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Development of a Survey Measuring Visitor Satisfaction and Service Quality of Cultural and Natural Sites in Belize

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DEVELOPMENT OF A SURVEY MEASURING VISITOR SATISFACTION AND SERVICE QUALITY OF CULTURAL AND NATURAL SITES IN BELIZE

by

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of the requirements for the degree

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ABSTRACT

Development of a Survey Measuring Visitor Satisfaction and Service

Quality of Cultural and Natural Sites in Belize

by

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The literature suggests that a correlation exists between visitor satisfaction and a visitor's choice to re-experience a product. The higher one's satisfaction level, the more likely he/she is to experience the product again and/or provide positive word-of-mouth advertising to friends and family. The Tian-Cole and Crompton model was chosen because of its acknowledgment and explanation of the differences between Visitor Satisfaction (VS) and Service Quality (SQ) and how their relationship influences satisfaction and contributes to Future Destination Selection.

In addition to identifying a theoretical framework that explains why visitors return, it was necessary to identify a survey methodology to be used in developing the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve (MPRFR) visitor satisfaction surveys. It was determined that a combination of the Relative Performance Assessment (RPA) and

Customer Service Questionnaire (CSQ) was an appropriate survey framework for a visitor satisfaction survey.

As a result of the research, two visitor satisfaction surveys were developed: Intercept Survey and Mail-back Survey. The Intercept Survey will be administered at a MPRFR site. It was designed to be concise and not take much of the visitor's time. This survey will be used to gather general information about visitor characteristics and level of satisfaction while at a site. The Mail-back Survey will be sent to the visitor after their trip so more time can be devoted to answering a more detailed visitor satisfaction survey. This survey asks visitors to indicate what site characteristics are important to them and then rate their satisfaction with each item. Instruments from the report entitled "A Front Country Visitor Study for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument" were used as an example of how to format a visitor satisfaction survey and how to use the collected data as a managerial tool.

The two main objectives of this research were accomplished and have established a foundation upon which subsequent research efforts will begin. This work serves as a catalyst to improving Belizean site planning, design, and management by better understanding what site characteristics contribute to visitor satisfaction.

(93 pages)

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Dustin Wiberg

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis project is not to test a certain hypothesis or develop a new theory, but rather to identify reasons why tourists return to a destination they have visited and what site elements contributed to their return. The literature suggests that a correlation exists between visitor satisfaction and a visitor's choice to re-experience a product. The higher one's satisfaction level, the more likely he/she is to experience the product again and/or provide positive word-of-mouth advertising to friends and family (Oliver 1980; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988; Spreng and Mackoy 1996; Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002). By identifying various visitor typologies and understanding their motivation for visiting a site in conjunction with how and what site characteristics contribute to higher levels of visitor satisfaction, site designers and managers can become better informed to develop and maintain higher quality sites that would promote repeat visitation and the long-term success of the site (Mackoy and Osland 2004; Palacio and McCool 1997; Foster 1999).

This thesis project work is intended to be used in the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve (MPRFR) in Belize, Central America. The MPRFR is estimated to be approximately 126,825 acres covered mostly by pine and broadleaf forests. Visitors can experience many different sites within the reserve, namely Rio On Pools, Rio Frio Cave, 1,000 Foot Falls, Orchid Cascades, and Big Rock Falls. Caracol, the largest Maya archeological ruin site in Belize, is not located within the reserve, but can only be accessed by travelling through the MPRFR (Figure 1). With all these opportunities to

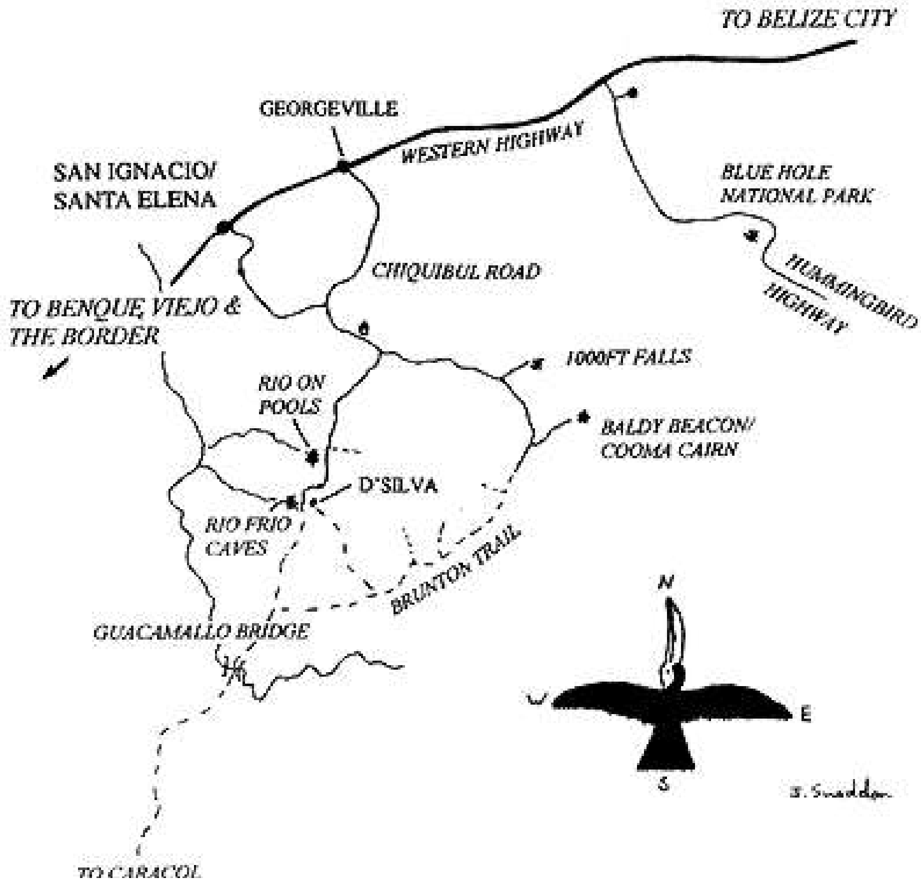

Figure 1. Map of the MPRFR (Offshore Design 2008)

experience Belize's natural and cultural sites, the MPRFR attracts approximately 40,000 visitors inland every year (Government of Belize 2006).

The survey instruments that were created as part of this thesis project were developed while considering the sites within the MPRFR because of the researcher's familiarity and excitement for the qualities and potential of the MPRFR sites. Also, a relationship has been established between the Belizean Ministry of Forestry, the agency managing the MPRFR, and University researchers, which will facilitate future survey administration. Once the surveys are administered and the data interpreted, site managers and designers will have a better understanding of how to develop and manage sites that promote high visitor satisfaction and ultimately influence a visitor's intention to return. Even though the survey instruments were written with the MPRFR in mind, with minor changes, the surveys are general enough to be used at relatively any outdoor recreation site.

This work also seeks to fill the gap in research that has been identified by those involved in the Workshop on National Research Priorities towards a National Research Agenda, held in Belize and hosted by the Natural Resource Management Program at the University of Belize. Workshop participants determined it was important to identify different ways of measuring visitor satisfaction as a means to understand tourism impacts throughout Belize (Natural Resource Management Program 2006).

The two main outcomes of this research are to identify an appropriate theory and method that effectively describes why visitors return to a site and develop a survey instrument that will measure a visitor's satisfaction of both Visitor Satisfaction and Service Quality at sites within and around the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve. Upon accomplishing these objectives, a foundation will be established, upon which subsequent research efforts can begin and will become a catalyst to improving Belizean site planning, design, and management.

Background

The country of Belize is located between the Caribbean Sea on the east, Guatemala on the south and west, and Mexico on the northeast (Figure 2). With approximately 300,000 inhabitants, Belize has the smallest non-island population in the Americas. Belize was a British Colony known as British Honduras until 1981, and is the only country in Central and South America where English is the official language. Belize's population consists of many distinct cultures: Maya, Creole, Garifuna, East Indian, and Mestizo. With 78,000 inhabitants, Belize City is the largest and most urban city in Belize. The national capital, located in the geographic center of the country, is Belmopan with an estimated population of over 11,100 (Government of Belize 2006).

Belize has many significant cultural resources that include many Mayan ruins that are located throughout the country, including Caracol, Xanuntunich, Altun Ha, and Lamanai, to name a few. There is also an extensive cave system in parts of Belize due to

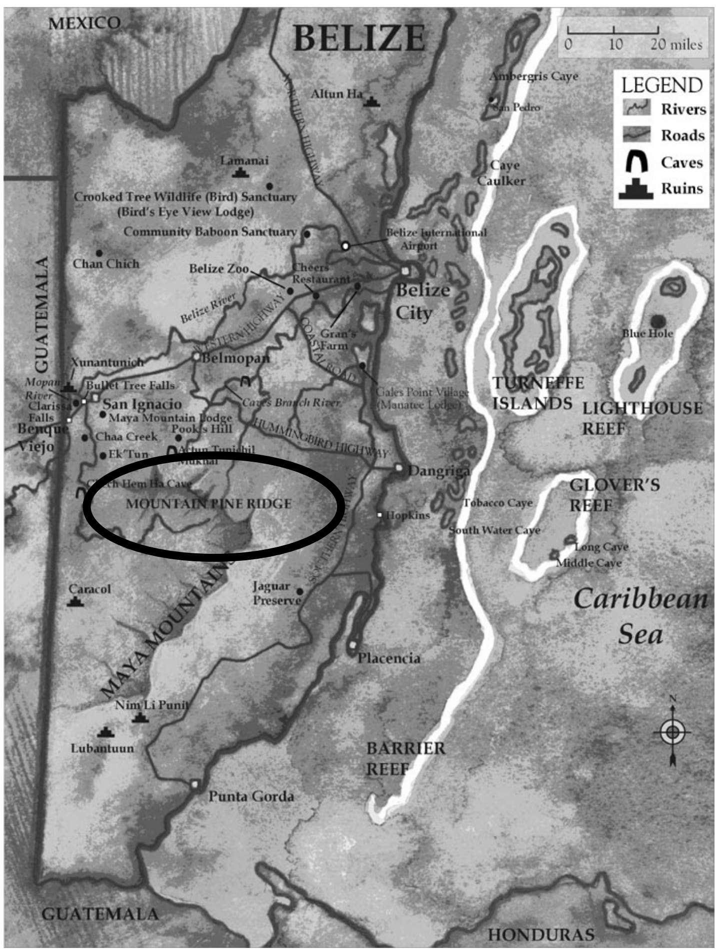

Figure 2. Map of Belize with MPRFR Circled (OH! Belize! 2008)

the geological network of limestone escarpment and associated karst formations. These caves were used extensively by the Maya to perform religious ceremonies and still house many artifacts, which give valuable insight into this fascinating culture. Aside from the rich cultural resources, Belize has many natural resources such as rainforests, mountain highlands, and coastal areas. Along with the varying landscapes within Belize, the flora and fauna that can be found is varied and rich. It has become a well-known destination among scuba divers because it is home to the second longest barrier reef in the world and is known for its spectacular recreational opportunities.

Since Belize is home to many significant cultural and natural resources, it has become a destination spot for many visitors making tourism an important staple of the Belizean economy. In 2005, the hotel industry employed approximately 3,813 employees. It was also reported that 1,113 tour guides and 209 tour operators were functioning within the country (Belize Tourism Board 2005). Aside from official tourism businesses within the country, many locals benefit economically from the tourism industry. If Belize continues to attract tourists to the country by providing and maintaining quality destinations, it can further capitalize on the lucrative tourism industry.

National Research Agenda

In 2006, a National Research Priorities Workshop was hosted by the Natural Resource Management Program at the University of Belize. It was held to identify and prioritize a national research agenda that would guide future research efforts within the country. Tourism, terrestrial/freshwater, and marine life were identified as being research topics significant to the country. Within each topic, a preliminary list of research needs were identified and then prioritized (for additional information see Natural Resource Management Program 2006). One topic identified during the workshop was the need to better understand the positive and negative economic, social, and ecological impacts tourism has on the country (Natural Resource Management Program 2006). To better understand and monitor these impacts is critical to a nation that nets $174.7 million (BZE $349.4 million) dollars annually from the tourism industry (Belize Tourism Board 2005).

First Time Visitors and Repeat Visitors

Since tourism accounts for a large portion of Belize's national economy, it is essential to monitor the overall health of the country's tourism industry. Many researchers have reported that a good indication of a strong tourism industry is a healthy balance between First Time Visitors (FTV)[1] and Repeat Visitors (RV)[2] (Holden and Sparrowhawk 2002; Lau and McKercher 2004; Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000; Petrick 2004). In 2003, the Belize Tourism Board (2005) reported that 75.8% of visitors coming to Belize were coming for the first time (FTV) and 24.2% of those vacationing in Belize were RV. RV forms a crucial component of a healthy tourism industry because they bring a steady stream of money into the economy (Lau and McKercher 2004) and are easier to identify for marketing purposes compared to potential FTV. Satisfied RV also provide positive word-of-mouth advertising, which is a free and effective method of advertising. These findings also suggest that it is more costly and difficult to identify potential visitors and then attract them to come to a given site[3] or destination.[4] However, once a person arrives, it is imperative that the visitor is satisfied with their visit so they will be inclined to return and tell others in a positive manner about their experience.

Consumer Satisfaction

Measuring consumer satisfaction is not a new concept. In fact, Marketing and Retailing researchers have been conceptualizing this idea for decades by developing frameworks that describe the process leading to satisfaction (Oliver 1980; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). Among the assortment of frameworks, a common theme is found linking satisfaction with behavioral intentions. For example, the more satisfied a consumer is after experiencing a service or product, the more likely they are to experience the service or product again. Tourism and Recreation research have used the frameworks developed by the Marketing and Retailing industries to show that a link exists between a visitor's feeling of satisfaction with a site or destination and their intention to return to the same site (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002).

Survey Instruments

Surveys used to measure user satisfaction on a site level have the capability of informing designers and site managers about the specific characteristics and amenities that visitors found either satisfying and/or unsatisfactory as they experience a site. Information gleaned from these surveys, would lead to a better understanding of what visitors, whether FTV or RV, expect when traveling to a specific site and how their expectations were met. FTV and RV expectations could then be used to evaluate the site's strengths and weaknesses. Site strengths could be enhanced and/or maintained while weaknesses could be improved. By monitoring visitor satisfaction, changes in planning, design, and management of current and future sites could be adjusted to become better aligned with visitor expectations resulting in higher visitor satisfaction. This process would enable those involved with the planning, design, and management of sites to better understand what visitors expect when experiencing a site and be more aware of how a site contributes to the overall health of the tourism industry within a country or region.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The intent of the literature review is to identify and explain the workings of a theoretical framework that could be used as a foundation for developing a method for measuring visitor satisfaction. The Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm has laid the foundation for the Visitor Satisfaction and Service Quality frameworks. These frameworks have created two schools of thought describing the process of how one becomes satisfied and how satisfaction influences that same person's intention to re-experience a product or place again. The Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003) model, as described in the body of the Literature Review, conceptualizes the relationship and differences that exist between the Visitor Satisfaction and Service Quality theoretical frameworks. By combining the two frameworks, a more complete story of visitor satisfaction can be told, which will assist professionals involved in site design and management to understand the level of visitor satisfaction at a particular site. This model was viewed as being a useful theory by which an operationalization measuring visitor satisfaction could be developed.

In order to operationalize the Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003) model, it was necessary to understand the characteristic differences between groups of tourists who may be coming to the various sites located within the MPRFR. First Time Visitors, Repeat Visitors, and Ecotourists, a subgroup within FTV or RV, were three visitor typologies that were investigated to better understand each group's characteristics. The literature revealed various motivations and characteristics that are unique among each group. These differences will help guide question development when drafting an instrument that will measure visitor satisfaction of site characteristics, features, and qualities.

Quality of Goods vs. Services

It is important to understand the fundamental differences between a good and a service. Marketing literature has defined characteristic differences between the quality of goods and services. Goods are tangible objects that are produced, but will not be consumed until some future date, such as a hand carved wooden bowl or an article of clothing. In these examples, there is a distinct separation between the time of production and consumption (Bowen 2002). Services, on the other hand, are intangible and are considered inseparable because they are produced and consumed simultaneously, such as touring a site. Goods are considered to be homogeneous because they can be measured objectively based on a standard such as weight, or presence of defects (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). However, measuring the quality of a service is considered heterogeneous because quality is a result of a subjective assessment of the service, which may vary between customers and influenced by the manner by which the service is delivered (Bowen 2002). Consumer assessments of quality are developed and formulated based on previous experience with a service or are a result of outside information such as a commercial or personal communication with friends and/or family (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Fuchs and Weiermair 2004).

In the context of tourism and recreation, a service is described as the interaction between a natural and/or cultural area and its management structure with the user (visitor). Nature and managers of natural areas create and facilitate opportunities to recreate, which visitors can then experience as consumers. Production of recreational opportunities (provided by nature and site managers) and its use (provided by the visitor) result in a service encounter. This interaction enables a visitor to derive benefits from their interaction with a site (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Foster 1999).

Importance of Visitors to a Site

It is imperative for individuals involved in the planning, design, and management of a site to understand how to design and manage sites that create positive, satisfying, and memorable experiences for those that visit (Fuchs and Weiermair 2004). With an increasingly competitive world-wide tourism market and the importance tourism plays in Belize's national economy, site managers and tourism agencies in Belize need to understand how specific site conditions and characteristics contribute to visitor satisfaction at both a site and destination level. This task poses some challenges because it is difficult to understand and measure visitor satisfaction because judgments of quality are subjective measurements made by a visitor based upon their own standard (Bowen 2002) and preconceived notions.

Research suggests that a link exists between visitor satisfaction and future behavioral intentions (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). For example, if a visitor or consumer is satisfied with their experience while at a site, they are more likely to become a repeat visitor and/or tell others about their experience by way of positive word-of-mouth advertising (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002).

Generally, there are two types of tourists that visit a site: First Time Visitors (FTV) and Repeat Visitors (RV). In order for a site to be successful, it is necessary to maintain a healthy balance between these two types of visitors (Lau and McKercher 2004). Marketing research suggests that it is allegedly five times more expensive to reach a new customer than to maintain an existing one (Reid and Reid, 1993 as cited by Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000; Lau and McKercher 2004). This can be explained by the increased effort, difficulty, and money required to identify potential visitors and find ways to attract them to the site through advertising, such as pamphlets, brochures, commercials, magazine ads, the web, etc. Conversely, if visitor registries are used, visitors who have already been to a site can be easily identified for marketing purposes. These records facilitate more efficient marketing efforts because the visitor's contact information has already been obtained. Emails, coupons, and frequent visitor programs can be used to directly market to past visitors. These efforts may likely incentivize satisfied visitors to return to the site.

It is essential for site managers to create an environment where FTV and RV are consistently satisfied. If a visitor is satisfied with their experience, they are more likely to become RV themselves and/or tell friends and family about their experience, which is the least expensive yet most powerful form of advertising available (Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000). FTV and RV often times have differing motivations for visiting a site and as a result, destinations offering a variety of activities and recreational opportunities are more likely to produce high levels of satisfaction within both groups (Lau and McKercher 2004).

Theoretical Frameworks Describing Visitors' Intention to Return

In order to successfully maintain a consistent flow of visitors to a site or destination, it is imperative to create and maintain an environment where a healthy balance between FTV and RV exists. This is accomplished when visitors are consistently satisfied with their site experience (Lau and McKercher 2004). The theoretical process describing why a person chooses to reuse a certain product, re-visit a specific site, or re-experience a service has been developed over the past few decades in a variety of industries such as Marketing, Retailing, Social Sciences, Recreation, Tourism, and Leisure Research. Many different theories have been developed in order to understand the process leading to consumer satisfaction, which affects attitudes and future consumption choices. These theories generally describe some standard by which satisfaction is judged based on the perceived performance of the good or service (Yuksel and Yuksel 2001). Among the various frameworks and theories describing consumer satisfaction is the Expectancy-Disconfirmation Paradigm (EDP) as developed by Oliver (1980). Oliver's model suggests that satisfaction is the result of differences in what a person expects to receive from a service transaction. This theory has become one of the most widely used and accepted methods describing the process of becoming satisfied and the influence satisfaction has on future consumption decisions (Yuksel and Yuksel 2001; Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002). For example, before the consumption of a good or service occurs, a consumer already has expectations of anticipated benefits. These expectations are developed over time and result from previous experiences with similar goods or services based on previous use, magazine advertisements, brochures, personal communications, etc. Whether good or bad, expectations become the reference standard by which consumers judge the good or service. This standard, compared with their perception of how well a good or service performed, results in satisfaction or dissatisfaction. Satisfaction is experienced when expectations are met or exceeded (confirmation[5] or positive disconfirmation[6]) and dissatisfaction occurs when expectations fall short of what the consumer anticipated (negative disconfirmation). Any future decisions to re-experience the good or service will be influenced by the feelings of satisfaction that were derived from their consumptive experience (Yuksel and Yuksel 2001; Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). This model can be simplified and explained by the following analogy: A customer arrives at a Chinese restaurant and expects to eat delicious food and enjoy prompt service. After the meal is finished and the experience is over, the customer perceived the food to be excellent and the waiter attentive. This experience will likely result in a satisfying experience since expectations of the perceived performance of the goods and service were met and/or exceeded. The next time the consumer makes a decision about where to eat Chinese food, they will be influenced by their previous dining experience and may likely return to the same restaurant. However, if the same consumer perceives the food to be great, but the service disrespectful and slow, negative disconfirmation occurs because the perceived performance of the waiter fell short of what the customer expected. The next time the customer feels like eating Chinese, their decision to return to the same restaurant is likely to be influenced by their feelings of dissatisfaction.

Weaknesses of the EDP

Even though the EDP is considered to be the most widely and often used framework for measuring satisfaction, some questions have been raised regarding the validity of the theory as described by Yuksel and Yuksel (2001). The following paragraphs describe some weaknesses and questions regarding the theoretical framework.

The EDP assumes several things about a consumer that may not be universally true. For example, the EDP assumes that every consumer already has an expectation about a service or product by which a judgment can be made based on their performance. However, if consumers have not yet developed expectations about a product or service or will be experiencing a product or service for the first time, then the standard used to judge the performance may not be accurately understood (Yuksel and Yuksel 2001). Another limitation with the EDP relating to consumer expectations is that consumers may have previous expectations of a product, but during an interaction with a good or service, their expectation of the product may change. In this case, the validity of a consumer’s response in evaluating their feelings of satisfaction may not be accurate since their reference standard evolved during their experience (Yuksel and Yuksel 2001).

Questions have also been raised regarding the timing and length of the visitor satisfaction survey instrument. Normally, consumer satisfaction questionnaires are given after a consumer experiences a product or service. If consumer expectations change as they experience a product or service, then surveys administered after the transaction may not be valid because of the altered reference standard. However, if the survey is administered before a consumer experiences a product, then a valid judgment of consumer satisfaction cannot be made because the product has not yet been experienced (Yuksel and Yuksel 2001).

Another limitation of the EDP method is that in order to understand a consumer's expectations and subsequent judgments of performance, it is necessary to ask the same question twice, but within a different context. This results in a longer survey, which may lead to respondent fatigue (Yuksel and Yuksel 2001). Another critique of the EDP suggests that some consumers may be using a different standard by which judgments are made. For example, some consumers may expect the quality of a service to be nearly perfect in order to experience satisfaction. Others may base their judgment of performance on a minimum tolerable level in order to feel satisfied. Another inconsistency with the EDP is that if a consumer is expecting poor service prior to a service encounter and the service is perceived to be poor, then according to the EDP framework, the consumer would be satisfied with the performance because their expectations were met, which may not necessarily be the case. Similarly, if the same consumer perceived the performance to be better than what was expected, negative disconfirmation would occur. This may indicate that the consumer could actually be satisfied because the transaction was judged to perform better than expected (Yuksel and Yuksel 2001).

Visitor Satisfaction and Service Quality Theoretical Frameworks

Despite the criticisms and shortcomings of the EDP, it has been used by other models as the theoretical foundation describing the attainment of satisfaction and how it influences future consumption decisions. Two such models are the Visitor Satisfaction (VS) and Service Quality (SQ) theoretical frameworks.

VS and SQ are separate conceptualizations[7] that use the EDP as a foundation for explaining the process of visitor satisfaction. Each model has been widely adopted by researchers and has resulted in two schools of thought regarding visitor satisfaction. Because both models share a common tie to the EDP, yet explain visitor satisfaction differently, there has been a considerable amount of confusion between their differences and relationships (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002). This sentiment was expressed by Spreng and Mackoy (1996) when they stated, “If they are not distinct, then we don’t have to waste time on surveys asking for both or confuse managers by telling them they have to be concerned with both” (202). Both site managers and researchers have raised questions about what the object of measurement should be in order to enhance a visitor’s experience at a site. Should they focus on measuring levels of satisfaction as described by the VS framework or should they measure a visitor’s satisfaction with service quality as described by the QS framework? As a result of this ambiguity, these frameworks have been operationalized[8] incorrectly by using the two frameworks interchangeably even though there is a consensus among researchers that they are different constructs (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Spreng and Mackoy 1996). For instance, some researchers have used survey instruments that ask questions involving attributes of service quality, but then conclude that the visitor is satisfied with their experience based on their satisfaction of service qualities (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). Other researchers have attempted to reconcile the varying differences and similarities of these two frameworks (for other examples see Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Spreng and Mackoy 1996; Fornell et al. 1996 as cited by Foster 1999), but a model that conceptualizes the relationship between these two frameworks has not been generally agreed upon (Spreng and Mackoy 1996).

Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003) have attempted to reconcile the differences present in the literature regarding the nature of VS and SQ, and developed a model that demonstrates the differences, relationships, and influences each framework has in describing visitor satisfaction and how this influences an individual's future destination selection[9].

Overview of the Tian-Cole and Crompton Model

As an overview, the model proposed by Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003), assumes that people have developed certain expectations and desires before visiting a site or destination. These expectations have been developed through the process of time and are a product of previous interactions with site characteristics and attributes, and what a person learns about a site from personal communications to media sources (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). When visiting a future site or destination, these expectations define a standard by which site experiences will be measured.

The model also suggests that VS and SQ operate on two separate levels termed the Transaction[10] and Global[11] levels (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002). Transaction level interactions occur when, for example, one interacts with employees at a site or experiences the cleanliness of a restroom. Each site characteristic can be either directly controlled by site managers or is outside of management's control. Each experience with a specific site characteristic, whether controlled by site managers or not, contributes to and begins influencing an overall feeling of satisfaction and/or quality of services related to that site. A culmination of judgments made about site interactions result in forming an attitude about the overall experience while at the site. Attitudes have an effect on how one feels about the site and will influence future interactions with other sites. This attitude formation is said to occur at the "Global Level." Global Level attitudes shape a person's expectations regarding service and satisfaction, and are used in making decisions about future trip selections, as well as defining what they have come to expect or desire when visiting future destinations. Whether confirmation or negative/positive disconfirmation occurs, attitudes and perceptions may change, and thus create a new standard by which future site experiences are measured. This process results in a feed-back loop and the process begins again. This demonstrates the dynamic process by which expectations and attitudes are formed (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003).

Gas Station Bathroom

The following scenario is used as an example of how SQ at a Transaction Level influences and can form attitudes at the Global Level. A person visits a gas station and expects the bathroom to be filthy, but pleasantly finds the bathroom to be visibly clean and smelling fresh because of the presence of an air sanitizer. As a result of the perceived service quality, positive disconfirmation will likely occur and will contribute to a high evaluation of the gas station's service quality. The previous standard is now replaced with a higher standard for bathroom cleanliness and odor. With any future visits to the same gas station bathroom, this new standard will likely be used to evaluate the quality of the bathroom conditions. After repeated experiences of clean and pleasantly smelling bathrooms occurring at the Transaction Level, a new standard may be formed for all gas station bathrooms at the Global Level. This person may now come to expect that all gas station bathrooms are clean and smell fresh in order for high SQ to be achieved.

Visitor Satisfaction (VS) Theoretical Framework

Satisfaction in the VS theoretical framework has been defined as “the summary psychological state resulting when the emotion surrounding disconfirmed expectations is coupled with the consumer’s prior feelings about the consumption experience” (Oliver 1981, 27). This end psychological state (i.e., a mood or a feeling), is the most important aspect of the process involving expectations and disconfirmation (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). In the tourism and recreation fields, a conceptualization of VS has been used to describe how one achieves satisfaction and how feelings of satisfaction influence their choice of which destinations they will visit (Figure 3) (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002).

VS Standard

VS framework suggests that satisfaction is a process and is judged using a standard that has been developed based on past experience and communication the visitor has had with others (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). The standard used in the VS framework is expectations based on “*predictions* made by consumers about what is likely to happen during an impending transaction or exchange” (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988, 17). Satisfaction of specific site attributes and experiences is achieved when the “likely” site performance was perceived to meet or exceed original expectations.

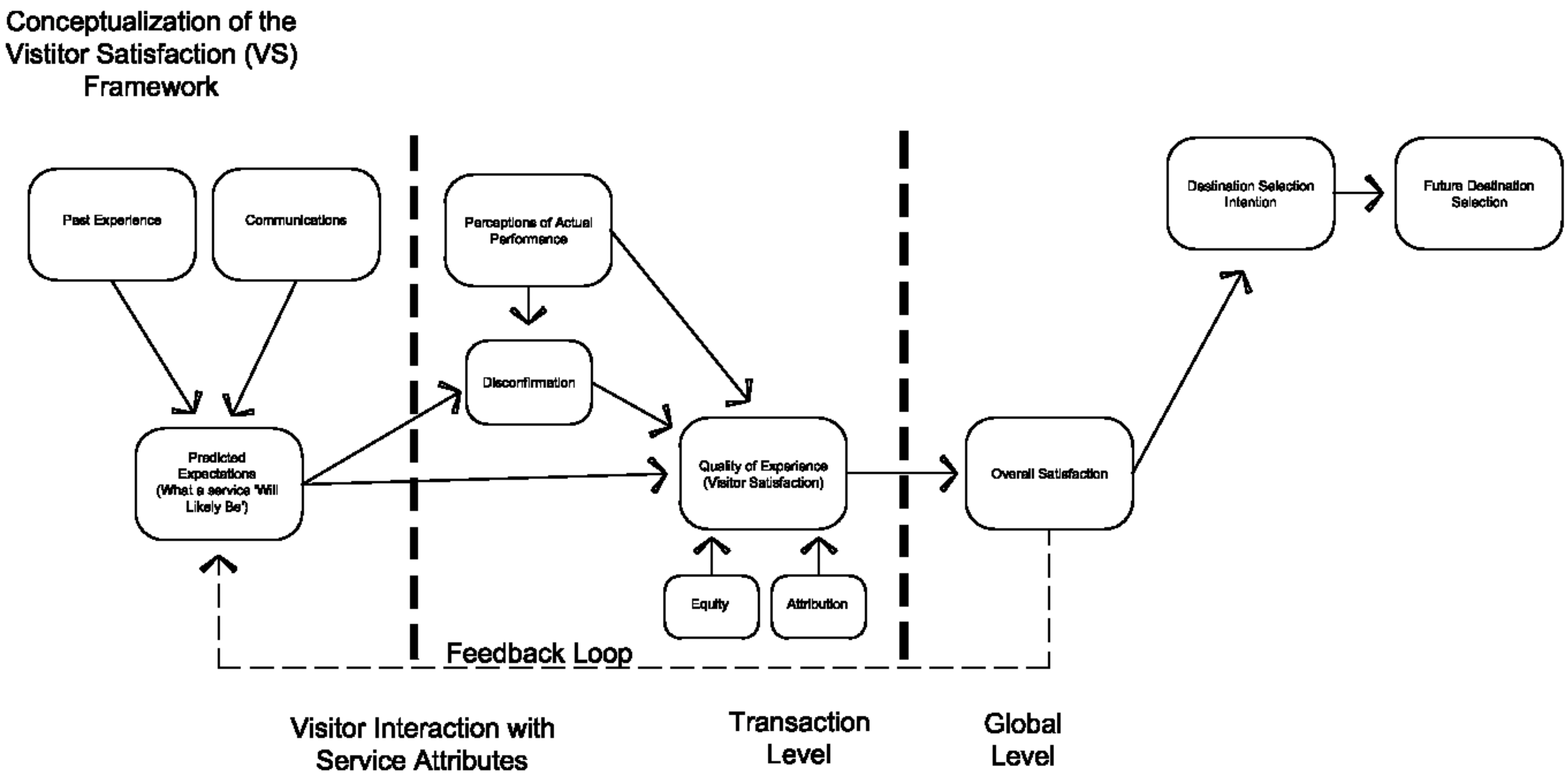

Figure 3. Visitor Satisfaction Framework
Adapted from a model conceptualizing the relationship between VS and SQ (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003)

Interaction with Site Attributes at the Transaction Level

As a visitor interacts with various site features, perceptions of actual performance of the service attributes are compared with the visitor's predicted expectations. If the visitor experiences confirmation, negative disconfirmation, or positive disconfirmation with a site attribute then the visitor's Quality of Experience[12] is influenced (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). This concept can be illustrated by the following example: After experiencing a certain site characteristic or attribute, a judgment is made about the experience compared with a personal standard. A feeling is produced that stems from a confirmation of predicted expectations or a positive variance of the same prediction. This judgment is likely to create a feeling of satisfaction for that particular interaction. However, if the perceived performance falls below what the service was predicted to likely be, negative disconfirmation occurs and the visitor may feel unsatisfied with that particular interaction. In the VS framework, singular transactions affect one's psychological outcome. This effect cannot be completely controlled by site managers since Quality of Experience judgments are influenced by more than just judgments of quality, but other factors beyond management's control (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Spreng and Mackoy 1996; Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). The following example illustrates how factors outside management's control may affect a visitor's Quality of Experience: The quality of a site may be excellent, but if a visitor forgets to bring his/her camera, the psychological end state of the visitor may be disappointment and regret rather than a feeling of happiness and accomplishment – the predicted psychological outcomes. After having visited the site without a camera, the person may likely feel unsatisfied with their experience even though the quality of the site may have been exceptional. One's Quality of Experience may be affected even before arriving at a site, such as receiving a speeding ticket while traveling to the destination or high humidity.

Other factors that influence the Quality of Experience at the Transaction Level are Equity and Attribution (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). When a tourist determines that a balance exists between their efforts to experience the site and perceived outcomes of visiting the site, equity is achieved and has an influence on the tourist's experience (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). Also, feelings and actions have an effect on a person's manner of thinking which is called attribution as described by Weiner (1985). Weiner further explains that causes of individual success and failure are based on three dimensions: locus (outcomes are a result of factors that come from within oneself or external factors that originate from the environment), stability (ability is considered to be constant and stable, whereas emotions and mood are considered inconsistent and changing), and controllability (being able to control an outcome). These dimensions affect many emotions such as anger, gratitude, guilt, etc. and will consequently impact perceptions of Quality of Experience.

Site Interactions at the Global Level

Each judgment and feeling occurring at the Transaction Level helps to define and characterize how a person views and comes to understand for themselves what a service should be. Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988) viewed VS as only being transaction specific, but others have suggested that judgments made regarding Quality of Experience lead to and directly influence Overall Satisfaction[13] which influences an individual's Destination Selection Intentions. The stronger the visitor's psychological outcome, the more influence it has on their behavioral intentions (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003).

The reason why Overall Satisfaction influences Destination Selection Intention is explained by the Theory of Reasoned Action (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). This theory assumes that since people are rational, they will use what information is available to them to make informed choices. A person's intention to act is a direct determinate of a desired behavior. In the context of tourism, if a tourist experiences overall satisfaction with a site then these feelings will become an influence upon their intention to return. Since intentions precede behavior, the tourist is likely to return to the site or at least provide favorable word-of-mouth advertising to friends and family about the site (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003).

Service Quality (SQ)

Another theoretical framework that has emerged is the measurement of satisfaction in terms of Service Quality (SQ). This framework was first conceptualized and operationalized by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), with the understanding that in an increasingly competitive business market it is important for businesses to differentiate themselves from their competition by offering better service to their customers. The Marketing and Retailing bodies of literature agree that the quality of a good or product is easily measured, but measuring a business's quality of services provided is much more illusive. In response to this need, a 22-itemed survey instrument called SERVQUAL was developed in order to create a reliable, theory based method to measure the SQ of a business. In this operationalization, satisfaction is defined in terms of the quality of perceived performance which idea originated from the EDP (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). Although SERVQUAL was developed originally for the retail and marketing industries, it was designed to be used by a wide variety of services and could be adapted for specific research needs where necessary (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). This cross-over into other industries is evidenced by the work of Maryam Kahn (2003). In order to understand ecotourist satisfaction in terms of SQ, Kahn's research adapted the SERVQUAL scale to incorporate questions that related more specifically to ecotourism. This survey instrument is called ECOSERV.

As evidenced by the ECOSERV survey instrument, the SERVQUAL framework has made the transition from the Marketing and Retail research into Tourism and Recreational research. Site managers are charged with providing and maintaining high quality sites where tourists can achieve desired levels of satisfaction. In a tourism context, SQ has been defined as the "quality of opportunities available at a destination" (Crompton and Love, 1995 as cited by Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003, 67). The EDP is used as the theoretical underpinnings supporting the SQ framework in that tourists become satisfied with the quality of services when confirmation or positive disconfirmation occurs (Figure 4).

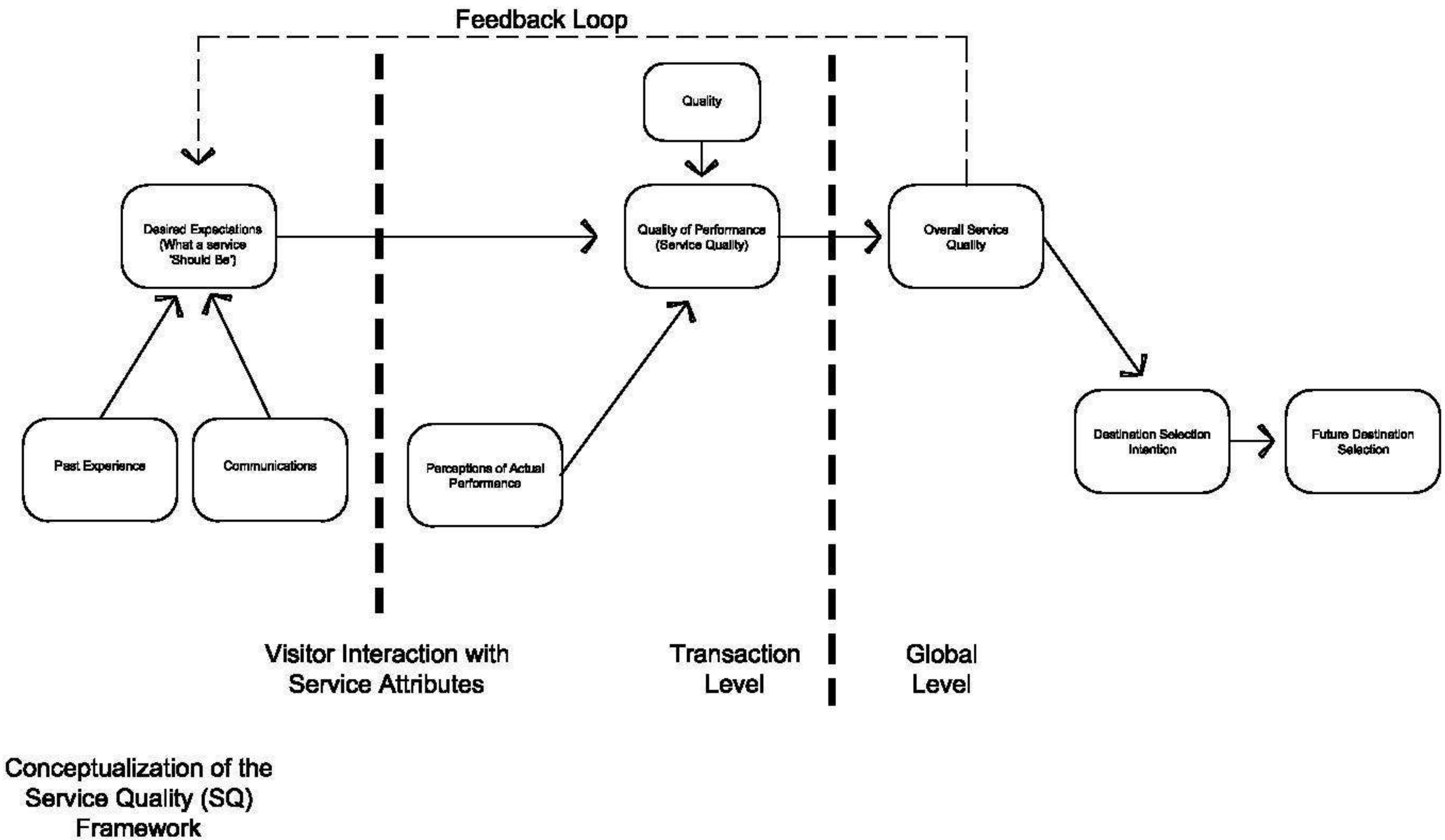

Figure 4. Service Quality Framework
Adapted from a model conceptualizing the relationship between VS and SQ (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003, 2, 4)

SQ Standard

An “ideal” or “desire” is the standard by which the Quality of Performance[14] is measured in the SQ framework. In other words, tourists make judgments based on expectations as to what the Quality of Performance “should be” (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003, 68; Spreng and Mackoy 1996). These expectations are considered to be related closely to an attitude because regardless of the type of service a person experiences, the same general characteristics are used to formulate judgments about the experience (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). An individual’s expectations of what the service should be is developed from past experiences and communications that have occurred over time (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). Expectations are then compared with perceptions of the actual performance of various opportunities available at the site, directly influencing perceptions of Quality of Performance.

Interaction with Service Attributes on the Transaction Level

In the SQ framework, if confirmation or positive disconfirmation occurs, then the visitor is said to be satisfied, as described by the EDP. Conversely, if a visitor experiences a negative disconfirmation of their expectations, then they will likely feel unsatisfied with that particular service attribute. The visitor’s level of satisfaction will be influenced by the quality of the services and opportunities provided by site managers. At the Transaction Level, each experience with a service attribute contributes to the Quality of Performance, which judgments are based on cognitive beliefs about what the service should be (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003).

Interaction with Service Attributes at the Global Level

Each interaction with service attributes at the Transaction Level directly influence Overall Service Quality attitudes at the Global Level, which is a general evaluation of the quality of services that were provided at the site (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002). Just as Overall Satisfaction of the VS framework directly influences Destination Selection Intentions, Overall Service Quality directly contributes to Destination Selection Intentions in the same way. If a visitor leaves a site thinking that the quality of service at the site was high, then they will likely return to visit the site in the future and/or tell others about their experience. This intention will then lead to action as suggested by the Theory of Reasoned Action explained previously (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003).

Differences and Relationships of VS and SQ

The EDP is the main theoretical framework that has laid the foundation for both VS and SQ models. These two theories describe how visitors become satisfied and how their satisfaction influences their intention to return to a particular site (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). However, each theory has several distinctions that set them apart from the other, but as represented by the Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003) model, they are shown as interacting with each other ultimately affecting Destination Intention Selection (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003) (Figure 5).

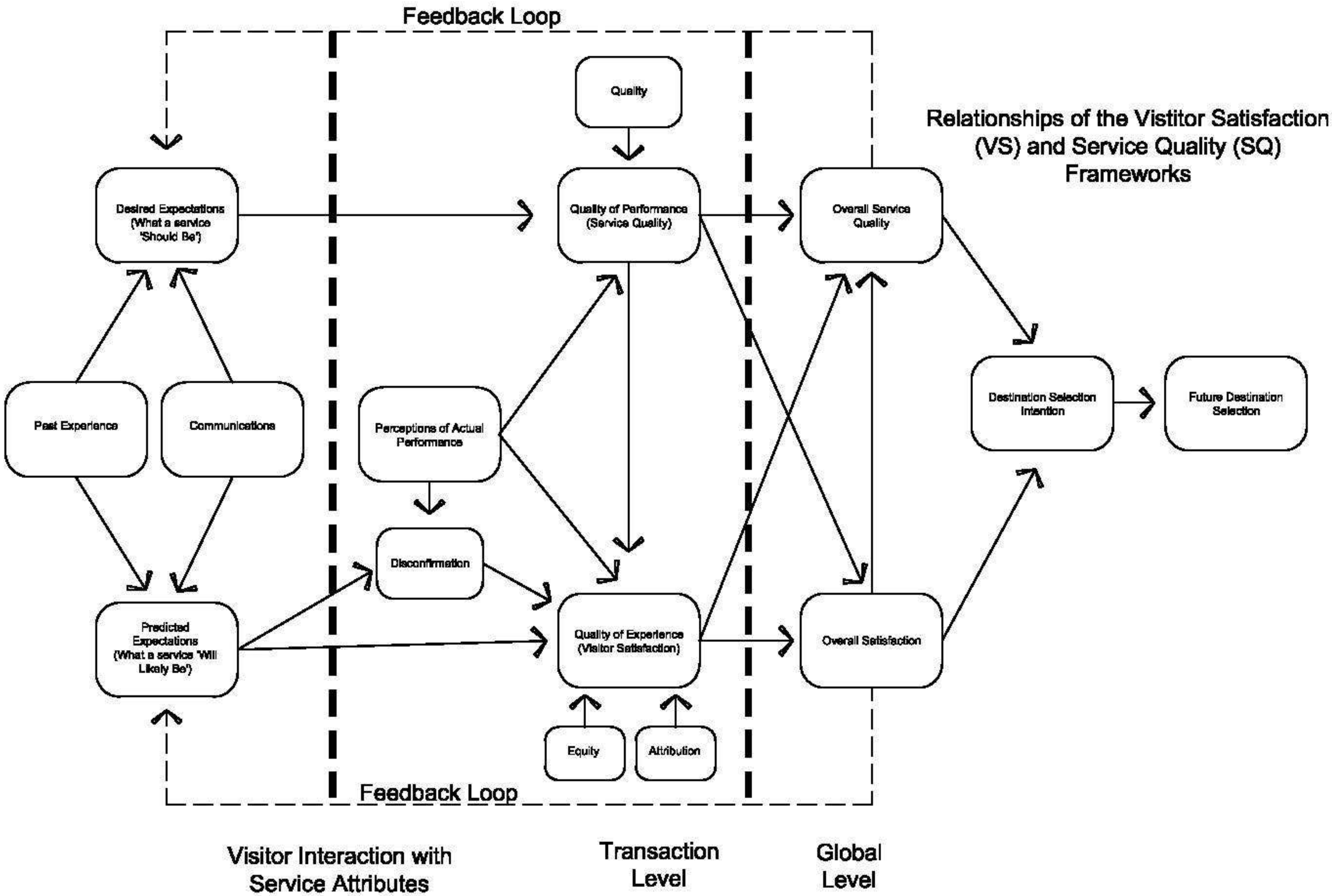

Figure 5. Combined VS and SQ Model
Adapted from a model conceptualizing the relationship between VS and SQ (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003)

VS and SQ Reference Standard

A difference exists between reference standards identified in the VS and SQ frameworks. The VS framework acknowledges the reference standard as what the Quality of Experience is "likely to be." Once confirmation or positive disconfirmation is experienced, needs and desired outcomes are being met or exceeded and the end result of this process is a psychological benefit that the visitor will experience. It is this psychological outcome that is the most important aspect of the VS framework and is the object of what is measured (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988). The reference standard used in the SQ literature is what the Quality of Performance of service attributes "should be," which is based on past experience with other transactions and communications (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Spreng and Mackoy 1996; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988).

Differing Role of Disconfirmation in VS and SQ

Another difference between the two frameworks is how disconfirmation varies in influencing both VS and SQ (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). In the VS framework, disconfirmation occurs when perceptions of service attribute performance is different from what was expected. These psychological outcomes from the disconfirmation experience, along with Predicted Expectations and Perceptions of Performance directly influence and contribute to the visitors' Quality of Experience of a particular service attribute (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003).

The relationship disconfirmation plays in the SQ framework differs from that of the VS framework in that it does not affect the visitor psychologically. Desirable performance of service attributes and a visitor's perception of performance directly affect their judgments made about Quality of Performance. "Thus service quality *is* the gap between expectations and performance, while satisfaction is a function of disconfirmation, which itself is a function of expectations and performance" (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003, 71).

Relationship of VS and SQ at the Transaction Level

Even though VS and SQ are distinct constructs, SQ influences VS at the Transaction Level. This influence has been explained by recognizing that each framework has varying factors that affect Quality of Experience (VS) and Quality of Performance (SQ) (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002). For example, quality is thought to be the only factor influencing Quality of Performance (SQ), whereas Quality of Experience (VS) has multiple inputs – quality being one of them (Oliver 1981). Since quality is the only dimension influencing Quality of Performance (SQ) it indirectly influences Quality of Experience (VS) since Quality of Experience is multi-dimensional (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Spreng and Mackoy 1996). There is a tendency for site managers to only focus on meeting or exceeding expectations relating to Quality of Performance because Quality of Performance (SQ) attributes are controlled by site managers. This management approach limits the ability of site managers to understand visitor satisfaction with their entire site experience since quality is only one of the many factors determining Quality of Experience (Spreng and Mackoy 1996).

Relationship of VS and SQ at the Global Level

On a Global Level, VS is considered to be experience specific, which means that in order to derive feelings of satisfaction one must actually experience or interact with the site. This differs from SQ because Perceptions of Performance can be gained by hearing about a destination through word-of-mouth advertising or other marketing information. These outside influences create perceptions of what the service should be (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002; Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003). This can be explained by the following scenario. If a person hears about how wonderful a hotel treats its customers, the person understands that the SQ of the hotel is excellent without having visited it personally. They come to expect that the service provided by the hotel “should be” a certain way. However, since feelings of satisfaction can only be derived from interacting and experiencing a site first-hand that same person cannot feel satisfaction with the hotel service without having first visited the hotel. Therefore, Overall Satisfaction only contributes to Overall Service Quality when a person actually visits a destination and obtains psychological benefits from their experience (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003; Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002).

Both VS and SQ contribute to Destination Intention Selections, however the influence that each has on a visitor’s future destination selection varies. Tian-Cole et al. (2002) found that Overall Service Quality had a much weaker influence on Destination Intention Selection when compared to the influence Overall Satisfaction has on Destination Intention Selection.

Visitor Motivations and Expectations

In order to measure how individual sites fulfill visitor expectations, specific benefits tourists seek are necessary to identify (Foster 1999) because these benefits or expectations will become the reference standard by which perceptions of performance will be measured. Market segmentation[15] or benefit segmentation[16] are often used to identify subgroups within a given population. These investigations lead to the identification of specific group characteristics and motivations that can then be more easily understood when managing or designing a site. Two groups that researchers have identified and investigated who are present at any site are First Time Visitors (FTV) and Repeat Visitors (RV) (Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000; Lau and McKercher 2004; Wang 2004; Petrick 2004). It is essential to clarify the differences that exist between FTV and RV in order for those involved in site design and management to develop appropriate strategies to enhance visitor satisfaction (Petrick 2004).

First Time Visitors

FTV are an important component to the success of any site or destination. They represent new consumers, bringing with them use and capital that help secure a profitable future. However, as a whole, this group is “volatile, fickle, and expensive market to pursue, with no guarantee of success” (Lau and McKercher 2004, 279). FTV are difficult to identify by site managers because FTV consider a variety of personal reasons and motivations before making their destination selection and therefore it is difficult to predict their behavior. Even though this group possesses significant marketing challenges and variability, they are crucial to the success of the site. For example, depending on their experience with the site, this group has the potential to become RV. Because of this, additional revenue can be anticipated along with providing positive word-of-mouth advertising. A shortage of FTV may indicate that a destination is experiencing a decline (Lau and McKercher 2004) or lack of proper marketing and advertising. In order to better understand how FTV become satisfied with a destination, it is necessary to identify the benefits they may be seeking and the attributes that characterize them as a group.

Since FTV have never been to the destination they have developed various expectations and images of what the site will be like based on advertisements, personal communications, etc. FTV have a complex image of the destination in their mind and cannot fully anticipate what to expect (Petrick 2004) and often are not fully aware of the various opportunities that are offered (Lau and McKercher 2004). In the mass tourism, large ship cruise industry, Petrick (2004) found FTV tended to base their repurchase intentions on the quality of their intended purchase. This finding infers that as a visitor experiences a site for the first time, it is crucial to provide high quality services, which in turn influence levels of satisfaction. FTV tend to be younger (Lau and McKercher 2004; Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000) and visit sites that offer more opportunities for outdoor activities, compared to RV (Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000). They are also less likely to visit friends and family while traveling (Petrick 2004). FTV tend to view their visit as an adventure, and in so doing, they are more likely to seek new cultural experiences and experiment with a variety of experiences while at the destination (Lau and McKercher 2004; Wang 2004). They are much more likely to be impressed by a destination’s culture since they are viewing or experiencing it for the first time (Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000). As a result, this group is more likely to become part of a tour group and travel widely throughout the region to see as many well-known attractions and sites as possible. This characteristic has some economic benefits to a destination because the number of visitors and their spending are more evenly distributed throughout a region rather than just at a specific site (Wang 2004). Their desire to see as much as possible during their visit may be explained by the fact that FTV are more likely to stay at a destination for a shorter period of time compared to RV (Lau and McKercher 2004; Wang 2004), and consequently spend less money in the local economies such as spending less on local transportation, dining outside the hotel, and local entertainment (Wang 2004).

Repeat Visitors

It has been suggested that site managers should put an emphasis on satisfying RV as an effective strategy to promote the long-term success of a site (Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000). It has also been suggested that RV are an essential component of the success of a tourist destination and they are an important means of disseminating information about the site to friends and family (Petrick 2004). Since RV have previously visited a site, they have more information about what opportunities are available, enabling them to make a more detailed itinerary at the destination. As a result of this experience, they are more likely to stay at a destination longer compared to FTV (Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000). By staying longer, they are inclined to spend more money on shopping, hotels, dining outside the hotel, and local transportation (Wang 2004). Research conducted by Wang (2004) demonstrated that the number of previous visits to a destination has a direct effect on increasing the amount of time and money RV spend while at a destination. This research also showed that visitors with the highest number of visits to Hong Kong almost doubled the spending of FTV to Hong Kong. RV seem to place more importance on shopping and interacting with indigenous cultures, experiencing their day-to-day living patterns (Wang 2004). They are not, however, as impressed with the culture or man-made environment as are the FTV since they have already visited the site. RV are most influenced by their personal associations and the ability to travel to the destination with relative ease. The further one has to travel to visit a destination, the more this distance will have an impact on the visitor's future destination selection (Tiefenbacher, Day, and Walton 2000). RV as a group, tend to be heterogeneous in the number of activities and sites they experience while at a destination. It is also apparent that the number of visits one has previously made to a destination has an effect on what types of activities one will engage in while visiting the site (Wang 2004). In a study by Petrick (2004), it was found that while on a cruise, RV use emotional responses to their experience to derive perceptions of quality whereas FTV perceptions of quality were based more on their perceived value of the cruise. This study suggests that RV have a better understanding of how the cruise makes them feel, whereas FTV are only able to make judgments based on what they know, such as the price of the cruise.

It was also noted perceived value and quality were directly related to both RV and FTV repurchase intentions. This suggests providing a satisfying experience at a reasonable price will promote perceptions of value. However, it was also found in the Petrick study (2004) that quality was a more important factor contributing to future repurchase behavior for FTV, and perceived value was the most important factor contributing to RV repurchase behavior. This suggests site managers may focus on providing quality destination features for FTV, while passing on additional cost savings or special services for the RV (Petrick 2004).

Ecotourists

A conclusive definition of the term “ecotourism” has been difficult for the tourism industry to define. It has been described in many different ways, such as “ecologically or socially responsible tourism, tourism that benefits the resource, or tourism that is educational in nature” (Palacio and McCool 1997, 234). The International Ecotourism Society defines ecotourism as “responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the well-being of local people” (The International Ecotourism Society 2007). A common theme among definitions is that ecotourism is a model of tourism where environmental conservation is a priority and makes possible economic gains to the local community (Holden and Sparrowhawk 2002).

By not having an industry-wide definition of ecotourism, many researchers have defined ecotourists in their own way as a product of their research efforts. Some research has focused on classifying ecotourists by motivations, social values, activities, and also allowing tourists to classify themselves into their own category. For example, research done by Palacio and McCool (1997) segmented the Belizean nature-based tourist population into Nature Escapists, Ecotourists, Comfortable Naturalists, and Passive Players. These classifications titles were created and defined by the researchers based on the expected benefits that each tourist was seeking while in Belize. Another approach to classify ecotourists, reported by Chang-Hung, Eagles, and Smith (2004), encouraged tourists to explain why they considered themselves to be ecotourists. This resulted in some similarities to other ecotourist classification characteristics, but also found there were some varying characteristics and multiple reasons why participants classified themselves as an ecotourist. It was recognized there are many factors that influence a person's self-classification based on "attitudes, interest, (and) behaviours" (165). Zografos and Allcroft (2007) segmented the potential ecotourist population of Scotland based on environmental values. Their ecotourism typologies included Disapprovers, Concerners, Scepticals, and Approvers. The varying descriptions and titles found throughout the Ecotourism literature are indicative of the varying approaches to describing ecotourist behavior and characteristics.

Since the methodology in classifying ecotourists varies, there is question as to how all these different methods and classifications overlap and if they could be generalized across the industry. In order to test for the classification discrepancies questions found within the literature, Hvenegaard (2002) took varying approaches that have been used to classify ecotourists: researcher-based typology, respondent-based typology, activity-based typology, and motivation-based typology. Hvenegaard applied all four methodologies while at one destination and compared the results. It was postulated the varying tourist types that were classified in the study "may approximate true groups in the population, each with distinct characteristics. If so, inconsistent methods to identify ecotourists may not be such a severe problem. Some typologies could serve as useful indicators to the others" (15-16). While there are varying ecotourist defined typologies, studying the characteristics, regardless of the manner they were defined, will help give a clearer picture of who ecotourists are, why they come to certain destinations, and what they expect when they get there.

Ecotourist Benefits and Characteristics

Ecotourists, as defined by various researchers, share commonalities across the broad spectrum of typologies that have been suggested in the literature. Demographically, ecotourists are generally well-educated individuals that have higher average incomes than other tourist types (Mackoy and Osland 2004; Holden and Sparrowhawk 2002). It has also been suggested that even though ecotourists have higher incomes compared to other typologies, they are conservative spenders. Mackoy and Osland (2004) suggested that when ecotourists make a lodging choice, two philosophies on spending and value were identified. Some take the approach of not spending much time in their lodging accommodations and therefore do not want to spend a great amount of money on lodging. Others want a low price, which may allow them to spend any savings on participating in other activities. Most ecotourists tend to be younger tourists. This may be explained by the types of activities they prefer to participate in while at a destination, which includes activities providing physical activity. There also tends to be slightly more males that are defined as ecotourists than females, and a large majority are from urbanized and economically prosperous countries (Holden and Sparrowhawk 2002). This group generally does not stay at locations as long as others and have been found to participate in a wider variety of activities than other groups (Palacio and McCool 1997).

Ecotourists are concerned about the environment and prefer to be in close proximity to it. They have a strong desire to learn more about nature and are considered to have “environmentally responsible attitudes” (Chang-Hung, Eagles, and Smith 2004, 163). This group generally wants to escape the pressures of home and work life and participate in some type of adventure while at a destination. Since people within this group tend to come from urbanized areas, they may be looking for a change in their routine or temporarily seeking a more active lifestyle. It has also been noted ecotourists generally place importance on being with other people even though they may travel in smaller group sizes in comparison with other tourist typologies. Social interaction is important for this group whether they are alone or with friends and family (Palacio and McCool 1997; Holden and Sparrowhawk 2002).

SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

Literature Review Summary

The intent behind the literature review is twofold. It was used to (1) identify and explain theories conceptualizing the process that influence a person's intention to visit a site or destination, and (2) identify attributes of various tourist typologies so that their characteristics and sought after benefits could be better understood and considered when developing an operationalization of a model. The model developed by Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003), which was conceptualized to include both VS and SQ, gives a more complete view into how satisfaction contributes to one's site or destination selection. It was for this reason this model was chosen. So only one operationalization of VS and SQ was developed that would lead to a more complete view of how satisfaction influences destination selection.

The following discussion will consider various methods that have been used to operationalize theories. The purpose of this section is to provide further investigation into what may be an appropriate operationalization of the VS and SQ model. There is evidence in the literature that many forms of measuring satisfaction exist, including, but not limited to, Customer Service Questionnaires, Relative Performance Assessment, Participant Observation, and SERVQUAL. Each method has positive and negative attributes that may enhance or lessen the effectiveness of the data collected. Some methods will be examined resulting in a preferred method or combination of methods to be used to operationalize the VS and SQ model previously discussed.

Customer Service Questionnaires

Customer Service Questionnaires (CSQ) is a quantitative approach to measuring satisfaction. It is comprised generally of many questions that are close-ended, where participants do not have the opportunity to give further explanation. Some of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach can be summarized in the following explanation of Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe:

> The main strengths are that: they [CSQs] can provide wide coverage of the range of situation; they can be fast and economical; and, particularly when statistics are aggregated from large samples, they may be of considerable relevance to policy decisions. On the debit side, these methods tend to be rather inflexible and artificial; they are not very effective in understanding processes or the significance that people attach to actions; they are not very helpful in generating theories; and because they focus on what is, or what has been recently, they make it hard for the policy-makers to infer what changes and actions should take place in the future. (As cited by Bowen 2002, 32)

It has also been suggested that the CSQ may produce results that are evaluated as being a good method to understand behavior. However, it may actually be a false indicator of what the researcher is trying to understand. Two potential problems are that interviewers may seem unenthusiastic and interviewees may experience survey fatigue due to the number and type of questions on the CSQ. These characteristics may lead to a half-hearted effort to distribute and answer the survey. Because of this problem, it has been noted that sometimes tour operators find the most useful data that is obtained from these surveys is the personal information that is collected, which can then be used for marketing purposes (Bowen 2002).

Another criticism of the CSQ is that often-times researchers move directly into developing a highly structured survey instrument that only relies on and includes predetermined attributes. The attributes are often derived from survey developers or through past personal experience rather than relying on first-hand knowledge that a respondent feels is relevant. These important attributes could be uncovered preliminarily through the use of open-ended questions, and after analyzing the responses, be utilized in the development of the survey. If a complete list of attributes is not fully identified, the results of the survey may be flawed and may provide an incomplete view of respondent behavior. Identifying attributes through a quality investigation before developing the survey instrument is a better approach to create a more meaningful and reliable survey instrument (Mackoy and Osland 2004).

Relative Performance Assessment

The Relative Performance Assessment (RPA), as proposed by Yuksel and Yuksel (2001), is a method that assesses a customer's perception of a company's service performance. That assessment is then evaluated based on how well the service of that company is perceived to perform compared with other similar companies. The underlying principles, although intended for use in the marketing industry, can be applied to the development of a satisfaction survey instrument. The RPA only asks a total of nine questions making it a relatively short survey compared to other survey instruments. This survey was intentionally developed to be more concise in order to alleviate or eliminate respondent fatigue. The survey includes three stages: "(a) identification of significant service attributes to customer satisfaction and repeat business (those attributes that are most valued by customers), (b) assessment of internal performance delivered on these key areas, and (c) assessment of relative performance (external)" (124). This technique allows the respondent to list attributes that are important to them and then evaluate the performance and satisfaction of these attributes. Open-ended questions also allow respondents to identify attributes significant to them and are not forced to answer predetermined questions suggested by researchers. It was suggested by the authors of this method that it may enhance other assessment frameworks that may not be achieved by using only the EDP (Yuksel and Yuksel 2001).

Even though this method attempts to measure one's perception of service performance, it seems plausible that the approach to measure performance could be used in other venues such as measuring satisfaction. Where time and resources are not readily available to perform a preliminary investigation to uncover survey attributes, this approach could be used by researchers to develop a survey with predefined attributes, but still allow survey respondents to indicate survey attributes that are important to them, that may not have been included in the survey. In this sense, research objectives could still be met, while providing a more structured opportunity for respondents to include their own specific attributes of importance. By adding this component to a survey, a better list of attributes will be identified and therefore assessed. This approach does not require much training to administer and is cost effective because it may only require one sheet of paper.

Participant Observation

Participant Observation (PO), was suggested by Bowen (2002) as a reliable and alternative means of measuring satisfaction. This method is based on the premise that in order to measure satisfaction throughout an entire experience, the observer becomes an integral part of those that he is observing. In order to accomplish this task and exclude bias, the observer has to overcome several obstacles. It is necessary to decide if the researcher will adopt a pretended role, in order to disguise the reason for being on the tour, or an actual role where the purpose of the researcher is revealed. Another obstacle necessary to overcome in PO is the necessity to become acquainted with the participants. This puts the observer in a position to better understand and be able to describe what is being observed. It is also necessary for the observer to be trusted by the group, which facilitates conversation and the building of relationships. Where trust is present between observer and participant, a more open dialogue can ensue. This method of measuring satisfaction is significant in that it allows the observer to not only view or ask questions about one moment in time, but to observe how satisfaction over time changed and matured based on a culmination of events. Deeper insights could be gained through this close interaction (Bowen 2002).

Even though many opportunities and strengths exist pertaining to this method of measuring satisfaction, some difficulties still need to be overcome. For example, in order to solicit information, this technique can only be used where the group size is fairly small to facilitate building relationships with each member of the group. It seems impractical to be used as a means to gather data for large groups because it would be expensive to personally participate in the number of observational situations needed to gather the desired data.

MPRFR Survey Instrument

The MPRFR survey instruments were developed using a combination of the CSQ and the RPA style of measuring satisfaction using the Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003) model as a theoretical foundation of the survey. This model illustrates how the VS and

SQ schools of thought are indeed separate, but the strength of the model suggests that even though the two frameworks are different, they both influence satisfaction and contribute to Destination Intention Selection. This survey represents an attempt to operationalize this model, which will allow planners, designers, and site managers to better understand what visitors are expecting when they visit a site within the MPRFR and how satisfied the visitors are with their experience while at the site. In order to operationalize the model, the survey instrument used in “A Front Country Visitor Study for Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument” developed by Burr et al. (2006) was used as a guide of how to format the satisfaction surveys, which included an Intercept Survey and Mail-Back Survey.

Intercept Survey

An Intercept Survey was developed in order to accommodate and respect a visitor’s time and experience while at a site. This is an appropriate strategy to gather demographic information of those visiting a specific site and to ask general questions about one’s experience and satisfaction levels of a specific site (see Appendix A to view the Intercept Survey). An attempt was made to define terms that may be confusing or interpreted in various ways. This was done so all survey participants would begin with a similar understanding of a term, which would leave less chance and variation in personal interpretation. By gathering this type of information, the Intercept Survey will establish site specific base-line data, and upon analyzing the data, be able to make conclusions about present and future site operations, planning, and design. The Intercept Survey is broken into three different sections in order to collect general data about a visitor's site experience: Site Questions, Satisfaction, and General.

"Site Questions"

The purpose of the "Site Questions" section is to develop a better understanding of how a visitor heard about the site, reasons for coming, and their experience and feeling before visiting the site. Answers to these questions will inform site managers about the effectiveness of marketing efforts, how items outside management's control affected visitor experience, and number and quality of recreational opportunities offered at the site. For example, if most visitors feel that the distance to the site is too far away from their lodging selection, then their satisfaction of the site may be affected. Similarly if the road conditions leading to the site are judged to be poor, then visitor satisfaction may be lower than what otherwise could have been. Even though these factors may be outside of management's control, they could be considered when planning and designing future sites. With proper planning and design, lodging options could be considered within a closer proximity to a site and/or road conditions could be properly developed and laid out to facilitate better access into the site.

"Satisfaction"

The purpose of the "Satisfaction" section is to understand a visitor's general satisfaction of the site. By asking the visitor to identify expectations they had before experiencing the site, site managers can better understand what people expect or hope to see. After understanding a visitor's site expectations, an assessment of their satisfaction with the site will be better understood. This information can then be evaluated by site managers to identify the weaknesses and/or strengths of a site by understanding visitor expectations and their subsequent satisfaction of the site. This same information will aid planners and designers to more appropriately develop future sites by considering what visitors expect to find while at a site.

“General”

The last portion of the survey asks questions relating to visitor demographics. This type of information allows site managers to identify who is coming to the site and gives insight into visitor characteristics. From this information, base-line data can be collected and established, which can be used for analyzing and comparing data through subsequent years. Answers to survey questions will aid those involved with site advertising and marketing to indentify more effective and efficient methods of advertising.

Demographic questions were intentionally placed at the end of the survey because some questions relate to personal information, such as income level or marriage status. Although collecting demographic information helps site managers understand visitor characteristics, the main purpose of the survey is to understand visitor satisfaction. If located at the beginning of the survey, demographic questions could discourage respondents from completing the survey in its entirety and data related to visitor expectations and satisfaction may remain unanswered.

The “General” section also includes a question asking the respondent if they would be willing to fill-out a more comprehensive survey aimed at measuring satisfaction. The Mail-back survey will be mailed to them within two weeks from the time they return home from their trip. If the respondent agrees, they can choose to receive either an electronic or a hard copy version of the survey that will be sent either via email or mail. The Mail-back survey is a more thorough and detailed survey asking questions relating to visitor expectations and satisfaction and can be completed and returned at their own convenience. If a respondent does not accept the invitation to fill out a Mail-back survey, at least a general understanding of visitor expectations, satisfaction and demographics can be collected and analyzed. This information will still provide valuable insight into the strengths and weaknesses of a site.

Survey Administration

The Intercept Survey will be administered by an interviewer(s) at key sites within the MPRFR: Orchid Cascade, 1,000 ft. Falls, Rio On Pools, Rio Frio Caves and Caracol (not within the reserve). It is anticipated the survey will not be administered until after a visitor has had a chance to experience the site so that satisfaction questions can be appropriately and thoughtfully answered. The information on the survey highlighted in red will need to be either read and/or filled-in by the interviewer before the survey begins. A survey ID # will be assigned to each survey so that a Mail-back survey can be appropriately linked to the Intercept Survey. The interviewer will provide information about the survey so the respondent has a clear understanding of how to fill out the survey and how the information will be used. Rather than have the interviewer fill out the survey for the respondent, the respondent will read and complete the survey which will eliminate interviewer bias and the chance of incorrectly transferring the spoken information to the survey. The interviewer may assist the respondent in order to clarify any questions that may arise. Ideally, the survey will be administered through the peak tourist months of January through March (Belize Tourism Board 2005) so peak visitors' site expectations and satisfaction can be measured.

Mail-back Survey

Two weeks after returning home from their travels, a mail-back survey will be sent via email or regular mail to those respondents who agreed to answer additional questions about their visit to Belize. This survey is much more detailed compared to the Intercept Survey and uses various types of questions to better understand what site characteristics and features contribute to visitor satisfaction (see Appendix B). As suggested by Yuksel and Yuksel (2001), this survey instrument asks open ended questions allowing respondent to further explain and clarify their answers and give additional feedback about their site experience. The responses from open-ended questions can give valuable insight into the mind of the respondent and often times produces insightful comments that researchers had not considered when originally developing the survey. This is evidenced by the findings of Mackoy and Osland (2004) where respondents shared information that may have been untapped if only close-ended questions had been asked.

As mentioned previously, identifying survey attributes before administering a survey may provide a clearer picture of satisfaction. In the case of this survey, gathering preliminary information from actual site visitors to include on a survey was not part of the scope of this research project. However attempts were made to identify, through the literature, survey attributes that were found to be relevant in other research projects.

These attributes were then used to develop the Mail-back survey. The mail-back survey is made up of several sections: Site Questions (Importance), Site Questions (Satisfaction), Ecotourist (Importance), Ecotourist (Satisfaction), Repeat Visitor, First Time Visitor, General.

“Site Questions”

The “Site Questions” section was developed following a similar format as the report completed by Burr et al. (2006). In this report, visitors were asked to rate the importance of certain features at Grand Staircase Escalante National Monument in Utah and then rate their level of satisfaction with those same features after having experienced the site. Asking the same question two different ways allows researchers to compare answers of what was expected and how satisfied visitors were with the specific attributes. A Likert Scale was used for both Importance and Satisfaction questions so the answers could be compared and shown graphically. A “5” represents either “Very Important” in Importance questions or “Highly Satisfied” for Satisfaction questions. The bottom of the scale is a “1” which represents either “Not Important” in Importance questions or “Not Satisfied” in Satisfaction questions. After analyzing the collected data, site managers can quickly see where weaknesses and strengths of the site exist in context of priority. This management tool is known as the Importance-Performance (I-P) Model. It compares ratings of importance with satisfaction and is illustrated by the I-P model (Figure 6).

The I-P technique was created in the marketing research field as a method to measure customer perceptions of SQ and conveys this information quickly and clearly to

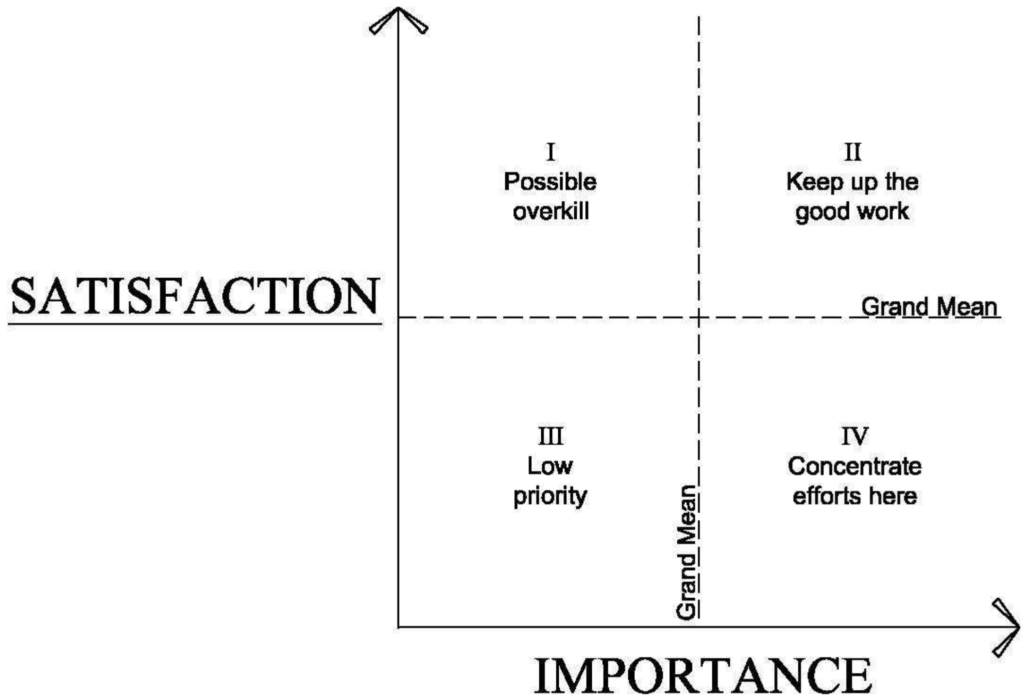

Figure 6: Importance/Performance Model (Burr et al. 2006, 105)

service managers (Mackoy and Osland 2004). The diagram is created by placing "Importance" along the X axis of the diagram and "Satisfaction" along the Y axis. The dotted lines in the diagram represent the grand means of all the respondents to Importance and Satisfaction questions. The grand means are established and indicated in the diagram in order to visually show any differences between the collective responses of Importance and Satisfaction. By demarcating the grand mean of Importance and Satisfaction responses, four quadrants are created, each one indicating a management approach and priority. The four quadrants are: Quadrant I: Possible overkill, Quadrant II: Low priority, Quadrant III: Keep up the good work, Quadrant IV: Concentrate efforts here (Burr et al. 2006). This diagram can be explained by understanding that when respondents consider a survey item to be of low importance and responded that they were not satisfied with the item while visiting a site, then management could consider the item to be of low priority (Quadrant II). On the other hand, if a survey item was found to be very important to visitors yet they were not satisfied with the item while at the site, then it would be important for management to focus their attention on narrowing the difference between importance and satisfaction (Quadrant IV). The use of this diagram will allow site managers to make informed choices about where they should allocate their resources and empower them to better manage their site (Mackoy and Osland 2004). When developing future sites, planners and designers will also benefit from using this same system where expectations and importance values are compared with satisfaction. For example, if certain items/features/qualities are expected when visiting a site and are deemed important, then it would be important to include these types of items/features/qualities into the planning and design of future sites to increase visitor satisfaction.

With the I-P approach in mind, the items included in the Mail-back survey under the “Site Questions” section where chosen to better understand what specific site items/features/qualities contribute to satisfaction at MPRFR sites. The items chosen would not only help site managers better manage their site, but would also inform those involved in planning and design of future sites understand what features are important to include in current and future sites within the MPRFR. Most of the questions in the “Site Questions” section of the Mail-back survey originated from considering different choices and decisions that are made during the design and development phases of a new site. For example, designers make choices about storm water conveyance, materials used to build site features, and path layout. These options and ultimate decisions to implement different site features may be made without consideration of what visitors expect to find when visiting a site. However, by identifying visitor expectations, better and more appropriate design decisions can be made that will enhance a visitor's Quality of Performance (SQ), which influences Destination Intention Selection.

Other questions within the "Site Questions" sections were developed while considering different factors that may affect the Quality of Experience (VS) that may be outside of a site planner, designer, or manager's control. However, professionals should still be partially responsible to develop or maintain a suitable environment where the visitor can achieve a higher level of Quality of Experience. Some factors that may affect the Quality of Experience are physical, security, social, psychological, and self-actualization, which are based on a hierarchy of needs (Latu and Everett 2000). These factors may be considered as part of site design or site management by including areas that provide protection from inclement weather, provide restrooms, signs warning of danger, or proper lighting. Many questions relating to the hierarchy of needs were used in order to better understand Quality of Experience (VS), which contributes to Destination Intention Selection.

The I-P technique is a useful tool for planners, designers, and site managers to make better and informed choices about how to accommodate visitor expectations. It is proposed that by using this method in conjunction with portions of the survey, those involved in site development and management will be able to visually see where efforts and resources may need to be concentrated in order to create a better environment where high levels of SQ and VS can be obtained (Figure 7).

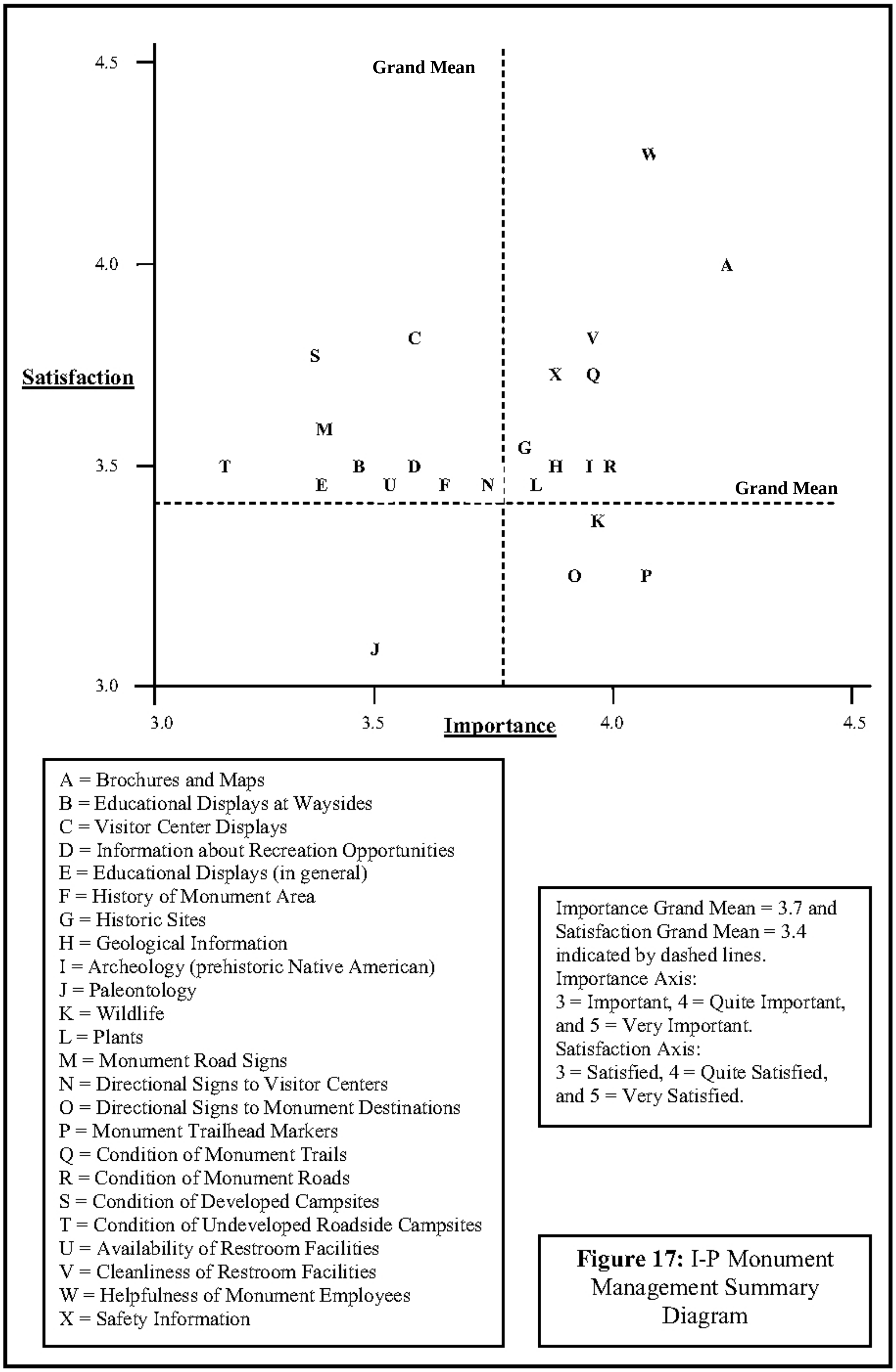

Figure 7. Applied Importance/Performance Model (Burr et al. 2006, 107)

“Ecotourist”

The “Ecotourist” section, located within the Mail-back survey, was developed with the assumption that some people who visit the MPRFR may be considered, or consider themselves to be, an ecotourist. This section was included in the survey because since the 1990s, ecotourism has increased 20%-34% a year and is growing globally three times faster than the traditional tourism markets (The International Ecotourism Society 2007). Also, ecotourists generally want to be part of adventure and close to nature. The MPRFR offers attractive opportunities for ecotourists because of its distance from the coast and its natural and cultural areas. The questions developed in the “Ecotourist” section of the Mail-back survey were based on the findings within the Literature Review. The literature review pointed out many characteristics that are common among ecotourists that may not be true for other types of travelers. Questions found within this section were included to better understand how the various sites within the MPRFR contribute to ecotourist satisfaction. The I-P diagram can be used to help site planners, designers, and managers prioritize and understand how to create a more satisfying experience for ecotourists.

“Repeat Visitors” and “First Time Visitors”

The “Repeat Visitor” and “First Time Visitor” sections were included in the survey based upon the findings of the Literature Review. One of these two sections will be completed by all of the survey respondents since all visitors will either be a FTV or RV. Through the literature it was determined that FTV and RV have different expectations when visiting a site or destination and also exhibit different characteristics while interacting with a site. The intent behind adding these sections to the Mail-back survey was to better understand how the various sites contributed to visitor satisfaction for different types of visitors.

"Some General Questions about Your Visit"

The general section asks more open-ended questions allowing visitors to explain how they felt when visiting the site and provide opportunities to give comments on strengths and weaknesses of the site. This information is valuable to those involved with site development and management because it provides insight into the mind of the visitor. Visitor comments may also yield important information that may not have been asked on the survey. The intent behind many questions within these sections is to better understand one's Quality of Experience and reach a more complete understanding of visitor satisfaction.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Tian-Cole and Crompton (2003) model acknowledges the differences between the VS and SQ theoretical frameworks, but also embraces and illustrates their relationships and influences that each has on the other. Herein lays the strength of the model because it shows how each theoretical framework contributes to Future Destination Selection based on measuring visitor satisfaction. This is significant because in most cases SQ is more readily measured by site managers because they have control over the quality of the services provided at a site or destination. Any positive changes made to enhance the quality of site attributes will likely result in higher Overall Service Quality and indirectly affect Overall Satisfaction. Foster (1999), in his analysis of

Australia's overall measurement of satisfaction, points out that Australia's main focus has been primarily on the quality of services that the country provides, such as hotels or tourism operators. Measuring the quality of these services is an important component to understanding and influencing a person's intention to return to a destination. However, this management approach only allows professionals involved in site design and maintenance to view only one side of the process describing how people become satisfied with a site experience and how satisfaction influences Future Destination Selections. Until Quality of Experience is measured in conjunction with Quality of Performance, as the model suggests, the complete picture of visitor satisfaction may remain partially obscured.

The purpose of developing a survey instrument to be used at various sites within the MPRFR is to measure and understand specifically what site items/features/qualities contribute to visitor satisfaction. The surveys have also been developed to understand and collect data, which will aid site planners, designers, and managers in understanding how to develop and maintain sites that consistently satisfy various types of visitors coming to sites within the MPRFR. By developing surveys that measure satisfaction and initiate the collection of base-line data, site managers can adjust current site practices, and planners and designers can develop more successful sites that consistently provide experiences resulting in satisfaction and will likely influence visitor future destination intentions. By establishing sites that successfully satisfy visitors, MPRFR site managers will be more likely to maintain a healthy balance between FTV and RV, which will contribute to the long-term success of the sites and will contribute to the overall health of the Belizean tourism industry.

Endnotes

[1] Visitors who have come to a site or destination for the first time.

[2] Visitors who have already visited a site or destination and have returned.

[3] A location within a destination (i.e., Rio On Pools is one attraction located within the MPRFR).

[4] A destination may be comprised of various sites (i.e., MPRFR is a destination providing many recreational opportunities such as 1,000 Foot Falls, Rio Frio Caves, and Caracol).

[5] When a consumer's perceived performance of a good or service "matches initial expectations" (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003, 66).

[6] When a consumer's perceived performance of a good or service exceeds initial expectations (Tian-Cole and Crompton 2003, 66).

[7] An explanation of a concept or theory

[8] Applying concepts or theories in a real-world situation

[9] Intention to visit a certain site or destination in the future

[10] A singular interaction with a service attribute or characteristic (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988).

[11] An attitude that is formed about a service (Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry 1988) or site experience.

[12] "…psychological outcome which visitors derive from visiting a facility"; "…refers to the specific benefits people obtain" (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002, 2, 4).

[13] "…visitors' levels of satisfaction towards their total experience with a recreation service, i.e., it is the summation of the specific benefits" (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002, 4).

[14] "…visitors' perceptions of the attributes of a facility that are controlled by management."; "…relates to evaluation of specific service attributes" (Tian-Cole, Crompton, and Willson 2002).

[15] "A process by which a large, potentially heterogeneous market is divided into smaller more homogeneous components or segments" (Palacio and McCool 1997, 236).

[16] A process by which researchers "… examine the benefits of a product perceived by potential purchasers …" "… (that) determine what it is about the product that makes it attractive, useful and worth the price to consumers" (Palacio and McCool 1997, 236).

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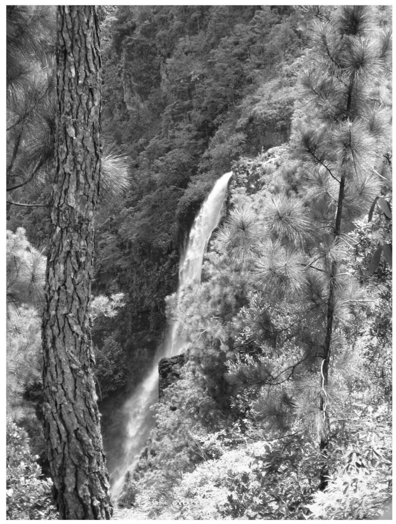
APPENDICES

Appendix A. Intercept Survey

Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve:
Visitor Survey



I'm a researcher conducting a survey evaluating visitors' experiences while in the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve. If you agree to respond to the survey questions, you can be assured that the information you provide will be kept confidential and will be compared with other responses to enhance future visitors' experiences at this site.

Would you be willing to participate in the survey?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Survey ID#______________ Interviewer: _______________________

Date:____/____/____ Day of the Week: ___________________

Time: ____________ Location: _________________________

Site Questions

1. Have you ever heard of this (interviewer adds specified location) before visiting the Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

2. How did you first hear about this site? (Check only one)

☐ TV Commercial	☐ Driving By/Road Signs	☐ Guide Books
☐ Internet	☐ Friends	☐ Other____________________
☐ Magazine	☐ Tour Guide	☐
☐ Family	☐ Map/Brochures	☐

3. What mode of transportation did you use to reach this destination? (Can check more than one)

☐ Bus	☐ Other____________________
☐ Hitchhike	☐ Personal Car
☐ Rental Vehicle	☐ Tour Group
☐ Taxi	

4. How long did it take for you to reach this site? ____________________________
4.a Would you consider the amount of time it took to reach the site reasonable?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ N/A

5. Check all of the following reasons that describe your purpose for coming to this site? (Can check more than one)

☐ Recreational Opportunities	☐ To be able to say you visited the MPRFR.
☐ Learn more about nature	☐ Take others to experience the site
☐ Learn more about local cultures	☐ Birding
☐ Learn more about past cultures	☐ Adventure
☐ Observe wildlife	☐ Scenic Qualities
☐ Relaxation	☐ Research
☐ Other____________________	☐ Check off one more place on your list of places to see.

6. Is this your first time visiting this site? (If yes, skip to question 7. If no, answer questions 6a-6c)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

6a. If No, when was the last time you visited this site? _________________________

6b. Describe why you came back to this site?

____
____
____

6c. Have you ever suggested to friends/family to visit this same site based on your past visit?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Satisfaction

An expectation could be described as an attitude or perception of what a person expects or hopes to experience while at a site.

7. Think of the expectations you had of the site before you arrived. How would you describe the manner in which your expectations were met or unmet after visiting the site?

☐ Exceeded your expectations ☐ What you expected ☐ Fell short of what you expected

If you marked 'Exceeded your expectations' or 'What you expected', skip to question 8.

7a. Describe why your experience of the site did not meet your expectations.

7b. Describe what changes would improve this site for future visitors.

8. Have you been satisfied with the site as a whole?

☐ Highly Satisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐ Neutral ☐ Unsatisfied ☐ Highly Unsatisfied

8a. Describe what would make your experience with this site more satisfying?

8b. Describe what would make your experience while in the MPRFR more satisfying?

8c. Would you come back to this site in the future? ☐ Yes ☐ No
Why or Why not?

9. Would you like to give any additional feedback about your visit to the site?

Thank you for responding to the previous survey questions. The following questions relate to visitor demographics. The results of this section will be confidential and will only be used for comparison purposes among others visitors of the MPRFR. Thanks again for your participation in this survey.

General

10. Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

11. Where are you from? City:__________

State: __________

Country: __________

12. Please mark which age group you belong to?

☐ 12-20 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 46-50 ☐ 61-65
☐ 21-25 ☐ 36-40 ☐ 51-55 ☐ 66-70
☐ 26-30 ☐ 41-45 ☐ 56-60 ☐ 71 and above
☐ Refuse

13. Please mark the category that represents your household income level in US $?

☐ 10,000-19,999 ☐ 40,000-49,999 ☐ 80,000-89,999
☐ 20,000-29,999 ☐ 50,000-59,999 ☐ 90,000-99,999
☐ 30,000-39,999 ☐ 60,000-69,999 ☐ 100,000 and above
☐ 70,000-79,999 ☐ N/A

14. What is your marital status?

☐ Single ☐ Married ☐ Divorced

15. How many children do you have under 18 years old?

# of children______ ☐ N/A

16. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

☐ High School ☐ Professional Degree (M.D., Law, Etc.)
☐ Trade School ☐ Masters Degree
☐ Two year Associates Degree ☐ Doctorate Degree
☐ Four year Bachelors Degree ☐ Other _______________

17. How many people are traveling with you?

☐ Traveling alone ☐ As part of a group of friends or family
☐ 1 other person ☐ As part of a tourist group
☐ 2 other people ☐ Other________________________

18. How long do you plan on staying in Belize? ___________________________

19. Have you already visited or plan on visiting other countries as part of this trip?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Undecided

20. Would you be willing to complete a more detailed internet or mail-back survey asking further questions about your visit to this site, MPRFR, and Belize?

☐ Yes ☐ No

<u>Interview would ask if the respondent would like to have a survey mailed or emailed.</u>

Name: ___________________________
Email Address: ______________________________
Home Address: ______________________________
____

Appendix B. Mail-Back Survey

Mountain Pine Ridge Forest Reserve:
Visitor Survey

Survey ID # _______________

You were contacted on _____/_____/____ after visiting _________________. You had previously agreed to complete an internet/mail-back survey after you completed your trip. In advance, thank you for answering the following questions.

Site Questions

1. The following list is comprised of items/features/qualities one might expect to find while at a particular site. Rate how **important** these items/features/qualities are to you as you experience a site.

Category	Item	Very Important	Quite Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
General						
	presence of wildlife	5	4	3	2	1
	well maintained roads	5	4	3	2	1
	appearance of being untouched by recent human activity	5	4	3	2	1
	on-site first aid/emergency services	5	4	3	2	1
	entrance fee for foreigners	5	4	3	2	1
	entrance fee for locals	5	4	3	2	1
	stewardship of the land	5	4	3	2	1
	minimized visual impacts to the surrounding areas and within the site	5	4	3	2	1
	quiet	5	4	3	2	1
	comfortable	5	4	3	2	1
Grading and Drainage						
	properly sited activity areas in order to minimize site disturbance	5	4	3	2	1
	presence of erosion control measures (i.e. prevent storm water run-off to erode paths or parking lots)	5	4	3	2	1
	proper storm water management (i.e. water from roadway prevented from entering nearby river)	5	4	3	2	1
Materials						
	use local materials for site furnishings/buildings	5	4	3	2	1
	paved parking lots	5	4	3	2	1
	asphalt paths	5	4	3	2	1
	composting toilets	5	4	3	2	1
	pit toilets	5	4	3	2	1

Category	Item	Very Important	Quite Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
	flushing toilets	5	4	3	2	1
Plants						
	site only uses locally grown plants in landscape areas	5	4	3	2	1
	regionally appropriate plants used in landscape areas	5	4	3	2	1
	active plant protection program	5	4	3	2	1
	proper plant maintenance	5	4	3	2	1
Programming						
	opportunities to engage in physical activity	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to engage in extreme physical activity	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities for birding	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to relax	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to learn more about the site	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to meet new people	5	4	3	2	1
	relatively few visitors at the site	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to appreciate nature	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to do things you have never done before	5	4	3	2	1
	lodging close to the site	5	4	3	2	1
	secure and clean changing area	5	4	3	2	1
	guides available	5	4	3	2	1
	tours available	5	4	3	2	1
Security						
	feel safe while at the site	5	4	3	2	1
	feel confident that your personal belongings are safe	5	4	3	2	1
	lighting	5	4	3	2	1
	security guards	5	4	3	2	1
	military presence	5	4	3	2	1
Signage						
	ease of finding your way around the site	5	4	3	2	1

Category	Item	Very Important	Quite Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
	site rules clearly posted	5	4	3	2	1
	site warnings of dangers clearly stated	5	4	3	2	1
	informational signage about the site	5	4	3	2	1
	interpretive signage about past or present local cultures	5	4	3	2	1
	directional signage (where site features are located)	5	4	3	2	1
	plant identification signs	5	4	3	2	1
	plant informational signs	5	4	3	2	1
Site Features						
	shelter from the elements	5	4	3	2	1
	picnic area	5	4	3	2	1
	accessibility for people with disabilities	5	4	3	2	1
	well-defined paths	5	4	3	2	1
	1'-2' path width	5	4	3	2	1
	2'-4' path width	5	4	3	2	1
	5' or greater path width	5	4	3	2	1
	paths that lead to areas of interest	5	4	3	2	1
	sufficient number of trashcans	5	4	3	2	1
	regular garbage pickup	5	4	3	2	1
	appropriately sized parking lot for the anticipated use of the site	5	4	3	2	1
	parking lot near activity areas	5	4	3	2	1
	visitor center	5	4	3	2	1
	food services	5	4	3	2	1
Visual						
	colors used for site features match surroundings	5	4	3	2	1
	important views are maintained	5	4	3	2	1
	natural beauty of the site	5	4	3	2	1
Water						
	rain water collection system to be used for restrooms or washing hands	5	4	3	2	1

Category	Item	Very Important	Quite Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
	available drinking water	5	4	3	2	1
	place to wash hands	5	4	3	2	1

2. Now, rate how **satisfied** you were with the following items/features/qualities after having visited the site.

Please answer the following questions keeping in mind the varying levels of satisfaction.

'Highly Satisfied' – A visitor's experience exceeded what they hoped or expected to experience while at a site.
'Quite Satisfied' – A visitor's experience was better than what they hoped or expected to experience while at a site.
'Satisfied' – A visitor's experience was what they hoped for or expected to experience while at a site.
'Somewhat Satisfied' – A visitor's experience only met some aspects of what was hoped for or expected to experience while at a site.
'Not Satisfied' – A visitor's experience was not what they hoped or expected to experience while at a site.
N/A – Items that were not present or did not apply while at the site.

Category	Item	N/A	Highly Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied
General							
	presence of wildlife	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	well maintained roads	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	appearance of being untouched by recent human activity	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	on-site first aid/emergency services	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	entrance fee for foreigners	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	entrance fee for locals	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	stewardship of the land	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	minimized visual impacts to the surrounding areas and within the site	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	quiet	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	comfortable	☐	5	4	3	2	1
Grading and Drainage							
	properly sited activity areas in order to minimize site disturbance	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	presence of erosion control measures (i.e. prevent storm water run-off to erode paths	☐	5	4	3	2	1

Category	Item	N/A	Highly Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied
	or parking lots)						
	proper storm water management (i.e. water from roadway prevented from entering nearby river)	☐	5	4	3	2	1
Materials							
	use local materials for site furnishings/buildings	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	paved parking lots	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	asphalt paths	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	composting toilets	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	pit toilets	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	flushing toilets	☐	5	4	3	2	1
Plants							
	site only uses locally grown plants in landscape areas	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	regionally appropriate plants used in landscape areas	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	active plant protection program	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	proper plant maintenance	☐	5	4	3	2	1
Programming							
	opportunities to engage in physical activity	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to engage in extreme physical activity	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities for birding	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to relax	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to learn more about the site	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to meet new people	5	4	3	2	1	
	relatively few visitors at the site	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to appreciate nature	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	opportunities to do things you have never done before	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	lodging close to the site	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	secure and clean changing area	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	guides available	☐	5	4	3	2	1

Category	Item	N/A	Highly Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied
	tours available	☐	5	4	3	2	1
Security							
	feel safe while at the site	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	feel confident that your personal belongings are safe	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	lighting	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	security guards	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	military presence	☐	5	4	3	2	1
Signage							
	ease of finding your way around the site	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	site rules clearly posted	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	site warnings of dangers clearly stated	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	interpretive signage about the site	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	informational signage about past or present local cultures	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	directional signage (where site features are located)	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	plant identification signs	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	plant informational signs	☐	5	4	3	2	1
Site Features							
	shelter from the elements	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	picnic area	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	accessibility for people with disabilities	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	well-defined paths	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	1'-2' path width	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	2'-4' path width	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	5' or greater path width	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	paths that lead to areas of interest	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	sufficient number of trashcans	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	regular garbage pickup	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	appropriately sized parking lot for the anticipated use of the site	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	parking lot near activity areas	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	visitor center	☐	5	4	3	2	1

Category	Item	N/A	Highly Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied
	food services	☐	5	4	3	2	1
Visual							
	colors used for site features match surroundings	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	important views are maintained	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	natural beauty of the site	☐	5	4	3	2	1
Water							
	rain water collection system to be used for restrooms or washing hands	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	available drinking water	☐	5	4	3	2	1
	place to wash hands	☐	5	4	3	2	1

3. Would you consider yourself to be an ecotourist? (If no or unsure, skip to question 5)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Ecotourist

4. The following list is comprised of items/features one might expect to find while at a particular site. Rate how **important** these items/features are to you as you experience a site.

Item	Highly Important	Quite Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
in some way, site managers have minimized environmental impacts	5	4	3	2	1
allows for opportunities to interact with local cultures	5	4	3	2	1
helps you escape from the pressures of home or work life	5	4	3	2	1
offers opportunities to engage in physically challenging activities	5	4	3	2	1
benefits the local economy in some way	5	4	3	2	1
provides opportunities to be in a wilderness setting	5	4	3	2	1
opportunities to learn more about nature	5	4	3	2	1
learn about other cultures	5	4	3	2	1
meeting other people who share similar interests	5	4	3	2	1
experience the site as if you were the first person to see it	5	4	3	2	1
management of the site is	5	4	3	2	1

Item	Highly Important	Quite Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
environmentally responsible					

4b. Rate how **satisfied** you were with the following items after visiting the site.

Item	N/A	Highly Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied
in some way, the site managers have minimized environmental impacts	☐	5	4	3	2	1
allows for opportunities to interact with local cultures	☐	5	4	3	2	1
helps you escape from the pressures of home or work life	☐	5	4	3	2	1
offers opportunities to engage in physically challenging activities	☐	5	4	3	2	1
benefits the local economy in some way	☐	5	4	3	2	1
provides opportunities to be in a wilderness setting	☐	5	4	3	2	1
opportunities to learn more about nature	☐	5	4	3	2	1
learn about other cultures	☐	5	4	3	2	1
meeting other people who share similar interests	☐	5	4	3	2	1
experience the site as if you were the first person to see it	☐	5	4	3	2	1
management of the site is environmentally responsible	☐	5	4	3	2	1

5. Have you ever visited the site before? (If no or unsure, skip to question 12)

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

Repeat Visitor (f First Time Visitor go to question 12)

6. How many times have you visited this site?____________________

6b. How satisfied were you with the site after your latest visit compared to previous visits?

Highly Satisfied 5	Quite Satisfied 4	Satisfied 3	Somewhat Satisfied 2	Not Satisfied 1

7. Have you ever suggested to friends or family that they should visit this site based on your experience?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

7a. Have you ever suggested to friends or family that they should visit the MPFR based on your experience?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

8. Why did you come back to the site?

____

____

____

____

9. Why did you come back to the MPRFR?

____

____

____

____

10. Did you visit other destinations in Belize besides the MPRFR?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

10a. Which destinations did you visit?

____

____

11. The following list is comprised of items/features one might expect to find while at a particular site. Rate how **important** these items/features are to you as you experience a site.

Item	Highly Important	Quite Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
amount of information available to you while at the site	5	4	3	2	1
quality of information available to you while at the site	5	4	3	2	1
availability of shopping	5	4	3	2	1
availability of dining	5	4	3	2	1
good value (what you received compared with what you put forth i.e. time, money, energy, etc.)	5	4	3	2	1

11a. Rate how **satisfied** you were with the following items after visiting the site.

Item	Highly Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied	N/A
amount of information available to you while at the site	5	4	3	2	1	☐
quality of information available to you while at the site	5	4	3	2	1	☐
availability of shopping	5	4	3	2	1	☐
availability of dining	5	4	3	2	1	☐
good value (what you received	5	4	3	2	1	☐

Item	Highly Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied	N/A
compared with what you put forth i.e. time, money, energy, etc.)						

First Time Visitor (if Repeat Visitor go to question 17)

12. How many days did you stay in the MPRFR? ___________

12a. If there were more activities to participate in, would you have stayed longer?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

13. Were you part of a tour group?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

13a. Were you satisfied with the quality of the tour?

Highly Satisfied 5	Quite Satisfied 4	Satisfied 3	Somewhat Satisfied 2	Not Satisfied 1

14. While in the MPRFR, how many sites did you visit?______

14a. Did you only visit well-known sites while in the MPRFR?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

15. Did you visit other destinations in Belize besides the MPRFR?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

15a. Which destination did you visit?

____

____

16. The following list is comprised of items/features one might expect to find while at a particular site. Rate how **important** these items/features are to you as you experience a site.

Item	Highly Important	Quite Important	Important	Somewhat Important	Not Important
amount of information made available to you while at the site	5	4	3	2	1
quality of information made available to you while at the site	5	4	3	2	1
variety of activities at the site	5	4	3	2	1
good value	5	4	3	2	1

16a. Rate how **satisfied** you were with the following items after visiting the site.

Item	Highly Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Not Satisfied	N/A
amount and quality of information available to you while at the site	5	4	3	2	1	☐
quality of information made available to you while at the site	5	4	3	2	1	☐
variety of activities at the site	5	4	3	2	1	☐
good value	5	4	3	2	1	☐

Some General Questions about Your Visit

17. Before arriving at the site, did anything happen that may have affected you negatively or positively?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Unsure

17a. If Yes or No, what happened?

18. Write down and rank the (3) three most important attributes that you would expect to find at a site.

(1) ______________________________

(2) ______________________________

(3) ______________________________

18a. Rate how **satisfied** you were with the three attributes you mentioned in question 18.

Item of Importance	Highly Satisfied	Moderately Satisfied	Satisfied	Unsatisfied	Highly Unsatisfied
(1)	5	4	3	2	1
(2)	5	4	3	2	1
(3)	5	4	3	2	1

19. Why would or wouldn't you suggest visiting **Belize** to your friends/family now that you have returned from your trip?

____

____

____

____

20. Why would or wouldn't you suggest visiting the **MPRFR** to your friends/family now that you have returned from your trip?

21. Why would or wouldn't you suggest visiting this **site** to your friends/family now that you have returned from your trip?

22. Rate your level of satisfaction with how site managers have accommodated your needs while at the MPRFR sites?

Highly Satisfied 5	Quite Satisfied 4	Satisfied 3	Somewhat Satisfied 2	Not Satisfied 1	N/A ☐

23. Rate how **satisfied** you were with your lodging accommodations.

Highly Satisfied 5	Quite Satisfied 4	Satisfied 3	Somewhat Satisfied 2	Not Satisfied 1	N/A ☐

24. Why were you satisfied or dissatisfied with your lodging?

If you would like to make any additional comments about your visit to this site, the MPRFR, Belize or the survey, please do so in the space provided below.

Thank you for completing this survey. The information and feedback you provided will help improve existing and future site planning, design, and management of sites in Belize.