"excellence"*, *"quality"*, *"satisfaction"*, *"status"*, *"symbols","* *impression"*, *"success"*, *"esteem"*, *"possession"*, *"conspicuous consumption"*, *"materialism"*, *"play"*, *"leisure"*, *"fun"*, *"aesthetics"*, *"fashion"*, *"beauty"*, *"product design"*, *"ethics"*, *"justice"*, *"virtue"*, *"morality"*, *"spirituality"*, *"faith"*, *"ecstasy"*, and *"sacredness"*. Verhagen et al., (2011, p.201) identify: *"escapism"* and *"entertainment"* *"economy"*, *"ease of use"*. Gallarza and Gill (2008, p.7) - after an extensive literature search - identify several sometimes overlapping value types. These include: *"Hedonic value", "utilitarian value", " transaction value"," pre-use value", "post-use value", " social value", "tangibles value", " intangibles value", " expected value", "received value", "emotional value ,* and *"reputation value".* Gallarza and Gill (2008) comment that clearly value is a multifaceted concept. Mathwick et al., (2001, p.41) identify - after an extensive literature review - *"return on investment"* value, *"service excellence"*

value, *"playfulness"* value, and "*aesthetic appeal*" value. Brock Smith and Colgate (2007, p.8) identify the types of value as proposed by Park et al., (1986) and Sheth et al., (1991) as including "*functional value",*" symbolic value", "*experiential value*", and "*epistemic*" value. Similarly Woodhall, (2003, p.7) identifies several types of value for the customer (VC): "*Net VC*", "*Derived VC*", "*Rational VC*", "*Sale VC*", and "*Marketing VC*" . Woodhall (2003, p.24) further suggests that value is likely to be a *gestalt:* a number of value types aggregated to form overall value. Holbrook, (1994, p.56) calls this "*compresent*" value. Woodhall (2003, p.9) presents a multiplicity of other value types within his overall value types. This is shown in figure 8 below.

Figure 8 Value Types

Sub-forms of VC	
CONTINGENT VC	**NATURE OF DERIVED VC**
Acquisition value	Aesthetic value
Basic value	Conditional value
Delivered value	Efficiency value
Desired value	Emotional value
Dual-stimulus value	Epistemic value
Exchange value	Esteem value
Exclusive value	Ethical value
Expected value	Excellence value
General value	Functional value
Postpurchase/performance value	Image value
Private meaning value	Logical value
Public meaning value	Material value
Received value	Play value
Redemption value	Possession value
Relative value	Practical value
Single-stimulus value	Social value
Transaction value	Spiritual value
Unanticipated value	Status value
Use value	

Although the Woodhall (2003) value types are comprehensive foundation for his overall Net VC, Derived VC, Rational VC, Sale VC, and Marketing VC value types, the seminal model for value types is Holbrook's (1996) model. Holbrook (1996) models individual value type into an overall typology which has four dimensions, and eight value types. This is shown in figure 9 below.

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Figure 9 Dimensions of Value

A Typology of Consumer Value

		Extrinsic	Intrinsic
Self-oriented	Active	EFFICIENCY (O/I, Convenience)	PLAY (Fun)
	Reactive	EXCELLENCE (Quality)	AESTHETICS (Beauty)
Other-oriented	Active	STATUS (Success, Impression Management)	ETHICS (Virtue, Justice, Morality)
	Reactive	ESTEEM (Reputation, Materialism, Possessions)	SPIRITUALITY (Faith, Ecstasy, Sacredness, Magic)

(Source: Holbrook, 1994, modified version shown above Holbrook, 1999, p.13. Also see Holbrook , 2005; 2008).

The model can be explained as the placing of value types into various dimensions. These are: extrinsic versus intrinsic value, self orientated versus other orientated value, and active versus reactive value. This typology of value was developed after an extensive review of the literature (see Holbrook, 1994; 1998) and may be explained thus:

- Extrinsic/ intrinsic: this relates to whether the value is related to an extrinsic output such as a successful car repair. This is basically a *"means to an end"* (Holbrook, 1994, p.40). Conversely, intrinsic value would be appreciating something as an end in itself. For example, the intrinsic value of experiencing fine art.

- Self Orientated/other orientated value: Self orientated value is for the individual's "selfish" reasons. What the experience does for them. For example, winning a price in a competition. On the other hand, other orientated value is something which is desired because others value its utility. For example, if conferment of a professorship is valued for the way others view the title (society may view it as a high status).

- Active/reactive value: active value is the result of *"manipulation"* (Holbrook, 1994, p.43) of something by an individual such as playing a game to win. Reactive value is a response to *"apprehending"* (Holbrook, 1994, p.43) something. Enjoying a rainstorm or sunshine for example.

This general typology is the broken down into more eight more specific types of value (Holbrook, 1994; 1998) namely: *efficiency, excellence, politics, esteem, play, esthetics, morality*, and *spirituality* (Holbrook, 1994, p.45). Holbrook is quick to point out that his

typology and types are by no means exhaustive. Other types of value may be added. He also is at pains to communicate that types of value may be *"compresent"* (Holbrook 1994, p.56; 2008, p. 379). That is, more than one type of value experienced at any one time. Overall for the purposes of this thesis a preliminary definition of value can be offered as:

"the customers interactive, relativistic preference experience" (Holbrook, 1994, p.27). This consists of value types that are aggregated to form overall customer value (Holbrook, 1994; Woodhall, 2003).

This definition extends current definitions to include value types. This appears to provide a clearer picture of as to what value pertains.

3.7 Conclusions

The literature review was influenced by four key questions identified by Gash (2000). In summary:

- What research already exists in the study of value? Set within the context of marketing, discourses within the discipline have moved from a quality, satisfaction, and relationship marketing focus to a value focus (Gummerus, 2011; Voima et al., 2010). Marketing has evolved from its economic base to a fragmented discipline which has many departure points (Wilkie and Moore, 2003). One such point is the study of value. The study of value can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophers such as Aristotle. More recently, Smith, Ricardo and Marx have influenced value discourses (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). Contemporary research on value has seen notable scholars such as: Prahalad and Hamel (1990), Prahalad and Ramswarmy (2000; 2004), Gummerus (2010; 2011), Gronroos (2004; 2006; 2008; 2009; 2011), Edvardsson et al., (2011), Korkman (2006), Norman and Ramirez (1993), Woodruff (1997), Woodruff and Flint (2006), Vargo and Lusch (2004a; 2004b; 2005; 2006; 2007; 2008; 2010; 2011), Gummesson (2006; 2007; 2008), Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), and Holbrook (1994; 1996; 1999; 2005) developing many insights into value creation and determination. The result of this abundant scholarly activity is that the concept of value is regarded as a *"polysemic"* but a critically important concept in marketing (Gallarza and Gil, 2008, p.6). This is due to its centrality in achieving competitive advantage (Porter, 1985), the importance of value creation and capture for increased economic benefits (Chatain, 2010; Moran and Ghoshal, 1999), and the

customer seeking services that have value for them (Korkman, 2006). This value centric focus is reflected in the latest American Marketing Association (2007) definition of marketing.

- What are the key themes emerging from the literature? The themes emerging from the literature includes the point where value is located, value processes, and whether value creation and determination are mutually exclusive or overlapping notions. These three discussions inform five key discourses. These are: the goods discourse, the experiential discourse, the resource based discourse, the practice discourse, and the customer discourse. The final theme that emerged from the literature was the types of value that are proposed to influence and contribute to overall value. Many types of value are conceptualised, but the work of Holbrook (1994; 1996; 1999) and Woodhall (2003) arguably provide the most comprehensive accounts. They identify various types of value that they argue comprise overall value. Woodhall (2003, p.24), terms this a *"gestalt"* whilst Holbrook (1994, p.56; 2008, p.379) terms it *"compresent value".* It does appear likely that innumerable value types are aggregated together by customers to form overall value.

- What are the main limitations of this existing work? The limitations of existing work were identified within the review as it unfolded. However, it is clear that argument and counter argument feature strongly across the value literature. Despite this, some common limitations do cut cross all the discussion areas.

  o Value as a definable concept is disputed (Gallarza and Gil, 2008). Many view the lack of consensus as due to the deficiencies or gaps within the current literature. However, the diverse range of viewpoints provides a rich and detailed source of material for the study of value. Furthermore the lack of consensus provides scope for further research.

  o Limitations are evident when discussing where value is located. Disputing value in exchange, the value in use proponents state that goods or service have no value until used. Likewise, those who promote value in meaning state it is not the goods or service in exchange or use that have value, but the meaning or symbolism associated with their consumption. This meaning or symbolism is where value is located. Finally, the value in context view sees value as being located in customers lifeworlds where value may be located pre, during, or post usage.

o The processes of value creation differs from academic to academic. Some advocate that value is created by the organisation (Adner and Kappor, 2010), whilst others argue that this is a limited view. For them value is co-created between the organisation and the customer (Vargo and Lusch 2004). More broadly, this is then developed to view value as actually created in the processes of constellations and networks of actors combining to ensure value emerges (Michel et al., 2008). Others view this as limited and argue that the terms producer and consumer are not helpful in visualising how value is created. Therefore, a new terminology that combines notions of production and consumption is suggested. Prosumption (Toffler, 1980 Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010) and Produsage (Bruns and Schimdt, 2011) feature as interesting notions of value creation.

o An overall limitation of the study of value is the dearth of information relating to whether value creation and determination are distinct or simultaneous processes. With the notable exception being Gummerus (2011) little explicit discussion is evident on this topic. Much of the literature does not differentiate between the two, and as a result value creation and determination are treated as isomorphic in the present thesis.

 The preceding discussions influence and inform various discourses concerning value. Although overlapping on many occasions specific discourses can be differentiated as shown in table 2 below.

Table 2 Value Discourses

Discourse	Differentiated by:
Goods Discourse	A focus upon the company - inward looking
Experiential Discourse	A focus upon customers experiences. This view is heavily influenced by what emotions are triggered during value seeking.
Resource Based Discourse	A focus upon the resources each party in the constellation of actors - including customers - can bring to value creation
Practice Discourse	A focus upon the practices which inherently contain value for the customer
Customer Discourse	A focus upon the customers lifeworld. How customers conduct their day to day lives will inform organisations about their value seeking requirements

- What research gaps exist in the literature for the present thesis to exploit? The outcome of the literature review is that value as a research topic is an exciting avenue for marketers to explore. The most recent conceptual work concerns the customers lifeworlds as being the key to customers value seeking (Heinonen et al., 2010; Voima et al., 2010). Unfortunately, little empirical work exists regarding this type of study. In addition, the work concerning the practices of customers (Korkman 2006, Holttinen, 2010; Skalen and Hackley, 2011) is also relatively new and lacking empirical research. Other discourses bring different and sometimes complementary aspects to value research. Therefore, for the purposes of the present thesis a final definition of value is developed to include the notion of customer experience, lifeworlds, and practice. It uses the terminology that *value is found* to overcome conceptual difficulties associated with creation and determination, and treats these two concepts as isomorphic. It is a definition developed specifically related to the approach the thesis will take. Therefore, value is found in:

"the customers interactive, relativistic preference experience" (Holbrook, 1994. p. 27). This consists of value types that are aggregated to form overall customer value (Holbrook, 1994; Woodhall, 2003). This can be viewed in the customers lifeworld practices (Gummerus, 2011). One way of viewing this in the public health club context is via studying customers practices.

The definition above provides an extension of existing research via the combination of differing discourses brought together to form a coherent and unique approach to studying value in practice. Practices in the customers lifeworld represent one way of viewing customers value seeking. However, this would be too broad in scope. Therefore, an in-situ study of customers practices within a health and fitness club will form the approach for the present thesis. That being the case, the next section - research methodology - will specify the combination of methods utilised to provide the insights into customers value seeking in public health and fitness clubs.

Chapter 4

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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4   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The research methodology provides a credible means by which to execute data collection and analysis. The end product of these processes is to provide information by which the research questions may be answered (Sarantakos, 2005; Clark-Carter, 1979). A research methodology is an approach designed to ensure the processes of the research undertaken are logical (Yin, 1989; Hakim, 1987). Therefore, a robust research methodology has a number of positive features. It supplies the required data. It allows other researchers to evaluate the coherence of the study. It permits an assessment of the studies authenticity, and it facilitates future studies (de Vaus, 2001). A research design provides utility via the appropriate organisation of the selected methods (Delamont, 2004).

This section complements the philosophical reflections chapter and it specifically addresses the actual methods influenced by the ontology and epistemology. This stands in contrast to the more holistic view of research provided in the reflections chapter. In this chapter the methodology could be considered one-sided. That is, the methodology concentrates upon the socially constructed, interpretive, qualitative world and the methods required to apprehend and provide information concerning this world. However, it is recognised that many individual decisions have to be made within the research methodology. Therefore, the selection and evaluation of the individual choices made within the methodology are communicated within this chapter.

4.2 The Research Aim, Objectives and Questions

The overall aim of the research is to investigate how value is attained by customers of public sector health and fitness clubs. Therefore, this aim inspired the following research questions:

1. What are customers value seeking practices in public sector health and fitness clubs?

2. How can customers value seeking practices in public sector health and fitness clubs be explained?

The research objectives were to:

1. Identify the philosophical stance underpinning the research
2. Identify current theories relating to how customers attain value
3. Identify a means by which customer value seeking practices can be researched most effectively
4. Identify customers value seeking practices in a public sector health and fitness club
5. Devise a method for explaining customers value seeking practices
6. Devise a means for service development

The remainder of this chapter is focussed upon contextualising, identifying, justifying, and evaluating the methodological selections.

4.3 The Rationale for Social Constructionism

To answer the research questions, Korkman (2006, p.48) suggests that practices should be viewed as neither *subjectivist nor objectivist*. This ties in with his view of practice theory of which he goes to great lengths to explicate. Korkman (2006) adopts the views of neo practice theorists such as Schatzki (1996) and Reckwith (2002), who draw inspiration from the likes of Bourdieu (1998) and Giddens (1976; 1984). These notable researchers locate themselves in - what they claim to be - a void between objectivist and constructionist schools of thought. This brings to the fore a discussion whether this pluralist, between paradigms position can be maintained. Priola (2001) draws from Martins' (1990, p.42-43) idea of the "*chameleon*". She concludes that being both objectivist and constructionist is permissible. This supports the views of practice theorists. Despite this, she cautions that this may result in *"significant difficulties"* (Priola, 2001, p.7). Bryman and Bell (2011, p.26) detail arguments both for and against the *commensurability* of differing paradigms. They conclude that the view taken will impact upon the research design. The present thesis recognises these discussions and suggests that objectivist and constructionist pluralism is untenable.

This is in line with the view of Gergen (1999) who whilst rejecting objectivistic approaches states: *"For many constructionists the hope has been to build from the existing rubble in new and more promising directions"* (Gergen 1999, p.30).

Social constructionism develops the constructionist discourse by viewing the role of society's culture upon meaning making (Bryman and Bell, 2011). Crotty (1998) proposes the best way to view culture is not as something created by society, but something that creates society. The underpinning structures which govern interpretation and action. George (1989, p. 1) identifies these knowledge creating structures as *" the product of place, people, moment, ideology, and even (or especially) economic and social circumstance"*. According to Crotty, (1998, pp.53-54) this is a pre-existing - historically created - *system of intelligibility which* influences the making of meaning, and individuals inhabit a world with a broad systems of "*symbols, behaviour, patterns, customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters"* which we culturally assimilate from birth. That is, the manner of meaning making and knowledge are socially constructed (Crotty, 1998). In this view, the brain does not reflect knowledge of an objective world, but creates knowledge through interaction with the world and its objects (Gergen, 1999; Banister., et al., 1995).

4.4 Methodological Framework

The methodological framework plays a crucial role in the research. The framework provides some overarching principles which guide the selection of the actual methodology. In this case the methodology selected is ethnography. Informing this choice was the selection of interpretivism as the methodological perspective. This choice has been influenced by the philosophical reflections and the outcome of the literature review. These suggested an interpretive study of practices pertaining to the value seeking of customers as a fruitful avenue for the research.

4.4.1 Interpretivism

If social constructionism is how knowledge is produced, then how that knowledge is interpreted becomes a key tenet of the research. Crotty's (1998, p.67) view is that: *"the*

interpretivist approach….looks for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social lifeworld". This blends seamlessly with Burrell and Morgan's (2008. p.227) view that insights into the *"actors"* social world may be ascertained via the interpretive approach. When considering interpretivism, Gill and Johnson (1997) identify what are considered to be two mutually exclusive paradigms (Crotty, 1998; Burrel and Morgan, 2008; Gill and Johnson, 1997). That is, the nomothetic and the ideographic paradigms. Nomothetic methods are characterised by *"systematic protocols"* and "*scientific rigour"* (Burrell and Morgan, 2008, p.37)". Conversely, ideographic methods involve the constructed interpretation of social life. The latter attempts interpretative understanding of actors and their social life . This contrast between nomothetic and ideographic methods is shown in table 3 below.

Table 3 Nomothetic and Ideographic Methods

Nomothetic methods emphasise	**Ideographic methods emphasise**
1. Deduction	Induction
2. Explanation via analysis of causal data	Explanation of subjects meaning systems. Explanation by understanding
3. Generation and use of quantitative data	Generation and use of qualitative data
4. Use of various controls, physical or statistical, so as to allow a test of hypothesis	Commitment to research in everyday settings, to allow access to and minimise reactivity among subject of research
5. Highly structured research methodology to ensure reliability of 1,2,3 & 4	Minimum structure to ensure 2,3, and 4 (as a result of 1)

← laboratory experiments, quasi-experiments, surveys, action research, ethnography →

(Source: Burrell and Morgan 2008, p.37)

In linking the ideographic interpretive theoretical perspective to the ethnographic methodology, a brief description of qualitative research is warranted. Although qualitative research may be appropriated for a selection of research paradigms, in the present thesis qualitative research:

"is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible….They turn the world into a set of representations including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.3).

This approach is consistent with the research epistemology (social constructionism), the theoretical perspective (interpretive) and research methodology (ethnography). Other strengths of qualitative research directly related to the present thesis includes: the ability to view socially constructed meaning from the subjects perspective (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003), the potential to use a variety of methods to study social meaning from multiple perspectives (Blaxter et al., 2010), the preference for naturally occurring data, a concentration upon *meaning,* and a tendency towards induction (Silverman 2000, p. 8).

Silverman (2000) identifies some limitations of qualitative research. These include: it is not considered to be as rigorous as scientific quantitative research, it is unreliable and it produces differing results according to differing researchers, interpretations of data may be mediated by factors such as language and writing limitations, and the tendency for contradictory data to be omitted from field accounts. Other criticisms of qualitative research include: the lack of generalisabilty of qualitative research, and the post-structural view that qualitative criteria are as irrelevant as quantitative criteria for assessing the credibility of the knowledge produced (Denzin and Lincoln, 2003).

4.5 Ethnography

In the context of the present research, the study is focussed upon , but not limited to, the practices component of culture. This is the focus of the research question. Ethnography appears to be a suitable methodology for attempting to research how practice is viewed in the particular context of a public sector health club, and to gain knowledge of how customers seek value as practice (Saunders et al., 2009). In addition, this will also provide material to allow these practices to be explained, and to provide suggestions for service development.

From the foundations of anthropology and sociology (Delamont, 2004; Anderson, 2009) ethnography is a written means of documenting cultures and related areas such as *"beliefs, motivations and behaviours"* (Tedlock, 2003, p.166). Veal (2011) proposes that ethnography is concerned with viewing peoples lifeworlds through their lens. Ethnography promotes the use of multiple methods to gain insights into the cultural understanding of phenomena (Bryman, 2008). According to Crang and Cook (1995, p.4) *"these methods include: participant observation, interviewing, focus groups,* [and] *increasingly video/photographic work."* Some of these methods formed key components of the methodology designed in this section. Ethnography concerns gathering data from subjects through being, living, and participating in their culture. Basically, the ethnographer is seeking to understand the subjects whose lives they observe (Thomson, 2011). Anderson (2009, p.372) states ethnography concerns:

 "representations of how people are actually living their everyday lives….[through]*…. accumulating a store of local knowledge……* [it] *takes seriously the study in which ways ordinary people make sense of their social worlds and navigate within them"*

 This can be viewed as being a process which seeks to explain inductively - after a period of immersion in the culture - "life" from the point of view of the subjects studied, rather than those doing the studying. Emerson et al., (2001, p.352) views the ethnographer as a: *"scribe as well as an explorer and quasi insider of both exotic and familiar social worlds".*

The use of ethnography to study value seeking practices appears warranted. Ethnography has potential for documenting a diverse range of topics. Examples include: a study of social processes resulting in turning points in the lives of young rappers (Lee, 2009), the use of fictional family relationships by which illegal workers develop group bonds (Kim, 2009), and the reasons for continued gambling - even when financially debilitating - amongst poker players (Avery, 2009). Specifically relating to practices, examples include: a study of the police narratives of gang violence. This includes recognition of local practices of staying safe in the local neighbourhood (Duck, 2009); a study of practices relating to the keeping of racing pigeons, which resulted in - amongst other things - increased social cohesion (Jerolmack, 2009); a study of mobilities practices of British migrants in France. This included how the practice of watching British television news programmes resulted in confirmation

of the choice to locate in France (Benson, 2011); a study of vulnerable people which was intended to provide a basis for *"good practice principles"* (Booth and Booth, 2003 cited in Fielding, 2003, p.16), and ethnography guidelines for researchers studying the practices of healthcare professionals (Thomson, 2011).

Thus far, a clear pattern emerges. Ethnography is a study of cultures, ethnography is concerned with viewing the lifeworlds of subjects in communities, and it is concerned not with the researchers subjective views, but the lived experience of the subjects from their viewpoint (Bryman, 2008). A further point is that it is legitimate to study specific aspects of culture. For example, the social practices of subjects (Korkman, 2006). This is the justification for using the methodology, however the limitations of the methodology are also worthy of consideration.

For Bourdieu (1998) practice and ethnography are limited by their inability to recognise their own limitations. In a sense for Bourdieu (1998), the unit of analysis studied by ethnographers is incorrect. Whereby the ethnographer may report practices identified "ethnographically", for Bourdieu (1998) the appropriate unit of analysis would be the underlying structures that cause the encultured agent to conduct practice as they do (Acciaioli 1981). Practices, for Bourdieu (1998) are predispositions, "habitus" that are buried within the cultural structures of the agents. These cultures are heavily influenced by political interests or what Foucault (1977) would term dominant hegemonies.

Banister et al. (1995) identify an number of potential limitations of ethnography. Primarily, the danger of the researcher imposing subjective accounts upon the group, inappropriate selection of specific methods within the ethnography realm, the erroneous location of the researcher within the study context, limited access to the study context (David and Sutton, 2004), compromised lived practices resulting from the perception of the researchers power, the inability of the researcher to immerse themselves in the study context, the researcher immersing themselves too much in the context (going native) and thus not viewing the whole perspective (Bryman, 2008), and the inability of the ethnographer to interpret

voluminous quantities of research material. The relative limitations of ethnography are compared to its strengths in table 4.

Table 4 Ethnography Limitations and Strengths

Ethnography Limitations	Ethnography Strengths
Access cannot be established in many contexts	The subjects world view is paramount in the development of the ethnography
Ethnographers do not access one single truth	Meaning is allowed to arise from the field. It is socially constructed.
Researchers subjectivity may affect the research	These methods can be more credible than contrived scientific experiments. This is due to the naturally occurring context being studied
Findings cannot be generalised	Being located within the context overcomes the limitations of "customer voice" research.
Findings cannot prove predictive behaviour	This type of research is more flexible to the requirements of socially constructed knowledge
Description of contexts is sometimes claimed as explaining contexts.	Allows deeps understanding of specific contexts and problems
Erroneous attitudes toward the belief that immersion results in understanding	The research takes place in situ in the context of the study
The means by which the ethnography is documented relies upon already existing language and structural devices to communicate the findings. This may obscure meaning.	The work is inductive
Contexts cannot be "ring fenced" as closed entities. This is simply assuming – incorrectly – that these contexts exist. This is the assumption of the natural scientist	Ideographic interpretations are in evidence

When considering the above table, this research selected to continue with ethnography as the means of conducting this research. Firstly, many of the reported limitations of ethnography are from researchers who use a positivistic lens of what constitutes reliable and valid research. Ethnography in the present thesis starts from a differing foundation. The perspective that all knowledge is social constructed is the overarching principle adopted for the present thesis (Crang and Cook, 1999). Secondly, the present thesis recognises limitations of imposing a researchers subjective view upon the customers value seeking practices. Therefore, to avoid this limitation, a process that minimises this occurrence is adopted. That is, application of the methods identified in this research methodology

chapter. Finally, a consistent theme running through the thesis is that the account provided in this thesis is one account competing for attention amongst many other accounts (Firat and Shultz, 1997). Therefore, after considering the strengths and limitations of ethnography it does appear to present itself as a suitable means of providing the required data for answering the research questions. These answers can be viewed as socially constructed accounts which will provide insights not considered to date.

Building upon the previous paragraph, it is important for the ethnography to provide an authentic account of the practices within research context. Therefore, the actual mechanics of conducting the ethnography study are of paramount importance. This is to communicate that a robust attempt has been made by the researcher to immerse themselves in the study context, and be able to finally escape the context with information that represents the subjects socially constructed value seeking practices (Crang and Cook, 1999, p.29). This information must be relevant to address the research questions requirements.

For the purposes of this research, an initial four step approach was utilised. This appeared to strike a balance between breadth and depth required for the present thesis. The steps are: accessing the setting, participant observation, interviewing, and leaving the research setting.

4.5.1 Accessing the Setting

The physical setting selected was a typical public sector health and fitness club: The Arkin health and fitness club based within the Swimming Centre and Arkin Fitness Centre[1]. This facility is a public sport and physical activity centre operated by a British Local Authority which manages several sport and physical activity centres within its boundaries. It is home to a main swimming pool and learner pool and boasts not only a swimming pool, but also a second pool for multi use activities including diving, and spectator seating. The Swimming Centre which has two floors also includes: 3 activity studios, a sauna and steam rooms,

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[1] The Swimming Centre and The Arkin Fitness Centre are pseudonyms

conference rooms, a snack bar and social area, a wetside changing village, and a fitness centre with associated male/female changing facilities.

Activities that customers can undertake within the Swimming Centre include: a wide range of wetside swimming activities such as recreational swimming, learn to swim classes, and other wetside activities such as Aquafit. On the dryside a number of activities such as the studio based Boxercise, Combat Aerobics, Legs, Bums and Tums, and Zumba are available. Other activities such as childrens birthday parties, conference room hire, and table tennis can be undertaken. Alternatively, after activities, the Swimming Centre has a snack bar and social area where customers can relax and talk with friends. The Swimming Centres' fitness centre is branded as the Arkin Fitness Centre. The Arkin Fitness Centre was used as a context to conduct the research study. According to Gerson and Horowitz, (2002, p.202)

 "Participant observation studies can begin by choosing a site that helps explore gaps in theory (Burawoy et al. 1991) or by choosing a site that offers the chance to observe groups or organisations of specific interest".

The site selected appears to fulfil these requirements. The Swimming Centres' Arkin Fitness Centre is typical of public health and fitness clubs. The Arkin Fitness Centre used in the study consists of a reception area, two floors which offer 92 cardiovascular machines (wave, stepper, rower, treadmill, etc), 26 resistance machines (leg press, bench press, shoulder press, etc), over 600lbs in free weights, a selection of dumbbells ranging from 1kg-30kg, a designated free weights area, a designated kinesis room with four stations, 4 consultation rooms, male and female changing areas, Arkin Fitness Consultants who are available to give advice and instruction, and its own self contained cycle spinning room. Personal Trainers can be employed by customers if required.

4.5.2 Participant Observation

The researcher used participant observation and interviewing whereby visibility was required and essential to the research. It was also a requirement of the Arkin Fitness Centre that the research be communicated to customers. This tied in with the ethical requirements

of the research which are detailed in section 4.8. Despite this, other than being aware of the research, many customers were not interested in the research or the person conducting it. Therefore, to a large degree the researcher was invisible. Primarily, the main benefit of this was that the researcher was able to participate and observe purely from the perspective of being just another customer.

Many potential methods for collecting qualitative data are available for ethnographic study. Brockington and Sullivan (2010, p.58) identify*:*

 "interviewing, focus groups, conversation and discourse analysis, fieldwork diaries, life histories and oral histories, photographs, film, video and documents, and *participant observation".*

Gill and Johnson (1997) indicate that from the numerous methods that exist within the methodology of ethnography; participant observation and interviews dominate. From the viewpoint of Glaser and Strauss (1967, cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.111) these may be called "*two slices*" of data collection This results in two *"modes of knowing"* that may be compared (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.111). Brockington and Sullivan (2010) concur that participant observation and interviews are the two dominant methods in ethnography. They also suggest that adoption of ethnography implicitly means that the researcher seeks understanding through participation in the culture, and through talking to the subjects within that culture. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest the methods should reflect the means which provides the best information to answer the research questions. Therefore, the current research selected these two methods - participant observation and interviews - as these appeared to fulfil these requirements.

The collection of data was in a symbiotic relationship with the data analysis and concluded when theoretical saturation was achieved. Theoretical saturation is a result of theoretical sampling which: *"collects, codes, and analyses* [the] *data and decides what data to collect next and where to find* [it]*…. in order to develop* [the] *theory as it emerges" (*Glaser 1978, cited in Goulding, 1998, p. 53). Therefore, when the research analysis categories were fully

saturated and no new insights were being generated, this marked the end of the data collection process.

To provide some context in respect of participant observation, consensus in relation to how observation should to be conducted converges around the degree to which the ethnographer is immersed in the context. This could range from participating completely in the observation or just observing the participation of the subjects of the study. A three way categorisation of observation can be placed upon a continuum. This is shown in figure 10 below:

Figure 10 Continuum of Observation

| Observation as participant | Participant observation | Complete participant |
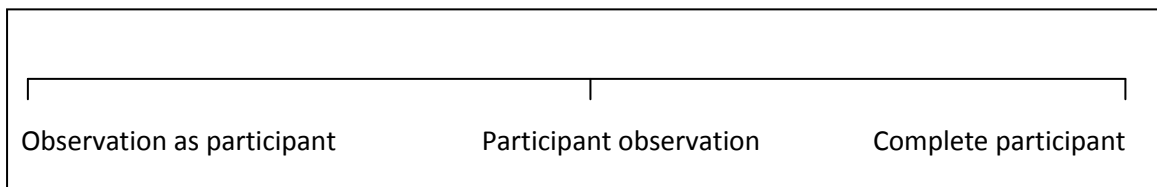
In the present thesis participant observation is the method utilised. Participant observation concerns the researcher as *"being - in - the - world"* of the group of subjects being studied (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983 cited in Pole and Morrison, 2003, p.20). The key aspect of participant observation is to interpret and view the world from the subjects viewpoint (Gill and Johnson, 1997). To achieve this, immersion in the context by the researcher is required. That entails becoming involved in all aspects of the social setting under study (Veal 2011). Participant observation has advantages as a method. It allows the limitations of voice only interviews to be overcome (Cohen et al., 2005), and it targets observation towards *"physical settings, humans, interactions, and programmes"* (Cohen et al., 2005, p.305). Denscombe, (2007, p.224) details the advantages of participant observation as: the ability of the researcher to preserve the *"naturalness"* of the research context, participant observation provides more *"holistic"* findings, the subjects under consideration have their worldview communicated, and the *"insights"* provided into the context are likely to be deeper than alternative methods.

A participant observation schedule was produced to guide the data collection. This schedule spanned the period of the data collection (May - September 2011). The sample schedule

shown in table 5 allowed the researcher to visit the facility at differing times. An example is shown for the first week only. The full schedule is detailed in appendix 2. This schedule allowed the researcher to visit the club at a differing time each week. Over a four week period this schedule ensured all the facility opening times were covered. This was to ensure that different value seeking practices were identified irrespective of the time of the facility visit. The four week schedule "rolled over" for the duration of the research.

Table 5 Participant Observation Schedule

Who is being observed?	What are the reasons for observing them?	When are they being observed?	Where is the observation taking place?	Why is the observation necessary?	How is the data to be collected?
Week 1	Week 1	Week 1	Week 1	Week 1	Week 1
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Mon: 6.30am-10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Tues: 6.30am-10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Wed: 6.30am- 10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Thurs: 6.30am-10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Fri: 6.30am- 10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sat: 7.30am-10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sun:7.30am-10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes

Cohen et al., (2005) outlines that criticisms of participant observation generally mirror the criticisms of the interpretive, qualitative approach. The dissent being that participant observation results in information that is: "*subjective, biased, impressionistic, idiosyncratic, and lacking quantification*" (Cohen et al., 2005, p.313). Gill and Johnson (1997, p.114) highlight that a particular concern to supporters and critics of participant observation is the danger of *"going native".* To overcome this danger Tedlock (2003, p.168) suggests:

"Field workers bring forward an ethnography about the social settings they study. In these roles ethnographers are expected to maintain a polite distance from those studied and to cultivate rapport, not friendship,; compassion, not sympathy; respect, not belief; understanding, not identification; admiration, not love"

For Tedlock (2003) addressing these dichotomies helps inoculate the researcher from the dangers of going native. Johnson and Christensen (2012) agree outlining the importance of the emic and etic perspective. The emic perspective is the subjects world view (weltenshauung). The etic perspective is the researchers view of the subjects world. The former runs the risk of the researcher going native, whilst the latter runs the risk - in the case of social constructionism research - of the researchers subjective world view being "imposed" upon the subjects lifeworld. The present research attempts to provide both emic and etic perspectives, without succumbing to the pitfalls of their limitations. Denscombe (2007) also outlines some concerns relating to participant observation. This includes difficulties of gaining *access* to the contextual setting, the high level of *personal commitment* required within the field, potential physical "*danger*" in some contexts, a lack of research *reliability,* inability to generalise the findings, and difficulties arising from "*ethical*" issues such as a lack of subject consent (Denscombe, 2007, p.225).

As this actual study was being carried out a problem arose by which the early participant observations did not initially appear to be providing data of significance. The researcher attempted not to panic but to draw upon three main sources for reassurance. Firstly, mundane practices which the research appeared to be identifying can be just as crucial to research as exceptional practices (Johnson, 2010). Secondly, Korkman (2006) reported similar difficulties in his study of cruiseship practices. He later reported that this was overcome as the study progressed. Finally, Latour (1999 cited in Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2009, p.33) implores researcher to *"follow the actants"* and view the social from their viewpoint. Actants being human and non human networks. As the researcher was aware that potentially some rich material may emerge from the interviews of the human actants who interact with non human actants (i.e. exercise machines), this went some way towards attenuating the concerns of the researcher.

4.5.3 Interviewing

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) suggest that interviewing is an artistic endeavour. Therefore, standardised research rules and techniques may not be applicable to interview research. Despite this, they are clear regarding the purpose of the research interview:

"the qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects points of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world" (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.1).

For the present thesis, the interview blends with participant observation as it seeks the same outcome, knowledge of practices, but using a differing means. An advantage of using both approaches is the ability to gather information concerning what people say they do and what they actually do. Argyris and Schön (1974, pp.6-7) term this: *"espoused theory"* and *"theory in use"*. They identified that there are often mismatches relating to peoples words and acts (Jones et al., 2011). Gerson and Horowitz (2010) agree proposing that participant observation and interviewing are complimentary. Each addressing a differing but interrelated facet of research.

The use of interviewing has many advantages. It allows the interviewer to view issues from the subjects viewpoint (Pole and Lampard, 2002). Interviews facilitate understanding not only of subjects social situations, contexts and relationships but also their *"experiences, feelings, attitudes, and the world they live in"* (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.xvii). Furthermore, interviews promote a more thorough interrogation of subjects than day to day conversations would uncover, and interviews allow specific issues relating to the research questions to be discussed (Gibson and Brown, 2009). Denscombe (2007) provides a useful summary of the advantages of interviewing. This includes the *"depth"* of data produced, the richness of the *"insights"* generated, the ability to focus upon the subjects *"priorities"*, the *"flexibility"* of the method, and that subjects *"enjoy"* the opportunity to articulate their views on the subject matter (Denscombe, 2007, p.202).

Types of interviews are compared and contrasted by Pole and Lampard (2002). They conclude that rather than concentrating upon whether interviews should be structured/unstructured or standardized/reflexive depends upon two issues. The research question and the type of data required. For the purposes of the present thesis although a broad heading of semi-structured interview could be applied, this is somewhat of *"a misnomer "* (Booth and Booth, 2003 cited in Fielding 2003, p.24). Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out that ethnographic questioning is more reflexive, dynamic, and evolutionary than other methods. Questions emerge as the participant observation and the interviews unfold. Therefore, outline questions were specified but others emerged during the course of the participant observation and interviews. An interview schedule was developed according to: the date when the interview was to be held, the type of interview, and the *"mode"* of the interview (Fielding, 2003, cited in Gibson and Brown, p.209).

The disadvantages of interviews are multiple. The interview material produced from the process of the conversation is socially constructed (Kvale and Brinkman 2009). The interview as a method has to be acknowledged as being a process that produces knowledge that is: *contextual, linguistic, narrative, and pragmatic* (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p.18). Pole and Lampard (2002) identify that the language used may not reflect the meaning and intent of subjects (Miller and Glassner, 2004). The interview is a non naturalistic occurrence which artificially brings two or more parties together (Johnson, 2011), the interview is limited by the socially constructed nature of the interaction (Ryen, 2001), the interview is not an equal exchange of ideas; the researcher dominants the structure (Kvale and Brinkman 2009), and the transcription and data analysis process may lose the experience the subject communicated (Miller and Glassner, 1997, cited in Silverman, 2004).

The interviews for the present thesis took place over a five month period; May-September 2011 and consisted of customers of the Arkin Fitness Centre. In total, twenty audio recorded in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted and took place in the cafeteria foyer area. The nature of the design of the facility resulted in this area not being used by other customers. The selection of this area was to ensure the confidentiality of the discussion taking place, and to avoid any background noise which may have affected the quality of the

audio recording. The audio recordings were subsequently transcribed to facilitate the coding of the data. The interview schedule is shown in table 6.

Table 6 Interview Schedule

Who is being interviewed?	What are the reasons for interviewing them?	When are they being interviewed?	Where is the interview taking place?	Why is the interview necessary?	How is the data to be collected?
Frank		3 June 2012			
Robert		28 June 2012			
Jordan		28 June 2012			
Peter		28 June 2012			
Walter		4 July 2012			
Harold		5 July 2012			
Elaine		5 July 2012			
Karen	**To question customers about their value seeking practices**	5 July 2012	**Arkin Fitness Centre (foyer rear cafeteria)**	**To provide data to answer the research questions**	**Audio recorded. Transcriptions made of audio recording**
Marianne		7 July 2012			
Noreen		12 July 2012			
Paul		28 July 2012			
Connor		08 August 2012			
Joseph		11 August 2012			
Sue		16 August 2012			
Tom		18 August 2012			
Louis		5 September 2012			
Carl		6 September 2012			
Theresa		17 September 2012			
Chris		22 September 2012			
Lyndsay		24 September 2012			

The rationale for the selection of the interview and its inherent strengths and limitations led to a clear remit for the present thesis. That is: *"it is the job of the researcher….to recognise these constraints and to take account of the extent to which they influenced the nature of the interview "* (Pole and Lampard, 2002, p.127). Therefore the interview is seen as a necessary compliment to the participant observation detailed in the previous section, but inherently containing limitations. Both of these data collection methods fit comfortably within the remit of ethnography, and the researcher was confident that these methods would produce the required data to provide insights to help answer the research questions.

4.5.4 Leaving the Research Setting

In leaving the research setting a number of considerations were taken into account. Delamont (2004, p.226) proposes that: *"Disengagement from the field is just as important as*

the entry and engagement". Sarantakos, (2005, p.205) agrees highlighting that it would be unwise to *"abruptly"* leave the research setting. He suggests a *"gradual disengagement"* to maintain good working relationships with those stakeholders within the research context (Sarantakos, 2005, p.206). Delamont (2004) also proposes that care is taken when exiting the setting. She is concerned with well-being of the researcher. She refers to *"the permanent hangover"* a researcher may experience as they "*readjust to ordinary life"* (Delamont, 2002, pp.166-7). Put simply, the researcher is changed by the fieldwork and this may impact negatively upon their work and personal lives. More pragmatically she also highlights how some research reaches a natural conclusion. For example, the setting studied comes to a natural conclusion (i.e. the end of a sporting event that has been studied).

For the present research Delamont's (2002) point regarding the research reaching a natural conclusion was built into the research period. The stakeholders in the research were all advised on the concluding date of the research in advance. This information was promoted through-out the Arkin Fitness centre. Therefore, as the conclusion of the research approached the visits to the club became less frequent as the researcher incrementally withdrew from the research setting (Sarantakos, 2005). Of course within the period of time between accessing the setting and leaving the setting data analysis was being undertaken to transform the raw data into relevant information. The next section addresses this aspect of the present thesis.

4.6 Data Analysis

Saunders et al. (2009) indicate that there is a vast array of potential methods for qualitative analysis. They identify a number of approaches such as: *"data display and analysis", "template analysis", "analytical induction""grounded theory", "discourse analysis", and "narrative analysis"* (Saunders et al., 2009, p.502). In addition to agreeing with many of the approaches of Saunders et al., (2009), Sarantakos (2005, p.344) is at pains to list other what he terms *" discursive approaches".* This includes: *"deconstructionism, conversation analysis, dramaturgical analysis, hermeneutic analysis, postmodernist analysis, semiotics, structuralism,* [and] *post structuralism"*. Despite this seemingly endless list, qualitative data analysis is simply an attempt to explain what issues underpin the collected data (Denscombe, 2007). Pole and Morrison (2003) concur that explanation and description is the

key ethnographic purpose. For the present thesis the selection of the data analysis, is driven by the philosophy of the research and the research questions (Thomas, 2006; Bailey, 2008; Saunders et al., 2009). In addition, guiding the analysis is Denscombe's (2007, p.287) four underpinning principles of qualitative data analysis:

1. *"a commitment to 'grounding' all analysis and conclusions directly in the evidence that has been collected"*
2. *"The researchers explanation of the data should emerge from a careful and meticulous reading of the data"*
3. *"The researcher should avoid introducing unwarranted preconceptions into the data analysis"*
4. *"analysis of data should involve an iterative process".*

Running concurrently with these four principles is the notion that the data analysis moves thorough stages. The salient areas have been identified by Denscombe (2007, p.252) as: *"Data preparation"* , *"initial exploration of the data", analysis of the data", "representation and display of the data, and validation of the data".* Other researchers follow similar schemes (see for example: Creswell, 1994; Creswell and Plano, 2007; Gibson and Brown, 2009; Johnson and Christensen, 2012). These themes form the remainder of this section.

4.6.1 Data Preparation

The interviews that were conducted were audio recorded. From these recordings transcription was undertaken. Transcription prepares qualitative data for initial exploration and subsequent analysis (Grundy et al., 2003). Advantages of transcription are: the transcription of interviews by the researcher facilitates deep knowledge of the data collected (Bailey, 2008), the transcript provides an accessible means of coding data (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009), and the transcript becomes a written traceable artefact available for other researchers examine (Wengraf, 2006).

Transcription does have some limitations. Disadvantages include: it is sometimes not suitable for those with speech, hearing, or other physical impediments (Grundy et al., 2003).

Furthermore, a transcript is a researchers representation of a subjects representation, and therefore this perhaps distances the researcher from the intended subjects meaning (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). In addition, transcription is time intensive and somewhat onerous (Tattersall et al., 2007), the influence of context on what is spoken requires consideration (Wengraf, 2006), and the potential for the written word to miscommunicate the spoken word may be problematic (Bailey, 2008). This latter point is developed by Grundy et al., (2003, p.28) as:

"Despite typical research training assumptions to the contrary, it is not possible for any transcriptionist, regardless of experience or training, to capture all verbal, prosodic, paralinguistic, extralinguistic, and contextual features of an interview".

In short, any transcription is limited by the philosophical and operational process features of transcription. Despite this, and to overcome these transcription limitations, the transcripts constructed for the present thesis attempted to: *"(a) create a literal transcription, (b) preserve everything that is said,* [sic] *avoid 'cleaning up', and (d) use normal English orthography "* (Grundy et al., 2003, p.30).

4.6.2 Initial exploration of the data

This initial phase allows the researcher to become familiar with the typed transcripts. This process should already be underway in terms of the researcher having produced the transcripts anyway. This phase allows familiarity with both the field notes and the interview transcripts both individually and together (Denscombe, 2007). This cross referencing at this stage allows the first formal comparisons to be undertaken. Advantages of this initial stage of data analysis are: it reacquaints the researcher with the data as originally collected; the combination of field notes and interview transcripts should rekindle issues of context that may be useful, and it facilitates thinking about how coding may take place. Disadvantages in this stage include: the potential to view this as a discrete phase (familiarity with the data is ongoing); the danger of imposing subjectivities onto the data (Gibson and Brown, 2009); and the danger of coding before full exploration is complete (Denscombe, 2007).

4.6.3 Analysis of the data

The analysis of data selected for the present thesis can be classified according to four distinct phases: coding the data, categorising these codes, identifying relationships between codes, and developing some conclusions regarding what the preceding means for theory and theory development (Denscombe, 2007). Although there is no broad consensus regarding the process phases, this approach did appear to be most suitable for providing the information required to answer the research questions.

In this case, coding is not conducted by allocating data to pre-conceived categories as employed in quantitative research, but to categories that emerged from the collected qualitative data (Kelle, 2007). This is achieved by constant comparison of data and categories that emerged from the data (Straus and Corbin, 1998). For example, in the present thesis the following categories - as shown in figure 11 - emerged from the data coding process relating to Health Club Search Practice. This practice is a sub-practice of Commitment Practice.

Figure 11 Health Club Search Practice Coding
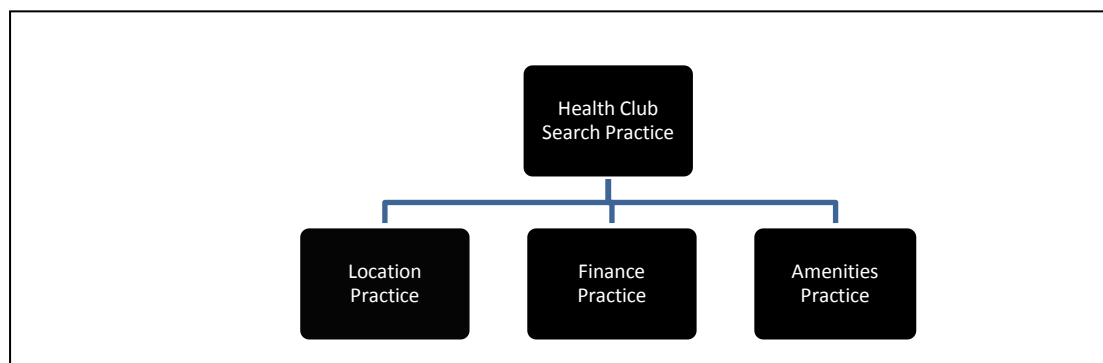
The above example illustrates that some customers - as part of Commitment Practice - appeared to select the health club based upon three practices relating to finance, location, and amenities. The Health Club Search Practice emerged empirically from these sub-practices. It is worthy of note that these categories changed frequently via constant comparison. The above being arrived at after a number of iterations. To achieve the above initial categories from which eventual theory construction will be developed, the analysis

process of Strauss and Corbin (1998) was appropriated for this purpose. This entails coding, categorisation, and theory building.

4.6.4 Coding, Categorisation, and Theory Building

In the present thesis the ethnographic data were coded and categorised. This encompassed the field notes of the researcher and the interview transcripts. This process is purported to lead to theory building (Bryman 2008; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) The coding of data:

"Entails reviewing transcripts and/or field notes and giving labels and names to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance and/or that appear to be particularly significant within the social worlds of those being studied" (Bryman 2001, p.392).

Despite this, Dey (2007) cautions that coding and categorisation is not *the* analytical process, but one of many interpretive processes. That being the case, the coding of data although an important aspect of the analysis processes it is not the only process. Other aspects of analysis includes: *"an emphasis on theoretical sensitivity, and the centrality of a story line around which analysis can coalesce"* (Dey, 2007, p.167). Dey (2007) discusses in some depth the advantages of coding and categorisation. For example, the advantages include: being able to place phenomena into discernable and distinct categories, communicating commonalities of the attributes of the data contained therein, and assignment of data to relevant categories following a clearly specified process (Dey, 2007). Disadvantages include: fragmenting data into codes loses holistic richness (Bryman, 2008); coding can also be criticised on the grounds of subjectivity of decisions relating to the sampling selections (Sarantakos, 2005), knowing when sampling saturation is achieved, and as Dey (2007) suggests categories can be unstable, with new data confounding existing categories. A key point made by Kelle (2007, p.195) is that these categories may or may not be *"mutually exclusive".* Dey (2007, p.168) highlights a problem with categories. He illustrates this by stating *"not all birds fly, and not all creatures that fly are birds"* and he proposes that interpretive and theoretical *"judgements"* inform the construction of the categories. Bryman (2008) cautions against getting caught up the volume and diversity of interesting data, and failing to see key analytical threads. Of course, the coding process will only ever produce - as

with all ethnographic research - a *"partial"* picture of the subject matter considered (Silverman, 2000, p.39). Conversely though, the resulting information should provide an in depth study of customers value seeking practices. This should help provide insights for academics and practitioners to consider and further explore (Silverman, 2000).

The coding and categorisation process utilised was Straus and Corbin's (1998) open, axial and selective coding. A feature of this data analysis is that it is conducted immediately. This contrasts with positivistic quantitative research designs where data is collected then analysed. In the present thesis the qualitative data were collected and analysed concurrently and iteratively (Bryman, 2008; Silverman, 2000). This results in codes and categories as they emerge (Charmaz, 2000). Some other issues borne in mind during the coding process included: pre-reading and familiarisation of notes and transcripts prior to coding, constant comparison of data and codes to establish links between categories developed, and remaining aware that coding is only part of analysis; interpretation and writing the results being the others (Bryman, 2008). Specifically, the mechanics of the process are:

- **Open Coding:** *"To code is simply to create a category"* and give it an identifying title (Gibson and Brown, 2009, p.130). This category is produced empirically and it emerges through exploring the data. In the present thesis, line by line coding was used. Bryman (2008) has identified that the words *code* and *category* often confuse researchers as they are used interchangeably. For the present thesis, a code is simply a summarising identifier (name) whether that be for an extract from a field note or the identification of a distinct category. Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.102) note that: *"Closely examining data for both differences and similarities allow for fine discrimination and differentiation among categories".* The above process was supported by the use of memos which expanded upon the researchers thoughts concerning the process of developing the categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). These categories (concepts) are then grouped into more abstract categories. For example, five initial categories may be grouped under one overall category that encompasses the intent of them. These final more abstract open codes become the materials used by later axial and selective coding.
- **Axial (Theoretical) Coding:** Axial coding entails consideration of the relationships between the categories identified in the open coding (Straus and Corbin 1998). A

significant issue is described by Strauss and Corbin (1998, p.125) as: *"Although text provides clues about how the categories relate, the actual linking takes place not descriptively, but rather at a conceptual level".* In other words open coding has supplied the concepts and the analyst (the researcher) can consider these concepts comparatively. This would be very difficult to achieve without this process being undertaken. Strauss (1987, cited in Strauss and Corbin 1998, p.126) provides the following guidelines in achieving this:

1. *"Laying out the properties of a category and their dimensions, a task that begins during open coding*

2. *Identifying the variety of conditions, actions/interactions and consequences associated with a phenomenon*

3. *Relating a category to its subcategories through statements denoting how they are related to each other*

4. *Looking for cues in the data that denote how major categories might relate to each other"*

Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest that the above approach results in the dual ability to view both the process and structure of the phenomena under consideration. In the present thesis, this can be seen in both the process of identifying which value seeking practices take place and how value seeking practices are structured.

- **Selective Coding:** This develops the axial coding by seeking to theorise the relationships between concepts into a cohesive storyline (Straus and Corbin, 1998). This story line can be supplemented with illustrations. The iterative nature of the research means that any concerns or omissions with the story line being written may be addressed. The story line in the context of the thesis is the three themed chapters following directly from this chapter. Therefore, the final selective coding seeks to document the study of the customers value seeking practices in public sector health and fitness clubs into a cohesive theoretical narrative.

Overall the coding described above does not follow a linear path. It is iterative and symbiotic with the researcher moving between categories and data, and constantly comparing both during the analysis (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

4.7 Reflections of the Coding Process

During the coding of the data the researcher was immediately struck by how the coding and categorisation of Strauss and Corbin (1998) process tended towards reductionism. Charmaz (2003) recognises this and highlights a differing approach. For Charmaz (2003) the process can be adopted, but the reductionist leanings underpinning the process can be replaced with a constructionist foundation. That is, the process results in one of interpretation. Notably, a:

"social world is always in process, and the lives of the research subjects shift and change as their circumstances and they themselves change…. a qualitative researcher - constructs a picture that draws from, reassembles, and renders subjects live. The product is more like a painting than a photograph" (Charmaz, 2003, p.270).

By this Charmaz (2003, p.251) simply uses coding and categorisation as *"heuristic"* devices rather than *"formulaic procedures"* to aid the construction of social life. This was the approach adopted in the present thesis. The empirical data was subjected to the three stages of coding and although specified as a linear process, the actual coding process is iterative and symbiotic. The purpose of this process was to produce information to answer the research questions that sought to establish:

1. What are the value seeking practices of public health and fitness club customers?
2. How can the value seeking practices of public health and fitness club customers be explained?

As the research commenced it initially appeared that the club did not have many practices of note (Field note: 30 May 2011). However, as the research unfolded scores of practices could be identified in this context. Therefore, the level of abstraction to be concentrated upon is dependent upon the level of macro versus micro detail required. In his work on cruiseship practices, Korkman (2006) eventually settled upon the identification and explanation of twenty one practices. These were contained under three themes: family practices, adult practices, and childrens practices. The present thesis research concentrated upon developing a deep understanding of the macro health club practices. However, that is not to say that the micro practices are irrelevant. On the contrary, several micro practices had enormous significance for the research. Therefore, this thesis strives to achieve a suitable balance between the macro and the micro practices relating to the health club.

After the completion of the first round of open coding seventy nine practices were identified. After several rounds of axial coding - which compares data relationships across open codes this reduced the original seventy nine practices down to seven. These seven practices retain the intent of the original practices, which continue to inform the work. These seven practices were then grouped under three themes that the data suggested. These are: Commitment Practice, Facilitating Practice, and Performance Practice. This is illustrated in figure 12 below.

Figure 12 Three Themes Of Practice

Commitment Practice	Joining Practice Attendance Practice	The practices that sees the customer committing themselves to joining and attending the health club
Facilitating Practice	Prerequisite Practice Induction Practice Movement Practice	The practices that facilitate the performance practices
Performance Practice	Fashion Practice Exercise Practice	The interactive practices executed by the customers in the performance of using in the health club

The selective coding stage is part of the coding process which does not necessarily occur in many research projects. Straus and Corbin (1998, p.144) call this stage *"analytical gestalt"*. This is where a central theme emerges from the interpretive process. The concepts of the axial coding can then be arranged around this central theme. A theme identified in the analysis did emerge as a significant core tenet (Straus and Corbin, 1998). That is, the issue of provider influenced practices, customer influenced practices, and the tension between these interactive but frequently opposing forces (Gronroos, 2011). This has particular significance for this research, and the present thesis terms this central theme: the customer/provider practice dialectic.

4.8 Research Ethics

For the purposes of the present research, the University of Sunderland's Research Ethics Principles document guided the investigation (Research Ethics Committee, 2011). This falls in line with suggestions that many *"professional associations"* or contexts may have appropriate ethical codes to guide research that is undertaken (Gray, 2004, p. 60; Saunders et al., 2012). Primarily, the University's Research Ethics Principles document attempts to ensure that participants have their *"dignity, rights, safety and well-being"* protected (Department of Health, 2011, p.14; Denscombe, 2003; Research Ethics Committee, 2011). In addition, these principles safeguard the integrity of the research institution in respect of their moral and legal responsibilities (Denscombe, 2007). Significantly, adherence by researchers to the university's document inherently addresses the key ethical requirements. Pragmatically, to achieve the overarching ethical requirements the researcher has to ensure that research participants are conversant with what the research entails, the voluntary nature of participation, and the advantages and disadvantages for them should they wish to be involved (King, 2012)**.** One of the main aspects of considering ethics is to allow researchers to be aware of the decisions they make and how these impact upon their study. This includes consideration of the implications for the research participants, the research institution, and the researchers themselves as participant observers (Sullivan and Riley, 2012**).** Sarantakos (2005, p.17-21) provides a useful guide pertaining to the overarching key areas requiring attention. Two are particularly pertinent. Namely:

- Professional practice and ethical standards
- The researcher-respondent relationship

4.8.1 Professional Practice and Ethical Standards

Whilst complying with the universities requirements, it was also recognised that ethics is not a uniform subject area (Gray, 2004). Bryman (2008) highlights that ethics can be a paradigm which suggests a set of principles to be adhered to universally, however conversely there are arguments for *"moral"* transgressions to be permitted on a "*case by case basis*" (Bryman, 2008, p. 116). King (2012) lends some support to this latter view. He claims that research ethics should move beyond *"the tick box mentality"* and recognise the often negotiated nature of research studies (King, 2012, p. 117)*.* Therefore, for the present research the

primary decision concerning ethics was a initially viewed as a philosophical one, and to some extent a political one (Gray, 2004). That is, should the researcher philosophically question the application of ethical principles in terms of who decides what ethics is? Alternatively, as a political decision should the researcher adopt the Universities research principles - to avoid the difficulties of non compliance - without recourse to philosophy. In this case, the decision made was actually based upon the topic of the research. The nature of the research - customers' value seeking practices - tended to make this a less arduous decision. This was due to it being a relatively non-controversial topic. For example, studies that consider subjects of a more sensitive nature (i.e. sexual preference, race, gender, etc) may need a deeper consideration of existing ethical principles. Therefore, the decision arrived at for the present study was to adhere to the University's Research Ethics Principles document. These principles were deemed as relevant to the study, and application of them would not compromise any stages of the research process.

4.8.2 The Researcher - Respondent Relationship

To achieve a research project that addressed the universities ethical considerations, the key areas focussed upon were the potential for "*harm to participants….* [the implications of a] *lack of informed consent*….[the dangers of] *invasion of privacy….. and* [attempting to avoid] *deception"* (Bryman, 2008, p.112). In attempting to avoid the research causing harm to the participants, several issues are relevant (Sullivan and Riley, 2012). Therefore, the research at all times attempted to be *"truthful"*, *"accurate" respectful*, and not compromise *the "dignity"* of participants (Saunders et al., 2012, p.231) In addition, harm such as *"stress"*, *"distress",* and compromised "*dignity* - induced by intrusive observation and interviewing - was designed out of the research procedures primarily by using informed consent (Collis and Hussey, 2009, pp.45-47; Flick, 2009).

Informed consent was achieved by ensuring that participants were fully aware of the voluntary nature of the research and their potential to opt out of it at any time (King, 2012). Informed consent is also about ensuring that participants are both aware of the research being undertaken and avoiding any type of coercion being applied to participants (Flick, 2009)**.** To achieve informed consent from participants, posters were located within the study context advising customers that research - observation and interviewing - was taking place. These posters also outlined the benefits and limitations of the research being

undertaken. Furthermore, participants selected for interviews and discussions within the research context had the nature of the research fully explained. This gave them the option of non-participation and withdrawal from the process at any time of their choosing. When participants were interviewed, verbal - rather than written - consent was obtained. This was in line with suggestions by Sarantakos (2005). He suggests that attempting to obtain written consent from participants may add an unnecessary additional layer to the research process. He felt that this was unnecessary and that it discourages interview and discussion participation.

The privacy of the participants was protected through the use of pseudonyms for both the context of the study and the participants. This ensured participant anonymity (Oliver, 2010). This was applied when fieldnotes were documented, interviews were recorded, and the research was written up (King, 2012). The observations and interviews undertaken were conducted so as not to intrude into the participants personal lives (Sarantakos, 2005). For example, observations were not carried out in shower areas, and interviews did not ask questions of deeply personal nature. Finally, the thesis was written in a manner so as not to identify individual study participants.

4.8.3 Ethical Limitations

The overall thesis is very focussed upon attempting to provide critical evaluation of the issues discussed. In this regard the limitations of ethics also warrant discussion. Overall Sarantakos (2005) identifies three main approaches to research ethics. Firstly, full ethical compliance is where the researcher adheres to research ethics codes of practice. Secondly, partial ethical compliance is where the researcher adheres to some research principles but sacrifices others to enable to the research to be carried out. Finally, ethical philosophy concerns questioning the very foundations of ethics and whether ethics per se is appropriate for research undertakings.

The present research utilised full compliance to the University's Research Ethics Principles document (Sarantakos, 2005). Despite this, some limitations are inherent within this approach. Firstly, it was not possible during the current research to individually notify participants of research specifics. For example, the researcher observing a particular location within the health and fitness club at a particular time. Secondly, recognition that

participants may change their behaviour and practices if they are aware that they are being observed was unavoidable. (King, 2012). Finally, at a more general level it was recognised that for future research full ethical compliance may be unworkable. For example, when gaining consent would render the research impotent (i.e. research into illegal activity). In cases whereby full compliance is not possible, partial ethical compliance may be considered acceptable. That is, when the utility of the research outcomes are greater than the disadvantages of the partial ethical compliance (Sarantakos, 2005). Of course, this would compromise adherence to issues relating to *"harm, informed consent, invasion of privacy….. and deception"* and limits research ethics in these respects (Bryman, 2008, p.112). In the present research however, this partial compliance approach was not necessary as full compliance was achievable.

4.9 The Provider/Customer Dialectic

The provider/customer dialectic emanated from the research in that it appeared that the provider imposed practices from which the customer was then expected to become the carrier of that practice. However, during the research it also became apparent that on a frequent basis the customer appeared to autonomously develop and carry their own practice. This resulted in a tension - often unseen - that had the potential to enable or constrain customers value seeking practice. An example of this tension was recorded in an early field note:

"I am coming to realise that there are practices which are being imported by customers into the health club . Where these are coming from, I am unsure. I have become aware that there are many as what can only be described as bizarre practices taking place in the club. One example relates to exercising that I have seen over the last few weeks. That is, many people are exercising in what appears to be the direct opposition to what they are shown at induction. Broadly, this includes doing exercises very badly in terms of form, misusing equipment for purposes other than it is intended, and exercising in a way that can potentially cause injury to self or others." (Fieldnote: 7 June 2011).

"In other practices, customers move into spaces that put them in danger, and intentionally engage in behaviour which directly contradicts the induction information…. I realise that two competing things are going on under the surface. That is, the provider imposes practices, but the customer develops their own practices, this results in a dichotomy that appears more and

more troublesome, however at the same time very, very, interesting" (Fieldnote: 7 June 2011).

The above fieldnotes were basically recognising that practices could be provider influenced and customer influenced. Felin and Hesterly (2007, p.196) suggest that much can be *"learned"* from juxtapositions. This unseen practice dialectic has the potential to enable or constrain customers value seeking practices. This provider and customer perspective has been addressed - mainly conceptually - by contemporary researchers (Gronroos 2008b; Gronroos, 2011; Gronroos and Ravald, 2010; Heinonen et al., 2010), but not in the terms used in the present thesis. That is, as a practice dialectic. Although some related empirical work by Gidhagen et al. (2011) has been completed in the video game industry, this has not concerned practices specifically, and no research of this nature appears to exist in the health club sector. This gap in empirical research is addressed in this thesis. The practice identified can now be viewed as being mediated via the provider/customer practice dialectic. This is shown in Figure 13 below.

Figure 13 The Provider/Customer Dialectic
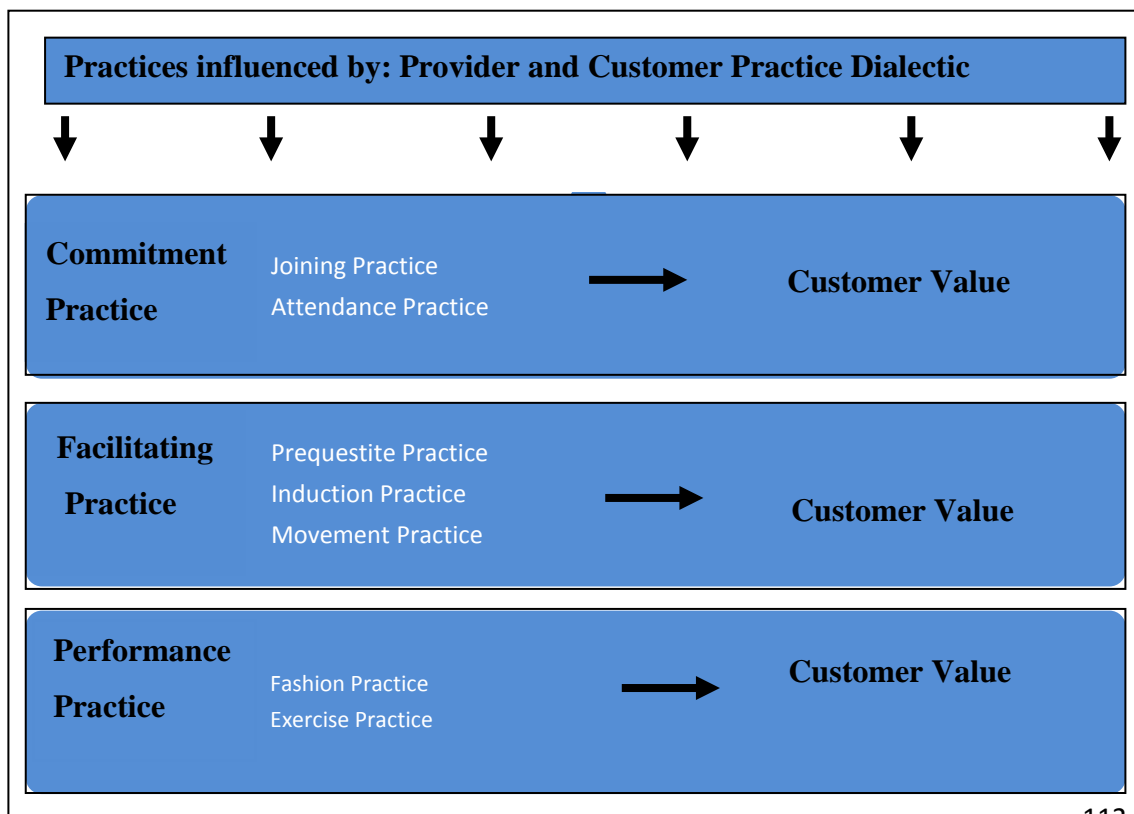
The table above also helps illuminate two key points. Firstly, that the practices undertaken by customers are assumed to have value embedded in them, and secondly the issue of practices being copied from customer to customer. The first issue has been addressed elsewhere in the thesis (see section 3.5.4). However, in summary, the fact that customers voluntarily take part in practices, assumes that these practices must have customer value embedded within them (Korkman, 2006). The second issue of customer practices being copied warrants a fuller explanation. Customer influenced practices appear commonly in the club. Connor commented that he felt some customers exercise practice does not come from any formal club instruction but: *"maybe watching other people in the gym that's a key one, and also reading things on the web or even means health magazines"* (Interview: 08 August 2011). This will be discussed further in the analytical chapters that follow.

4.10 Conclusions

This chapter commenced by outlining the aim, research questions, and objectives the research seeks to address. These are developed to fill a gap in existing academic research. No existing research has attempted to identify and explain customers value seeking practices in public sector health and fitness clubs. The research findings will assist in helping understand what is of value to customers, how this can be explained, and how customers propose practice which may assist in developing service. Therefore, this research is of interest to both academics and practitioners.

A rationale for the use of social constructionism was provided. Existing studies of practices tends towards a chameleon approach to studying practice where both objectivist and constructionist view meld to explain practice (Korkman, 2006). This approach was viewed as an untenable position for the present thesis (Crotty, 1998. Gergen, 1999). Therefore, social constructionism guided the methodological choices.

The methodological framework utilised was interpretivism. This approach utilises ideographic methods where qualitative data collection and analysis was used to understand meaning from the subjects perspective (Burrell and Morgan, 2008). From this foundation

ethnography was used as a specific methodology. Ethnography permitted practices to be viewed during a period of months in which the researcher was immersed in the research context (Bryman, 2008; Jerolmack, 2009). Participant observation and interviews were utilised as means of data collection. These selections had the advantage that both the emic and etic perspectives of practice could be considered (Johnson and Christensen, 2012).

The data coding resulted from a consideration of a number of discursive approaches to data analysis. The selection of Strauss and Corbin's (1998) open, axial, and selective coding was based upon the rationale of four key principles. Firstly to allow the research to be anchored to the "*evidence*" that had been *"collected* " (Denscombe, 2007, p.287). Secondly, these coding practices facilitated deep analysis within and between various ideas (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Thirdly, it helped prevent the researcher using a priori perspectives to influence the interpretation (ibid). Finally, this analysis coding allowed the researcher to move back and forth between the collected data and the research context as issues emerged (Charmaz, 2003). This allowed points of interest to be clarified and developed, as well as returning to the field as the research progressed.

In reflecting upon the research process, initial data collection reservations turned to excitement as it became clear that practices of some significance were being identified. Seventy nine initial practices were eventually reduced to seven practices subsumed within three overarching themes. Namely, Commitment Practices, Facilitating Practices, and Performance Practices. As the research developed it became clear that the practices could be viewed as a dialectic between provider influenced practices and customer developed practices. This provided raw material for service development. Therefore, the subsequent three chapters identify public sector health practices, explain these practices, and make suggestions - which emanate from the provider/customer practice dialectic – for service development.

Chapter 5

COMMITMENT PRACTICE

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5   COMMITMENT PRACTICE

5.1 Introduction

Commitment Practice, Facilitating Practice, and Performance Practice are the overarching themes identified by the research. These practices form the locus of the following three chapters. These themes are interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, each can be said to be constructed from sub-practices. Secondly, these sub-practices could - if required - be further broken down into the practices that inform them. This level of detail allows both academics and practitioners to consider practice at very rich levels. Thirdly, several very interesting sub-practices have emerged which   provide insights for academics and practitioners. This stands in direct contrast to previous research by Korkman (2006) which suggests that it is rare that practices of extra-ordinary types are found. He comments:

"There are very few direct surprises and variations. There is hardly any positive drama in experiential and [sic] *peaks and valleys, which is interpreted to bring deep satisfaction"* (Korkman, 2006, p.83).

Early in the present thesis data collection it did appear that indeed practices are unsurprising and routinized (Shatzchi, 1996; 2001; Reckwitz, 2002). This is reflected in an early field note:

"*I am worried that no practices of any note will be viewable.* A difficulty here *is the volume of Arkin Fitness Key[2] operated cardio machines which means everybody on cardio is simply watching TV. There is little conversation or interaction. Customers just appear to be moving from one exercise to the next. Nothings seems to happening. What will my research produce? Just a blueprint of customer movements through a health fitness club".* (Fieldnote: 30 May 2011).

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[2] The Arkin Fitness Key allows access to cardio machines. The machines cannot be operated without the key. The Arkin Fitness Key keeps a record of the activity completed by the customer on the machine. This can then be viewed at a Arkin Fitness Key Station at the end of the work-out. The key does not record all resistance machines (or free weights) however, so it is usually an incomplete record of activity.

Two points can be made at this juncture. Firstly, at a superficial level the above information did appear correct. Nothing but the customers well defined movements through the club appeared to be happening. A mere blue print. According to Shostack (1987, p.34) a blue print is a means of allowing services to be *engineered.* A blue print documents a series of process steps by which a customer moves through a service. The movements are characterised by their complexity and divergence, and as such, subsequent strategic decisions can be made, and interventions undertaken to adjust the processes (Ibid). Although a blue print can also be used to further investigate a plethora of service issues, in of itself it is but a minor output of a research effort. Secondly, this situation did change quite dramatically as the research unfolded. Yes, as Knox and Hannam (2007) point out mundane practice was present, but so were quite extraordinary practices. Not extraordinary in the terms of customers exhilarating experiences of the service (Arnould and Price, 2006), but extraordinary in terms of how practices enabled or constrained customer value seeking in unseen, hidden, networked, and often quite startling ways.

5.2 Commitment Practice

Commitment practice consists of two main strands: Joining Practice and Attendance Practice. Broadly, Joining Practice and Attendance Practice can be shown as a sub-practices of Commitment Practice. This is shown if figure 14 below.

Figure 14 Commitment Practice
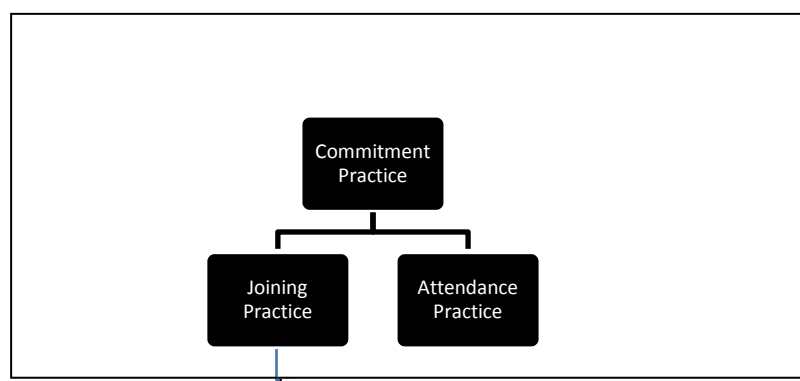
5.2.1 Joining Practice

The first Commitment Practice is Joining Practice. This practice is primarily prior to attending the health club. A number of commitment issues have to be considered before someone decides to join a health club, not least what practices in their social lives have resulting in them feeling they need to join a health and fitness club. Heinonen et al, (2011) identify that commitment is usually viewed from a psychological research perspective. The present research was not psychrogical in nature and the concept of commitment emanated from the actual practices of the customers. The primary Commitment Practice - Joining Practice - did suggest some goal driven behaviour, but these goals are viewed from a socially constructed practice perspective rather than some individual cognitive, affective, or conative individualistic notion. The issues identified are from actual customer practices, where practice is a broader notion than cognition, affect, and conative components. Practice consists of *"tools/know-how"….images….physical space….action"* and a "*subject"* who carrys out the practice (Korkman, 2006, p. 27).

Joining Practice in which customers attain value is influenced by the Physical Improvement Practices of customers and also the search for a suitable health club. Of course, both are products of the society in which they are embedded. Edvardsson et al., (2011) are amongst a very exclusive band of value researchers who address this point. They argue for a notion of socially constructed value creation. They comment:

"perceptions of value are embedded in social systems in which customers and companies have already established positions and roles. These roles have implicit implications for how people perceive the norms and values of social reality, including their thinking and behaviour with respect to the co-creation of value….research has implicitly regarded 'value' as an individualized (or even unique) perception that is apparently independent of any social context in which the reciprocal service provision takes place. In contrast, according to social construction theories, all activities, including value co-creation take place within social systems; as such, value co-creation extends beyond the individual and subjective setting. Indeed, value itself must be understood as part of the collective social context" (Edvardsson et al., 2011, pp.3-6)

Edvardsson et al., (2011, p.17) go on to outline that value should be understood "*as value-in social-context*." Value in a socially constructed context goes some way towards explaining why - in the present thesis - ethnography was used to study practices. This view is consistent with other ethnographers who concentrate upon practices as the unit of study (see for example: Knox and Hannam, 2007). That being the case, customers practices in this research should be viewed as being socially constructed. Therefore, the present thesis provides a slice of customers socially constructed reality in relation to their value seeking practices.

Customers' Joining Practice has to consider and select the health and fitness club appropriate to their Physical Improvement Practice and this also includes the search for a suitable club. The key sub-practices of Joining Practice can be illustrated as shown in figure 15 below.

Figure 15 Joining Practice
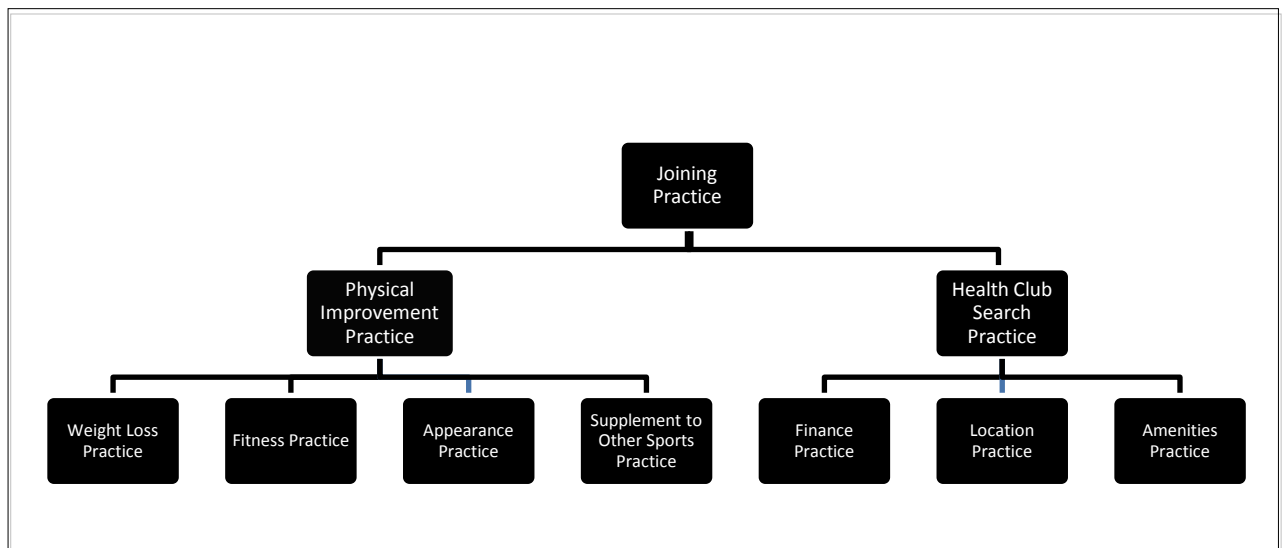
The Joining Practice identified conforms to Korkman's (2006) definition that customer practices are the: *"more or less routinized actions, which are orchestrated by tools, know-how, images, physical space, and a subject who is carrying out the practice" (*Korkman, 2006,

p.27). In this case, Joining Practice includes: *actions* such as physically contacting the health club, *the subject* (the customer) has to interact with the health club to facilitate joining*, tools/know-how* is represented by the customer knowing who to contact, when to contact, and being familiar with the procedures for joining the health club, the *image* of the health club is what the club symbolises to the customer, and the *physical space* is of a place to do activity and this exists as a multifaceted health club.

5.2.1.1. Physical Improvement Practice

The first sub-practice of Joining Practice is Physical Improvement Practice. This Practice at a very deep level concerns four further sub-practices. These are weight loss, fitness, appearance, and wanting to supplement other sports. These are all integral to customers Physical Improvement Practice. To enter the Joining Practice of the health club, Peter commented that: "*I just want to keep my weight down*" (Interview: 28 June 2011). This was a common situation during the field observations; customers wanted to enhance their current Physical Improvement Practice to a practice that included facilitating weight loss. Therefore, they try to commit to this via the Joining Practice. Many of the existing customers who engage in Weight-Loss Practice are over-weight, and concentrate upon cardio exercise almost exclusively. The fieldnote below was written after a conversation with one of the Arkin Fitness Consultants who stated: *"The vast majority of the people who use this gym are doing so for weight loss. That is why they are always on the cardio machines"* (Fieldnote: 12 June 2011).

The weight loss component of Joining Practice is constrained by those who do not act. They do not join the health club. Koch and Nafinger (2011) outline that fear negates the successful attainment of goals and this was a feature of Joining Practice. Self consciousness would prevent some potential customers from moving from their current Physical Improvement Practice in their personal lives to engaging with the clubs Joining Practice. Harold observed:

"*well I've tried to get the wife to come, but erm she wouldn't: was always into diets and that, I just think she is proper self conscious…….because of her weight and that"* (Interview: 5 July 2011).

In the extract above Harold articulates that his wife has had Weight-Loss Practices for a long time: it is an existing Physical Improvement Practice, but herself consciousness is negating her ability to enter the Joining Practice. She therefore does not attempt to commit to the club. This situation suggests that it is likely that Joining Practice is strongly influenced by *"enabling"* and *"constraining"* social forces (Bauman, 1999, p.xii). That is, on the one hand the enabling social force to be fit, healthy and in shape, and on the other hand overridden by the constraining social forces which restricts commitment to the Joining Practice. This dichotomy does however provide opportunities for academics and practitioners to attempt to identify, explain, and influence these constraining social forces. It also encourages health club managers to consider how they can identify such customers and overcome this reluctance. Studying Physical Improvement Practices of potential customers went beyond the scope of the present research. Despite this, the potential of it as a fruitful research area is acknowledged.

When considering customers Joining Practice with regard to committing to the health club, dominant conventional wisdom pertaining to health and fitness drives practice. Comments such as I want to get fitter, I want to tone up, I want to develop a little bit of muscle, were common themes heard amongst members. Some entered the Joining Practice to commit to the health club to enhance their appearance. Robert very candidly commented: *" I started training to get girls and look good in a t-shirt when I go out.... I was quite a skinny little figure: little physique, so I just wanted to bulk up and I wanted to be toned aswell "* *(*Interview: 28 June 11). Of course, improving appearance is part of what joining a health club is about. Andrews et al., (2005) propose that for some customers, health is not about remaining illness free. It is about having a healthy mind, a good looking body, and a feeling of fitness. However, in this case, Robert did tend to confirm the society stereo-type of the bodybuilder. Andrews et al., (2005, p.888) views this type of extreme participation as *"the result of complex social and cultural construction".* They comment that when these attitudes are acted upon, the person joins the health club and not only contributes to making the club, but can be also made by the club. In simple terms, the provider and the customer are both *co-dependent* and *co-producing* the health club (Andrews et al., 2005, p.888). Viewed as a provider/customer practice dialectic this means value may be found by practices dominated by either producer side dynamics or customer side influences

(Gronroos, 2008b; 2011; Heinonen, 2010). The customer finds value in this resultant practice, and chooses to engage in or reject that practice.

Joining the health club to supplement other sports was also a key driver for some customers. Although this was not as common as other reasons for participating in the commitment to the club via Joining Practice – hence its lighter treatment than the other practices – it does warrant a brief explanation. Many of the customers engaged in the Joining Practice are primarily wanting to use the health club as a means to an end to achieve excellence in some other primary sport. Sixteen year old amateur boxer Jordan Jones is this type of customer. When asked why he joined the health club he replied:

"Just for my sport more than anything else….you don't want to be pushed around in the ring and obviously you need to be strong just to throw strong punches you know" (Interview: 28 June 2011).

Examples of other sports supplemented by weight training includes: soccer, mixed martial arts, and athletics. I observed that:

"a significant number of the customers I chat to are using the health club facilities to supplement other sports. I was chatting with Derek today, and he said that he was gaining some muscle he hoped would make him heavier. Derek intimated that for his sport - recreational Brazilian Ju-jitsu - this added weight can help pin a person to the ground. This is a major objective of his sport" (Fieldnote: 8 August 2011).

In summary, Physical Improvement Practice consisting of weight loss, fitness, improved appearance, and supplementing other sports can be identified as influential in Joining Practice. These aspects of Physical Improvement Practice influence Joining Practice which in turn influences Commitment Practice. However, this is only a partial picture as another significant aspect of Joining Practice is the practice of searching for a suitable health club.

5.2.1.2 Health Club Search Practice

Foxall et al., (2011) relate that psychological variables are claimed to dominate buyer behaviour. This view indicates that customers are rationally processing the choices they make in relation to their Joining Practice. For example, the rational purchasing of a health club membership or selection of an appropriate health club would be examples of this psychological view. Foxhall et al., (2010) suggest that in contrast to the dominant paradigm, what customers say and do differs significantly. Therefore, Foxall et al., (2011) propose that the practice of joining the health club is linked to social and contextual factors which govern the Joining Practice. One such social factor could be what Netemeyer et al., (1995 cited in Chang et al., 2011) calls vanity buying. This is where an underlying motivation to purchase a health club membership is constructed by social pressure to improve physicality. Wang (2004 cited in Chang et al., 2011) provides an example of Taiwanese women who join health clubs to improve their bodily appearance. This phenomenon was also indentified in the Physical Improvement Practices of this chapter. However, in this case the data collected also suggested that the actual specific practice of the selection of the health club by customers relied upon three main sub-practices. These are shown in figure 16 below.

Figure 16 Health Club Search Practice
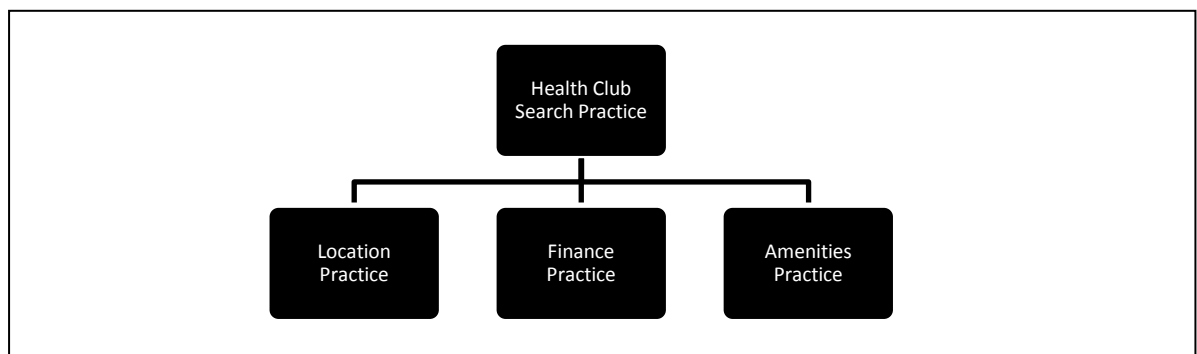
For some the Joining Practice is simply to fit the location of the health club conveniently to work or home so as not to disrupt their overall social lives. Another practice is price. That is, their Joining Practice is driven by financial practice and proximity to where they work or live. Connor indicated: *"It was cheap.... and it was also on the way back home from work. So it was not out of my way and it was cheap….cheapest in the region"* (Interview: 08 August 2011). For Connor convenience of location - so as not to disrupt his social life - was important. This was traded off against price which impacted upon his Finance Practice. For

him, location was primary. Connor went as far as to state that he would not attend this club if the location was further away from his work place or his personal circumstances changed making the location not easily accessible. This was common in the interviews. According to Peter Roberts, Managing Director of the low cost health club chain Pure Gym: *"at the end of the day for a lot of people it's about convenience ....it's not all about money that's for sure"* (Health Club Management, 2010, p.26).

For a small minority of other customers location is still based upon proximity to work or home, but they try to avoid attendance at an establishment where they are known. This goes back to self consciousness relating to Physical Improvement Practice. Marianne said of another club in her locality:

"I would not go to that club because there are too many people there I know....I just don't like erm working out and ....I just feel quite uncomfortable if there are people who I know there" (Interview: 7 July 2011).

For Marianne, convenience and proximity to work are still important but these self image factors impinge upon her location practice. Although she still chose a convenient location, it was based upon privacy rather than strictly location factors.

The final Health Club Search Practice relates to the amenities that clubs have on offer. Amenities Practice is also an endeavour that assumes importance for customers value seeking. That is, they commit to a club by searching out which have the best amenities in conjunction with Finance Practice and Location Practice. For example, Kimberley stated:

"I chose this club because I like to go swimming after I have been in the gym. I also go to some of the classes when I can be bothered. In most of the other gyms around here either they have not got a pool or if they have they are really expensive. I couldn't afford places like the polo club". This is perfect for me because it's really cheap" (Fieldnote: 15 June 2011).

At the Arkin Fitness Centre an array of supporting facilities, goods, information and services are available. These that are generally considered to directly relate to sport and physical activity includes: the actual Arkin Fitness Centre itself, swimming, sauna and steam room,

snack bar, and a wide selection of fitness classes. Therefore, The collected data suggested that Amenities Practice is a significant value seeking Health Club Search Practice.

5.2.2 Attendance Practice

This section develops Commitment Practice by considering the second subordinate practice. Namely Attendance Practice. This is in shown figure 17 below.

Figure 17 Attendance Practice
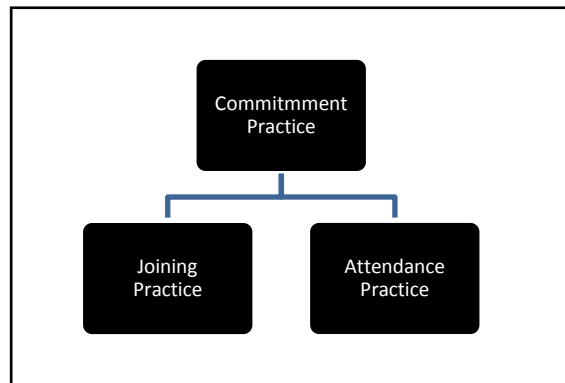
The second Commitment Practice is Attendance Practice. Attendance Practice is contingent on a number of sub-practices identified in field notes and interviews, and these can be summarised as: Programme Practice, Finance Practice, Accessibility Practice, and Lifeworld Practice. These combined practices make up Attendance Practice which when combined with Joining Practice results in Commitment Practice. The sub-practices are shown in figure 18 below.

Figure 18 Expanded Attendance Practice
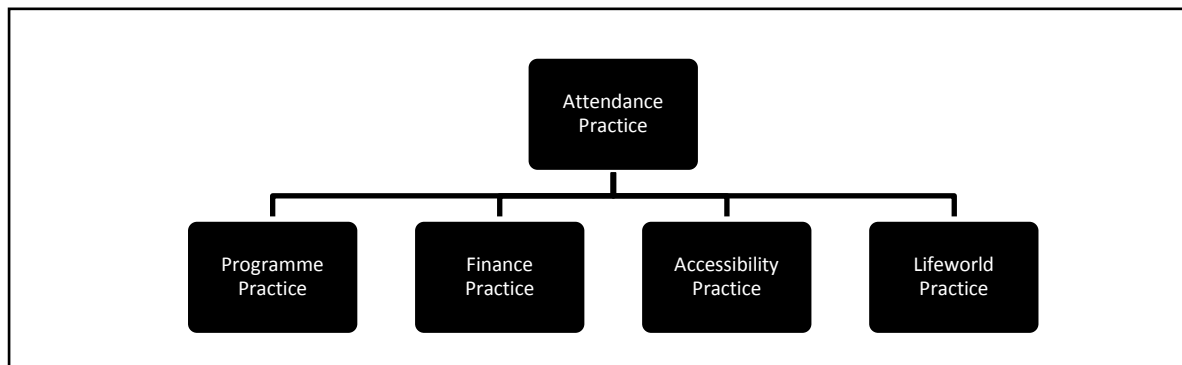
For managers, customers health club Attendance Practice is of vast importance (Surujlal and Dhurup, 2011). Attendance from this perspective concerns not only retaining customers for the longer term to generate revenues, but also having the customer present in the club to engage in interactive value creation (Gronroos 2011; Gallaza et al., 2011). Therefore, the customer annual retention rate is a key performance indicator in the management of health clubs (Hall, 2008)**.** The Fitness Industry Association estimates that the annual retention rates for customers on a 12 month membership contract are only 55% (Hall, 2008). Therefore, a major concern of health club management is the reduction of the attrition rate (Hillsdon 2011; Oliver, 2007). Work to improve this loss is primarily concentrated upon customer retention strategies (Surujlal and Dhurup, 2011). These usually emphasise some form of customer relationship management (Hall, 2008). Although Crossley (2005) claims that customers have vocabularies for attendance and non attendance, the practices identified here do suggest that non-attendance may be the result of practice constraints in the customers lifeworld. This is in contrast to notion that they will construct motives - such as being too tired - to account for non-attendance.   Studying the practices of customers attendance has much to add to the understanding of why customers fail to attend, which may eventually lead to loss of custom.

Attendance practice is interesting because it is enabled or constrained by practices that would not fall under traditional relationship marketing strategies. Understanding what these practices are is insightful. From a customer perspective knowing what practices enable or constrain attendance may help the customer provide their own solution to re-structure their practice. This would implicitly lead to a new practice that contains more value for them.

From the provider perspective this practice identification is crucial. The identification of hidden practices, such as those elucidated by the present research, could be used as catalysts in removing barriers to attendance.

5.2.2.1 Programme Practice

Programme practice on a common sense level is that regular attendance is required to fulfil a customers' exercise schedule. That is, their attendance is necessary as part of the programme provided by the club. The essence of this programme based attendance was captured by Karen when responding to questioning regarding her three times a week attendance: *"One of the trainers told us"* (Interview: 5 July 2011). Alternatively, some customers developed programmes based upon their own experience. In this case, customers decided upon their own attendance. This was in relation to a schedule of exercising they had constructed for themselves. This was an interesting insight. For them they were finding value from their own creation rather than one provided by the club. Of course, this rests upon an assumption that what they do actually does create value. An alternative proposal is that they may lack clarity in what they should be doing, and this may in fact reduce value. This stumbling development of practices was experienced myself in relation to running on the treadmill. The fieldnote below highlights the instance:

"I realised I was creating/destroying my own value through trial and error….nobody was advising me to jog every other day, rather than everyday. I was figuring out for myself" (Fieldnote: 4 July 2011).

This slow realisation of how my own practice was developing organically led to the consideration of how practices enter, evolve, and change within the club. Over time it became clear that some practices were customer defined, and others were provider defined. This resulted in an ongoing tension between provider practices and customer practices. This domination concerned who influenced the practice most.

5.2.2.2 Finance Practice

A Finance Practice which influenced some customers to attend is linked with the initial Joining Practice, and also impacts upon Attendance Practice. That is, they pay by direct debit and this influences their Attendance Practice. Woodhall, (2003, p.7) terms this net value. This is where a customer weighs up the benefits and sacrifices they have to make to achieve *"worthwhileness"* from what they pay in comparison to their actual attendance Practice (Woodhall, 2003, p.7). Woodhall (2003) views net value as a narrow component of an overall gestalt assessment of value. Marianne demonstrates that to achieve this net value she must conduct Attendance Practice regularly:

" I'm much more likely to go because it comes out of my bank each month, so I'm much more likely to do it....because if you have got the constant thing coming out you are much more likely to go" (Interview: 7 July 2011).

Historically, many health clubs have insisted upon minimum contracts of 12 months membership whether you attend or not (King, 2012). This was not some altruistic attempt to encourage attendance through net value. It was an attempt to tie customers into long money generating revenue streams (King, 2012). However, this does not appear to be a prudent strategy for encouraging attendance. Jones and Sasser (1995, p.11) suggest that keeping customers *"hostage"* leads to them *"feeling trapped".* Therefore, even if direct debits effectively forced customers to attend this would result in customers that were difficult to service, and likely to negatively impact upon other users. Although the Fitness Industry Association points out that contracts retain members for an additional 13 weeks, it does not appear that the effects of this hostage taking have been evaluated. Attendance Practice needs to be voluntary, which draws in the customer through practices that provide value (Nordin, 2008). John noted:

"I am leaving as soon as my contract runs out. Sometimes I have to miss sessions when I am working away. I still have to pay though even though I am not there. It not worth it. It's a rip off" (Fieldnote: 1 September 2012)

The Finance Practice of customers therefore can be a dual edged sword. On the one hand some customers achieve value via attending regularly. This Finance Practice drives their Attendance Practice. Conversely, for other customers this impact upon their Finance Practice does not encourage them to adhere to regular Attendance Practice and ultimately leads to value attenuation. Despite this duality Finance Practice was identified as a key component of Attendance Practice.

5.2.2.3 Accessibility Practice

The practice of accessing health clubs should be relatively routinised for customers. However, at this particular club the practice of attendance is constrained. The league football team stadiums' proximity to the health club causes difficulties. For example, when football matches are held , many customers do not attend the health club. Generally, the dominant view is:

"on match days there's no parking….so that rules out one Saturday every fortnight…you have got to park away from the stadium which is a bit of a nightmare, and the second one is the gym is really quiet…. I think that the likes of people who go to the gym it's all about lifestyle, and it's all about people who tend to go to the gym tend to have a car and they won't use other modes of transport" (Interviews: 7 July 2011 and 8 August 2011).

Access to the health club on match days is caused be difficulties relating to car-parking, generally heavy traffic, and large gatherings of spectators. This was constraint on Accessibility Practice that took me by surprise one evening when the health club had only four people attending. I heard somebody who appreciated the low numbers say: *"I wish Popsicle[3] played here every night"* (Fieldnote: 31 May 2011). The pop group Popsicle were playing a concert at the stadium. Therefore, customers predicted that they would have accessibility difficulties and stayed away from the health club. Although this is a single example of an Accessibility Practice, it is related in terms that any access issues may

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[3] Popsicle is a pseudonym

compromise Attendance Practice. This practice was identified by observing practice on match and events days and it was also confirmed via the voice of customers in interviews

5.2.2.4 Lifeworld Practice

Lifeworld practice consists of a significant group of sub-practices that greatly influence Attendance Practice. Heinonen et al. (2010) provides significant conceptual literature which directly relates to the output of the present thesis research. Heinonen et al. (2010) suggests that the customers life should be the foci of the research effort. Although this stands in marked contrast to the study of practice in-situ, Heinonen et al., (2010, p.532) posit that what they are attempting to achieve is an understanding of *"what the customer does with the service"* in terms of value creation for themselves. Burrowing down more deeply they are attempting to establish how a service fits and meshs with the life of the customer. However, this is in the sense of the service matching the customers lifeworld, rather than the customers lifeworld having to fit a providers offering. That is, the customers lifeworld should be the nexus of research:

"We take a step towards a more holistic understanding of the customers life, practices and experiences, in which service is naturally and inevitably embedded" (Heinonen et al., 2010, p.533).

This research by Heinonen et al., (2010) is at the conceptual stage and has certainly not been applied in the health club sector. Despite this, the present thesis emergent data suggested that the customers lifeworld should be considered. Many in-situ practices are directly related to practices in customers outside lifeworld. Furthermore, the basic but important nuance of Heinonen et al., (2010) work is that it proposes looking at what the customer does with service, and how they use service to achieve their personal objectives. In simple terms, their research views not what the service provider offers, but of what the customers lifeworld consists. This includes how customers live their lives and how they use service. Although this theses is considering practices of health club users in-situ, empirical data emerged relating to customers lifeworld practices. These are shown in context in table 19 below.

Figure 19 Lifeworld Practices
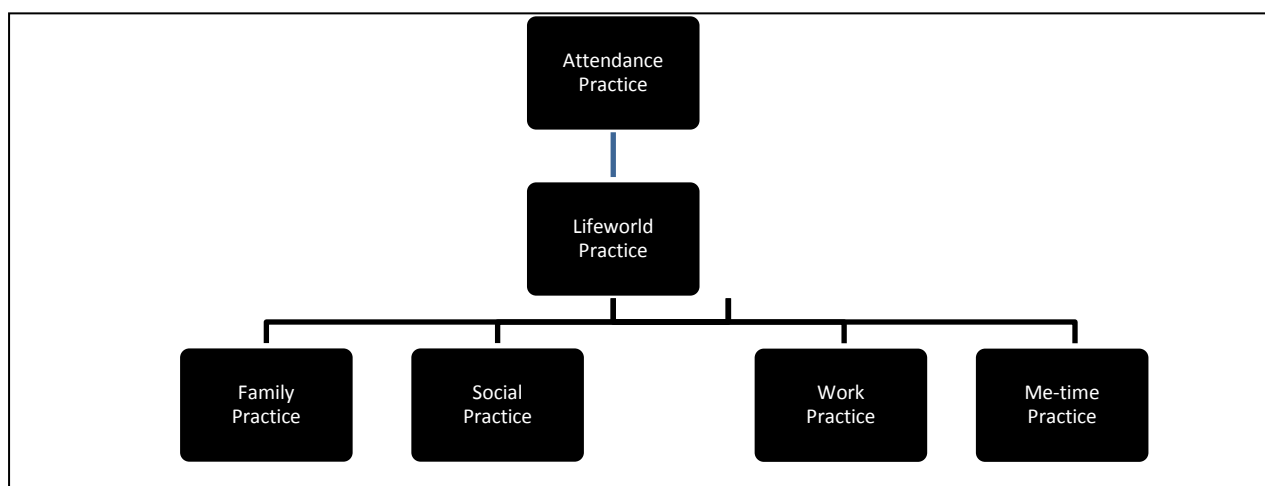
These lifeworld sub-practices were all established as enabling or constraining Attendance Practice. For example, emphasising the impact his Family Practices have on his club life Walter said: *"if we are particularly busy day that day or the Mrs is stuck somewhere and I have got to go for the kids, I wouldn't be able to come to the gym"* (Interview: 4 July 2011). My fieldnote documented my surprise that this type of outside Lifeworld Practice would impinge upon a customer's Attendance Practice:

"*This is a real sea change for me from what I expected. For many members health club attendance is not essential, and a small barrier would stop them attending"* (Fieldnote: 27 July 2011).

I had been likening attending the health club as being similar to attending the cinema or work. That is, you would only be called away, or stopped from a planned visit for something quite urgent. However, time and again customers reported that run of the mill Lifeworld Practices would stop them attending the club, Sue said:

"*Hangovers….if I am doing anything else….if I was working, and I was working late. If I finished at seven o clock or something I am not going to then come to the gym and not get home until nine o'clock or something, or if I am going out with friends … I have got a season ticket so I don't come down on match days"* (Interview: 16 August 2011).

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For customers, the value of doing something else often outweighed the value of attending the club. Social Practice was another Lifeworld Practice that constrained Attendance Practice. Kevin emphasised that his Friday night out with friends would mean that he could not attend the club:

"I cannot workout this Friday I am going out with my mates. I am not going out until 9pm, but I want to take my time getting ready. I don't want to be rushed". If I went to the gym, I would have to hurry when I was getting ready" (Fieldnote: 16 September 2011).

For Marianne her Work Practice enables attendance only at certain times of the day:

"I'm much better on a night then I am during the day….I used to go with Kayleigh as soon as it opened on a morning at six or whatever it was, and it meant I had to get up at half five or whatever it was….I am not a morning person anyway, so that was not any good for me….I am much better at night but it closes at nine, so sometimes by the time I have finished work, walked the dogs and got back….had something to eat, and it means I will be sitting and I've just got in….so it doesn't seem worth it" (Interview: 7 July 2011).

For Marianne she feels her Work Practice gives her a window of opportunity - if she finishes work on time - between five and six o clock on an evening. Many customers were enabled and constrained significantly by work commitments. For Walter this was both an enabler and a potential future constraint if his working situation changed:

"I am fortunate enough to finish (work) at two o clock, so I can pretty much get most afternoons in…. honestly there is no way if I finished work at five clock I would think I'm gonna go to the gym now…then I wouldn't come to the gym" (Interview: 4 July 2011).

For others an enabler for Attendance Practice is that view that they have Lifeworld Practices that involve "me time". Tom intimated that most could accept that going to the club an hour a day would not be considered selfish, He said if a close family member pressured him about attending the club, his response would be:

"You could not really class it as selfish….you are working most of the day, hence you need some time alone, which would be your gym time and the rest would be spent with that person so you need some alone time" (Interview: 18 August 2011).

Others also commented that nothing would stop them from coming to the club. For example, John informed me in the club that "*no way would anything stop me from getting my session in*" (Fieldnote: 30 September 2011). This is supported by Smith Maguire (2008, p.5) who views fitness clubs as "*semi-private space*" where the "*mode of fitness presented…. Is an expression of the individuation of leisure*".

For customers such as Tom, "Me Time" Practice provides value that they argue would be unreasonable to impinge upon. This stands in contrast to other customers whose Lifeworld Practice easily impacted upon their Attendance Practice.

The Lifeworld Practices detailed depend very heavily upon socially constructed narratives concerning club attendance versus outside Lifeworld Practices. What is regarded as acceptable and unacceptable varies from individual to individual, but in another sense these narratives are malleable. That is, choosing between putting Lifeworld Practice commitments first (i.e. Family Practice) or prioritising "Me Time" Practice is negotiable. This does provide opportunities for customers - if they desire - to construct narratives to improve attendance. In the case of the provider, the aforementioned is possible by emphasising and supporting the importance of *me time.* This approach could be used to support customers in integrating any number of Lifeworld Practices into club practices. This approach is suggested by Gronroos (2008b; 2011), and Heinonen et al., 2010). An example of this is aspect is Disney type service; where Lifeworld Practice (i.e. Family Practice, Social Practice) and organisations practices (supporting customers in achieving their Family or Social Practice) mesh. Of course, there are negative social implications of this Disney type of service, however in present thesis these are left for others to discuss (see for example: Ritzer, 1993; 1998; Bryman, 2004).

In re-assembling Commitment Practice six key outcomes can be identified. Firstly, Commitment Practice is socially constructed. Secondly, Commitment Practice consists of Joining Practices and Attendances Practices. Thirdly, these practices themselves can be further broken down into:

- Joining Practice: consisting of Physical Improvement Practice and Health Club Search Practice.
- Attendance Practice: consisting of Programme Practice, Finance Practice, Accessibility Practice, and Lifeworld Practice.

Fourthly, the process of breaking down the sub-practices may continue depending upon the level of detail required for analysis. This has been carried out in the present thesis where it was required to illuminate points of particular significance. This identification of the practices is helpful as it allows academics and practitioners to view the key constituents that make up overall commitment practice. Fifthly, the study of these practices allowed the notion of the provider/customer practice dialectic to be developed as it emerged from the data. Finally, consideration may be given to the provider/customer practice dialectic, identifying it's likely locations, and the reflecting upon the implications this has for academic and practical study.

5.3 The Provider/Customer Dialectic

This section will start to develop the notion of the provider/customer dialectic which the data suggested greatly impacted upon health club practices. This serves a dual purpose. Firstly, the practices identified can be used as a base to start to tease out practice conflicts. These conflicts are a result of the provider/customer practice dialectic. Secondly, as some of the more dramatic conflicts of practice are evident in subsequent chapters, this section lays the groundwork for viewing these conflicts. Therefore this section will provide more of a foundational theoretical perspective for the provider/customer practice dialectic. The subsequent chapters will confront the provider/customer practice dialectic from more of an applied perspective.

When considering the provider/customer practice dialectic this thesis views it from the customers' perspective. That is, any fractures are investigated by data collected from the practices of customers. Despite this, the nature of studying practice inevitably encompasses provider practice. This is drawn upon when appropriate, however the focus remains firmly on the customer perspective. Although the provider perspective would be interesting to explore in depth, it is beyond the scope of the present thesis. This dialectic data emerged concerning the provider/customer practice as unanticipated outcome of the research into identifying and explaining customer value seeking practice. Therefore, this thesis by identifying this additional provider/customer practice dialectic provides a rich topic for future research**.**

In understanding the customer side of the provider/customer dialectic, Heinonen et al., (2010) propose that the customer should be primary. They call this Customer Dominant Logic (C-D logic). They ask not what customer needs are, but how they live their lives. Traditional service management and Service Dominant Logic (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) concentrates upon narrow aspects of the customers life. For example, providing a particular service at a particular time, however they do not look holistically at the customers life including: their *history*, their *future*, and the *other activities and experiences* they engage in (Heinonen et al., 2010, p.535). C-D logic proposes this is a gap in research that needs to be closed (Wikstrom et al., 2010). Social constructionism plays a significant role in C-D logic. Heinonen et al., (2010) highlight that value found is likely to be socially constructed. They point to fashion to highlight how the value customers get from it is socially constructed. This points toward not only value-in-use as proposed by Gronroos (2008; 2011) but a value in the broader context. The subtle idea here is to support the customers life with service attuned to the way customers live:

"*to understand the use and value of a service, we first need to understand customer's lives, including context, activities and experiences performing different tasks and how the service supports the customer's life. This focus is crucial….*" (Heinonen et al., 2010, p.538).

For the present thesis this logic is partially addressed by identifying some customers life practices in the context of the health club. These practices enable or constrain the

customers life in the health club. Therefore, this research is in line with the suggestion of Heinonen et al., (2010, p.545) who state:

"This means setting out from understanding of customer's activities and then supporting those activities where a company can fit in. In other words, companies need to do more in-depth ethnographical studies".

The key notion of Heinonen et al., (2010) is for service providers to mesh with the customers lifeworld practices. This results in the service simply *"orchestrating"* provision in line with customers lives (Gidhagen et al., 2011, p.405). In the present thesis it is evident from the data collected that customers take the initiative and attempt to carry out practices from their lifeworld in the health club. It does not take a large leap of imagination to see that this appears particularly likely when the provider does not support the value sought by customers. Where this occurs it can be suggested that this may be the result of the provider not considering or knowing customers lifeworlds. The key notion relating to the above is the recognition that customers will bring lifeworld practices - where possible - to the health club to enable them to attain more value from their existing provider imposed practices. This may bring positive or negative consequences upon existing practices as new practices are introduced into the club. This view moves beyond conceiving practice as simply provider/customer interactions. It suggests that customers should be considered as proposers of new practice. This view ties in with conceptual work by Gidhagen et al., (2011, p.394) who views the customer as being in a *"value proposing role"* and Wikstrom et al. (2010, p.28) who suggests that the customer is the *"value specifier".*

The present thesis data collection suggested that the provider has practices that they expect to be adopted. From the information addressed so far the provider would expect a beginner to adopt their programmes for weight loss or increased fitness. This is traditional provider side viewpoint which may at first appear logical and unproblematic but as the thesis progresses this can be shown to be more complex; perhaps not always in the interests of the customer. Gronroos (2008; 2011) also wants the customers lives to be considered, but he views it from the perspective of the interaction between the provider and the customer. This is a narrower view than Heinonen et al. (2010), but at least he still moves in the direction of understanding the customers life. In fact, he states on several occasions that value is created

for the customer through their everyday practices (Gronroos; 2008b; Gronroos and Ravald, 2010; Gronroos, 2011). However, this is always kept in the background and not fully developed in his papers. His focus lies firmly upon the interactions between the provider and the service.

At the health club, a provider logic appears to be the main focus of service. The value for the customer has to tie in with what the provider creates. At an early stage of the research, my field-notes recorded this provider side domination after I committed to the club. During The Facilitating Practice of Induction - which is covered in more depth in the next chapter - I noted:

" During the induction I felt a lack of control regarding what I had to do. Everything was imposed. I had to use the computerised Arkin Fitness Key to access the machines, I would need to follow a certain programme for my goals, doing things in certain ways, at certain speeds. Everything appeared orderly, but I felt some of the things were not related to what I wanted or needed". Actually, I did not want an induction, I could not see the point" (Fieldnote: 29 May 2011).

Although the above may appear a little pedantic, in actuality several points are subtle but important. Firstly, practices such as the Arkin Fitness Key could easily be dispensed with for those who do not require them. Secondly, alternatives gleaned from customer practices could be considered. Provider side offerings are problematic in that they do not view the world from the customer practice viewpoint. For example, the reasons for induction are not clear other than for some disputable provider side reasons. This latter point is taken up by a member of The Chartered Institute for the Management of Sport and Physical Activity (IMSPA) on the institutes website:

"is an induction designed to benefit the customer, by giving them a realistic amount of new information to take in, or does it cover everything so that the manager can cover his backside with it if something goes wrong?" (IMSPA, 2008).

This customers post is symptomatic of provider side dominant practice if the customers life practices are not taken into account. That is, the customer may not require an induction due to prior experience, qualifications, etc. Although the provider may point out they have a duty of care regarding ensuring customers know how to use equipment provided, this is simply conjecture. At present, no guidelines exist in relation to the need for inductions. This provider side logic can quickly turn into what the provider finds easiest, rather than what practices the customer would prefer. This results in many tensions between provider practice and customer practice. This dialectic tension was very evident on numerous occasions during the research. The provider/customer practice dialectic emerged from data in this section and a number fractures between what the organisation attempts to impose and potential customer proposed practice around and within the club. These contradicting fractures are identified as part of the concluding comments of each of the themed chapters.

5.4 Conclusions

This section has addressed the issue of Commitment Practice as suggested by the empirical data analysis. The understanding of health club customer practice allows academic and practical knowledge to be extended. Practices are socially constructed consisting of subjects who are using tools/know-how and are influenced by image and physical space which produces actions. Overall as a composite this is a practice. Therefore, the first main theme Commitment Practice was considered. This overarching practice was viewed as being socially constructed and influencing the customer practice of joining and attending the health club.

Joining Practice is focused around the socially constructed practices of the customers. In their social context customers Physical Improvement Practice impacts significantly upon the practice of joining a health club. The practice of joining the health club emanates from Physical Improvement Practice which constructs health club usage as being necessary for weight loss, fitness, improved appearance, and to supplement the performance of other sports. Therefore, commitment to the health club is heavily influenced by joining the health club which in turn emerges out of the socially constructed Physical Improvement Practice of customers. These Physical Improvement Practices providing the impetus for customers to commit to the health club.

Joining Practice is also influenced by Health Club Search Practice. This has three sub-practices of Finance Practice, Location Practice, and Amenities Practices. The empirical data suggested that a major factor in the Joining Practice was the cost of the joining fees. People joined the health club due to its relatively low fees. Despite this, the most important factor of Joining Practice was convenient location. For many customers, a convenient location was the dominant factor. The lesser of the factors was amenities provided by the health club. These amenities included types of equipment, supporting social facilities, and access to other fitness related activities such as swimming. Generally, the practice of searching for a health club was founded upon these factors.

Attendance Practice concerned issues relating to frequenting the club once the customers had joined as a member. Attendance Practice was enabled or constrained by the sub-practices of: Programme Practice, Finance Practice, Accessibility Practice, and Lifeworld Practice. The final practice in this list was particularly significant. It was highlighted that further sub-practices relating to family, social relations, work, and personal "me-time" meshed or conflicted with the practices encouraged by the club. Overall the key tensions - that may facilitate service development - between what the club provides and what the customer proposes could summarised as:

Contradiction 1: Customers who engage in Joining Practice driven by Physical Improvement Practice in a sense have already committed to the club by being willing to engage in the Health Club Search Practice. At present the club does not have a means to access the lifeworlds of customers who although are committed to Physical Improvement Practices - such as losing weight - do not actually engage in Health Club Search Practice or the Joining Practice. Therefore, the potential to use the study of practice to identify such users is recognised.

Contradiction 2: Attendance at the club is considered critical for customers to achieve their goals. In addition, research into health club customer retention is concentrated around preserving attendance. Despite this, customers are easily deterred from attending the Arkin Fitness Centre. An example of this was provided when the football league club play at the local stadium. In essence, the customer is proposing a practice of non attendance. This appears to be simply accepted by the

Arkin Fitness Centre. This contradiction provides an opportunity for customers and providers to consider alternative means of exercising on these days.

Contradiction 3: In a similar fashion to contradiction 2 above, many aspects of Lifeworld Practice impact upon customers Attendance Practice. This was identified as Family, Social, Work, and Me-Time Practices. Again although consistent attendance is considered an imperative for achievement of customers goals and an important aspect customer retention, many Lifeworld Practice issues impinge upon regular attendance. Again these non attendance proposals are not addressed by the club in terms of supporting customers in overcoming these obstacles

The contradictions identified above appeared from the empirical data. It became clear that a continual set of proposals and counter proposals were evident in terms of what customer practice takes place within the club. When these proposals do not match, contradictions appear. This rather than being problematic, provides opportunities for academics to develop further understanding of customers within this context. In addition, for practitioners the information provides opportunities to consider how they can best support customers practices. It also recognises explicitly the notion of customers as proposers of practice and this presents service development opportunities (Gidhagen et al., 2011).

Chapter 6

FACILITATING PRACTICE

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6   FACILITATING PRACTICE

6.1 Introduction

Due to the interactive nature of Facilitating Practice, the provider/customer dialectic is brought into sharper focus in this chapter. Facilitating Practice subsumes: Prerequisite Practice, Induction Practice, and Movement Practice. Facilitating Practice is identified by the empirical research as being necessary to allow the Performance Practice - identified in the next chapter - to take place. Facilitating Practice and its sub-practices are shown in figure 20 below.

Figure 20 Facilitating Practice
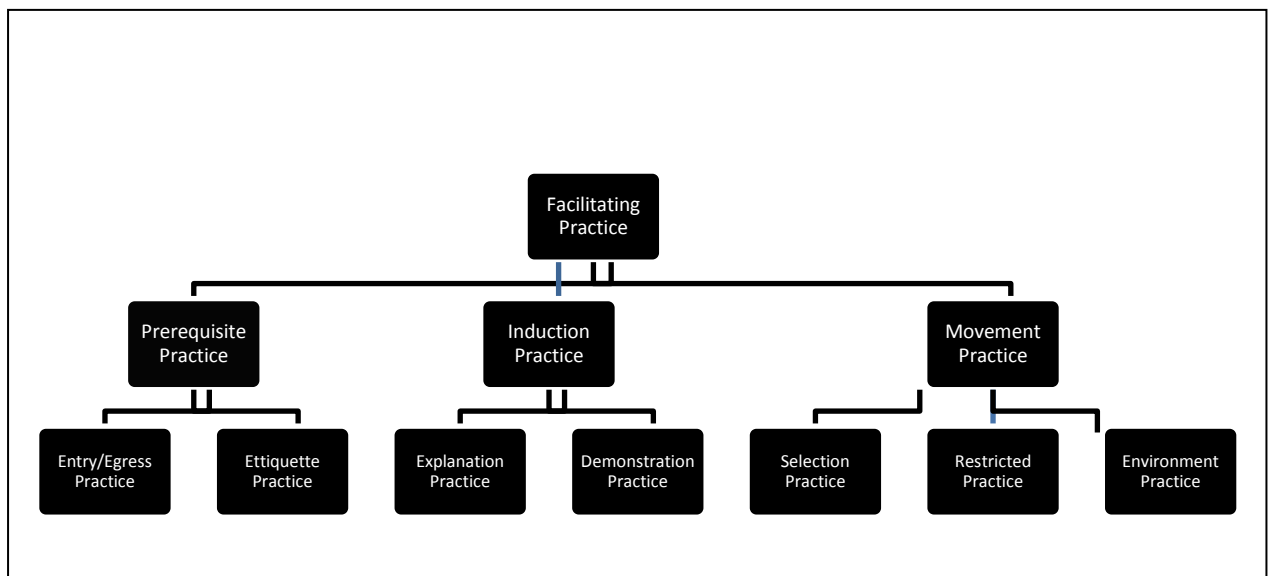
Prerequisite Practice explains how the customers Entry/Egress Practice assists the customer in being able to carry out any practice they undertake in the club. That is, they need to be able to physically access and leave the club, they require access to specific areas within the club to undertake an assortment of activities, and they must be able to access the various processes required for successful club experiences. These Entry/Egress Practices must be undertaken in a socially acceptable manner. Hence, Etiquette Practice is also a key concern. Therefore, Prerequisite Practice concerns not only ascertaining appropriate Access/Egress

Practices, but also viewing the means by which customers conduct practice according to the clubs socially accepted norms.

From a dialectical perspective Prerequisite Practice can be problematic. This is evident when providers Entry/Egress or Etiquette Practice does not mesh with customers Lifeworld Practice identified in the previous chapter. Furthermore, if the customer does not find value in what the club proposes, this can motivate them to develop their own practice. In extreme cases where no clear customer or provider practice emerges, this may lead to a continual vacuum where customers are unsure as how to carry out practice. This may attenuate value for those customers.

The second facilitating practice is Induction Practice. In a sense, observations and customer interviews did connect with existing theoretical research. Bedford (2009a) suggests that customer inductions are desirable - for retention reasons - and should contain two main elements: explanation and demonstration. These are interconnected practices which have been separated in this chapter for discussion purposes, but they remain inexorably intertwined. The explanation element of Induction Practice concerns the customer being socialised into the club. This is usually explained via verbal means. The demonstration element of Induction Practice concerns ensuring the customer knows the physical layout of the club, how to perform their exercise programme, the method by which the exercise equipment should be used, and demonstrating the use of the Arkin Fitness Key and its docking station. This is usually achieved through a physical demonstration of the practice. Induction practice is set within a debatable provider context that states inductions are required on health and safety grounds.

From the dialectic perspective a number of cracks appeared within Induction Practice. This is not surprising: induction is a provider imposed practice. An ongoing conflict surrounds the need for inductions, the heterogeneity of the induction, and the inflexibility of Induction Practice. The data collected also suggested that there is a flaw in the logic of Induction Practice on health and safety grounds. That is, customers - after induction has taken place - *invent* their own programmes, and they do not ask for permission to follow these new ways.

As such these can be viewed as proposing new value seeking practice. New value seeking practice that sometimes circumvents adherence to health and safety.

The third Facilitating Practice is Movement Practice. This practice concerns how and why the customer moves through the club in a particular manner. Two elements are relevant in this regard: Selection Practice and Environment Practice. Although these may be considered more mundane practices, an extraordinary situation was evident within the Selection Practice. That is, female customers were effectively prohibited from using a significant part of the club. This restriction did not apply to male customers. The identification of this phenomenon emerged from the study of practice, and as such further highlighted the necessity of studying customers value seeking via a practice lens.

From the dialectical viewpoint the chasm between male and female practice was quite striking when studied from the practices lens. Interestingly, this discrepancy appeared invisible to alternative methods of study such as the voice of the customer. In fact, the customers voice actually reinforced this inequality between male and female customers. Both male and female customers justified the inequality by simply referring to the particular area - from which women were excluded - as *the mens bit*. However, morally this inequality cannot be supported. Therefore, apart from this obvious inequality, one can conclude that male customers have access to value seeking practices that female customers currently do not.

Overall Facilitating Practice produces some key material that needs to be considered. In particular, the prerequisite, induction, and movement practices material provides insights which would be invisible if only the voice of the customer was used to study value seeking (Wikstrom et al., 2010). Therefore, this chapter is instructive in identifying: Facilitating Practice, the key sub-practices of facilitation, and the dialectical difficulties arising from the empirical material considered.

6.2.1. Prerequisite Practice

Within the club, Prerequisite Practice is necessary to help the practice of facilitation. At this club Prerequisite Practice was suggested by the data as being concentrated around Entry/Egress Practice, and Etiquette Practice. This is shown in figure 21 below.

Figure 21 Prerequisite Practice
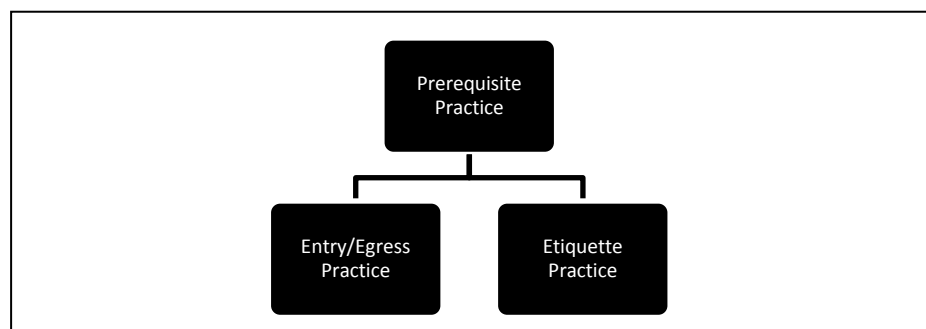
Two points are relevant In considering the above model. Firstly, due to the interactive nature of these practices the provider/customer dialectic will be discussed within each section. Secondly, the links to other practices will be shown where necessary. This should allow both the context and content to be focussed upon the salient issues.

6.2.1.1 Entry/Egress Practice

The practice of gaining entry and leaving the club is subordinate to Prerequisite Practice. Within this context *"socially constructed consumers"* (Holttinen, 2010, p.2) carry out practices by utilising existing and new resources to access the club (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). The latter of these two would be provided by the club. Potentially then, customers are being created by the club who expect the existing and new practices to be carried out in certain ways. For example, Induction is used in the club as one such means of creating the customer. This entails inductions covering how customers are expected to enter and leave

the club, and how they should conduct themselves whilst carrying out various practices. For

Entry/Egress Practice the key components can be identified as shown is Table 5 below.

Table 7 Entry and Egress

Entry	Egress
Arrive at Swimming Centre main entrance via an appropriate mode of transport (car, bus, cycle, motorcycle, on foot, etc).	After Exercise Practice has been completed, the Arkin Fitness Key is checked out at the Arkin Fitness Key docking station
Entry is via the front door or revolving door	Enter Changing room
Reception is directly adjacent to the main entrance. The customer has to produce a membership card and state that they are to use the Arkin Fitness Centre. Reception "swipes" the membership card and issues an admission ticket	Access locker for showering items (then re-secure locker)
The admission ticket is taken to the Arkin Fitness Centre and given to the Arkin Fitness Consultant at the Arkin Fitness Centre Reception Desk. If the instructor is not present, the ticket is placed in a plastic box which is on the desk at all times	Shower if required
The customer enters the changing area (if required)	Open locker after showering to allow access to customer belongings
The customer selects a locker	Change if required
The customer changes and places all their belongings not required in the gym in the locker	Leave the changing area
The locker key is removed from the locker. The locker key is attached to a wrist band to allow the customer to wear the key in the gym	Leave Arkin Fitness Centre
A pre-issued Arkin Fitness Key is taken to the Arkin Fitness Key docking station and check-in takes place	Move to a new activity within the Swimming Centre (if required)
Exercise Practice can now commence (Exercise Practice is addressed in the next chapter)	Leave the Swimming Centre via main entrance door or revolving door

Explained in this linear fashion entry and egress appears uneventful. For example, practices

such as entering the centre at the main entrance, changing, selecting lockers, and showering

present no difficulties for the customer. These practices - of which the majority work very

well - could be viewed as the provider effectively supporting the customers value seeking

practices (Gronroos, 2011) In this case, most of the practices identified are commonly

already embedded in the social lifeworlds of the customer (Gebauer et al., 2010). As such,

only a supporting infrastructure needs to be provided for the customer to find value in these

practices (Gronroos and Ravald, 2010). Despite this, several dialectical issues come to light.

These issues can be grouped under two main headings: Reception and Arkin Fitness Desk Interactions, and Locker and Arkin Fitness Key Practices.

To interact with the reception area, the customer has to enter the main Swimming Centre. Entering the centre links with the Accessibility Practice in the commitment chapter. That is, entering the centre is dependent upon Attendance Practice. This is in terms of being able to arrive at the centre in the first instance: not constrained by accessibility difficulties (i.e. soccer crowds) and lifeworld obligations (i.e. family commitments). From the provider side, interaction with the Swimming Centre reception is a necessary organisational requirement for them to centrally monitor attendances in the overall facility. The Arkin Fitness Centre does not have a continuous member of staff on the desk. Therefore, some customers could enter and leave the Arkin Fitness Centre undetected if they were not processed at the Swimming Centre reception area. This could be stated as being a provider side imposed practice. One of the Arkin Fitness Consultants commented: *"We need people to go via reception so we know whether their direct debit is up to date" (*Fieldnote: 24 August 2011).

When I asked could if this procedure could be carried out weekly or fortnightly rather than everyday, the Arkin Fitness Consultant replied:

"well, we need them to go via reception for our daily attendance figures, and so people without tickets cannot access the Arkin Fitness Centre without paying. It has happened in the past" (Fieldnote: 24 August 2011)

From a marketing point of view it could be argued that this interaction is positive for the club (Gallarza et al., 2011). Potentially, it facilitates customer and organisational learning through productive interactions, it supports customers value creation processes, its helps generate information exchange, it may be the source of competitive advantage for the organisation, it reduces of customer/organisational disputes, it creates rapport between the interacting parties, and it may be a part of an overall strategic effort concerned with relationship building (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006; Hammervoll, 2011; Gronroos, 2011; Jap et al., 2011; Brito, 2011; Claycomb and Frankwick, 2008).

From a customer's Entry Practice perspective going to the Swimming Centre reception to get a ticket is an unnecessary part of gaining entry. In addition, the customer frequently has to wait in a queue to have their membership card swiped. This adds time to what, from the customers viewpoint is an unnecessary part of Entry Practice. This is especially relevant when a ticket is then issued and taken to the Arkin Fitness Centre, for there to be no one available to take the ticket. A fieldnote captures this problem:

"I do not think I would queue at reception if it was not for the fact that I am a researcher here. I would do what I have seen others do. That is, I would not go to the reception when it is busy. I would simply by-pass main reception. At the Arkin Fitness Centre desk there is rarely anyone on duty to take the ticket anyway. This would be a much quicker way of getting to work-out" (Fieldnote: 16 August 2011).

In the example provided, the quote above directly relates to the provider/customer dialectic. In the club, although it was observed that the majority of customers do follow the provider imposed practice of interacting with main reception, a number of other customers are proposing another practice. A practice that does not involve being processed by reception. This disjuncture between the provider side practice expectations and the customers alternative value seeking practice can be explained as: *"An actor disrupt [ing] the consonance by introducing new ideas or new resources in to the market configuration"* (Storbacka and Nenonen, 2011, p.243). Although the above quote relates to markets, it just as easily applies to practice. The fracture of the reception interaction practice needs to be reconciled for the benefit of the value seeking customer. The provider may consider supporting the customers value seeking process by investigating alternative means of capturing attendance. This would support the customer in the value seeking practice of getting to the Arkin Fitness Centre without them having to interact with reception. A practice that appears to have limited value for them. Rindfleisch (2010) proposes a view that the provider and customer should work together to solve problems such as these, jointly developing solutions to these difficulties. Rindfleisch (2010) cites the example of the computer industry where customers propose new products with minimal help from providers via open innovation. In as sense this is what is happening when customers are proposing new practices within the health club. They only require the support of the provider to change to practices that give them increased value.

Another aspect of Entry Practice is Key Practice. Keys used are of two types: locker keys and Arkin Fitness Keys. The locker key has a wrist band that customers are expected to wear whilst they conduct their workout. The Arkin Fitness Key is supplied at induction and it operates the cardio and resistance machines. It also records workout statistical information such as distance covered, calories burned, and other workout related functions. Some of the machines cannot be operated without this key. An expectation by the provider is that both the keys will be worn on the wrist by the customer.

The locker key has to be retained by the customer. This is now socially accepted practice within these types of clubs. However, in this club the customers are almost unanimous in rejecting the wearing of the key on the wrist. Customers appear to select from three options: they place the key in their pocket, they lie the key on the floor, or they attach their Arkin Fitness Key to the Locker Key to form a larger bunch of keys. This latter action has the result that their attached bunch of keys is in the exercise machine they are using, and at other times the keys are stored as previously stated: in the pocket or on the floor. Justin confirmed this stating: *"I don't bother wearing the key, it's a nuisance. I just put it on the floor when I am using the equipment"* (Fieldnote: 11 September 2011).

Again the customer is proposing an alternative practice to the provider side proposition. von Hippel and Katz (2002) claim that if customers are allowed to innovate they will take up the opportunity. In this case, because the club does not enforce the wearing of the key on the wrist, the customer is innovating. They are finding an alternative means of retaining their key. For them, this provides a more appropriate value seeking practice than the one proposed by the club. Although the storage of keys in the pocket or on the floor does not appear particularly problematic for either the provider or the customer, it does result in keys being lost, and it is illustrative of an unresolved dialectic.

The Arkin Fitness Key also does appear to have some associated difficulties. The provider side practice is for the Arkin Fitness Key to be: entered onto the locker wrist band, used by customers to access (check in) and leave the club (check out), and for the customer to be able to access various workout statistics. The underpinning rationale is that the Arkin Fitness

Key is part of an overall customer relationship management system. This system is claimed as providing benefits to customers, fitness Instructors, and the service providers. These relationship management links are shown using a similar system to the Arkin Fitness system in figure 22 below.

Figure 22 The Key System

(Source: http://www.wyc.co.kr)
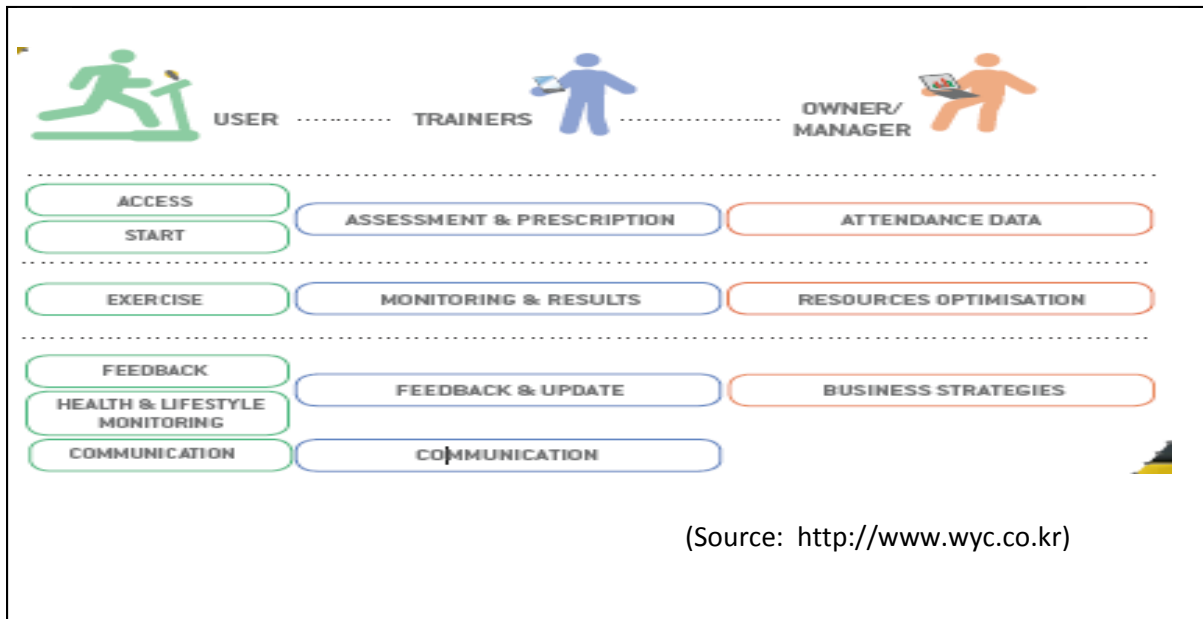
Customers practice does often match many of the provider and Arkin Fitness System requirements. However, it is also evident that many customers propose alternative practice. This divergence entails: where to locate the key when exercising, what information is interpreted during check-in and check out, and whether check-in and check-out actually takes place. The location of the key was addressed in the previous section, but an issue that cuts across several of the identified problems relating to checking in and out. Checking in and out is critical to the providers relationship management system and the main purpose of the Arkin Fitness Key. Wikstrom et al (2010, p.25) terms alterative practice as the customer becoming: *the value specifier*. Connor becomes a value specifier stating:

"I do not check in with the key…. I just keep checked in and I just put the key in (the various machines)*….I am constantly checked in, I just don't check out, I don't even check the machines (statistics)…. and I just never check out….just don't bother using the statistics….I think each person is different and I don't think the statistics are a true reflection of what you*

*are doing….it does record what you are doing but each persons different, so how can they tell me what I should be doing…. I keep a mental note myself….cos some machines you can't use the key, so if you are doing free weights you cannot use them machines so why use the key for some machines and not some others, it does not record your overall work-out. (*Interview: 8 August 2011).

What Connor is saying is he finds value for himself by not using the key as proposed by the provider. He has developed his own practice. This was probably learned from others, and he now teaches the practice to other customers as he interacts with them. The interview confirms that I said in response to his never check out advice: *"Oh, thats a good idea, I never thought of that"* (Interview: 8 August 2011). This new customer proposed practice goes unnoticed, or at least ignored by the provider. This is not unusual though. Providers are often unaware of the support the customer needs to conduct their value seeking practice (Wikstrom et al., 2010). For the provider though, this does flaw the Arkin Fitness System as a customer relationship management tool. In addition, there are other difficulties with Arkin Fitness Key usage evident. This concerns lost keys. Due to placing Arkin Fitness Keys on the floor, many keys are lost by customers. This happened to me when I inadvertently left my key somewhere in the club. On the next visit, I attempted to retrieve my Arkin Fitness Key. My fieldnote documents that situation:

"I asked the Arkin Fitness Consultant if my key had been handed in. He went to a filing cabinet and brought out a bag of approximately ten keys. I said: 'wow you have got a lot of keys'. The Arkin Fitness Consultant replied: "yes, lots of people lose them. Usually the bag is full' (a full bag would probably hold up to about twenty five keys). I asked if my key could not be found how much was it to replace the key. He replied " 'about fifteen pounds' " (Fieldnote: 1 July 2011).

Losing Arkin Fitness Keys is a problem at the centre. Having to ask Arkin Fitness Consultants for lost keys may deter users from visiting the club, and leave people feeling they are at fault for losing the key. Clearly the dialectic between what the provider wants and what many customers practice remains unresolved. The customer is providing clear communication in their Arkin Fitness Key Practice that a difficulty exists, but the provider either does not notice or chooses to ignore the difficulty. It can be postulated that this results in limited value for

both the customer and the provider. To overcome such situations Rinfleisch (2010, p.12) proposes that the customer should be empowered in : *"Collaborating", "Tinkering", "Co-designing", and "Submitting"* proposals to the provider to communicate what gives them value. At present this is not formally available to customers. Despite this, the customer is actually doing this anyway. Tinkering with the existing practice and submitting an alternative practice. This illustrates the value of deep ethnographic studies into practice (von Hippel and Katz 2002). However, although this evident from the empirical material collected, these customer proposed practices remain undetected to the club at present.

In reassembling Entry/Egress Practice this can be viewed as the customer using existing socially constructed practices and new - provider taught - practices to help them enter and leave the club. On the whole, these are well supported by the club. These practices fulfil the customers value seeking. This is concluded as very few alternative customer value seeking propositions are evident. Despite this, two areas of practice did come to the fore as being in tension. These were: Reception and Arkin Fitness Reception interactions, and locker and Arkin Fitness Key practices. This dialectic was evident through the provider imposed practices not being universally adopted by customers. In both cases the dialectic highlighted the unnecessary nature of the provider imposed practice. In addition, the customers alternatives provided more value for many customers. Therefore, the customers as the ultimate judges of value are providing suggestions through their practice that the provider would be well advised to heed (von Hippel, 2002).

6.2.1.2 Etiquette Practice

Etiquette can be defined as social manners (Swartz, 1988; Elias 1982). Although all practices identified in this thesis are socially constructed, etiquette practice in this section refers to the socialisation process necessary to facilitate practice such as having the correct knowledge and skills to operate at a very general level within the club (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). Many practices within the health club are shaped by existing social norms. These are imported from other areas of the customers lifeworld. As a result, sometimes Lifeworld Practice meshes with Etiquette Practice within the health club. For example, asking

the Arkin Fitness Consultant for information may be akin to asking a school teacher for advice (Latham et al., 2005). Alternatively, in some contexts certain Etiquette Practice may be judged as *"intrusive"*, *"disrespectful"*, *"against social taboos"* or *"dangerous"* (Bednall et al., 2005, p.5). That is, outside lifeworld social norms may conflict with club etiquette. Therefore, certain practices have to be addressed to avoid conflicts arising from inappropriate etiquette within the club.

In the club most Etiquette Practice refers to the underpinning practices required to support the main practices identified within this thesis. Therefore, etiquette is a co-ordinating practice. For example, the practices adopted by customers at induction would represent this aspect. These include: what steps need to be taken to enter the changing rooms? what do we need to do with the Arkin Fitness Key? and what do we need to know to successfully interact with the club? Another issue includes the language required within the club. For example: cardio, work-out, sets, reps, and resistance are all staples of the experienced health club customers vocabulary. However, it is highly unlikely that the single induction session provided could ever cover the gamut of required Etiquette Practice. Therefore, a large proportion of Etiquette Practice is negotiated in social interactions with other customers (Grigore, 2011). However, this does not always work seamlessly.   Noreen expressed anxiety commenting: *"Sometimes I am not sure if what I am doing is Ok. Sometimes, I get funny looks from other customers*" (Fieldnote: 12 July 2011). When etiquette is not clear, dominant groups propose new value seeking practices (Bednall et al., 2005). Bednall et al., (2005) provides an example of an unacceptable practice relating to mobile phone usage. He highlights that using a mobile phone in a library would fracture social practice. In the case of the health club studied, social practice is concerns multifaceted negotiated factors including those of a *"temporal"* and *"spatial"* nature (Heinonen, 2006, p.381; Heinonen and Strandvik 2006, p.38**).** Therefore, some practices may be acceptable in this environment that may be unacceptable in other similar environments. Therefore, the etiquette practice identified for the provider/customer dialectic is one that provides an example of how poor etiquette practice can create confusion and contradiction within the club. Fractured socialisation processes are said to cause *"anxiety"* (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, p.6). Undoubtedly, anxiety would attenuate value for the customers practice. At present although induction and employee/customer interactions may move in the correct direction to facilitate this socialisation, several key areas identified by the customers

represent basic etiquette practices which remain in a state of flux. That is, due to the customers uncertainty regarding correct etiquette, neither the provider nor the customer offers a strong proposition of how the practice should be undertaken.

The example used here to illustrate the provider/customer dialectic is that of Etiquette Practice relating to equipment usage and claiming space. Two related practices. Customers were observed as being compromised by Etiquette Practices that were not clear. This appeared to constrain their value seeking. A number of customers reported being unsure as what to do when equipment they required was being used. Jordan reflected upon this when he said:

"I don't really ask people like [how long they have got left on that particular machine]*, I don't know, I think it sounds rude. I don't know why but I know that when people say that to me, I just think right ah....as soon as someone says that to you, you feel like 'Oh I'll have to get off straight away'" (*Interview: 28 June 2011).

Similarly Connor outlined:

*"You would feel rude interrupting a work-out"   (*Interview: 8 August 2011).

The above statements can be understood when widely adopted practice of guarding equipment (claiming space) is considered. If equipment appears not to be in use, customers tend to appropriate this equipment for their own purposes. They will do this without asking other customers nearby if the equipment is available. This is partly due to their reluctance to interrupt other customers. Sometimes though a person has simply left the equipment momentarily. Upon their return they are then reluctant to interrupt the customer who has just taken their equipment. Therefore, to prevent this awkward situation a widespread customer practice of guarding machines and claiming space is evident in the club. This is where the person originally using the equipment will stand guard and claim certain spaces for themselves. This is to stop others taking the equipment they are using. My field note captured an extreme example of this:

"A guy approximately 25 years of age does a set of bench presses. He then gets off the machine and stands guard. This is a common occurrence. What is particularly striking about

this standing guard is that the guy stands with an outstretched leg on the bench in an awkward position as if he is about to stretch the hamstring. He remains in this static position until it is time for him to do another set. Once he completes the set, he returns to his awkward leg outstretched stance. He repeats this routine over and over. By positioning himself in this overtly unusual way he claims a large amount of space for himself. Therefore, not only is it obvious he is using the equipment, but also the immediate space around him is not available His message is clear, I am using this equipment: stay away!"

(Fieldnote: 14 September 2011)

Although it could be argued that this was simply a stance adopted by the customer, the observations made within the club suggest a different interpretation. This type of claiming space takes place too frequently for it to be coincidence. The body is used to communicate *"stay away from my equipment"* to other customers (Barga, 2011). As a result this leaves customers feeling intimidated. Hence, the previous comments by customers regarding not feeling able to ask if equipment is available for use. Sometimes equipment such as mobile phones, gloves, and keys are placed on the floor around equipment to communicate the same message. Winn (1985, p.15) provides an illustration of this type of *"territoriality"* in figure 23 below*:*

Figure 23 Claiming Space
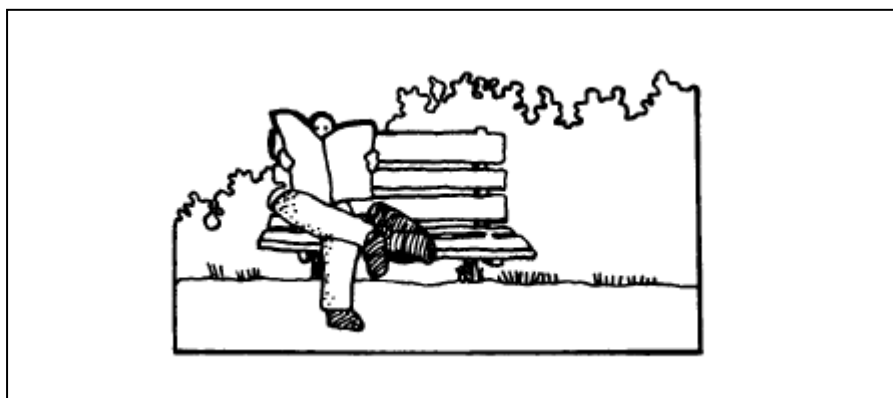
Winn (1985) illustrates how some people put their jackets on park benches and spread their body to communicate: *this is my space.* Although this will be understood in society by most

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people, in the health club environment, it is not clear whether this is socially acceptable or not. Many customers are not as bold as Robert who confronts customers:

"Sometimes you cannot get on machines and there lads just standing around texting on the phone, and they not really using the machine…. I just ask them 'are you nearly finished' and nine times out of ten they will just say yes…. they should be finished, and if they have been standing there for ten or twenty minutes, get on the machine, do your thing, then getaway…I wouldn't just hog the machine" (Interview: 28 June 2011).

In this case of Etiquette Practice, it is not the claiming of space that is the particular difficulty; it is the lack of clarity regarding what the customers social norm should be for accessing equipment. Although some - more assertive - customers question whether equipment is free, other customers feel it is rude to ask about the availability of equipment, or they are simply fearful of the response. Customers like Jordan Jones then feel intimidated and unable to ask if the equipment is free. Thus customers then consider it not acceptable for others to make similar requests. They attempt to mitigate these type of requests by claiming space. This results in an ongoing conflict between customers who ask if equipment is free, those who attempt to communicate *stay away,* and those who are unclear as to what to do. This social dialogue is not resulting in a clear Etiquette Practice understood by all. In this case, the dialectic is also faltering and oscillating as there are no strong practice proposers, just weak, fragmented, and discursive practices. This negates value for many customers as no acceptable Etiquette Practice emerges.

Considering etiquette as something to be broken down and reassembled has taken a slightly different form in this section. Etiquette is something that cuts across all practices and therefore is somewhat of an elusive practice. Rather than the provider attempting to cover all the potential types of etiquette required in the club, they should view the practices of the customer which will inform them where disjunctures occur between provider practices and customer practices. It was noted in this section that poor Etiquette Practice results in anxiety for the customer. A striking example was provided regarding equipment availability, and the idea of the practice of claiming space. This was an example where no clear practice was in operation. Therefore, the empirical data highlighted that this was an area of etiquette which created much confusion for the customer. That being the case, the customer struggles to

find a practice of value. The practices of other customers may also attenuate the customers value seeking practices through the mismatch between differing ideas of what correct Etiquette Practice should be in operation.

In reassembling Prerequisite Practice, it has been shown that it is a sub-practice of Facilitating Practice. Prerequisite Practice concerns two main areas: Entry/Egress Practice, and Etiquette Practice. These two practices have been linked to the customers Lifeworld Practice, and the socially constructed nature of practice. Existing customer Lifeworld Practice allows the provider the opportunity of supporting the value seeking Prerequisite Practice of the customer. Therefore, much Prerequisite Practice such as gaining entry to the Swimming Centre via the main entrance, changing, and using lockers was not problematic. Despite this, several practices were in tension and these were illustrated in the section. This dialectic can be said to be the result of customer practices which attempt to seek value but are compromised as they clash with provider imposed practices or there is a vacuum where no clear practice is evident.

6.2.2 Induction Practice

Induction practice is integral to Facilitating Practice and it ties in with Prerequisite Practice in that it provides much information that assists in carrying out the later Performance Practices detailed in the next chapter. The relationship to the other facilitating practices is shown in figure 24 below.

Figure 24 Expanded Facilitating Practice
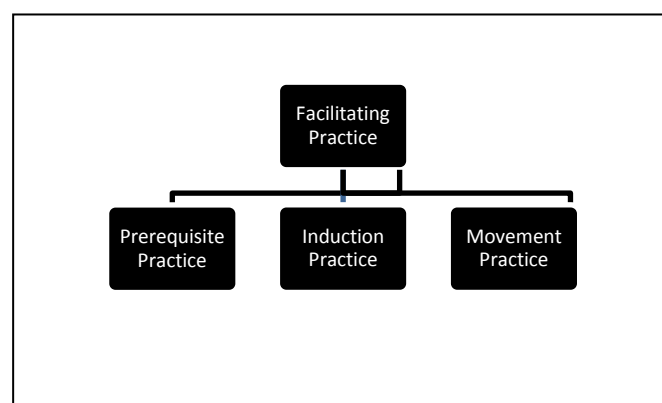
In the health club sector induction is a somewhat contentious issue. Two main issues come to the fore. Induction as a means of customer retention, and as a health and safety requirement to demonstrate compliance with the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 (Bedford, 2009a). The private health club sector is fragmented in its approach to inductions. The Fitness Industry Association (2010) has developed a health commitment statement (HCS) which puts the onus on the customer to make the decision concerning whether an induction is appropriate for them:

"The HCS reflects government policy and legal trends, which aim to shift responsibility for personal health from the operator to the user. The Fitness Industry Association is taking the lead in allowing operators to be more accessible while facilitating a better working relationship between fitness and medical sectors in the community" (http://www.thecore.uk.net.)

In other words, if a health club follows this code, the customer can choose whether they undergo the induction process. This approach may be used for those clubs who want to attempt to comply with the Health and Safety at Work Act (via the statement). However, they would not gain the purported benefits of induction for customer care and retention reasons (Bedford, 2009a).

The Arkin Fitness Centre Club has inductions. The clubs who promote inductions suggest that the customer/provider interaction improves customer retention, it increases customer perceptions of feeling supported, and it facilitates a dialogue between the provider and the customer (Hillsdon, 2011; Bedford, 2009a). Furthermore, it allows customer requirements to be established, an exercise schedule to be developed, and it provides a forum for demonstrating exercises and equipment (Hillsdon, 2011; Bedford, 2009a). Some limitations of induction are: perceptions that the provider are attempting to cover themselves against insurance claims, inductions that are not one to one may result in negative customer perceptions, and poor quality inductions not tailored to individual requirements may lead to customer dissatisfaction (Bedford 2009b). There is the added issue that inductions are considered costly by some customers. When asked whether he thought inductions were value for money, Paul said:

"It was just stupid. Like every machine tells you what you have got to do anyway. So they just basically tell you what the machine tells you…my mate did his a few weeks ago…. and it is just stupid" (Interview: 28 July 2011).

Despite Paul having reservations many customers felt like Tom regarding the induction:

"me personally the positive where I was taught to use some of the machines that worked on some parts of the body that I did not know I would be able to work on , but erm the main one was the actual trainer….he taught us loads, he ended up training us quite a lot" (Interview: 18 August 2011).

Overall the extant research concludes that induction benefits outweigh the negatives, and hence inductions have been adopted in this Arkin Fitness Centre for all members. This is regardless of previous experience or ability. Despite this, the spectre of emerging low cost sector facilities may increase pressure on providers like the Arkin Fitness Centre to dispense with inductions. The low cost sector health and fitness club business model is to reduce costs to the customers to a minimum (Algar, 2011). This means reducing fees to the customer by at least half in most cases (Hill, 2011). To achieve these low costs only basic provision is on offer at low cost sector clubs (Hudson, 2011). Hence, items that add costs - such as inductions - are not usually provided. Therefore, the price conscious customer does not have the added induction expense. The low cost sector clubs - which are open 24 hours per day - are likely to compete for the same customers as the public clubs. Therefore, providers like the Arkin Fitness Centre will come under increasing pressure to remove inductions to reduce costs to the end user. This may come at a price of lost benefits in terms of experiential value (Holbrook, 1999), but gains in net value or efficiency value (Woodhall, 2003; Holbrook, 1999). The data collected suggest the key sub-practices concerning induction are as shown in figure 25 below.

Figure 25 Induction Practice
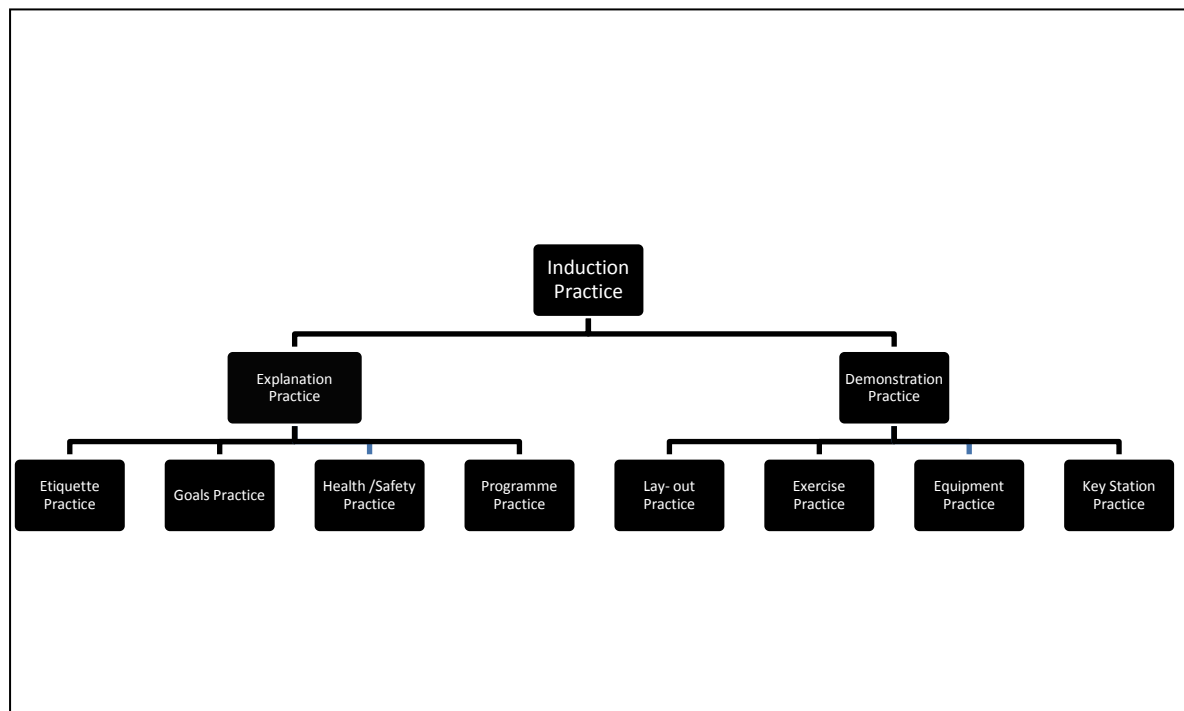
The empirical data collected highlighted overlap between some areas of practice. Therefore, they could not be treated as totally separate entities. For example, Etiquette Practice and Key Practice were both significant parts of Prerequisite Practice. Despite this overlap, they are given a differing treatment in this section. They are explained from a different perspective; Etiquette Practice as something explained at induction, and Key Practice, as something that is demonstrated at induction. It should also be noted that explanation and demonstration are also closely related and hence much overlap is evident between these practices.

6.2.2.1 Explanation Practice

The initial induction is concerned with explaining various aspect of club life and Programme Practice. The key areas suggested by the data are as shown in figure 26 below.

Figure 26 Explanation Practice
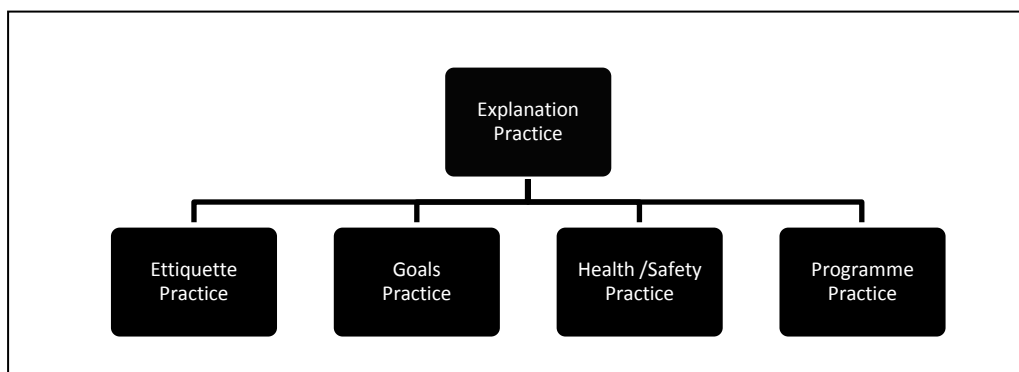
The explanation of what is expected of the customer in the club tends to be a provider side dominated interaction. The Arkin Fitness Consultant responsible for the induction has a set protocol in terms of what should be addressed within the induction. This protocol, which is contained as appendices 2, considers six items of very basic information. Firstly, the explanation of the induction process is addressed by Arkin Fitness Consultants. However, the instructor is given autonomy in what is to be addressed. Secondly, the customers informational details (name, address, telephone number, etc) are ascertained. Thirdly, the goals of the customer are identified. Fourthly, customers bodyweights and measurements are gleaned. Fifthly, some general history is considered. This includes whether the customer has used a gym previously. Finally, a section for the frequency of visit and the amount of time the customer wants to spend in the Arkin Fitness Centre is discussed. This is consultative only in terms of the Arkin Fitness Consultant will attempt to influence - in line with current exercise guidelines - the optimum frequency and duration of the exercise programme. Arkin Fitness Consultant John confirmed:

"yes the induction schedule basically is just a guideline. We can cover what we think is best. It is more just to have an initial chat with the customer, and to get some basic information"

(Fieldnote: 11 September 2011)

In terms of the Induction Practice, the protocol addresses only background issues relating to general health and customer goals. The practices performed by the customers as indicated by the participant observation, field notes, and interviews are not documented on the

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protocol. Therefore, Arkin Fitness Consultants have to use their experience and knowledge in deciding what is to be covered during an induction. This approach has some advantages. For example, Arkin Fitness Consultants are empowered to use their own judgement during interactions with the customers, and they have some autonomy in how they conduct inductions (Banbury, 2011). It is claimed that positive interactions of this nature are essential to creating value (Kowalkowski, 2011). Higgins and Scholer (2009) concur, they suggest that the intensity of engagement leads to increased value perceptions. This ties in with the research by Bedford (2009a) who suggests that increased interaction between club employees and customers results in membership retention. On the other hand, as what is to addressed at induction is not a uniform procedure, what is delivered to customers is highly heterogeneous (Parasuraman et al., 1985). Theo comments:

"Its strange me and my friend both did inductions at separate times. He got told how to do every exercise you can think of. I didn't they just told me how to do a couple of exercises. They didn't even tell me about the free weights"   (Fieldnote: 4 June 2011)

Similar difficulties to this have been noted earlier concerning unclear Etiquette Practice relating to equipment usage. Therefore, the empirical data collected provides some insights which throws new light upon the clubs inductions.

The empirical data identified that Induction Explanation Practice concerned etiquette such as: how the customers programme is set, how to access various pieces of equipment, where this equipment is located, how to operate the equipment, where to change, how to use lockers, how they can update their allocated programme of exercises, and how to ask for assistance from Arkin Fitness Consultants should it be required. Generally, it could be said that this aspect of provider dominated Explanation Practice works quite effectively. This ties in with Kowalkowski 's (2011, p.280) view that a *"one-sided provider perspective"* is frequently evident in services. However, he cautions that this often results in offerings that customers do not perceive to be *"important"*. He also adds that provider dominated relationships may be seen as lacking relevance for the customers *"value creation processes"* (Kowalkowski 2011, p.280). In the terms of this thesis this means provider practice may not match the customers value seeking practices. Hence, a dialectic will be evident.

The second, third, and fourth areas of Explanation Practice are concerned with goal setting, health and safety, and a programme of exercise. These are addressed in a discussion between the Arkin Fitness Consultant and customer. This interaction attempts to establish what are the customers intended end results. As part of this discussion several health and safety issues such as customer being physically healthy to be able to undertake exercise, and any injuries that Arkin Fitness Consultant may need to take into consideration are discussed. From this information a programme of exercise is developed for the customer. This is then explained by the Arkin Fitness Consultant to the customer.

Several points can be made regarding induction explanations. The explanations were generally well received by customers. Walter comments:

"the induction was basically questions asked by the staff to me…. saying: what do I want to achieve? whats your goals? and they basically took us through every machine that would help us achieve the goals, different fitness exercises and things like that which was quite good" (Interview: 4 July 2011).

The sentiment above expressed by Walter, was symptomatic of the general mood towards explanations linked to inductions. Inductions are helpful in explaining the basics. The customer took away a general view that if they required further help, Arkin Fitness Consultants could be approached for additional ad hoc advice. The customer does not appear to propose practice of their own during the explanation part of inductions. This is not surprising: the content and direction of the induction is tightly controlled by the Arkin Fitness Consultant. When asked if a customer said during an induction: *"I know how to do everything I need for my training"* how they would react to that situation, Arkin Fitness Consultant Joe said:

"I would say fair enough and just ask them what their goals were, and how they will achieve them. If they could explain it to my satisfaction they could do their own thing….but they would have to be shown the machines for health and safety reasons" (Fieldnote: 19 August 2011).

This scenario of the customer proposing this as a practice is unlikely to occur as this possibility has been weeded out at an earlier stage in the joining process. As a requirement of membership customers are advised that they must take an induction. Any one refusing to do so, is not allowed to join the club. Arkin Fitness Consultant Joe confirmed that this does occur. He stated:

"Yes some customer do not want to take the induction, but that is not allowed. They have to do it or they are not allowed to join" (Fieldnote: 19 August 2011).

This represents a dialectic in provider/customer practice. That is, some customers are proposing that they do not want to participate in the induction process. For them avoiding this practice would be beneficial. This would allow them to participate in their own value seeking practice of exercising in the club without an induction. However, this proposal is rejected out of hand by the club. The basis for this rejection is weak. As a health and safety issue, the Health Commitment Statement (HCS) issued by the Fitness Industry Association does not require compulsory inductions: explanations or demonstrations. Furthermore, as a customer retention technique it fails as some customers are deterred from joining as they do not want or need an induction.

Customers proposing this practice are looking for the organisation to support their need to bypass induction explanations. Elaine - an experienced female customer prior to attending the Arkin Fitness Centre - when asked did she need an induction explanation simply laughed and replied: *"not really"* (Interview: 5 July 2011). So induction explanations are clearly a provider side influenced practice. Despite this, the provider should consider supporting the value seeking practice as proposed by the customer. That is, to by-pass induction explanations and go straight to club usage. This does not necessarily have to apply to all customers. Many customers value inductions. However, the empirical data suggests that this approach may not allow some customers to find value in that particular practice. Ravald (2009) urges that providers move away from such a one sided approach. She argues for *"understanding the customers process of value creation"* (Ravald 2009, p.2).

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In reassembling Explanation Practice which is an element of Induction Practice, it is clearly evident that explanations are heavily controlled by the provider. Although the explanations indicated early promise with the goal setting being a dialogue between the provider and the customer, once the goals are agreed, the etiquette, health and safety, and the exercise programmes are imposed upon customers. Although an argument could be made that the Arkin Fitness Consultants have to provide the information to uninformed customers, the section shows that this is not necessarily the case. Many customers are receiving explanations they neither want nor need. Unfortunately, the provider side maintains that inductions have to be undertaken for health and safety reasons. This claim lacks support. Kowalkowski (2011) has misgiving about this type of provider dominated provision as it may well lead to offerings of irrelevance. Gronroos (2011) views the providers role as identifying the customers practice and offering support to this value seeking. At present this is resisted at the club in terms of Explanation Practice. The club is adopting a *"make and sell"* orientation (Day, 1999, p.70). Here is an induction we have produced now you will buy it. They should consider adopting a *"sense and respond"* orientation (ibid). Sensing customer practice and responding with support. Ultimately, a company following a practice dialectic with this approach would automatically become a learning organisation (Vargo and Lusch, 2004).

6.2.2.2 Demonstration Practice

Bedford (2009b) states that induction usually follows one of two means of demonstration. The first is to show the customer every potential combination of exercises and equipment they would encounter in the club. The second is to only show customers what equipment and exercise is necessary for their allocated exercise programme. Bedford (2009b) feels the latter is the most appropriate means of induction; to show every piece of equipment would result in information overload. At the Arkin Fitness Centre the option of showing only exercises and equipment related to the programme is adopted. It should be noted that demonstration involves much explanation which was discussed in the previous section. The Demonstration Practice elements are shown in figure 27 below.

Figure 27 Demonstration Practice
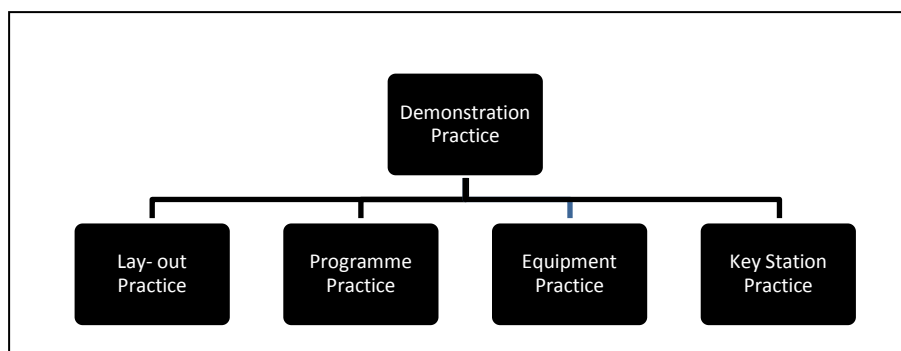
Demonstration is not detailed on the protocol used by staff. The experience and knowledge of the Arkin Fitness Consultant is used to demonstrate the equipment. Some physical support is provided with pictures on some of the exercise machines. The demonstration usually involves the facility layout being explained and demonstrated via a walkthrough of the Arkin Fitness Centre. This occurs simultaneously with the demonstration of the exercises and equipment. Key practice is demonstrated separately. As key practice was outlined in the Prerequisite Practices section it is not discussed in any depth in this section, other than to say, inductees receive explanation and demonstration of how to use the Arkin Fitness Key and access the work-out statistics via the Arkin Fitness Key Docking Station.

The demonstration is exercise programme led. This means that the layout demonstration tends to follow the route of exercises identified in during the explanation phase. The only deviation to this is to point out areas such as: main reception, changing rooms, and showers. Exercise areas such as the kinesis room and the free weights section are only highlighted if they are contained on the programme. The implicit assumption is that the programme will be adhered to, so these areas require no further explanation. Any future changes are adjusted after a discussion with the Arkin Fitness Consultant. Karen notes that during induction:

"they give you a key and ask you what you want to do, and then they give you specific activities for that [at the explanation] *and take you around and show you how the machines work…. and then you do it and they tell you if you are doing it right"* (Interview: 5 July 2011).

As the customer moves through the club their movement is dictated by the location of the programmed exercises and the associated equipment required to support the exercise. This does not necessarily have to be adhered to rigidly. For example, a programme having stationary bike followed by a rowing machine, could reverse the order if required. However, the provider practice is that if you want to use a piece of equipment that you have not used before you should ask a Arkin Fitness Consultant. This has an inherent logic as if the equipment demonstration is for health and safety reasons, then customers simply selecting machines themselves would be illogical. However, in many cases the customers actual Programme Practice following induction is not to ask, and just use the exercise equipment to support the new exercises they incorporate into their programmes.

From a practice dialectic viewpoint several problems linked to demonstration are evident. The assumption that customer will stick only to what has been demonstrated is contradicted by customers practice. In addition, they inhabit parts of the club not addressed during induction where they exercise in ways that have not been demonstrated. This situation is encapsulated by Joseph responding to questions regarding if he deviated from his set programme and attempted new exercises:

"Yeh, maybe if I have got them from magazines or something like that, or off the internet or what friends have said….I wouldn't [ask for permission] *I would just do it myself you don't really ask. You would be there constantly asking…. to try something new …. watching other people when you are working out say you are on the treadmill you can see somebody using the weights, maybe theres something for you to try…. you can ask somebody if they are working out what does that work ? how does that work your body?"* (Interview: 11 August 2011)

A number of problems are apparent with Josephs view of copying others. Firstly, he assumes that what others are doing is correct. As is indicated in section 7.2.2 (Exercise Practice), customers often adopt variations to their set programmes that are at best bizarre and at worst dangerous. Secondly, by not asking a Arkin Fitness Consultant this effectively questions the usefulness of demonstrations on health and safety grounds. This is because customers are exercising in ways that have not been demonstrated. Thirdly, by doing this customers are proposing new practice. Finally, by allowing this new practice to be

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conducted, the club effectively condones the practice. This contradicts demonstration as part of health and safety. It also questions why the Arkin Fitness Consultant does not support the adopted new practice by intervening to give advice. This intervention does not happen. Fiona, a Arkin Fitness Consultant states: *"You can tell them but it's a waste of time. Once you are gone they go back to the way they were doing it"* (Fieldnote: 1 September 2011). This comment from the Arkin Fitness Consultants was common. However, this simply demonstrates that the communication methods used do not convince the customer. The customers need to gain value through adopting the correct exercise technique. The dialectic has highlighted this problem. The club needs to focus their attention on how this issue can be addressed, rather than accepting the status quo.

In reassembling demonstration practice the provider/customer dialectic has highlighted a number of issues. Firstly, the provider takes the more pragmatic approach of only showing customers the exercises and machines required to carry out their programme. Secondly, this makes an implicit assumption that customers will follow the programme rigidly and request guidance should they intend to deviate from this programme at any given point. Thirdly, the customers value seeking practices are frequently amended by customers incorporating new exercises and equipment into their programmes. In explaining this phenomena Ramsey White et al., (2009, p.783) claim that customers will show *"autonomy"* in seeking value for themselves. Fourthly, by and large these amendments to practice are not formally monitored. That is, the Arkin Fitness Consultants have no means of checking which customers are adhering to their programmes or modifying them. In addition, when Exercise Programmes are modified they tend not to intervene. Even if they did attempt policing this may be an error. Ramsey White et al., (2009, p.783) suggest that the provider *"should aim to support"* - in this case - the customers practice as a source of value.

In reassembling Induction Practice this section should have brought: *"into focus something that you might never have thought about, and it might give you an insight into somebody else's way"* (Ramsey White et al., 2009, p.782). That is, although inductions are claimed as being for customer retention and health and safety, these twin issues become increasingly problematic when viewed from a practice perspective. From the retention viewpoint, although the explanations and demonstration interactions are purported as being key to

retaining customers, price may lure customers away from wanting this service. That is, the growing numbers of budget clubs - in the main - do not provide induction in this face to face interactive sense. In addition, some experienced customers neither need nor want the inductions. Therefore, this is unlikely to be considered a value seeking practice for those customers. This must be considered in relation to Gronroos (2011, p.16) recent comments when states the service should act as a *"facilitator"* of customers value seeking practices. Furthermore, the requirements for induction are imposed, and dialogue is at a minimum, therefore the customers potential to find value for themselves in this practice is wholly dependent upon the providers offering. Ballantyne and Varey (2006, p.225) term this a *"monological"* provider perspective. That is, there is little scope during the induction for customer autonomy or dialogue between the provider and customer.

From the health and safety perspective, the explanations and demonstration do not follow a set procedure. The induction relies upon the experience of the Arkin Fitness Consultant. This creates gaps for differing Arkin Fitness Consultants to provide information that conflicts with other each other. This could simply be in terms of what each Arkin Fitness Consultant considers important from their point of view. The outcome of induction is then not policed. That is, customers can and do display autonomous behaviour by making alterations to their Programme Practice. This leads to the use of new equipment, and performance of different exercises which are not covered during the induction. Many customers do not ask a Arkin Fitness Consultant how to execute the new exercise. Therefore, this results in a club that has many practices for which the customer has not been inducted. These issues only come to light from the dialectic arising from differing provider and customer practices. Studying these issues from the practice perspective allows the provider to *"become more involved in customers' worlds "*(Flint et al., 2008, p.82). This results in collaboration with customers rather than coercion of customers (Cunha and Rego, 2010).

6.2.3 Movement Practice

Movement Practice is closely linked to its sister practices of prerequisite and induction. That is, to move through the club etiquette has to observed, and the physical layout of the club is

explained and demonstrated at induction. Movement practice could have been placed under the Performance Practice detailed in the next chapter. Despite this, the decision was taken to locate it in the Facilitating Practice chapter. This was due to many of the movement practices being rooted in induction. That is, people tend to move according to what they were shown at induction, and sometimes movements through the club actually prevent performance taking place. This latter issue being a particularly striking example of the appropriateness of placing Movement Practice in this chapter. This relationship of movement practice to the other Facilitating Practices is shown in figure 28 below.

Figure 28 Expanded Facilitating Practice
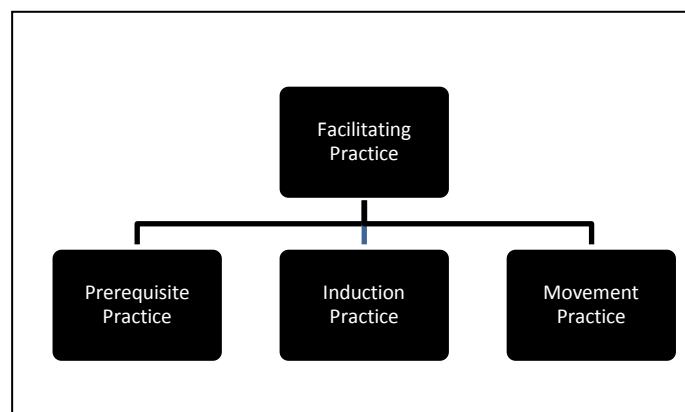
Movement Practice can be broken down into two sub-practices that emerged from the study. That is: Selection Practice and Environment Practice. In the former, issues such as convenience/comfort of equipment were important, as was Restricted Practice that constrained Selection Practice. In the latter, the environment in which the movements were taking place all influenced Movement Practice. This included varying the conditions in which the customer located themselves, moving through the club to alleviate boredom. These relationships are shown in figure 29 below.

Figure 29 Movement Practice
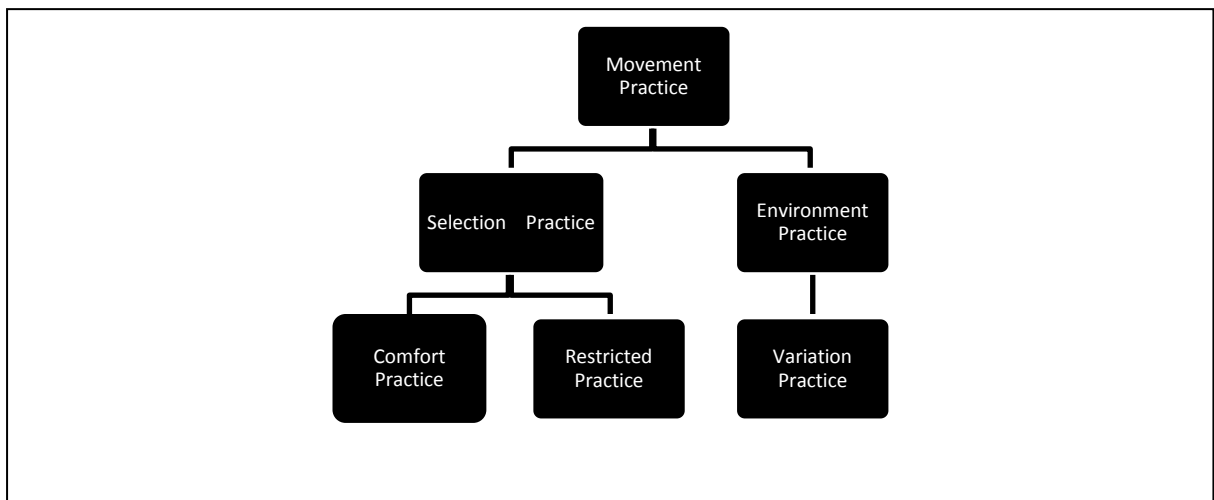
6.2.3.1 Selection Practices

In moving through the club the customer makes various selections to find value for themselves. Many of these selections are routinised and could be viewed as the provider supporting the customers value seeking activities. Examples of this includes, moving to changing rooms and changing, moving to drinks fountains and taking refreshments, moving from downstairs to upstairs locations when required, and moving within various spaces such as cardio areas, and free weights areas. For example, a fairly routine practice undertaken by customers is for convenience. That is, they will not stick to particular areas or equipment, but will simply move through the club based upon what is equipment is available to them at that point in time. Unavailability of equipment is not problematic for this type of customer, they simply select the next convenient choice. These, and other provider supporting practices contribute to many of the day to day occurrences through which customers find value. Within the gamut of value practices that customers find, several can be identified as in tension. These are the focus of this section.

Comfort practice is a mainly autonomous decision by customers to select areas which provide the most comfort for them. Examples of this include customers selecting location based upon temperature, ease of exercise, and functionality of the equipment. Two

separate fieldnotes detail a change in my own movement practice. This decision was based upon temperature differences between the lower and upper floors:

"*I do the treadmill downstairs as usual (20 minutes). I really felt warm" (*Fieldnote: 14 June 2011).

"*Tonight I ran on the treadmill upstairs, It was just a change of scenery really. But I noticed it was a lot cooler upstairs and my running was much, much easier than usual. I decided to always train up here" (*Fieldnote: 4 July 2011).

This was common to many customers, they would work-out upstairs as they perceived it as cooler. A tie in with Fashion Practice detailed in the next chapter could also be noted. Many customers would select fashions to mitigate the high temperature of the club. Peter commented:

 "*its very warm in there*" (Interview: 28 June 2011)

whilst Connor said:

 "*I wear a vest and tracksuit bottoms….keeps us cool*" (Interview: 08 August 11).

Whilst identification of this practice may appear mundane two outcomes that impact upon customer value can be ascertained. Firstly, temperature dictates location choices. This results in the upper floor being overpopulated. As a result exercise machines are often not available. Secondly, it dictates a particular Fashion Practice which tends to towards the revealing. Whilst some customers may find value in this type of clothing, others view it from a different perspective that compromises their value seeking. They see scantily clad people as *poseurs* (see: Fashion Practice in the next chapter) and the negative connotations of this Fashion Practice impacts on the ability of other customers to find value.

Comfort practice also is dictated by the ease of an exercise, and the functionality of the equipment in delivering an exercise experience that feels appropriate. On many occasions customers would relate how the exercise felt in terms of comfort. Judy stated:

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"I use the bike because it's easier than the rower, and the treadmill kills you. I find the rower really awkward, but the bike is really smooth" (Fieldnote: Mon 8 August 2011).

Similarly Frank said:

"I prefer the machines to the free weight because it's safer" (Interview: 3 June 2011).

When asked which they felt was better for them an often stated reply was *"this one feels the best"* (Interview: 3 June 2011).

I wondered if the various comfort activities and what felt best, was actually what worked best in terms of being the most valuable from an exercise view point. I asked the Arkin Fitness Consultants for their thoughts on this issue. John's response was typical of the Arkin Fitness Consultants comments:

"they get stuck in a rut: a comfort zone really. It does not matter what you tell them about how much more effective another exercise might be. They just stick to what they feel is best" (Fieldnote: 9 September 2011).

Reassembling Comfort Practice allows it to be viewed as a customer value seeking practice. If they believe an exercise or piece of equipment suits them best, then clearly this provides value for them. It could even be termed as being valued for the *"desired end state"* (Higgins and Scholer, 2009, p.101) of feeling comfortable. Often the comfortable is the appropriate choice (for example, because an alternative may aggravate a particular injury). However, often the customer makes the incorrect choice due to mistakes or misunderstandings regarding the benefits of a particular exercise. Therefore, the provider can support the customer by educating them in the advantages/disadvantage of their choices vis a vis an alternative choice. Gronroos (2011) encourages this type of interaction. He believes that value can be co-created in these type of close interactions. This would allow the customer to seek true value, rather than value based upon misjudgement.

6.2.3.2 Restricted Practice

During Movement Practice the data produced an issue which resulted in some customers being restricted in their value seeking practice. As the empirical data has shown many practices are uneventful and work very well as customers experience the club. Some Movement Practices that are successful includes: removing locker keys from lockers, moving from changing areas to the main gym, and for disabled customers moving from one floor to another via the elevator. However, as the practices unfolded several Movement Practices did emerge as problematic. This includes overlap with practices already identified elsewhere such as Movement Practice delayed by Prerequisite Practice difficulties (such as whether to wait at or evade reception), Prerequisite Practice etiquette ambiguities (such as not knowing whether to ask if equipment is available), and induction demonstration constraints (such as not knowing how to use all the machines). However, in terms of movement that is restricted a key issue emerged. That is, the restricted movement of women in relation to free weights section of the club, and the use of the equipment in this area.

From the provider side perspective women have access to all areas of the health club. This is not a surprising underpinning assumption. Since the 1970s, fitness as an industry - which women are a key part of - has steadily grown. Several issues have contributed to this growth. This includes:

"the interconnections between commercial fitness clubs, fitness media (including exercise manuals, fitness magazines, and specialist personal trainer publications), and fitness producers (including health club managers and personal trainers)" (Smith Maguire, 2008, p.3).

This has resulted in a socially constructed view that fitness clubs are part of the *natural* pursuits of people who have free leisure time (Smith Maguire, 2008). The underpinning notion is that health clubs are good for the individual and society as a whole. Of course, this view can be questioned, and in a sense the empirical data collected does dispute this notion from one particular perspective. That is, the data collected appeared to suggest that women are implicitly not allowed to participate in aspects of club life. In this case, female customers cannot access the free weights area. Therefore, they are restricted in the opportunity to use this exercise area and its associated equipment. This is socially constructed, implicit, but

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reinforced by many of the clubs practices. For example, Arkin Fitness Consultants do not explain or demonstrate this area to women during induction. Therefore, the club themselves contribute to and reinforce these practices. Subsequently, this perpetuates the stereo type of women as weaker and less able to carry-out free weights practice.

As it became apparent that a de-facto *no women allowed in the free weights area* was operating in the Arkin Fitness Centre. Data was collected that highlighted this point. Table 6 shows almost unanimous confirmation of what was deemed the mens area:

Table 7 The Mens Area

Unit of Data Relating to Free-Weights Area	Interview
"I think mostly young lads get in that part"	Interview: (Robert) 28 June 2011
"I like the free weights bit. I think to be honest, I think it would be hard for women to go in there….just because you always get blokes in there….intimidated, that's it. I think they would feel intimidated cos men in there do heavy weights and that. It is all like when I go in, generally all lads in the free weights bit "	Interview: (Jordan) 28 June 11
"The lads bit. Basically it is because it is very rare you see any girls in there…. I don't know whether some girls just kinda think ' oh well that's just where the lads go but, or they might feel intimidated, cos there are a lot of lads that workout there that are quite big and you know"	Interview: (Walter) 4 July 11
"The mens area….cos there is only men ever in there…. I dunno I presume its all proper muscle building….for big muscles and most girls don't want big muscles….cos I couldn't lift anything I don't think"	Interview: (Elaine) 5 July 11
"Its normally really really busy….majority there quite a few poseurs in there…. people just trying to get on with their work-out…. quite mixed…. Stereotyping women they cannot lift the weights that are in there…. they might feel a little bit intimidated….it's all men…. I have seen one or two women in there in the past but it's very very rare"	Interview: (Connor) 8 August 2011
I never use it so….just cos its always full of blokes, and it's like the really heavy weights so…its all the ones with like vests on….proper sought of bodybuilder types…..no I have not seen very many girls in that part. Yeh, its mainly lads who use that place	Interview: (Sue) 16 August 2011
The body builders area….or the bouncer area. There is a lot of stocky fellas in there so…	Interview: (Joseph) 11 August 2011

The practices of women therefore do not include movement to the free weights area and its equipment. The view is that this is a men only area of which women have no part. However, free weights are a method of resistance training that has benefits for women and men. Taylor and Fletcher (2011, p.1) comment:

"Resistance training is recommended for a wide spectrum of individuals including athletes to improve athletic performance, patients to treat various diagnoses, and healthy people to prevent health related conditions".

Free weights as part of resistance training have benefits over machines used for the same purpose. Free weights work stabiliser muscles more directly than machines, and they allow variations in Programme Practice. For example, via the use of balance balls and similar equipment for instability training (Kibele and Behm, 2009). Free weights also cater for explosive movements, and the range of motion reflects many day to day and athletic movements (Haff, 2000). These cannot be mimicked by resistance machines. Therefore, a strong argument is evident for including free weights resistance training into the programmes of women customers.

The Movement Practice used by the clubs female customers is not based upon perceived exercise benefits; it is more stay in line with the social construction that free weights are not suitable for women. Some of this avoidance is based upon this construction, and this is exacerbated by the related practice of male customers claiming the free weights space for themselves. A significant issue here is not that the club is responsible for this situation, but they are unintentionally designing, contributing to, and maintaining this barrier to womens Movement Practice. Arkin Fitness Consultant John reflects the general view that:

"The women are just intimidated to go in the free weights gym I suppose. As well as that we never induct them in there either. They seem to prefer the resistance machines. That because you put your key in and it displays what you should do. Women are intimidated by weights so we start them off on resistance machines, because it is more controlled. If they ever ask will show them the free weights, but they never do. On the reviews we give them the option but they say: no, I will stick to the machines. They see all the other women on the machines, so they are reluctant to use the free weights. Theres only one women who ever uses the free

*weights area, and shes a bodybuilder. The free weights are better for you because they use other muscles that are not worked on the machines, but it's no good. The women don't want it" (*Fieldnote: 17 September 20 11).

In reassembling Restricted Practice the comments above bring the key issues into sharp focus. Fitness clubs are socially embedded in terms of being leisure time activity. Despite this, it is clear that inherent in the clubs practices is the notion of free weights being too complicated, heavy, or unsuitable for women. Many of the customers lifeworld cultural resources reinforce this notion (Arnould et al., 2006). Within the club, this social construction does not apply to male customers. Women are therefore restricted by social norms, the information given to them at induction, and the information provided to men at the induction. This results in a situation where it is easy for men to appropriate the free weights space for themselves. This becomes an additional constraining social force in which the women then start to believe that yes, indeed, the free weights is the mens area. From a dialectic viewpoint, the providers influence is so dominant that the female customers become subservient to its power. This is described by Vargo and Lusch (2004; 2006) as a goods dominant logic, where the customer has to accept the output of the provider. This impacts upon customers by attenuating their potential value seeking. It also leaves them unable to engage in any dialogue (Ballantyne and Varey, 2006) that would enable them to even propose an alternative practice which would allow them to access the free weights area.

6.2.3.3 Environment Practice

The environment of the Arkin Fitness Centre was suggested by the empirical data as also playing a role in customer value seeking. According to an integrated model of service developed by Tsiotsou, and Wirtz (2011, p.18) highlights the service as a combination of *"design" "atmospherics" "processes" and Signals* within which the customer interacts with the service. This model is shown in Figure 30 below.

Figure 30 Service Environment
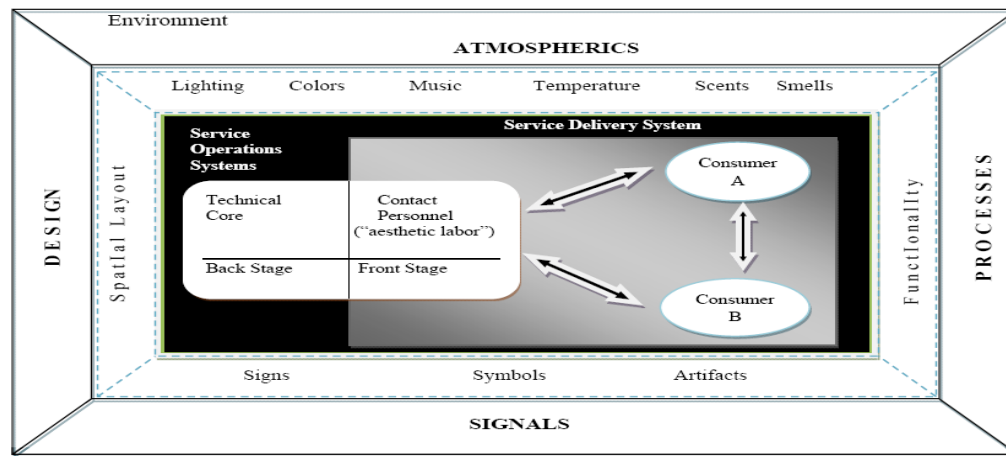
Source: Tsiotsou, and Wirtz (2011, p.18).

The customers reported that their value seeking sought to vary certain aspect of the service environment to attain value for themselves. This is illustrated by the Variation Practice adopted by customers. Variation Practice is a fairly mundane practice but worthy of comment. Customers often report they need a change of environment. This often plays a part in reduction of boredom. This was often cited as the major reason for customers selecting areas containing various opportunities to try something different. When asked why she often selected differing area and workouts, Karen commented: *"So it doesn't get boring. It just gets repetitive"* (Interview: 5 July 2011).

Many customers movements were in search of variation and entertainment to help pass the time. This could be term search for epistemic value within practice. Epistemic value concerns *"Novelty seeking, and variety seeking motives"* (Sheth et al., 1991) Sue commented that she used an iPod for entertainment to alleviate boredom and also moved to a position in the upstairs of the club so she could watch others workout:

" It makes the time go a bit faster if you are listening to music…. I think sometimes I have really got to push myself to come here, cos it's not something I would do if I did not have to. But then once I am here I do actually enjoy it…. I do all my cardio upstairs…cos I am nosey and I can see downstairs, who is coming in and going out" (Interview: 16 August 2011).

In reassembling customer Variation Practice it can be seen that it is mainly used to relieve boredom. Oliver (2007) highlights how music leads people to become engaged with the health club, and this in turn improves retention. An observation in this health club is the relative lack of entertainment to alleviate boredom. John commented:

"The clubs a bit boring. They do not have the big screens like you have in the private health clubs. You have to make your own entertainment really" (Fieldnote: 18 August 2011)

Oliver (2007) has suggested that a lack of suitable entertainment could result in some customers feeling ignored. In this club, unless the customer is on a cardio machine they have only background music to provide entertainment. This is a possible contributory factor in provoking customers to seek value by varying locations in which they work-out. Although this comes to the attention via the practice of the customer movements, this issue could probably be addressed via dialogue between the provider and the customer (Ballantyne and Varey 2006). This could help establish customers entertainment requirements, which Buckley and Hughes (2008) consider an essential part of fitness club provision. The key point remains that the customer is seeking variation through their practice.

In re-assembling Movement Practice it is viewed as an essential part of Facilitating Practice along with Prerequisite Practice and Induction Practice. In sum, these practices facilitate the customer to carry out their Performance Practice within the club. Within Movement Practice, Selection Practice concerns which areas of the club to frequent, and which equipment to use. Many of these selections work well within the club. For example, moving from changing areas to the main gym, or moving from one item of cardio equipment to another. Nevertheless, two areas of tension could be viewed within Comfort Practice and Restricted Practice. In both cases difficulties were encountered. The first concerns customers making movements based upon what was comfortable for them, rather than what was best for them. The second concern was the Restricted Practice of women. It appeared that they were implicitly prohibited from the free weights area and equipment. When considering the environment component of Movement Practice the empirical data suggests that customers movements are based upon the desire to experience variety. When viewed from the practice dialectic perspective, this is the customer proposing that they need

stimulation to alleviate boredom. In the absence of the provider supporting this practice, customers are attempting to find value for themselves via Variation Practice.

6.3 Conclusions

When Facilitating Practice is considered holistically the empirical data suggested three main sub-practices. Namely, Prerequisite Practice, Induction Practice, and Movement Practice. Within these sub-practices many other lower level practices were identified. Where practice is unproblematic this can be viewed as the provider supporting the customers value seeking. Positive examples of this includes aspects of Prerequisite Practice such as using lockers, components of Induction Practice such as setting goals, and Movement Practice elements such as moving between the lower and upper floors. Despite this, the practice dialectic presented examples of customers proposing alternative practice. These disjunctures are illuminated using an approach in which the practice dialectic provides a series of "*contradictions"* to be considered (Holt, 2002, p.86):

> Contradiction 1: Customers reject entry via reception. They do not want to queue with other customers who are simply accessing the Swimming Centre. Therefore, customers propose a value seeking practice that by-passes reception. This suggests customers direct entry to the Arkin Fitness Centre would be a more appropriate value seeking practice.

> Contradiction 2: The customer does not wear the locker key wrist band. The Arkin Fitness Key is also problematic. The customer proposes that the locker and Arkin Fitness Keys are not required in their present form. The club should consider alternative means of locker key retention, and the Arkin Fitness Key could be replaced with less intrusive monitoring systems. This would align service provision closer to customers value seeking practices.

> Contradiction 3: The customer finds it difficult to attain value in practice when attempting to establish equipment availability. This is due to the etiquette difficulties. This results in discursive contradictory practices being proposed by customers. Therefore, no clear practice is evident. An outcome of this fracture includes customers guarding equipment and claiming space. Therefore, the value seeking practice of one customer (to ask if equipment is available) often results in

attenuated value for another customer (who is offended by the intrusion). In developing their own practices, the customers are basically proposing that either etiquette may be acceptable - to ask or not to ask - but they need clear provider support in which is to be applied.

Contradiction 4: The customer rejects Induction Practice as a health and safety requirement. Post induction customers frequently incorporate new exercises into their programmes. These new customer proposed practices are accepted by the club. This contradicts induction as a means to fulfil health and safety requirements. That is, customers are regularly carrying out programme modifications for which they have not had explanation nor demonstration. For some customers inductions are not valued. Their practice proposes being able to move straight to Programme Practice without the need for induction as being of greater value to them.

Contradiction 5: Some customers reject inductions on the grounds of value for money. Customers feel coerced into having to pay for inductions they sometimes do not require. The removal of the fee and compulsory inductions may be more in line with customers value seeking practice and current market trends.

Contradiction 6: Arkin Fitness Consultants heterogeneous delivery of Induction Practice creates space for disparate customer practice. For example, if differing etiquette is explained at induction, customers have conflicting notions of what is correct practice. This results in them proposing their own practice to fill voids created at induction.

Contradiction 7: Provider side dominated Induction Practice does not provide a forum for dialogue with customers. The customer proposes that they need dialogue. At present the inductions are dominated by monologue. This does not mesh with customers value seeking practice.

Contradiction 8: Customers propose Movement Practice based upon comfort. What they do often conflicts with what would work best for them. The customers - in this case - may need to be educated via dialogue. This is to encourage them to propose Movement Practice based upon whats most effective for them.

Contradiction 9: Customers Movement Practices through the club can be dictated by environmental conditions rather than any Programme Practice requirements. For

example, temperature. Therefore, the customer proposes that they can only move according to environmental conditions. They would acquire greater value if their movement was based upon other criteria. For example, Movement Practice based upon the being in the most suitable area for achieving the most effective workout.

Contradiction 10: Customers Movement Practice through the club can predicated up where customers perceive they are allowed to go. The club excludes female customers – de facto – from the free weights areas and equipment. By attending the club the female customers are proposing that they want exercise programmes of value. This value seeking practice would be enhanced by access to the most effective equipment . This should include the free weights area and equipment.

Contradiction 11: The customers Movement Practice through the club is often a search for alleviating boredom. At present their value seeking is limited to a narrow range of entertainment, so they find variation by moving to differing parts of the club. Variety seeking is customers proposing new alleviation of boredom value seeking practice.

These contradictions provide in-situ examples of the value seeking practice dialectic in action. Although the Arkin Fitness Centre could argue that the contradictions identified above are not unanimous to all users, it allows the club to see the potential value seeking practice proposals from the customers perspective. They can evaluate these proposals for their relative merits. The contradictions although specific to this Arkin Fitness Centre have wider implications. Firstly, broadening out the context, the identified model of Facilitating Practices provides a template for academics and practitioners to consider value seeking practices of the customers within other health clubs. Secondly, identifying tensions between service provision and customer practices using this dialectic approach is a new method for the health club sector. Finally, the contradictions identified for the Arkin Fitness Centre can be used as conceptual ideas that can be applied to any health club (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). That is, these contradictions can be used to compare a health clubs own practice in these areas to evaluate if these disjunctures apply to their club. This would be used as a " *first pass"* preliminary scan of health club practice (Buttle, 1996, p.25). Therefore, the ethnography and dialectic methods used in the present research may be applied to any health club to identify customers proposed practice specific to them.

Chapter 7

PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

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7   PERFORMANCE PRACTICE

7.1 Introduction

Performance Practice may be viewed as following in linear fashion from Commitment Practice and Facilitating Practice. However, there is also symbiosis between all the practice categories. This applies both vertically and horizontally. For example, within Facilitating Practice differing individual practices will converge occasionally. Similarly, Commitment, Facilitating, and Performance Practices will mesh from time to time across these categories. In this chapter Performance Practice is considered as the value seeking customer interacts with the physical club, its equipment, and other customers (Lowe et al., 2011). This is all in a highly visible way. As such continual Performance Practice has a confirmatory nature. That is, if practices of either the provider or the customer are continually enacted and re-enacted they will become the socially constructed club practice. Therefore, Performance Practice is a highly visible means of considering health club customers value seeking. The overall Performance Practices are identified in figure 31 below.

**Figure 31 Performance Practices**
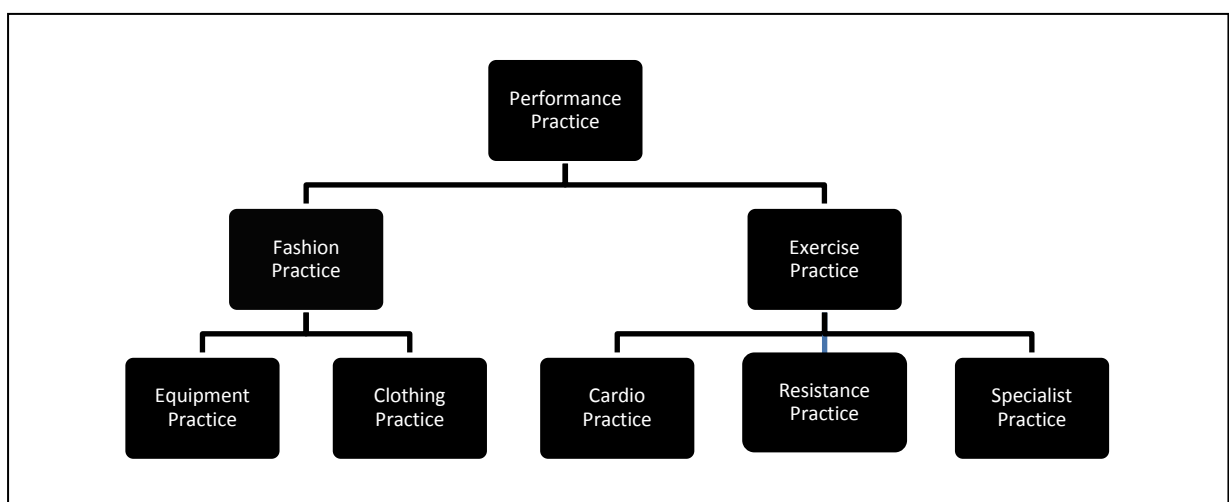
7.2. Performance Practice

Performance Practice consists of two main strands: Fashion Practice and Exercise Practice. As with previous chapters these customer value seeking practices need to be appropriately

supported by the provider (Gronroos, 2011). Practices that are shown as provider/customer dialectically opposed become the grounds for the negotiation and renegotiation of what practice should be to fulfil customers value seeking.

The first practice - which contributes to Performance Practice - to be considered in this section is Fashion Practice. The empirical data suggested that Fashion Practice consists of the equipment and clothing used by customers in which they find functional and hedonic (including Identity construction) value. In terms of equipment practice, the empirical data suggested towels, iPods, gloves, and drinks bottles as significant items. When considering Clothing Practice three further practices were identified: Sportswear Practice, Athletic Clothing Practice, and Poseur Practice. Many of these practices provided the value sought by customers. For example, customers reported using equipment such as iPods for functional value purposes such as entertainment or motivation. In addition, experiential value relating to the look and feel of iPods was also value generating for customers. Similarly, Clothing Practice was used for functional ease of movement, and more experientially to fit with current high street fashions.

From a dialectic viewpoint several issued emerged. Primarily, this concerns when customers equipment and fashion practices impinge on other customers value seeking. For example, equipment such as iPods can block communication between customers. By the same token, customers Clothing Practice which intimidates can also lead to value attenuation for other customers. These and other issues emerged from the empirical data. Fashion Practices are particularly significant due to the highly visible nature of them. Despite this, the meanings underpinning Fashion Practice are often hidden. Therefore, this section attempts to make these explicit.

Exercise Practice consists of three sub-practices. These are: Cardio Practice, Resistance Practice, and Specialist Practice. Spanning these three sub-practices are two issues which the empirical data identified as significant. Namely, Exercise Mode Practice and Exercise Execution Practice. The former concerns whether customers attend the club on their own, with a partner or partners. The latter concerns how customers actually perform exercises

in terms of technique, duration, and pacing. In line with other practices identified within the thesis, many of these practices are uneventful. That is, the customers and provider understanding of these practices is comparable. Despite this, when viewed as a dialectic some difficulties do emerge. The ruptures identified by the dialectic converge around difficulties of working out alone (Exercise Mode Practice), and techniques and strategies used in Exercise Execution Practice. In the former, working out alone is linked with the barriers identified in Fashion Practices, and in the latter how poor technique and understanding leads to social contagion between customers and Arkin Fitness Consultants is explored.

Holistically, Performance Practice provides empirical data which customers suggest is significant during their club life. Therefore, overall the section highlights several sub-practices which are performed without difficulty as customer/provider understanding converges. Alternatively, Performance Practice also has significant value attenuating and generating possibilities when considered from the practice dialectic perspective. This results in the specification of nine contradictions which could be considered for service development.

7.2.1 Fashion Practice

The first Performance Practice considered is Fashion Practice. The word fashion is ubiquitous in a plethora of differing contexts (Andersson, 2011). Therefore, Fashion Practice relating to the empirical data collected at the club revolves around two visible elements which appeared to be underpinned by several non visible elements. The empirical data suggested the visible elements concerns Equipment Practice and Clothing Practice. This is shown in figure 32 below.

Figure 32 Fashion Practice
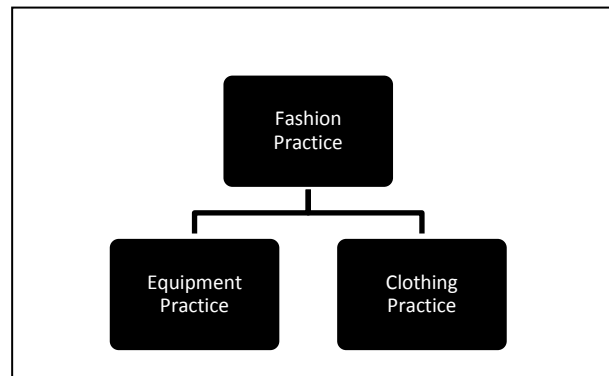
The above practices are explicated in terms of what they generally consist. Secondly, the tensions which are evident are explained via the dialectic practice method. These provide opportunities for service development as the customer proposes practice. The interplay and intersections with other practices will be detailed as appropriate as the chapter unfolds.

7.2.1.1 Equipment Practice

Equipment Practice is included as an element of Fashion Practice due to the visibility of adornments mainly worn, or carried by the customer: on, or in contact with their body. This would appear to be an appropriate classification:

"The notion of fashion involves consumption behaviour that displays an individual's tastes and value to others, given that fashion styles are usually accepted by a large group of people at a particular time and signify both social identification and distinction….This term refers to clothing and other physical and material objects put on the human body" (Pentecost and Andrews, 2010, p.4).

In the Arkin Fitness Centre the dominant equipment is iPods (or similar devices), drinks bottles, gloves, and towels. But these are more than simple commodity items. According to Nam and Kim (2011, p.85) these are things: *"things…. are not just physical objects, but they also include the emotional feeling and meanings that are connected with the object".*

Therefore, customers Equipment Practice serves two purposes: firstly, customers gain functional value from the item of equipment, and secondly they gain experiential value from use of the equipment. This latter value includes contributions in constructing the identity of the customer. Taken as a composite, both aspects provide overall customer value as components of fashion Equipment Practice. In the main, fashion Equipment Practice appears to work well with the customers and the club appearing to profit from the functional benefits of these items. The customer finds value in using these items, with the provider adopting a supporting role (Gronroos, 2011). In all the cases, the users of these items always initially reported that the use of these items was for the functional value they provided. Lee who uses all these items typified initial customer responses when he said: *"I use the drinks bottle for hydration. The IPod is for entertainment and the towel is to put on the bench. The gloves protect my hands"* (Fieldnote: 22 September 2011).

For customers using these items the value seeking practice is partially fulfilled by the functional benefits the equipment provides. However, when delving deeper into customers value seeking practice, experiential benefits were also sought. Sheth et al. (1991, p.160) identify experiential benefits include value relating to *social* value (i.e. being part of the group that has the desirable equipment*), emotional* value (i.e. a Nike branded drinks bottle arousing *just do it* motivations), *epistemic* value (i.e. customers curiosity being stimulated via learning materials on an iPod), and *conditional* value (i.e. products used due to the unique conditions within the club). Chen and Granitz (2011, p.2) concur with this classification but suggest the other types of value may be present depending upon the context. In an Information technology context they suggest value being gained from *social rituals* (i.e. sharing iPod applications), *ownership and identity* (i.e. iPod ownership may signal certain an organised, experienced user), *aesthetics* (i.e. the look of the equipment) and *immersion and escape* (i.e. listening to music to escape the boredom of a workout). Of course, this could be extended to include various type of value identified in the literature review. As this thesis is concerned with overall aggregated value as viewed in practice, the type of value components used are based purely upon the empirical data suggestions. Namely, functional and experiential value (ibid).

The empirical data could be seen to highlight that drinks bottles, iPods, gloves, and towels did indeed serve the functional, experiential, and identity value practices. Customers commented that for functionally they needed to use gloves for grip, towels to wipe sweat from benches, iPod's for entertainment, and drinks bottles for hydration. In addition, they liked the items to be experientially pleasing. James commented to me about his iPod during his work-out:

"It is probably the best on the market….its accessible, all the advertising leans you towards that, and obviously you go with it because a lot of your friends [have them], *the podcasts, they use it, share your music….its streamlined and it's easy to use, and it's probably the standard on the market because it looks so cool. It's a fashion item really, you don't want naff equipment"* *(*Fieldnote: 24 September 2011).

Conversely, from a dialectic practice viewpoint, what customers do with the support of the provider may actually be reducing value of other customers. That is, those customers not using drinks bottles, towels, gloves, or iPods. Perhaps by not engaging with these practices these customers are suggesting alternative practice. The view of the provider and fashion equipment users highlight this disjuncture. Arkin Fitness Consultants often agree with the conventional wisdom of functional, experiential and identity value seeking Equipment Practices. Commenting upon the functional value of drinks bottles, club employee Josie reflected the views of Arkin Fitness Consultants when she said: *"Yes, you need to drink. This is to keep hydrated. The scientific research says that you have to drink"* (Field note: 7 September 2011). With these types of informational inputs it is not surprising that the customers hold this functional hydration view. In addition, this has some academic support. Mundel (2011, p.1) highlights that the *"sports medicine and exercise science community"* advise that hydration should take place during exercise. Despite this, Mundel, (2011) draws upon recent research to highlight that hydration, whilst conceding it may be required for long duration and heat intensive exercise (i.e.: marathon running in the desert), may not be required for activities of shorter durations (Marino et al., 2010; Walsh et al., 1994). Spence (2011, p.1) comments on the same issue suggesting that those promoting hydration for *"most sports…. is a form of quackery* and *bad medicine by any measure"*. The same doubts can be expressed regarding the use of IPODS , gloves, and towels. For example, whilst iPods provide entertainment, they block communication and sociability (Bull, 2006).

Gloves *of any type* could protect hands and improve grip, and towels could cross contaminate benches, equipment, and the towel owner (Johnson, 2011).

When considering more deeply the experiential nature of these items, customers value their appealing looks, pleasurable handling, and construction of identity in terms of expressing *"individuality"* (Herd, 2011, p.4). However, alternatively - using training gloves as an example - a Arkin Fitness Consultant commented on his belief of someone creating their individuality:

"They say they use the gloves for the better grip and to prevent calluses forming on the hands. I think they are a load of rubbish but they are marketed for the gym environment. The makers claim they are specially designed for the gym environment. Some people might say different, but I think it is just the poseurs that wear them. They think it makes them look big and strong" (Fieldnote: 5 September 2011).

iPod usage also serves as a similar case in point. iPod usage tends to be viewed by customers and the provider as a functional item for entertainment and/an aesthetic adornment which helps create the identity of a fashionable club user. In general, the club presents itself as a fun environment where the customer can improve physically, whilst interacting with other customers. However, some customer practice contradicts this claim, and a more sinister undertone becomes apparent. A fieldnote observes:

"A lot of people appear to not want to interact and speak. Today after I had completing the cross trainer, I went to the leg press. A women… was next to it. I did not feel I could ask her if I could use it. She had headphones on and would not make eye contact. I have noticed this a lot already. It makes the club feel really unfriendly, and there is little social interaction"

(Fieldnote: 2 June 2011).

Although in isolation this may appear insignificant, comments from other users support a potential difficulty. Carl Comments:

"They listen to music. It could encourage themselves more….to be honest sometimes people don't like to talk to other people so it puts up a bit of a wall if you are listening to your iPod….I think they don't want to talk to others in the gym. They just want to get on with it"

(Interview: 6 September 2011).

Bull (2006) claims that personal stereo use is about strategies of control. Customers are attempting to control the *"uncontrollable"* by removing the *close proximity of unknown others* , creating a *special space*, enacting an exciting *"script"*, and sliding into an *auditory world* where they are *not on their own"* (Bull, 2006*,* pp.134-135): To some extent to shut out a hostile and "*alienating"* world with a metaphorical "*do not disturb sign"* (Bull, 2006, pp.133-135). Therefore, if Bull (2006) is to be believed, customers in the health club may be attempting to mask fear and intimidation via the use of iPods. They are constructing identities and creating an *"auditory bubble"* to communicate stay away! (Bull, 2006, p.131). This would tie in the previous claiming of space as identified in Movement Practice. Whilst this may not appear on the surface to be a value attenuator clearly it is for some customers. Ashleigh a former health club employee commented:

"at my old health club it used to be jumping. There were not that many people who used iPods because they had big screens that people used to watch. Here though it is really flat when you go in. Nobody really talks. The exercise machines make it worse because you can plug earphones into them, and watch TV or whatever" (Field note: 26 September 2011).

In re-assembling Equipment Practice the empirical data highlights that customers find value from the use of towels, IPods, gloves, and drink bottles. Specifically, it could be established that these items displayed functional and experiential value (including identity construction) that customers found in practice. These items not only contain value *as commodities,* but also value as *things* (Nam and Kim, 2011, p.85)*.* However, although many of the practices undertaken - with the support of the club - could be considered mundane (Johnson, 2010) many have interesting hidden meanings. These could reduce the value of other customers club usage. Equipment Practice can be viewed from a dialectic perspective. That is, generally the dominant Equipment Practices are encouraged and supported by the club. At inductions you are advised to bring a towel, and drinks bottle, however those that choose not to do this

are not challenged, or encouraged to comply with these requests. Those who do not comply can be viewed as proposing new practice. One not involving drinks, or towels, gloves, and IPods. Although this could be dismissed as simply a customer choice whether to use these items or not, no consideration is given to alternative meanings associated with identity. Some of these meanings could result in attenuated value for other customers. This is through the club being unsociable in terms of iPods being associated with customer isolation strategies and gloves being associated with images of dominant males. This stand in marked contrast to claims of the Arkin Fitness Centre as being a social environment.

7.2.1.2 Clothing Practice

Acting in tandem with Equipment Practice, Clothing Practice concerns functional, and experiential (including identity construction) value. Andersson (2011, pp.13-14) suggests:

"As clothing is lived and experienced, the encounters with fashion in everyday life involve not only the apparent questions of personal taste and aesthetics, but relate to more diffuse ideas concerning our own body and identity. Clothing….is used as protection against the elements….garments embellish the body, conceal the body, or display the body….use of dress to hide or reveal the body, fashion can be deployed or display an identity….by dressing in a particular way something is said about the individual".

During the participant observation clothing practice became apparent at an early stage. I observed:

"Wow, it is really hot in here, and that guy is wearing a woolly beanie hat. He is surly, and appears to be cultivating a mean and mood image". (Fieldnote: 2 June 2011).

Marianne referred to the same customer during an interview. She stated:

"and theres erm….some people who just always make me smile because I think they must be here all the time. You know, really, really fit people, and then you get the odd one who are very sort of poseury [sic], *and there is a boy in there who always stands out because he always wears a hat in the in the gym: a woolly hat, and I don't really understand why he would wear a woolly hat"* (Interview: 7 July 2011).

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These distinctive Clothing Practices started to emerge as a significant practice as the research unfolded. Clothing Practice could be said to incorporate the elements detailed in figure 33 below.

Figure 33 Clothing Practice
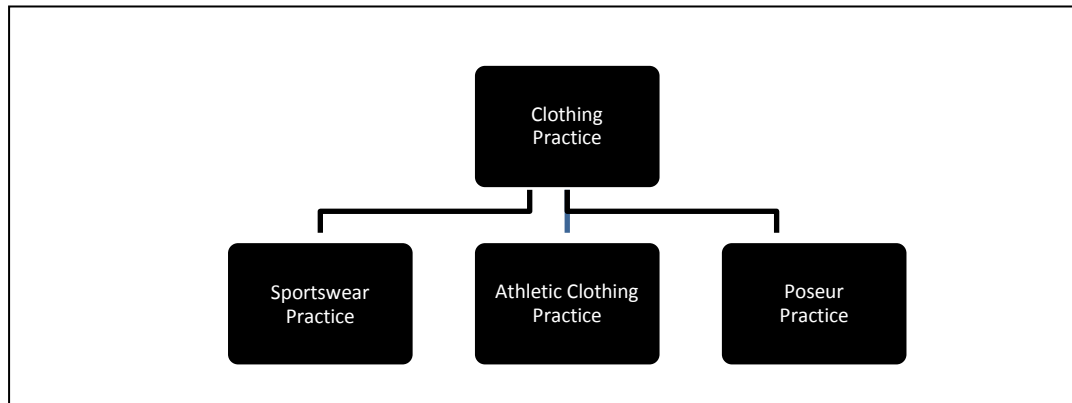
Much Clothing Practice is mundane. That is, the customers report their clothing practice is simply functional for the purposes of working - out. Many customers can be categorised as following Sportswear Practice. On the whole, Sportswear Practice customers are unconcerned with the more experiential aspects of their fashion, or its impact on creating their identity. Customers exemplifying this approach include responses such as Walter and Sue:

"Obviously comfort for one. What dictates as well is ….I've got to select around what my iPod will fit into, and things like that" (Interview Walter: 4 July 2011). *"Clothes what I am wearing now, so jogging bottoms or a vest or t-shirt…..its practical I suppose"* (Interview Sue: 16 August 2011).

Both Walter and Sue recognise that for them the functional nature of their gym wear is important when working-out. They prioritise comfort and functionality that does not restrict their movements. An influencing factor is temperature. Comfort relates to wearing functional clothing that is not too hot. I discovered this in my early work-outs at the club:

"I have noticed that I dress differently to other customers. I wear heavier tracksuit bottoms and a more "dressy" heavy t-shirt. I am boiling. I need to dress like the others with lighter type clothing - and shorts - so I am not too hot" (Field note: 31 May 2011).

 It was observed that most users fell in line with contemporary high street fashion styles for workout wear. Therefore, they wear clothes befitting of the context in which they are situated (Laitala, et al., 2011). This is hardly surprising:

"clothing practices are formed in the social intersection between discourses ascribing specific meanings to bodies in different contexts and embodied experiences of dress" (Torell, 2011, p.85).

In the Arkin Fitness Centre a socially constructed high-street sportswear dress code in operation for the majority of customers. They do not stray too far from this accepted Clothing Practice. This can be stated as being influenced by retailers who produce these fashions and as a result become *"enactors of consumption worlds"* (Fredriksson, 2011, p.44). For these customers the overriding concern is: *"clothes* [that] *can either facilitate or restrict body movements and thereby influence such knowledge in action"* (Torell, 2011, p.86). From this base of Sportswear Practice, a development can be discerned. Those who wear specialist athletic clothing and who take the notion of functionality to a new level. This notion suggests that their Clothing Practice is an attempt to improve their athletic performance through the use of technological clothing. This stand in contrast to the unrestricted movement favoured by the Sportswear Practice customers (Andersson, 2011) These "athletes" can be identified by technological clothing items such as specialised running shoes, lycra shorts, and compression clothing. It could be suggested that this due to the marketing efforts of major sportswear suppliers, and this results in experiential *"feelings and emotions in the wearer"* (Andersson, 2011, p. 17). This applies to the Sportswear Practice customers, but is particularly pertinent to clothing for improved athletic performance. This may be viewed as customer seeking functional and experiential value through Athletic Clothing Practice.

Athletic Clothing Practice is adopted by those who are very serious about their working out. The use of this clothing spans functional and experiential value types. Craik (2011) has

commented that athletic clothing that improves performance has two implications. Firstly, it creates performance enhancement or as she puts it, achieving: *that extra edge"* (Craik, 2011, p.73), and second it creates the body. The first is exemplified by Chris who outlines the performance nature of his Athletic Clothing Practice:

"I got them [his running shoes] *for a tenner from the Nike shop up at Dalton Park. They were a sample pair and I thought I am having them and I'm not even bothered about the colour* [luminous orange] *and they are proper waffle running shoes because they are mesh and really lightweight, so when you get tired you basically don't get tired, because they are that light. You know the first thing that hits you when you get tired, your feet start to slide off the treadmill, with them you don't….* [get tired]*….Performance enhancement every time, I am not really bothered about….* [the look]*…. I have got worse ones than them to be honest "* (Interview: 22 September 2011).

On the whole, both Sportswear Practice and Athletic Clothing Practice can be seen as a quite mundane functional and experiential value seeking by customers. Sportswear Practice manifests itself in the club context whereby functionality is the priority. Although they are not *indifferent* to Clothing Practice as providing experiential value, they just don't take it as *seriously* as the other groups in terms of identity construction (Fredriksson, 2011, p.47). It should also be noted that contemporary sportswear *"is indistinguishable from casual wear"* (Craik, 2011, p.78) For customers adopting Athletic Clothing Practice, functionality requires performance to be improved through the use of technological fashion (Craik, 2011). This is also promoted as having experiential value in terms of aesthetics and positive emotion which results in hedonic value (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982). Identity is also constructed in terms of the customer as both the athlete and an object of desire (Billings and Hundley, 2010).

In the empirical data collected, Athletic Clothing Practice appears as a bridge between Sportswear Clothing Practice and Poseur Clothing Practice that is addressed in the next section. That is, Athletic Clothing Practice is developing Sportswear Clothing Practice in functional, experiential, and identity construction aspects. However, Poseur Clothing Practice appears to place function in the background, and bring experiential value aspects very much to the foreground via identity construction. Therefore, in line with this the

empirical data suggested that customers have socially constructed ideas concerning what a poseur practices with their clothing. Flamboyant, brazen, clothing is seen a major part of being viewed as being a poseur. In addition, a regular feature of being a poseur is the addition of a suntan, and customers looking in the mirrors at their own images. Reflecting other customer comments, Marianne said of poseurs:

"frequently they'll be around the mirrors bit and you'll see them, I know they are there so you can look at yourself, but you will see them glance around and look at other people looking at them....sometimes if you watch them for long enough....they will place themselves so that if there is an......nice looking boy or whatever in one particular area, a poseury girl will come over in front of them and just place themselves - it seems - right in front of them.....the boys do the same as the girls aswell....quite revealing clothes: so the girls will have their stomachs out, whereas most people who go to the gym don't do that, erm frequently quite short shorts, and on girls that is isn't really common, and the boys will almost certainly be wearing a vest or very, very tight t-shirt" (Interview: 7 July 2011).

In the eyes of customers, the poseur uses clothing practice to create *"sex appeal"* allowing other customers to *"gaze voyeuristically"* at them (Craik, 2011, p.75). Marianne pointed this out in the extract above. For her, poseurs needed to be sure other customers were looking at them. This is enhanced by the showing of muscles and suntans in the case of the men, and the skimpy outfits worn by women. This is the result of: *"The connections between fashion as a social system, a cultural practice and a symbolic product are essential components in the consumer identify construction"* (Fredriksson, 2011, pp.46-47).

The identity constructed for poseurs is one where the clothing fashion characteristics of presenting oneself as *"attractive and appealing"* is spoken as a derogatory term by other club customers (Melchior, 2011, p.58). Subsequently, although the poseur may find value for themselves in mainly experiential and identity terms, the other customers attempt to negate that value by subversive name calling and labelling. This could be viewed as attempting to stop Poseur Clothing Practice. It is proposed by these - non poseur - customers as being deviant and undesirable. It would be rare for anyone to accept the term poseur. James commenting upon why he wears a vest when working - out rejects the poseur label:

"I think it is a fair thing to say that about a lot of people, but my purpose for wearing it is probably different. It is for my training. You can see the benefits as you go, so it spurs you on…so you look good and it pushes you on that little bit further" (Fieldnote: 3 August 2011).

Despite the comments made by James, it is evident that two alterative proposals are in evidence in relation to Poseur Clothing Practice. Firstly, the poseurs are attempting to create an alluring, appealing, and attractive identity. For them this is a value seeking practice. Secondly those who resist the Poseur Clothing Practice are proposing it as unacceptable. For them, Poseur Clothing Practice by other customers attenuates their own value seeking.

In re-assembling Clothing Practice it has been highlighted from the empirical data collected that three main practices are evident. Sportswear Practices utilises clothing for mainly functional purposes within an overall accepted high-street dress code. Athletic Clothing Practice develops Sportswear Clothing Practice in terms of wearing technological clothing for enhanced functional performance. Furthermore, this includes additional experiential and identity building aspects. Finally, Poseur Practice relegated functional practice to the background and emphasised experiential and identity construction as the priority. In all of the Clothing Practice value is found in the clothes that are worn whether this is Sportswear, Athletic, or Poseur Clothing Practice. Despite this, it was shown that the potential exists for Athletic and Poseur Practice to the attenuate the value seeking of others. Of the course, the opposite is potentially possible. If a club was dominated by Sportswear Practice, then any Athletic or Poseur Practice customers may feel their value is attenuated.

In considering Fashion Practice as a totality, several issues are evident. Firstly, fashion is a Performance Practice that is visible on one level and invisible on another. The visible aspect concerns what is worn either as equipment or clothing. However, Fashion Practice often has invisible aspects relating to functional, experiential, and identity construction practices. Value was found via the use of equipment such as towels, iPods, gloves, and drinks bottles. These items are not only functional commodities, but also items that provide experiential and identity construction value. However, the converse was also evident. Some customers found no value in the use of these items, and found their value attenuated by those who did

use these items. For example, iPod usage makes communication difficult. Clothing Practices appeared as value seeking, but the priority differed according to the nature of the clothing worn. Sportswear Clothing Practice emphasised function over experiential and identity value. Athletic Clothing Practice developed both functional and experiential aspects to create performance enhancement and identity construction. Poseur Clothing Practice varied and appeared to emphasise experiential and identity construction value over functional value.

As a dialectic to be considered, the factures that were evident concerned four main issues Firstly, dominant equipment practices were supported by the club. Conversely, those proposing alternatives were encouraged to support that dominant practices of towels, iPods, gloves, and drinks bottles. Secondly, the potential value attenuation for those alienated by IPods users isolation practices, and intimidatory glove wearing dominant males is not recognised by the club. Furthermore, those proposing no towels or drinks may have some theoretical support from theory in terms of towels creating cross contamination, and hydration not being required for working out. Thirdly, the clothing practice highlighted the potential for Athletic Clothing Practice and Poseur Clothing Practice to come to dominate club wear. This would result in value attenuation for customers adopting Sportswear Clothing Practice. It appears that a counter proposal was being suggested in resistance to the Poseur Practice group in particular. That is, club customers labelled poseurs as deviant and undesirable. This has the potential to reduce value both for the labeller and the labelled.

7.2.2. Exercise Practice

Exercise Practice is the second main strand of Performance Practice. This overarching Practice is under pinned by two main assumptions relating to the customers. Namely, that they have committed to the club, and they are familiar with the Facilitating Practices that allows performance to take place. In general, most can be said to be involved in developing one or more of the components of physical fitness. Ortega et al., (2008, p.1) provide the following definition:

"Physical fitness can be thought of as an integrative measure of most, if not all, the body functions (skeletomuscular, cardiorespiratory, hematocirculatory, psychoneurological and endocrine-metabolic) involved in the performance of daily physical activity and/or physical exercise"

In the general terms used by the Arkin Fitness Consultants physical exercise is a means to achieve *"Cardiorespiratory fitness"," muscular fitness"* (i.e. strength, endurance, explosive strength)*, "speed/agility (and balance)"* and *"flexibility"* (Ortega et al., 2008, pp.2-3) which are components related to overall physical fitness. Arkin Fitness Consultant Robin states:

"Unless you are concentrating upon one type of activity such as musclebuilding, physical fitness should include cardio, all round muscle fitness, tone, strength, and flexibility"

*(*Fieldnote: 20 September 2011).

Some components of overall physical fitness - for example, *"glucose tolerance"* - are beyond the scope of exercise alone (Vanhees, et al., 2005, p.103), however the Arkin Fitness Consultants appear to be aware of the overall elements within their control that Physical Exercise Practice should address. In pursuit of physical fitness the performance of exercises in the Arkin Fitness Centre can be illustrated as falling within one of three overarching categories as shown in figure 34 below.

Figure 34 Exercise Practice
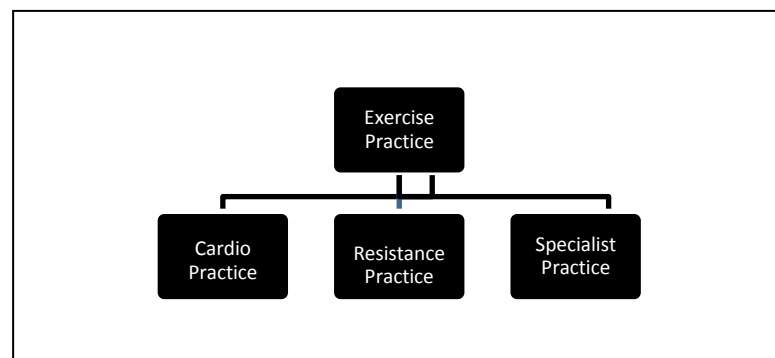
7.2.2.1 Cardio Practice

Cardio Practice generally centres around the equipment used to gain *"cardiovascular, skeletal muscle and metabolic"* improvements (Ferguson-Stegall, 2011, p.1). The primary aerobic equipment at the Arkin Fitness Centre consists of: bikes, treadmills, steppers, cross-trainers, waves, hand-bikes and rowing machines.

7.2.2.2 Resistance Practice

Resistance Practice concerns gaining muscular strength, power, and endurance (Ratamess et al., 2010). Equipment used for these purposes is predominantly: free weights, machines (traditional resistance machines), and to a lesser extent the customers own body weight.

7.2.2.3 Specialist Practice

Under the heading of Specialist Practice are items not considered specialist from a physical exercise perspective, but specialist from a club perspective. That is, only a selected few customers engage in these activities, and this therefore makes them a special case. These exercise practices include: instability movements and flexibility exercises. Equipment falling under this category includes: balance balls, kinesis machines, stretching machines, and the customers own – without equipment – stretching.

The club facilitates customers Exercise Practice according to what is specified as their goals at the induction. Therefore, the exercises they are allocated are decided prior to them performing the exercises. As a general rule the customer performs the exercise routines selecting the appropriate cardio, resistance, or specialist practices as dictated by their programme. In performing the actual exercises many can be observed as performing Exercise Practice in accordance with the Induction Practice methods outlined in the Facilitating Practice chapter. This includes correct usage of cardio machines such as treadmill, bikes, cross-trainers, and rowing machines. These are heavily utilised within the club. Theresa commented:

"To lose weight so it's like the bike, the rowing, the running, the cross country [sic]*, then it was like the chest press, the leg press, the sit-ups, and that one that does your back"* (Interview: 17 September 2011).

However, some significant problems emerge from sub-practice spanning all the exercise categories above. These are shown in figure 35 below.

Figure 35 Expanded Exercise Practice
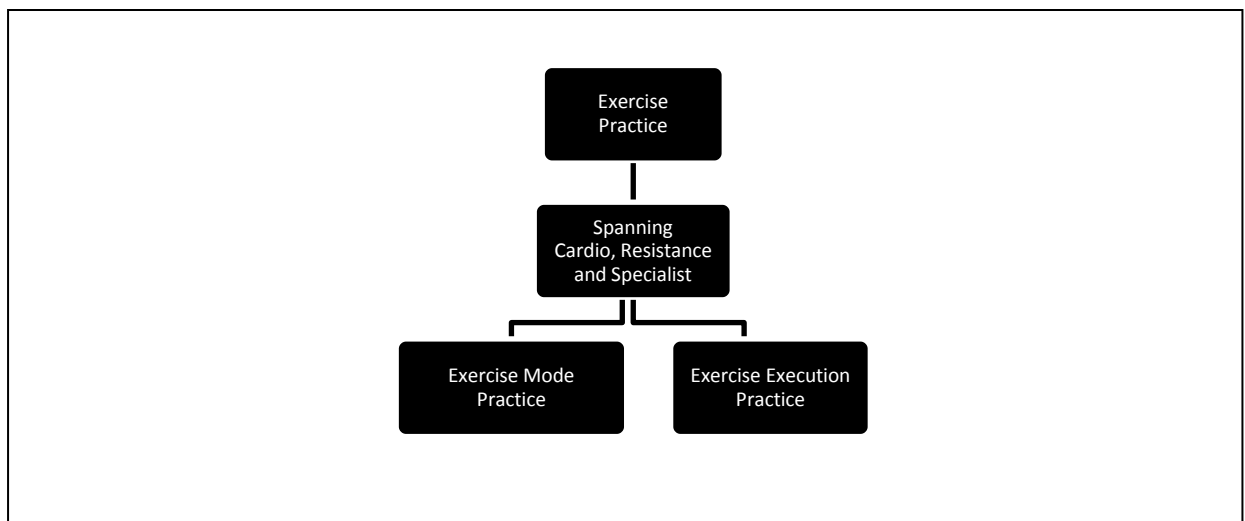
When performing Physical Exercise Practice the practice dialectic highlights several *"disjunctures"* (Korkman, 2006, p.159). This ranges from minor in the case of Exercise Mode of Practice to major in the case of Exercise Execution Practice.

The first sub-practice Exercise Mode Practice is simply whether customers prefer to work-out alone, with a partner, or a group of partners. This presents few problems in terms of the dialectic. From the customers perspective each has its advantages and disadvantages. Tom highlights that advantages of working out with a friend are:

"It's normally me and my friend at the most…..when I am on my own I find I can't stay at the gym after a certain amount of time say forty five minutes. I get, sought of become bored, so when you have got someone there when you are taking a rest there is actually someone there to speak to, so it lasts longer, plus if they are working on a machine which normally you

don't, they might give you a tip and your interested in working that part of the body" (Interview: 18 August 2011).

Whilst Louis in response to the question what was his preferred mode of working out, with a friend or alone? he replied:

"myself….the advantages are: you can get around quicker….your are not relying on other people to turn up, like sitting around waiting for your mate to turn up. The disadvantages are: maybes motivation with regards to, like I do another set, where when you are by yourself you don't. If you are doing bench press you cannot really do benching without somebody spotting you, you know where they watch you [for safety purposes]*, so you are limited with how much you can lift aswell"* (Interview: 5 September 2011).

In explaining the customers Exercise Mode Practice the people who prefer to work-out with friends usually have one of three reasons. Firstly, pragmatic reasons of safety: they need someone to assist them with lifts. Secondly, they feel motivated by the competition a willing friend may provide. Finally, the friend is a source of entertainment to alleviate boredom that some users feel whilst working-out. For those working-out alone, flexibility and not having to rely on others or others not having to rely on them appears to be the reason for this practice. Overall, either practice works well and is viewed as an important selection by the customer. The only caveat is that due to the use of iPods and the claiming of space, it can be very difficult for lone customers to ask for assistance from other customers should they require help with an exercise. This was problem was captured by Louis who said:

"Sometimes if you lift two heavy dumbbells and you cannot lift both of them up, you are limited to what you can lift….sometimes you feel you are putting onto people…..thats just the way people are I suppose…people are busy doing their own thing…. If people are really into doing the weights they cannot be bothered to keep getting up and giving you a hand"

(Interview: 5 September 2011).

These comments serve to highlight the disjuncture between working out alone or working with a friend. Working out alone highlights the difficulties of club life. Primarily this means the customer cannot perform certain exercises which for them would provide value. When

combined with aspects of Fashion Practices (i.e. iPod usage) and Etiquette Practice (i.e. claiming space), this also serves to highlight the wider issue of the club as a source of alienation. That is, some customers cannot find value as they struggle alone during the performance of their exercises.

The dialectic comes more to the fore when Exercise Execution Practice is considered. As with Exercise Mode Practice the empirical data identified this as a significant practice. Exercise Execution Practice is the specific technique used when performing any type of exercise. Proficient exercise control is crucial (DiStefano, et al., 2009) This entails exercising through an appropriate range of motion. In simple terms, this is the criteria for gaining maximum results from effort expended, and to avoid injury by using the *correct technique* for a particular exercise (Hoffman et al., 2011, p.3; Colado and Garcia-Masso, 2009). In particular, something to be avoided is the consistent use of cheating and partial repetitions (Giebing et al., 2005). In the former, this means using unnatural body momentum during exercises to make the exercise easier: the latter is not completing the full range of motion for the exercise (Giebing et al., 2005). In terms of pacing and duration of exercising this means adhering to the appropriate speed and duration required of each exercise. Again, this is to ensure effort is not wasted. An example of this is: how fast, and for how long should one run on the treadmill?. The participant observations enabled the researcher to view the performances of customers vis a vis the correct exercise protocols he had been shown during induction. The interviews helped understand the meanings behind adopted practice. The results were quite insightful.

Many customers could be seen to be seeking value from exercises that they had clearly been trained to perform at induction using the correct Exercise Execution Practice. A fieldnote indicates:

"tonight I watched as Andre performed his exercises. He went on the treadmill for 30 minutes. When he finished I asked: 'why 30 mins duration?' he replied that this was the amount of time that was allocated by the Arkin Fitness Consultants to improve his cardio-vascular fitness. Later I watched as he moved the shoulder press machine through its full range of motion. Talking to him he said that the Arkin Fitness Consultants had told him to

get maximum benefits from the exercises he must move the machine through the full range of motion" (Field note: 23 July 2011).

Customers of Andre's type can be observed regularly within the club. They adhere to the correct protocols introduced to customers by the Arkin Fitness Consultants via induction. Some other customers import appropriate practice from other clubs. Despite this, when viewed as a dialectic customers propose practice - which although providing value for them - does not conform to theory or induction requirements for Exercise Execution Practice. A fieldnote documents this issue:

"After four months of observing the exercise execution used in the club, some interesting issues are evident. On cardio machines people grip hand rails on treadmills to cheat on running. On other cardio machines such as steppers, waves, and rowers they move through a very narrow range of motion. When it comes to resistance machines the range of motion is incredibly limited, and weights used are often too heavy. The weight would not permit the user to move the equipment through the range of movement even if they had the desire to do so. The free weights exercise execution is outrageously poor. The range of motion a bench press barbell is moved can be literally an inch when it should nearer 15 inches. The same applies to other free weights exercises too numerous to document. The free weights exercise execution bears little resemblance to any accepted exercise practice as recommended by either theory or the Arkin Fitness Consultants advice. It is actually quite startling what takes place in terms of poor exercise form" (Field note: 27 September 2011).

In seeking to understand how this poor exercise execution had manifested itself, I observed Harry - an inexperienced customer - using particular poor form. Harry was simply one of many observed and chatted to by the researcher. Each time Harry performed an exercise he completed only partial movements rather than the accepted range. This was not a one off: Harry and many others worked out like this all the time. He replied:

"you've got to use heavy weight. You can really feel it. I can feel it more like this when the weight is heavy. If I go all the way up and down on the exercise, I cannot feel it as much that way" (Field note: 14 July 2011).

Another related response that applied to all poorly performed exercises was that people did not know why they were using a particular pace or duration during exercises. Asked why he used the treadmill for a particular time length? why he selected the pace to run? and why he thought that was correct, Tom's confused response was typical of many users:

"Normally its until, for me on the treadmill its until once my stomach starts to hurt. If its burning too much thats when I stop....you know some people take it, you know you could have a small accident, pull a hamstring, you know you find out your own barriers. That's how I found it, one day I pulled a hamstring because I was going too fast, so I found out I cannot go that speed yet, so I slowly work up" (Interview: 18 August 2011).

Overall, a significant proportion customers did not know how to perform exercises, or the speed or duration they should use. When asked they gave incomprehensible accounts which though meaningful to them - hence these practices give them value - in the long term these practices would be likely to result in limited value. This is in terms of physical fitness improvements would likely stall. In addition, the likelihood of injury is greatly increased by poor exercise form (Sewell et al., 2009). In explaining the widespread use of poor Exercise Execution Practice, a simple explanation that the induction is ineffective may be posed. However, the fieldnotes suggested a problem of more depth:

"Why do so many customer perform their exercises so poorly ? They must want what works best for them. They spend a lot of time working out, so to perform the exercise practice so poorly is strange" (Fieldnote: 25 August 2011).

The notion of social contagion goes some way to explaining how this widespread culture of poor Exercise Execution Practice exists. Angst et al., (2010, p.1219) comment:

"social contagion acknowledges....mutual influence.... and implicates information transmission through direct contact and observation".

Widespread inappropriate Exercise Execution Practice results in customers then becoming *"stuck in the webs of culture"* (Leonardi and Barley, 2010, p. 2). In the case of the Arkin Fitness Centre, it appears that the copying of others Exercise Execution Practices is the main

contributor to this problem. This is compounded by poor form which still "burns muscles" and causes fatigue. The customer appears to equate this with an effective work-out. These dual issues were captured by Chris and Dan (the latter of which used particularly poor Execution Practice) :

"Quite a few times in there people watch you on a machine, and you know what they are doing and then they will use it after you - even though they have had an induction - I do not think they are confident yet of you know using that…. A case in point is you know the hamstring machine, I have lost count of how many times they put their legs in the wrong place… they have basically got to, they have basically got to watch someone go on that hamstring machine before they use it …. They just stand as if they are waiting for the machine and then you come off it and then they basically go on it" (Interview: Chris 22 September 2011).

"The heavier the weight the more you feel it. It kills you using a really heavy weight. That's the best way to workout" (Fieldnote: Dan 28 September 2011)

In many cases copying incorrect Exercise Execution, the end result becomes as self fulfilling prophecy of poor practice. As the poor exercise execution becomes more and more socially contagious the adopting of poor practice becomes the norm. Therefore, others new to the club adopt the existing practice and the problem is perpetuated. This is compounded by the misnomer that if something is difficult (i.e. using a heavy weight) it must be good for you myth. Overall then, poor execution practice is the result of social contagion and the myth that: *if it hurts it works* compounding the situation.

This Exercise Execution Practice contagion has also spread to the Arkin Fitness Consultants themselves. Although aware that they induct customers in the correct exercise execution, they feel powerless to correct poor form on a day to day basis. Ruby contemplates the issue:

"Straight from induction everyone seems to maintain it [Exercise Execution Practice] *quite well, and they stick to it….but it does not take too long before people are starting to rush things and they just want to get through…. so they rush it, so it tends to be a decrease in how much they are keeping the correct form. A lot of people tend to use a lot of their body to move a lot of things so they will use their whole body rather than use the specific muscle*

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*groups, and you see a lot in the free weights section, people who will use their whole body to throw it upwards, they will use their back, the big muscles, use their stomachs rather than keeping it specific…. so you are not going to get the gains….unless corrected they tend to do that because they think they can progress by lifting higher weights because they are using the whole body rather than just doing the separate muscle groups, when they could be doing less weight and getting better gains…. I think for us as gym staff if we make sure we point it out to them, which we do try to do…. but if they have done that for a long time and have not been corrected they are resistant and say 'well I like to do it my way'….. I think that they are scared that knowing how to do it the proper way is meaning they are going to have to decrease the weights , and a lot of peoples attitude toward this is if they are lifting big weights, then that is the way to go" (*Fieldnote: 2 September 2011).

With this extract Exercise Execution Practice can be reassembled. Ruby encapsulates what the empirical data suggested. That is, correct Exercise Execution Practice is taught at induction, but then subsequently many customers adopt incorrect methods of working out. Although Ruby felt this was due to being in a hurry it does appear that poor Exercise Execution Practice is supported by aspects of social contagion. Customers see many others working out using poor form, so they think it is the norm. Ruby indicates that customers find value from the incorrect Exercise Execution Practice. That is, they prefer doing things their way. In this club the customers way is justified by Harry and Dans' comments regarding it feeling right. This results in continued poor Exercise Execution Practice that has become accepted as the norm. This has resulted in club culture that even Arkin Fitness Consultants have accepted. They feel limited in influencing the customers to adopt appropriate Exercise Execution Practice.

In reassembling Exercise Execution Practice a further notion is evident. Customers are proposing inappropriate Exercise Execution Practice that is accepted by the club. This has two implications: firstly, that the clubs Exercise Execution Practice is contagious to new customers who view this type of practice as the norm, and secondly this results in a broader social contagion issue of poor Exercise Execution Practice being transferred as customers move to other clubs.

7.3 Conclusions

The holistic view of Performance Practice as suggested by the empirical date converged around two significant practices. Namely, Fashion Practice and Exercise Practice. Within these overarching practices were many sub-practices. Examples of practice which progressed for some customers without difficulties and provided value includes: Equipment Practice use of iPods, drinks bottles, towels, and gloves. In terms of Clothing Practice: Sportswear Practice, Athletic Clothing Practice, and Poseur Practice give some customers value. Within these areas the dialectic highlighted several potential disjunctures. These not only provide insights for academics and practitioners, but also provide material for service development. Therefore, the practice contradictions can be viewed as customers proposing their own value seeking practices. The contradictions coalesce around:

Contradiction 1: . At induction you are advised to bring a towel and water bottle. Despite this, those that propose alternative practices are not challenged, or supported. Those not using these items are proposing that the practice has little value for them.

Contradiction 2: The wearing of gloves and iPods use is not questioned. These physical items are viewed as simply the customers personal choice representing functional, experiential, and identity aspects of Fashion and Equipment Practice value seeking. The possibility exists of more negative value attenuating practice vis a vis other customers views of such practice. For example, the wearing of gloves to project a *big and strong* persona could lead to other customers feeling intimidated. The use of iPods may exclude both the wearer and non-wearer from value attained from social interaction with each other.

Contradiction 3: At present the club is considered an arena for all users of shapes, sizes and types. The majority of these carry out Sportswear Practice for functional value. Despite this, customers adopting Athletic Clothing and Poseur Practice may represent a problem. As they propose a practice culture where creation of distinct fashion and bodily display could dominate the club, this could result in a lack of value for those not capable or willing to become engage in Athletic and Poseur Practice.

Contradiction 4: Through subversive name calling, customers are attempting to propose that Poseur Practice is unacceptable. This could result in attenuated value for the name callers and the poseurs.

Contradiction 5: Customers seek value through effective performance of exercise. This is compromised when working out alone. Customers sometimes require assistance. However, to due to alienation of iPods, and claiming space, this creates a club culture where interaction is problematic. This does impact negatively on the customer seeking the help.

Contradiction 6: During Exercise Execution Practice many customers do not perform exercises correctly. In addition, they are unable to provide comprehensible accounts of why they use a particular pace or duration during exercise. This results in poor Execution Practice, and confusion as to why customers do what they do.

Contradiction 7: The customers who use poor Exercise Execution Practice believe that *if it hurts it works*. This is contradicted by both theory on the subject and the advice of Arkin Fitness Consultants

Contradiction 8: The Arkin Fitness Consultants believe they are powerless to meaningfully resist poor Exercise Execution Practice. They condone poor Execution Practice and long term customer value is compromised.

Contradiction 9: The adoption of poor Exercise Execution Practice has the potential to be transferred to other clubs.

Lusch and Webster (2011, p.131) outline that for customers, value has to be *"realised"*. The whole emphasis in this theses is that through practice customers seek value. The contradictions above highlight when practice is in conflict. The dialectic highlights the mismatches between current customers practice, provider expectations of practice, and customers proposals for potential practice. The fractures identified within this approach provide scope for service development. This may be in terms of supporting customers proposals for seeking value, or by attempting to influence the direction of the value seeking when this conflicts with other customers value seeking. Viewing value from this perspective allows the *"very nature of engagement"* of customers value seeking to be seen in a different light (Tanev et al., 2011, p.131). One which identifies the customers as value

seekers, providers as supporters of this value seeking, and practices as an overarching means to view the customers actions, tools/knowhow, image of the service, and use of the services physical space. Finally, viewing practices as a dialectic allows customers to be seen as proposers of practice. This can then be used by the provider as raw material for service development.

Chapter 8

CONCLUSIONS

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8   CONCLUSIONS

8.1 Introduction

This final chapter is focused firstly upon summarising the thesis. The chapter is also forward looking in that it contains information of benefit to researchers considering future research in the value as practice arena. Therefore, this chapter discusses the research philosophy, the identified gaps in knowledge, the methodological framework utilised, the associated methods used to collect and analyse data, the major findings of the research thesis, the contributions to knowledge, the limitations of the research, and areas for further research. Finally, some personal reflections related to the researchers journey complete the thesis.

The philosophy of the thesis emerged from the researchers exploration of issues relating to metaphysics, ontology, and epistemology. This led the researcher to a position that viewed philosophy as having to precede the research effort. The researcher established much support for this position and is a fervent advocate of this view (see for example: Ayikorua, 2009; Alvesson, 2002; Burrell and Morgan, 2008). This pertains to the importance of not having preconceived ideas relating to taken for granted research paradigms. If research did not question existing paradigms, then stagnation is likely due to unquestioned compliance to dominant hegemonies (Cottingham, 1996; Foucault, 1977). In other words, the research sought to unbind the bounded rationality that surrounds many research efforts **(**Simon 1957).   The view taken in the present thesis was that it was not possible to be a philosophical *"chameleon"* which would involve moving between realist and anti-realist positions (Martin, 1990, pp.42-43).

Once the philosophical anti-realist approach was established, a model to guide the research route from philosophy to methods would have been desirable. Unfortunately, the literature is fragmented concerning these types of models. To overcome this difficulty the researcher himself developed a model to guide the research process. This model was divided into two sections. The first pertaining to the philosophy chapter and the second relating to the methodology chapter. This model limitations were recognised. Primarily, this concerned imposing linearity onto topics that were not particularly amenable to such structure

(Cottingham, 1996). However, despite this, the model served its purpose and helped guide the research effort.

The key philosophical perspectives were then considered in more depth as the chapter progressed. This was to consider the philosophical approach to be taken towards the present research. The nature of realist and anti-realist world views were highlighted as a continuum. These polar opposites were discussed and some examples provided relating to various positions on the continuum. This eventually led to the ontology of the current thesis. This was to be an anti-realist ontology. This facilitated a discussion pertaining to epistemology which was specified as social constructionism. In summary, social constructionism is the view that meaning and the social world are constructed (Sarantakos, 2005). Meaning becomes embedded in the cultural lives of subjects within which "reality" is negotiated and renegotiated (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This approach ultimately leads to research accounts that are entered into the academic domain and compete with each other for attention (Firat, and Shultz, 1997).

The literature review was focused upon addressing what research exists in relation to the study of value. It identified key themes emanating from the literature. Primarily, it was established that the marketing discipline had developed from a relationship, quality and satisfaction focus to a value focus (Gallarza et al., 2011). Furthermore, as marketing has experienced increasing fragmentation over the past 70 years, value is proposed as a unifying concept for the marketing effort (Woodhall, 2003; Brock Smith and Colgate 2007; Sanchez-Fernandez and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007). The key themes resulting from this increased interest in value can be identified as: the goods based discourse, the experiential discourse, the resources based discourse, the practice discourse, and the customer discourse. These differing discourses are influenced and informed by the competing combinations and perspectives relating to: the location of value, value processes, how value is created and determined, and the types of value which customers seek. Overall, it was apparent that each discourse competes for attention in the academic literature and each has relative strengths and limitations which must be considered by researchers.

The limitations of the value discourses can be summarised as relating to four key areas. Firstly, there is a lack of consensus concerning the concept of value. The academic literature views the concept as *"polysemic"* (Gallarza et al., 2011, p.182). However, this does not have to be a wholly limiting situation. This lack of consensus results in rich discursive research streams that enlighten the value scholar. A second limitation concerns where value is located. That is, is value found in exchange, use, symbols or context, and is value found pre, during, or post experience? Thirdly, the competition between discourses can cause confusion for both the academic and particularly the practitioner. An example would be the customer discourse which attempts to overcome limitations of the other discourses by viewing the customer as the creator of value, and the organisation as the supporter of value (Heinonen et al., 2010; Heinonen and Strandvik, 2009). This is a relatively new discourse which throws the emphasis firmly upon the customer as the value creator (Strandvik et al., 2012). This stands in contrast to the other discourses which tend to view the customer as a recipient or co-creator of value, rather than the sole creator. The final limitation is the paucity of literature that differentiates between value creation and value determination. Gummerus (2011) is a notable exception. Most treat the concepts as isomorphic.

The gaps in the literature which the current research sought to exploit related to two key areas.

- Value as the focus for marketing: value is currently being proposed as the topic of focus and activity within the marketing discipline (Gallarza et al, 2011; Vargo and Lusch, 2004; Brock Smith and Colgate, 2007). This is due to its role in helping organisations achieve competitive advantage, increased revenues, greater market share, gaining increased value capture from value creation, and economic growth from value creation (Porter, 1985; Pynnonen et al. 2011; Gallarza and Gill, 2008; Chatain, 2010). In addition, Wittell et al., (2011) claim that customers seek service which satisfies their value requirements. Vargo and Lusch (2004) propelled this concept onto marketings centre stage via their service dominant logic discourse. This however, is just one discourse amongst many other discourses. The practice theory discourse is one area in which practices which are held to have value embedded has limited research. Therefore, the present thesis sought to help fill this gap in knowledge.

- Value seeking practice within public health and fitness clubs: gaps relating to the dearth of research concerning how value is found in customers experiences, lifeworlds, and their practices was available to exploit. Narrowing this focus slightly, within the health and fitness club context no known research exists concerning customers value seeking practices. Therefore, the purpose of the present thesis was to address this gap in existing knowledge. For the purposes of thesis the following definition was developed. This was specifically for the public health and fitness context:

Value is found in *"the customers interactive, relativistic preference experience"* (Holbrook, 1994. p. 27). This consists of value types that are aggregated to form overall customer value (Holbrook, 1994; Woodhall, 2003). This can be viewed in the customers lifeworld practices (Gummerus, 2011). One way of viewing this in the public health club context is via studying customers practices.

This combined some aspects of varying discourses together to form a basis for research exploring the in-situ value seeking practices of public health and fitness clubs customers.

The research methodology emerged from the philosophical reflections and literature review chapters. Therefore, the research methodology attempted to construct a research design that would allow the collection and analysis of data to fulfil the aim, research questions, and objectives.

The overall aim of the research was to investigate how value is attained by customers of public sector health and fitness clubs. Therefore, this aim inspired the following research questions:

1. What are customers value seeking practices in public sector health and fitness clubs?
2. How can customers value seeking practices in public sector health and fitness clubs be explained?

The research objectives were to:

1. Identify the philosophical stance underpinning the research

2. Identify current theories relating to how customers attain value

3. Identify a means by which customers value seeking practices can be researched most effectively

4. Identify customers value seeking practices in a public sector health and fitness club

5. Devise a method for explaining customers value seeking practices

6. Devise a means for service development.

To achieve these requirements a rationale for the use of social constructionism was provided. This entailed arguing against a "*chameleon*" approach (Martin, 1990, pp.42-44); Priola, 2001). That is, objectivism and constructionism were viewed as being mutually exclusive (Gergen, 1999; Crotty 1998). Therefore, the present thesis viewed the data collection and analysis as producing a socially constructed account of customers value seeking practices. That is, knowledge of the world is socially constructed through interactions between subject and object (Gergen 1999; Banister et al., 1995). Of course, as has been a feature of the thesis the purported limitations of this approach were considered. Primarily this pertained to the criticisms made by those who propose realist, objectivist, and positivistic means of viewing the world. That is, that the world and its objects exist external to man and are captured using positivistic and post positivist methods (Johnson and Duberley, 2000). In addition, the view that the world is a combination of objectivism and constructionism was considered. This view primarily views the physical world as objective and the social world as constructed (Crotty, 1998). Despite these limitations social constructionism was retained as the epistemological foundation of the thesis.

The methodological framework adopted was interpretivism. This consisted of using ideographic methods. These methods concern the more inductive, explanatory, qualitative, contextual and less structured ways of conducting research (Burrel and Morgan 2008). This facilitated interpretations from qualitative data which resulted in understanding of public health and fitness club customers value seeking practices from their - the subjects - perspective (Burrell and Morgan, 2008). Ethnography was utilised as a methodology to view the in-situ value seeking practices of the customers. Ethnography facilitates the study of cultures and allows the lifeworlds of subjects to be considered from their viewpoint (Bryman, 2008). This methodology has been used to study similar contexts such as the

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practices of cruise ship passengers, practices relating to racing pigeons, and the mobilities practice of British migrants (Korkman, 2006; Jerolmack, 2009; Benson, 2011). Limitations of ethnography are claimed as being the inability of the researcher to gain objective findings, the negative impact of the researcher on the study context, and a view that immersion in the context results in biased findings (Hammersley, 1990; Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995; David and Sutton 2004; Cohen et al., 2005).

Data collection used two main methods; participant observation and interviews. These selections allowed both emic and etic perspectives to be utilised. Basically, the former perspective is the subjects world view, whilst the latter is the researchers view of the subjects lifeworld (Johnson and Christensen, 2012). In the present thesis, care was taken to allow the subjects views to emerge. The data analysis coding process of open, axial and selective coding was used to help analyse the data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). For further research authenticity, it was highlighted that the analytical process was broader than simply coding data. The interpretation and the writing up of the research was also an integral part of the analysis. To overcome the reductive limitations of the Strauss and Corbin (1998) coding process the suggestions of Charmaz (2003) were adopted to view the use of coding as a heuristic device. That is, the writing of the findings is also part of the interpretative process. Throughout the analysis process constant comparison of data was undertaken; the process being iterative and symbiotic. This resulted in findings which emerged from the study context that reflected the value seeking practices of customers in public health and fitness clubs. The data was rooted in the practices that were viewed through participant observation and discussed via interviews.

8.2 Research Questions Revisited

The research questions were answered via three themed chapters. These were concerned with identifying and explaining Commitment, Facilitating and Performance Practices. In addressing the research questions, the identification and explanation of the practices was the result of an ethnographic methodology which utilised participant observation and interviews. The data analysis used open, axial and selective coding to allow categories to emerge from the data rather than the researcher imposing their perspective upon the

collected data (Charmaz, 2000). Customers value seeking practices in public health and fitness clubs were identified as falling under three main categories. Namely: Commitment Practices, Facilitating Practices, and Performance Practices. The explanation of these practices was set within the context of how the practices customers untook led to value for them. An unexpected additional finding of the research was the emergence of a model which highlighted the dialectic nature of customers value seeking practices. This also facilitated suggestions for the development of current and future value seeking practices. A theme of these suggestions was the potential for the customer to act as the proposer - rather than a passive recipient - of practice (Gidhagen, et al., 2011).

In identifying customers value seeking practices the first overarching category of practice identified was Commitment Practice. This encompassed the sub-practices of Joining Practice, and Attendance Practice. These practices were informed by Physical Improvement Practice and Health Club Search Practice in the former, and Programme Practice, Finance Practice, Accessibility Practice and Lifeworld Practice in the latter. Once Commitment Practices were identified, they were explained in terms of what influenced the actual practices. For example, in the case of Commitment Practice, the Joining Practice was enabled or constrained by various issue such as Physical Improvement Practices relating to weight loss, fitness, improved appearance, and to supplement other sports. Furthermore, the explanation identified a dialectic tension between what the provider expected in terms of practices and what customers proposed as their value seeking practices. This resulted in the conclusion of each chapter detailing fractures between the provider and the customer, whereby it appeared that the customer was proposing alterative value seeking practices. These proposals may be utilised for service development.

The second overarching practice was Facilitating Practice. This category was informed by data relating to Pre-requisite Practice, Induction Practice, and Movement Practice. For example, it was illustrated that when it came to female customers their value seeking practice was constrained by restrictions placed upon them. These barriers were both social and organisational. That is, female customers were effectively excluded from participating in the free weights section of the health club. This was explained as being the result of Arkin Fitness Consultant's viewing free weights as not being desired by women, other customers

believing that women did not want this provision, men appropriating the free weights space for their own use, and women themselves - influenced by social factors - rejecting a very effective range of Exercise Practice (i.e. free weights). The dialectic nature of value was again highlighted via the identification of ruptures in existing customers value seeking practices, and proposals by customers for alternative value seeking practices. A clear and simple example of this was non compliance in the wearing of Arkin Fitness Key wrist bands. The customer was in effect proposing that they did not want to wear the wrist band. In the absence of alternatives they simply placed the key on the floor resulting in many lost keys.

The third overarching value seeking practice was Performance Practice. This category consisted of Fashion and Exercise Practice. In the former case, the sub-practices of Equipment Practice and Clothing Practice informed the explanation. In the latter, Cardio Practice, Resistance Practice and Specialist Practice were the key explanatory components. An example of value seeking Performance Practices carried by customers is illustrated by Clothing Practice. Customers sought value from three types of sub-practices: Sportswear Practice, Athletic Performance Practice, and Poseur Practice. This final practice can be used to illustrate again the dialectic nature of value seeking practice. Those customers proposing Poseur Practice were resented by other customers. This led to customer practice proposals and counter proposals which served to enable and constrain value seeking.

8.3 Contributions to Knowledge

The contributions to knowledge can be summarised under four main topics:

- Study of practice: Korkman (2006) identified that few studies of practice - within which value is proposed as embedded - have been conducted within the service industry. Although many writers in the value literature allude to value practices as being important - most recently Gronroos (2011) - few directly study this aspect. Notable exceptions are Korkman (2006) and Holttinen (2010). Therefore, the present Ph.D thesis pre-empts a growing interest in the area of practice as the focus of value studies. Therefore, the study of practices which provide value for customers has been extended by this study

- Value seeking practice in the public health and fitness sector: The present study is unique in studying customers value seeking practices in the public health and fitness club sector. The identification of three overarching practices relating to the customers value seeking in public health and fitness clubs, provides a model which can be applied to other health clubs in this sector. The model also has wider reaching implications as it may be tested in other fitness and leisure related contexts. On a broader theme, the model may be applied to the service sector in general.

- Explanation of value seeking practices: The identification of practices is one contribution to knowledge, but the explanation of these practices is also a notable contribution. The explanation of customers value seeking practices provides new information for academics and practitioners to assimilate. It is hoped that this will motivate others to develop these explanations in terms of other contexts, and alterative explanations. This enriches the discourses relating to customers value seeking.

- The development of the dialectic model: This model proposes value seeking practices are mediated via customer and provider proposals. This is the first model of this type to be empirically derived from the public health club sector. The use of the dialectic model also offers the potential for provider to use it for service development. Providers are enabled to compare what practices they expected of customers, and the actual value seeking practices customers undertake. This also suggests that value creation may emerge from customer proposals rather than provider proposals (Gidhagen et al., 2011).

8.4 Limitations

 A feature of this thesis has been the attempt by the researcher to identify limitations as the thesis unfolded. On a general level several limitations were addressed. Firstly, recognition of the post modernist view that philosophy could be a flawed endeavour was considered (Derrida, 1967; Burman and Maclure, 2005). Secondly, discussions relating to the literature review offered limitations of differing perspectives relating to value as a concept, value processes, value discourses, and value creation and determination. Thirdly, the relative merits and de-merits of the research methodological approach were also considered.

Several limitations were identified including: the limitations of the research approach, the ethnographic methodology, the specific data collection methods, and the data analysis. Fourthly, the three themed chapters of the thesis were set within the context of being one interpretation competing for attention with other interpretations (Firat and Shultz, 1997). This implicitly suggests a limitation in that the interpretation is but a single view. Finally this chapter outlines the researcher as being reflexive in relation to the study. This overcomes the potential for complacency by the researcher who is unaware of how they may limit the research themselves. Despite the identification of these general limitations, the present research may suggest some specific limitations that other researchers can attempt to overcome. These can be grouped into three main topics:

- The context of the research: The health and fitness club as part of the leisure sector provided a limited context for the research. The only other research project of this type - in this context - was that of Korkman (2006). He studied the value practices of cruiseship passengers. Other closely related contexts that could be studied to overcome this limitation includes: the sports sector, the recreation sector, and other leisure sectors.

- The service setting: The service setting studied a single public health and fitness club in a particular British city. This limited the scope of the research. To overcome this limitation future studies could explore other health and fitness clubs in differing cities. The type of setting also provided a limitation. That is, the health club was a medium sized club in terms of physical space and number of members. Future studies could overcome this limitation by varying the location and the type of club studied. Consideration could also be given to researching practices at multiple clubs rather than a single facility.

- A particular limitation was the scope of the ethnography methods adopted. These could have been extended to include video recording, focus groups, photographs, and company documents (Sarantakos, 2005). The decisions not to use them in the present thesis were pragmatic rather than methodological. Whilst they may have added richness to the research, they would have extended the process beyond reasonable limits. However, future research could take on elements (i.e. video recording) not utilised by the present research.

8.5 Areas for Further Research

The areas for further research emanate from the *"context"*, *"process",* and *"content"* of the thesis (de Wit and Meyer, 2004, p.5). The considerations for further research emerging as the thesis unfolded. The key areas for further research are:

- Application of the dialectic model: the dialectic model which helped explain customers value seeking practices may be considered an unexpected bonus of the research. The model emerged from the data gathered from the customers perspective. Future research may consider applying this model in differing research contexts. This future research can move directly to viewing practices from this novel perspective. Additionally, this could take researchers in a number of specific directions. Firstly, the dialectic model could be studied from a customer dominant perspective (Heinonen et al., 2010). This is a new research stream for which little empirical research exists. Additionally this can consider the role of customers as the proposers of value seeking practice (Gidhagen et al., 2011). Secondly, the model could be studied from the provider side in terms of how they can support the customer value seeking practices (Gronroos, 2011). Thirdly, the model could be developed in terms of prosumption (Humphreys and Grayson, 2008). That is attempting to use the model to show the blurring of the dichotomy between provider and customer notions of value seeking. Further research of the dialectic model could be applied using a realist, objectivistic, post positivistic paradigm. This would entail considering the present research as an existing inductive starting point. The model could then be tested for its reliability and validity in terms of its ability to discriminate between provider and customer value seeking practice. In addition, the model could be tested in terms of the extent to which customers value seeking practice leads to customer satisfaction and loyalty. For example, a club where customers value seeking practices diverge from provider expectations of practice may lead to greater or less customer satisfaction and loyalty. A number of hypothesis could be formed along these lines.

- Lifeworld Practices: Recent Research by Heinonen et al., (2010) views the customers lifeworlds as being important in value seeking. They suggest that by understanding the customer and *"what they do with service"* researchers can better understand the value customers seek (Heinonen et al., 2010, p. 532). Therefore, future research

can explore how customers conduct practices in their lifeworld, and the implications this has for value facilitation (Gronroos, 2011).

- Csikszentmihalyi (2000, p.270) suggests that experiential value seeking is driven by internal customer needs that are propelled towards *"activities that requires attention"*. Therefore, customers seek value from challenging experiences to attain need fulfilment. Further research could investigate whether practices emerge from a needs driven perspective. That is, where do customers value seeking practice needs emanate from, what are the processes driving these needs? Are the value seeking practices we require developed at an early age? Do customers spend their lives seeking the best practices available to fulfil these requirements?

- A particular aspect of the research that may be extended is the study of customer value seeking practices from a feminist perspective. The present thesis identified that female customers are not facilitated in attaining value from the Movement Practice. That is, they were effectively excluded from moving to the free weights area. Future studies could explore this phenomena further to establish whether overall customer value seeking practice differs between males and females. If it does, what are the reasons for this divergence?

- The gym as a source of alienation is another area touched upon in the present thesis. The Fashion Practices identified attenuated value for some customers. For example, some Performance Practices carried by customer - in particular Equipment and Clothing Practice - could lead to value attenuation for other customers. The present research identified that the equipment use (i.e. iPods) and clothing worn could lead to the alienation of some customers. Further research could specifically research this phenomena to develop a theory of the health club practices as a source of alienation.

8.6 Personal Reflections

Reflexivity concerns focussing upon: *"the complex relationships between processes of knowledge production and the various contents of such processes, as well as the involvement of the knowledge producer"* (Alvesson and Skolberg, 2009, p.8). The philosophical reflections and research methodology sections addressed knowledge production reflexively.

Therefore, this section concentrates upon the latter, the researcher as the knowledge producer. Primarily, in this case, the emphasis is upon re-telling - in narrative form - the concise story of the journey of the researcher (Etherington, 2004). Since commencing the research in 1999 my journey has been a combination of success and setbacks. Despite this, above all my journey was a quest for knowledge and understanding which did not hinge upon gaining a qualification. My focus was always concerned with seeking academic enlightenment. I believe the longevity of the research has resulted in a more rounded academic than the one that would have emerged from a shorter and less arduous journey.

Now that I have completed this work and the major challenges have been overcome, the results of my journey are contained within this thesis. During this time some concrete changes have occurred as the result of the Ph.D process. This relates to all the major areas of the research including developing: a passion for the literature, a commitment that philosophy must precede research, a conversion from realist, objectivist, positivist methods to anti-realist, constructionist, and interpretative perspectives. In addition to these changes, some other key developments are evident. I have developed an approach to questioning the underpinning assumptions relating to all research and the social world. This is first major change from who I was to who I have become. This results in my research process being one which is aware of, and documents its own philosophical and practical limitations. This produces work that attempts not to pre-suppose how things should be or are, but to provide an interpretation for others to peruse and critique. The authenticity and credibility of my work as a research resource is for other academics to assess. My work competes for attention with others research efforts, which for me is more palatable means of "doing research". I like the idea of Strauss and Corbin (1998) that concepts and ideas which resonate are the ones which should gain acceptance. Gummerus (2011) stated that during her Ph.D journey she found her research voice. I too have found such a voice, but in addition I have found a passion for writing. This can be my art, and I can look forward to a lifetime of producing art of a higher and higher standard. As I refine my research, thinking, reflexivity and writing, my work should evolve to be a credit to the Ph.D process and the notion of lifelong learning.

Finally over the course of the process, I have changed my view of the necessity of a Ph.D. I previously believed that learning and understanding was the end in itself. And I was not concerned when a colleague stated *" the only good Ph.D is a finished Ph.D"*. He was basically articulating that many people can claim to be completing a Ph.D but many subsequently fail to submit work. Therefore, the implication was that their work should not be taken that seriously.   More recently I have come to view the Ph.D title as a means to have my voice heard more clearly. Etherington (2004, p. 19) reflecting upon the achievement of her own Ph.D outlines that when she had achieved the qualification she was freed from the many constraints of not having one. Primarily, she felt she could attempt more creative work that would gain easier acceptance because of her new found status. In my case the award would allow different teaching, research, conference (particularly, within my own industry) and writing avenues to be pursued.

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APPENDICES

Appendices 1 Participant Observation Schedule

Who is being observed?	What are the reasons for observing them?	When are they being observed?	Where is the observation taking place?	Why is the observation necessary?	How is the data to be collected?
Week 1	**Week 1**	**Week 1**	**Week 1**	**Week 1**	**Week 1**
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Mon: 6.30am- 10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Tues: 6.30am- 10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Wed: 6.30am- 10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Thurs: 6.30am- 10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Fri: 6.30am- 10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sat: 7.30am-10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sun:7.30am-10.30am	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Week 2	**Week 2**	**Week 2**	**Week 2**	**Week 2**	**Week 2**
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Mon: 10.30am-2.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Tues: 10.30am-2.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Wed: 10.30am-2.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Thurs: 10.30am-2.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Fri: 10.30am-2.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sat: 10.30am-1.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sun: 10.30am-1.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Week 3	**Week 3**	**Week 3**	**Week 3**	**Week 3**	**Week 3**
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Mon: 2.30pm-6.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Tues: 2.30pm- 6.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Wed: 2.30pm-6.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Thurs: 2.30pm-6.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Fri: 2.30pm-6.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sat: 1.30pm—4.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sun:1.30pm-4.30pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Week 4	**Week 4**	**Week 4**	**Week 4**	**Week 4**	**Week 4**

Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Mon: 6.30pm-9.00pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Tues: 6.30pm-9.00pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Wed: 6.30pm-9.00pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Thurs: 6.30pm-9.00pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Fri: 6.30pm-9.00pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sat: 4.30pm-8.00pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes
Health club members	To observe customers value seeking practices	Sun: 4.30pm-8.00pm	Arkin Fitness Centre	To provide data to answer the research questions	Participant observation and fieldnotes

Appendices 2 Arkin Fitness Induction Guide

Customer Name: _____   Date: _____

Introductions: Explain process

Data Check: Customer to verify address, telephone numbers, date of birth, height, weight,

Customer Goals:
Reason for   _____
Target date: _____
Measurements: _____
Exercise History: _____
Used gym   _____
If so, how long   _____
Do any sports?   _____
Likes / Dislikes:
Likes
Dislikes   _____
Frequency: _____
Days per week
Timescale: _____
Minutes per visit   _____

Additional Notes: