

**A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF GARDENS AS A RESOURCE FOR TOURISM
AND RECREATION IN THE UK**

By

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**A thesis submitted to the University of Plymouth
in partial fulfilment for the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**Department of Geographical Sciences
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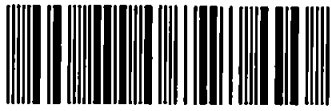
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JOANNE JANE CONNELL

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ABSTRACT

Garden visiting has become a popular leisure pursuit in recent years. Within a tourism and recreation context, scant research exists on the subject of gardens as recreational resources and the manner in which they are presented to and consumed by the public. This thesis explores the scope and nature of gardens as tourism and recreation resources in the UK. The thesis examines the conceptual foundations of the garden, in order to establish what reasons explain predisposition towards garden visiting, and why gardens provide a desirable environment in which people want to spend leisure time. The activity of garden visiting is analysed using a two-dimensional approach, which takes into account the supply of gardens open to the public and the demand for garden visits. In this respect, the supply-side relates to the perceptions of garden owners/managers, while the demand aspect is linked with the outlook of garden visitors. Uniting these two perspectives yields an intriguing area of research, that of the visitor experience, how that experience is perceived and managed, and which elements are crucial in its formation.

Understanding the visitor experience is a critical for operators of garden attractions, in line with all attractions. This thesis presents the results of two surveys, one of garden owners/managers (n=546) and one of garden visitors (n=593). Data analysis provides a source of information on the range and characteristics of gardens open to the public, approaches to managing the visitor experience and issues for owners/managers in

relation to operating a garden visitor attraction as well as visitors' characteristics, motivations, behaviour and perceptions of the garden experience. The data generated allows the identification of a range of themes and implications for the operators of garden attractions, in particular those issues that will influence future development.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

At no time during the registration for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy has the author been registered for any other University award.

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The author has undertaken research on a part-time basis while maintaining a full-time post as a Lecturer. The study provides a comprehensive analysis of a neglected area within tourism and recreation literature and provides an original contribution to knowledge. Papers are being prepared for publication following submission of the thesis.

Signed *G. Conzatti*.....

Date....26.1.05.....

1.0 Introduction

Gardens have a global appeal and, as Adams (1991) states, the love of gardening in contemporary times has created a leisure phenomenon that has spread widely. In Great Britain, gardens play a significant role in the enjoyment of leisure time and, as Brown (1993) claims, gardening is a national passion. Gardens and gardening have become integrated into the leisure lives of the population as a passive and active pursuit in the home as well as extending to garden visiting. One of the most prominent recreational trends of recent years is the increasing number of visits made to gardens open to the public. Despite the growing economic, social and environmental significance of tourism and recreation based on visiting gardens, it is an area which has been under-researched. This thesis, therefore, represents the first systematic study of the phenomenon of garden visitation, with the visitor experience as its central focus. The thesis seeks first, to investigate the characteristics, management and presentation of gardens open to the public within Great Britain; and second, to explore the nature and quality of the visitor experience within these gardens.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and explain the growth of garden visiting; review previous research on the topic and recognise its limitations; define gardens and garden visiting; and to detail the aims, objectives and structure of the thesis. This chapter provides the context for a review of the history of the garden as a visitor attraction (Chapter 2), the visitor experience of garden visiting (Chapter 3) and the results of primary research on garden management and visitors for this thesis

(Chapters 4-6). This chapter also examines the way in which the results of this investigation will assist in the greater understanding of garden visiting at both a theoretical and an applied level. From a philosophical perspective, tourism and recreation literature underpins the research, although by its very nature, garden visiting is interdisciplinary. Consequently, cognate areas of research such as garden history, human geography and management studies are also reviewed where there is a particular relevance to inform the discussion, conceptualisation and analysis of garden visitation.

1.1 Garden Visiting in Great Britain: An Overview

At an anecdotal level, evidence provided by media commentaries, the continuing popularity of garden opening initiatives (especially the National Gardens Scheme) and the range of consumer guide books on sale (such as the *Good Gardens Guide*), indicate that garden visiting is now a well-established leisure phenomenon. It is clear that in addition to rising numbers of garden visitors, the number of gardens open to the public in the late twentieth-century has increased. Taylor (1995a: 54), for example, comments that “there are probably more good gardens beautifully tended than ever before and garden visiting has become a major leisure activity”.

One approach to identifying the importance of gardens as visitor attractions is to examine data collected by national tourism organisations, which demonstrate the national significance of gardens in terms of: the numbers, type and public access (supply); and their reported visitor numbers (demand). Annual statistical publications, such as *Sightseeing in the UK* (collated from English Tourism Council, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, VisitScotland and Wales Tourist Board statistics) and

the *English Heritage Monitor* (English Tourism Council), document the rising numbers of gardens and visitors through the latter part of the twentieth-century. The English Tourism Council (2000a) states that there are 378 gardens in England alone, accounting for six per cent of the attractions sector. The Scottish Tourist Board (2000) states that there are 59 garden attractions in Scotland. A smaller number of gardens exist in Wales, although the exact number is undocumented.

In reality, these figures are gross underestimates of the number of gardens open to the public. The statistics do not take into consideration the huge variety of gardens open to the public, such as private gardens, which are made accessible under the National Garden Scheme. A more accurate estimate is given by Oxalis (2000), who collates an annual listing of all gardens open to the public and calculates that there are about 5,000 gardens open in Great Britain. Evans (2001:155) notes somewhat vaguely that there are “well-over” 500 visitor attractions and 3,500 private gardens promoted to visitors. What is clear is that the number of gardens and visitor numbers have grown significantly since 1980 (English Tourism Council, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, VisitScotland and Wales Tourist Board, 2001) which presents garden visiting as a significant and new, yet under-researched, area within the tourism and recreation research.

While gardens comprise six per cent of all attractions, they only account for four per cent of visits. Such statistics give some indication of the relatively large number of small sites (ETC *et al.*, 2001), (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1 The Visitor Attraction Sector in the UK

Category of attraction	Percent of attractions	Percent of visits to attractions
Cathedrals and churches	4	5
Country parks	5	16
Farms	3	2
GARDENS	6	4
Historic houses and castles	21	11
Other historic properties	6	2
Leisure and theme parks	2	11
Museums and galleries	29	23
Steam railways	2	1
Visitor centres	7	5
Wildlife attractions and zoos	5	6
Workplaces	5	2
Other	6	11
Total	100	100

Source: English Tourism Council, Northern Ireland Tourist Board, VisitScotland and Wales Tourist Board (2001)

As Table 1.1 shows, gardens are fourth in terms of per cent of attractions and eighth out of 13 in terms of visitor numbers. While Table 1.1 may appear to show gardens as less important than other sectors, the *volume* and *growth* of garden visitors is worthy of note.

(i) The Volume of Garden Visitors

It is estimated that there were about 16 million visits to 400 gardens in 1999, which gave rise to the highest growth of any sector that year with 46 per cent of gardens seeing an increase in visitors (Evans, 2001). The average number of visits per garden in 2000 was 54,680, but this mean masks the huge range from the lowest case, where only 50 people visited, to the highest, which attracted 1.3 million visitors (ETC *et al.*, 2001). The diversity of attractions in the garden sector is clear from these figures.

Visitor figures for Britain's most visited gardens in 1999-2000 are illustrated in Table

1.2, identifying the significant numbers of people who choose to visit garden attractions. The popularity of botanical gardens may be explained by the accessibility of the sites to large populations of local residents and visitors, as well as providing free entry.

Table 1.2 Visitor Figures for the Most Visited Garden Sites in Britain 1999-2000

MOST VISITED GARDENS	2000	1999	Percentage change	Admission
Kew Gardens, London	860,340	864,269	-0.5%	Paid
Botanic Gardens, Belfast	650,000	650,000	0	Free
Wisley Gardens, Surrey	613,987	615,034	-0.2%	Paid
Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh	609,838	609,488	0.1%	Free
Botanic Gardens, Glasgow	400,000	400,000	0	Free
Wakehurst Place, West Sussex	304,890	292,883	4.1%	Paid
Ventnor Botanic Garden, Isle-of-Wight	298,524	250,000	19.4%	Free
Stourhead Gardens, Wiltshire	253,833	272,816	-7.0%	Paid

Source: ETC *et al.* (2001)

(ii) The Growth in Garden Visits

The numbers of visits to English attractions from 1976 to 1999 are illustrated in Figure 1.1 (data is unavailable for the whole of the UK). Gardens demonstrate the highest rate of growth of all attraction from the early 1980s. Historic properties, the precursor to gardens as visitor attractions (see Chapter 2), exhibit somewhat fluctuating rates of growth, below the average for attractions.

Figure 1.1 Trend in Number of Visits to Attractions in England 1976-1999

A characteristic of the gardens operating as visitor attractions at the end of the twentieth-century is that nearly half have opened since 1980, compared with 29% of historic houses. Therefore, many gardens are recently established as visitor attractions.

While gardens have enjoyed substantial visitor numbers and growth rates over the last 15-20 years compared with all other types of attraction, there is little scope for complacency in a market that is subject to the vagaries of consumer demand. Hanna (1999: 9) notes that “gardens have not had a fall in visitor numbers since 1985” although a 7 per cent drop was experienced in 1998, probably due to poor summer weather conditions. The English Tourism Council (2000b) reported a slow down in the growth of visits to tourism attractions: the growth in garden visits was 39 per cent between 1979-1989, reducing to 26 per cent between 1989-1999. Between 1999 and 2000, garden attractions in the UK witnessed a reduction in visitor numbers (Table 1.3). However, other categories of attraction saw much larger decreases, most probably a result of over-supply.

With an uncertain future predicted for visitor attractions, it is essential for garden owners/managers to identify what visitors find enjoyable about visits to gardens and to ensure that the management of the visitor experience is given adequate consideration. New attractions with unusual features seem set to improve visitor attendance at gardens. Several new and substantive attractions in the garden sector of the visitor market emerged in 2000, including the National Botanic Garden of Wales, the Eden Project (Cornwall) and a new visitor centre at Ventnor Botanic Garden (Isle of Wight). These gardens were not included in the ETC *et al.* survey of attractions in

2000 and, thus, it is estimated that the market is actually larger than recorded in the results. The Eden Project forecast some 800,000 visitors in its first year of operation, for example (Meneer, 2000, personal communication).

Table 1.3 Percentage Change in Visitor Numbers 1999-2000

Attraction	No. in sample	Free admission	Paid admission	Total
Gardens	215	+3%	-5%	-2%
Cathedrals/churches	136	-2	-7	-4
Country parks	177	-1	+1	-1
Farms	91	-13	-5	-8
Historic houses and castles	709	+5	-4	-4
Other historic properties	199	+3	-4	-3
Leisure and theme parks	58	+1	-2	-1
Museums and art galleries	1005	-2	-4	-3
Steam railways	65	+9	+2	+3
Visitor centres	226	-1	-2	-1
Wildlife attractions and zoos	156	-7	-1	-2
Workplaces	160	-5	-3	-4
Other	189	+5	-3	+1
Total	3386	-1	-3	-2

Source: ETC, NITB, VS and WTB (2001: 6)

1.2 Garden Visitors: An Overview

Early research which examined garden visitors indicates an essentially middle class grouping across a wide range of ages, with equal appeal to males and females and visits made predominantly in two-person groups (Gallagher, 1983). Data from the ETC *et al.* (2001) show that, like most attractions except for those in the historic property sector, the market for gardens is chiefly domestic. However, where the garden market diverges from other attractions is in the appeal for children. Table 1.4

shows that only 16 per cent of garden visitors are children, the lowest of all attractions. The percentage of children recorded at attractions on average is 32 per cent. The implications of the lack of appeal to the family market are discussed in Chapter 8.

Table 1.4 Visitor Profiles at Gardens and Attractions (per cent)

	Gardens	Attraction average
Overseas visitors	10	14
Domestic visitors	90	86
Adults	83	67
Children	16	32

Source: adapted from ETC, NITB, VS and WTB (2001)

Evans (2001) speculates that potential garden tourists might be those who: own houses with gardens; read gardening magazines or look at garden websites; attend horticultural shows; belong to horticultural associations or local flower arranging clubs; belong to friends initiatives; participate in outdoor recreation; and belong to the National Trust. Garden visitors are not, of course, a homogenous group. Different people will seek different experiences and expectations may vary according to the type of garden, the seasonal changes, the reaction of accompanying visitors and the mood of the visitor, to name but a few examples. As Pett (1998: 9) suggests, “over the last twenty years, gardens have increasingly been arousing interest among a wide spectrum of people, from the observant traveller to the serious social or garden historian”, which highlights the diversity of visitor types. This feature was also emphasised by Gallagher (1981) who recognised that garden visitors are united in the pleasure that they derive from gardens but, beyond that, their interests are diverse. Intriguingly, the motivations and behaviour of garden visitors are not always likely to

be constant as different gardens provoke different responses, since garden visiting is a sensory experience, and visitation may take place for numerous reasons.

1.2.1 Identifying Motivations for Garden Visiting

As illustrated earlier, the figures for garden visiting in the late 1990s clearly indicate a strong demand. Reasons for this increase are not simple to detect and most probably include a wide range and combination of factors. Hadfield (cited in Hunt, 1964: 17) describes the garden visitor as “he or she who loves a garden instinctively without knowing why”, illustrating the problematic nature of isolating the motivations associated with garden visiting. Gallagher (1983) found that it is difficult to pinpoint which aspects of gardens attract visitors. Gallagher (1981) notes that providers are often not interested in particular facets of a visit to a garden or country house, surmising that the visitor’s only interest is in having a day out. However, it is essential to understand what motivates a visit to a garden and to gain some insights on visitor perceptions, needs and interests. If these aspects are known, it is easier for a garden owner to ensure that visitors are satisfied with their experience of the garden. While Gallagher’s (1983) emphasis was on the provision of visitor information, the visitor experience encompasses a wider range of aspects, such as staff friendliness and helpfulness, provision of teas and toilets, weather conditions and accessibility, as will be discussed in Chapter 3 and in the results of the research in Chapters 5 and 6. There is also a wider range of underlying influences that condition, impact on and motivate garden visiting, including trends towards cultural tourism, the impact of societal change on leisure consumption and the interest in gardening.

(i) Cultural Tourism

One of the principal factors influencing the growth in garden visits is connected with the increasing ease of mobility within society and increasing confidence to visit new attractions on a more regular basis. In the UK, for example, there has been a 200% rise in heritage visits from 1970-1991 (Richards, 1996). Richards states that cultural tourism has been stimulated by the expansion of the middle classes since the 1970s, which has generated a section of society with high levels of education and cultural capital which is reflected in leisure trends. Membership of the National Trust has grown by one million since 1991 and now stands at about 2.7 million (National Trust, 2001a). However, Mandler (1997) states that a tourist's visit to a country house may have nothing to do with a sense of heritage and this, of course, extends to all types of garden. While traditionally, gardens have tended to be classified as heritage attractions, this is a misnomer. It is true that many gardens are historic features, particularly those belonging to the National Trust or those which form part of an historic house attraction, but many other gardens have been formed in contemporary times and lean more towards modern or even futuristic notions of space and design principles. Therefore, the rise in heritage visits is not necessarily a reliable barometer in the context of garden visitation. So, what other reasons explain the growth in visits to gardens?

(ii) Postmodern Society and Leisure

In terms of broad social change, the desire for more cultural goods and differentiated experiences associated with the concept of postmodern society appears relevant. The notion of postmodernity in tourism and recreation (see Urry, 1990) may also explain, for example, the reasons why there are so many gardens that individuals want to visit.

In other words, visiting a garden has developed from a mere desire to see flowers to a cacophony of social, personal and intellectual factors. Thus, there may be a socially constructed and modified dimension to garden visiting (see Definition of Terms, later in the chapter).

(iii) Visitor Well-being

Research indicates that gardens have a role to play in re-creative (as well as recreative) purposes. In this respect, gardens are deemed to have a significant effect on human well-being both as places in which to engage in gardening activities and as pleasant spaces to visit. In relation to garden visiting, Gallagher (1983: 5) identifies that gardens are “spiritually satisfying”, a somewhat nebulous concept to define. However, spiritual values may be underpinned by the essence of gardens as quiet, reflective environments. Kaplan (1978) surveyed 4,000 members of the American Horticulture Society and 60% cited the most important satisfaction gained from gardening was peacefulness and tranquility. Fairbrother (1997: 253) comments that “whenever we think of a garden it is serene, peaceful and calm, and above all, kind” providing a tranquil environment for leisure consumption. The idea that gardens provide psychological benefits is supported by the work of Lewis (1979), who found that self-esteem and well-being were two important elements of the effects of gardening quoted in a survey of low-income urban gardeners. Dunnett and Qasim’s (2000) work supports Lewis’s research and state that gardens provide complex benefits and convey emotional, psychological, healing and spiritual values. These benefits highlight the general qualities of gardens as visitor environments. Thus, visiting gardens gives an opportunity to escape everyday life and recreate in pleasant and simple environments.

(iv) The Popularity of Gardening as a Leisure Pursuit

A rising interest in gardening as a leisure pursuit has resulted in, at the very least, a favourable climate for attracting visitors to gardens open to the public, a claim supported by Gallagher (1983) and Evans (2001). Roberts (1996) suggests that the domestic gardens created by the inter-war suburban housing developments around London took over from the great estates as the pride and glory of England and stimulated a new era of garden interest. In addition, the move towards home-centred leisure among the working class population led to a refocusing on the garden as a space for leisure (see Young and Wilmott, 1973, Turkington, 1995). Constantine (1981) notes that in the 1950s, two-thirds of British homes had gardens and by the end of the 1960s, this figure had risen to four-fifths. Domestic dwellings with gardens now comprise about 85% of the housing stock in Britain (Bhatti, 1999) and as Constantine (1981: 396) comments, “the cultivation of a private garden [is now] within reach of a large and previously uninitiated section of society...”. Thus, it seems that greater interest in gardening has been evoked due to a growing proportion of the population becoming garden owners and the subsequent need to carry out garden maintenance and/or create an attractive environment close to the house (although, as Constantine (1981) notes, not all garden owners are keen gardeners). Visiting gardens could be related to this interest as it provides a focus for collecting ideas for one’s own garden. Littlejohn (1997: 170) adds to this notion: “most English visitors, being flower gardeners themselves, come to see if your flowers are more varied and impressive than theirs”.

Leapman (1999: 29) reports that the television garden “make-over” programme regularly attracts around ten million viewers and that commentators famously claim

that “gardening is the new sex” (see also the commentary on the BBC *Ground Force* programme provided by Titchmarsh, 2002, and Hodge, 2002). The *BBC Gardener's World Magazine* reaches the highest circulation figures for all gardening magazines in the UK, at 310,770 in 2000 (Audit Bureau of Circulations, 2001). According to the General Household Survey (Office for National Statistics, 1998a), gardening as a leisure pursuit has grown since 1977 and has remained at a constant level through the 1990s. In 1996, 48 per cent of those interviewed in the four weeks prior to the survey had participated in gardening and Hodge (2002) states that around 26 million people class themselves as gardeners. The significance of the participation rate is that gardening is the only active leisure pursuit to achieve such high levels. The trend for gardening interest has become more significant at the start of the twenty-first-century and, as the Scottish Tourist Board (2000) points out, public awareness and interest in gardening is booming, and gardens have become a “fashionable social tendency” (Leapman, 1999: 29).

(v) Other Factors Influencing Visits to Gardens

A progressively ageing population may be another factor to consider in why visits to gardens have increased, as such attractions tend to be associated with more mature people and gardens provide a suitable environment for those seeking relaxed and peaceful environment. However, such environments are attractive to a wide range of people. Growing interest in the natural environment has spurred a greater propensity to visit naturally based attractions under which the broad heading ‘gardens’ may be classified (Swarbrooke, 2001; English Tourism Council, 2000a). The Department of the Environment (1993) stated that 85% of the population are concerned about the environment and this may be manifest in leisure choice.

Motivations may range from the desire to admire floral displays (such as gardens operated by public authorities and planted with bedding schemes), horticultural achievements (such as Royal Horticultural Society gardens like Wisley) or the works of the great landscape architects (such as Capability Brown) and garden designers (such as Gertrude Jekyll). Some may visit a garden as an adjunct to visiting an historic house, thus the garden is secondary to the visit to the house. A miscellany of personal factors can motivate visits to gardens, such as curiosity of the rich and famous (envy, deference or fun), as a distraction from children, a refuge from weather, or simply a desire for a breath of fresh air in pleasant surroundings (Mandler, 1997).

(vi) Summary: Garden Visitors

Above all, the work of tourism organisations, voluntary organisations and individual garden operators in the marketing and development of gardens, is grounded by the realisation that gardens are attractive to many people, not just those with a specific interest but to those looking for a pleasant day out, a good cup of tea or as a means of supporting a charity. In many cases, reasons for selecting a garden to visit are not clearly identifiable or linked to something specific about that site. As Longville (2000) notes, "You don't need to be a devoted gardener to be interested in all of this - garden openings are simply a beautiful and relaxing way to spend an afternoon. Some people just visit gardens for the delicious home-made teas often on offer!" Longville also notes in relation to National Gardens Scheme gardens, "at the back of your mind when you visit an NGS [National Gardens Scheme] garden, is the pleasant knowledge that your money is going to help a whole range of good causes, from providing cancer relief to training National Trust gardeners".

In summary, Gallagher (1983) states that it is possible to identify a number of influential factors on visit decision-making. These factors include: a perception that gardens are accessible leisure destinations as a result of a long history of garden opening; the effect of promotions, such as guide books and the National Gardens Scheme, which have raised the profile of gardens as places to visit; the sheer number of gardens to visit; and the image of the garden as a serene, romantic and peaceful place with a value of intrinsic good. Motivations for visiting gardens form one of the research interests of this thesis and is explored further in Chapter 6. What is also evident from the research on garden visitation is that gardens have a central role in place imagery, since many localities have close associations with, or have been branded using, garden-related icons.

1.3 The Role of Gardens in Place Marketing

Around the world, the theme of plants, gardens and gardening have been used to promote specific destinations to visitors, as part of place-marketing strategies. The growth of garden tourism in destination marketing has been noted as significant in urban areas of Quebec (Beaudet, 1999). The tourism potential of displays of wild flowers in Namaqualand, South Africa) has been highlighted by Rooyen (1999). In Croatia, gardens and parks have been described as an integral part of the tourism product (Kis, 1996). It is well-known that tourists visit the Netherlands to view the bulbfields, flower displays and plant exhibitions and a significant tourism product has developed around the horticultural theme (Anon, 1992).

In New Zealand, garden tourism in the form of festivals, has attracted much interest with the promotion of such events as the Taranaki Rhododendron Festival (where 120

private gardens open to the public in November of each year) (Tipples and Gibbons, 1992) and the Palmerston North Rose Festival (Ryan and Bates, 1995). Indeed, Canterbury has been labelled the 'Garden City of New Zealand'. However, Tipples and Gibbons (1992: 34) comment that garden tourism is "so far a largely undeveloped facet of New Zealand tourism" and in terms of opportunities for adding value through providing commercial angles (such as plant sales, food and crafts), New Zealand gardens have "not moved as far as Britain in this area".

The British Tourist Authority (BTA) has recognised the potential of a well-established garden sector as a major attraction for overseas visitors to Britain and has launched promotional activity in the guise of 'Britain's Gardens'. The target markets for the campaign are Ireland, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, New Zealand, Australia, South Africa, France, Italy, Scandinavia, India, Austria and Switzerland. Target segments are seniors aged 54 plus; empty nesters (that is, those whose children have grown up and left home) aged 60 years plus; and DINKieS (dual income, no children) aged 35-55 years. The promotional campaign is operated in both print form and via a new interactive website, described by the BTA (2000a) as "the number one interactive garden website".

The growth in popularity of garden visiting has been harnessed by tourism organisations in Great Britain as a national and regional asset in terms of tourism, leisure and place-marketing. The development of gardens as marketable commodities is particularly clear from observations of current marketing initiatives by national tourist organisations (NTOs) and regional/area tourist boards (RTOs). At a national level in Great Britain, the British Tourist Authority (BTA) website (British Tourist

Authority, 2000a), for example, presents a garden visiting campaign aimed at overseas tourists as well as domestic visitors. Moreover, a plethora of regional tourist board¹ and local authority² tourism marketing campaigns have been launched to accentuate and expand gardens as a resource for tourism and recreation. Such initiatives illustrate a rediscovery by promotional bodies of an historical phenomenon whereby people have traditionally been drawn to enjoy the attraction of open spaces, local attractions and the garden as a visitor attraction. In addition, garden visitors are seemingly becoming one of the key markets for British tourism (see for example, British Tourist Authority, 2000b; English Tourism Council, 2000a; Cornwall Tourist Board, 1999, Scottish Tourist Board (now VisitScotland), 2000). However, the garden tourism market does not yet boast the high profile linked with other niche products, such as rambling and cycling (Evans, 2001).

Essentially, gardens open to the public and promoted for visitation, tend to evoke connections with a rural tradition and a countryside setting. Garden visiting is thus primarily linked to the public opening of historic country houses and estates, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. However, the rural emphasis should not be viewed as prescriptive as many important gardens, in terms of the volume of visitor numbers, are located in urban and suburban locations. Indeed, many gardens promoted by RTOs show that while there is a greater propensity for gardens to be located in rural areas, many significant gardens in terms of product and visitor numbers, are situated in urban locations. For example, the Perthshire Gardens Collection leaflet (Perthshire

¹ For example, *Glorious Gardens of Argyll and Bute*, distributed by The Argyll, The Isles, Stirling, Loch Lomond, the Trossachs Tourist Board

² For example, *Cornwall Open Gardens Guide*, produced by Cornwall County Council

Area Tourist Board) includes gardens within the urban districts of Perth and Dundee in Scotland. Consequently, the marketing of gardens is relevant in both rural and urban contexts.

1.4 Research Context

The justification for this study of garden visiting is a gap in the knowledge and understanding of gardens as a tourism and recreational resource. Gardens form a well-researched area in the context of history, meaning and design relevant to a wide range of disciplines, including art, history, literature, landscape design, botany, biology, sociology, geography, psychology and management and there is a vast literature on gardens, famous designers and practical gardening. Despite the significance and popularity of gardens, research interest has not been widely extended to the field of tourism and recreation management. As Bhatti and Church (2000: 184) point out, “the contemporary garden has largely been ignored in social science generally and leisure studies in particular”. The minimal research attention, both in Great Britain and overseas, contrasts with research directed at other attractions, such as theme parks (for example, Stevens, 2000), historic houses (for example, Markwell, Bennett and Ravenscroft, 1997), distilleries (for example, McBoyle, 1996) and zoos (for example, Mason, 2000).

There is some evidence of a growing body of interdisciplinary literature at an international level directed towards the greater understanding of gardens in the social sciences. Work exists on the spiritual aspect of gardens and the significance of gardening to human well-being (for example, Lewis, 1979; Dunnett and Qasim, 2000). The role of the domestic garden and consumption of private garden space has

slowly emerged as a fruitful area of research for sociologists (Bhatti, 1999), social historians (Constantine, 1981) and geographers (Halkett, 1978; Williams, 1995), as well as more interdisciplinary studies (Bhatti and Church, 2000).

Existing research on garden visitation tends to be out-of-date or limited in scale. An English Tourist Board sponsored study, which provided a comprehensive overview of visits to historic gardens (Gallagher, 1981; Gallagher, 1983) provided data on 94 historic gardens open to the public and their visitors, with a focus on information. Since Gallagher's (1983) study was published, there have been significant increases in the number of gardens, garden visitors and changes in leisure tastes, trends, attitudes and expectations. The consequent changes in the operation, role and commercialisation of garden visiting have emerged as new issues, along with the increasing focus of gardens in the non-heritage/historic sector.

More recent research is small-scale, focusing on specific gardens (Benfield, 2001) and garden events (Tipples and Gibbons, 1991; Ryan and Bates, 1995). Benfield (2001) provides an overview of timed ticketing at Sissinghurst Castle Gardens, Kent, in relation to problems of carrying capacity at the famed National Trust garden. Tipples and Gibbons (1991) conducted a limited, exploratory study of motives for garden opening (based on 12 garden owners) and garden visiting. Ryan and Bates's (1995) study analysed the motivations for opening gardens as part of a festival and made recommendations in relation to organising festivals. Evans (2001) provides a generalised and brief market overview for garden tourism in the UK. Other research, such as work on specific destinations (such as Beaudet's (1999) work in Quebec and Rooyen's (1999) study on the appeal of wildflowers in South Africa) is of limited

scope and relevance to managing gardens as visitor attractions. While a perfunctory overview of the garden sector may be gleaned from the available statistics, there is no research to assist in the understanding of what constitutes the visitor experience to gardens and the implications for garden operators. The consistent neglect of the importance of British gardens open to the public in recreational terms is both notable and surprising in an era of diversity in research and recognition of key attractions. With the growing sophistication of the consumer and the greater use of niche marketing by tourism and leisure organisations, research on garden visiting is now timely.

So why have gardens suffered from a lack of research attention? One explanation may be the 'hobby' and 'interest' nature of private gardens open to the public, which may not have been viewed as mainstream leisure spaces. In terms of academic research, one possible reason for the relative neglect is that capital-intensive visitor attractions (such as theme parks) have been a focus for contemporary tourism and leisure research. Gardens may have been perceived by academics as unfashionable or commercially insignificant, while the reality is, of course, that many are the top visitor attractions in Great Britain (for example, Kew Gardens and the Eden Project). Thus, gardens deserve as much scholarly research attention as any other form of attraction.

Certainly, more focused research activity has concentrated on urban parks as public recreational space. Williams (1995: 166) notes that "...as the academic and professional study of recreation emerged in the latter part of the 1960s and the early 1970s, urban open space, as an overtly recreational resource, was amongst the first type of facility to attract attention". This early focus is reflected in the quantity of

studies on parks in the urban context (for example, Duffield and Walker, 1983; Harrison, 1983; Burgess, Harrison and Limb, 1988; Page, Nielsen and Goodenough, 1994, which are reviewed in detail by Hall and Page, 2002). Such studies indicate a reasonably well-developed body of knowledge on behavioural aspects and patterns of use of urban parks in the UK and internationally, yet, such detailed research attention has not been extended to garden visitation.

Urban municipal parks form a distinct recreational space, which is significantly different from gardens in terms of the approach to management and visitor experience. While parks are public spaces, they are frequented more often and assume a different social and cultural meaning among the regular users, who are predominantly local residents. Frameworks for understanding public spaces are useful in determining the nature of the garden as space but application of frameworks, such as those by Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone (1992) and Grahn (1991), produce a differential in relation to parks and gardens. The notion of the garden as public space and the application of these frameworks is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

1.5 Definition of Terms

In distinguishing the meanings of gardens, some progress is possible in forming a coherent understanding of motivation for garden visiting. Consequently, it is worthwhile contemplating what gardens mean to people because it assists in building an appreciation of why people visit gardens. Many authors agree that finding an adequate definition of the term garden is extremely difficult. Hellyer (1977) rightly contests that gardens mean different things to different people, a feature reiterated by Ross (1993), where the features, appearances and purposes of gardens vary so greatly

that they defy any simple definition. An analysis of the literature on the defining aspects of gardens indicates the existence of five main dimensions, which are outlined below. It should be pointed out that some consideration of the domestic garden is incorporated in this review where relevant in order to provide a context for the meaning of gardens in the absence of literature on gardens open to the public.

1.5.1 Utilitarian Dimensions

Perhaps the most useful starting place in the search for definitions of the garden is to consider a dictionary definition. The Concise Oxford Dictionary defines the term garden as a “piece of ground devoted to growing flowers, fruit or vegetables”. Similarly, Fairbrother (1997) asserts that a garden is a place for growing flowers, although this definition describes a floral allotment as much as a garden. This utilitarian view, conveying little more than the practical aspect of a garden and a focus on production, ignores the consumption element and social construction. In the context of recreation, Patmore (1983) suggests that domestic gardens have three functions. First, gardens provide an extension to the house and provide opportunities to carry out domestic tasks, such as drying clothes or keeping pets. Second, they serve as a space for outdoor recreation, particularly if young children make up part of a household. Third, the garden itself provides a focus for recreation, if gardening as a pursuit is considered as leisure. This is supported by the work of Halkett (1978) and Nielsen (unpublished, cited in Williams, 1995: 89), which demonstrate the use of the private garden and support the notion of the garden as an outdoor room. Halkett’s (1978) study of private gardens in Adelaide, South Australia, defines three forms of activities in gardens: recreation, gardening and household ancillary activities. Halkett also found that passive (such as, reading, sunbathing), active (such as, playing games)

and social (such as, entertaining) components comprised the recreation experience of private garden use. Nielsen's empirical work on recreation in private gardens in Stoke-on-Trent is useful as it highlights an intermediate category, where activities may be considered chores or leisure, depending on the view of the participant. Thus, from a functional point of view, gardens offer a space for undertaking practical tasks.

1.5.2 Pleasure Dimensions

However, a utilitarian perspective does not explain, for example, *why* people might want to grow flowers. Mackellar Gouly (1993: xvi) states that a garden is "an area of ground *designed and laid out primarily to be used for pleasure* [my italics], where the growing of plants is, or was, an important element". This definition recognises the significance of the recreational and aesthetic aspects of the garden, which are given greater emphasis than its horticultural elements. Pugh (1988) describes a garden as a pleasurable retreat and further reflects that a garden can generate symbolic images, such as holidays, travel to exotic places, relaxation, leisure, retirement, creativity and naturalness.

It is important to include the meaning of gardens from a social interaction perspective. Sarudy's (1989) study of parks and gardens in Baltimore, indicated that seventeenth-century gardens in London were popular public meeting places and important for exchange of information between gentlemen, visitors and tradesmen. This point was developed further by Coffin (1994) who indicated that gardens may form a place for social intercourse, including conversational walks, theatrical performances and generally offering an environment for social enjoyment. This interpretation acts to highlight the use of controlled natural spaces for pleasure and indicates that the

garden provides one of the best spaces for this purpose. Indeed, the design of a garden may generate an ambient atmosphere for relaxed social experiences with laid paths, considered views, boundaries and areas for communal or private interaction. There is some overlap with the study of parks in this respect (see Billinge, 1996). Thus, the idea of the garden as a focus for pleasurable experiences is established.

1.5.3 Creative Dimensions

In the process of creating a garden (for either or both utilitarian or pleasure purposes), the idea of controlling nature has traditionally been a prominent one. Jellicoe, Goode and Lancaster (1993: 604) give the historical definition of a garden as “an oasis of order, safely enclosed against the surrounding dangers of uncontrolled nature”, emphasising well-groomed cultivation rather than the wild qualities offered by natural environments. Ross (1993) emphasises the artistic dimension of garden creation, noting that gardens have the capacity not only to soothe and delight but also to represent, express, arouse and amuse and are, thus, multifaceted. This discussion leads to the contemplation of the link between gardens and nature. There is much debate about the differences between what is natural and what is created by man. There is some agreement that *natural* is a social construct and has a cultural meaning (Pugh, 1988; Larsen, 1992; Crandell, 1993; Wood, 1992). Crandell (1993) argues that people generally want to see a pictorial conception of a landscape that may have resulted in the creation of landscapes people want to experience. Extending Crandell’s argument, it might be argued that this is what a garden constitutes – a part of nature enhanced and perfected for public consumption and an imitation of what people would like to think is natural. Gardening, as Wood (1992) argues, while using nature as its base resource, often incorporates a whole array of unnatural processes,

such as genetic manipulation, chemical applications and pest controls, which produce an end product that, while seeming quite natural, is not.

1.5.4 Spiritual Dimensions

Other writers have developed wider perspectives on the garden as a spiritual place with a complex array of social psychological meanings. Spirn (1998: 70) emphasises the spiritual qualities of the garden and describes it as a “potent and complex symbol”, embodying “pleasure, fertility, sustenance, and renewal”. Indeed, the spiritual and symbolic aspects of gardens form a significant research area (see Charlesworth, 1993; Minford, 1998). Underlying this, as Thacker (1979) outlines, are the mythical associations with paradise and Eden and the notion that the very first gardens were not created by Man. Adams (1991) highlights the concept of the garden as an allegory of the cycle of life and death and that gardening is a way of attempting to maintain life. Wescoat (1995) points out that while few gardens are religious, “many religious places have garden-like qualities”. The spiritual nature of the garden represents the perfect space – tranquility, peace and being at one with nature. .

1.5.5 Gardens as a Social Construction

Gardens may also be considered as socially constructed environments. Groening and Schneider (1999) comment that gardens convey a comprehensive social meaning. Indeed, an exploration of the meanings of gardens identifies several emergent themes. Francis and Hester (1990) posit that in relation to the meaning and value of gardens, several perspectives may be identified, including as expression of ideas, as places and resources, and as expression of cultural values and beliefs. Adams (1991) states that the human desire to dominate nature for metaphysical purposes or moral imperatives,

such as in the perfection of Eastern garden design in the quest for Zen tranquility. In addition, the notion that where humans can control nature, the ability to control other humans is clearly identifiable, such as in royal gardens, including the Chinese palaces and in the geometry of Versailles. Consequently, underlying political agendas may have affected garden design, a view supported by Francis and Hester (1990), Williamson (1993) and Charlesworth (1993). The creation of the eighteenth-century landscape parks in England led to the inevitable idea that, with wealth, man could change nature: so, if a hill blocked the view, it could be moved. Accordingly, Hoyles (1991) suggests that gardens symbolise aspects of culture and politics in the widest interpretation.

1.5.6 Summary: Defining Gardens

The categorisation of definitions discussed here clearly show that, while basic definitions dealing with the utility aspects of gardens are acceptable in the sense that they inform us about the practical function of garden space, a deeper understanding of what constitutes a garden is necessary in the process of understanding why people like gardens and like visiting gardens. Elkins (1993: 190) argues that gardens should be regarded in several ways in an attempt to “demonstrate the unusual diversity of responses to gardens”. Bhatti and Church’s study (2000) claims that the garden is viewed as: a private retreat; a setting for creativity; a social place for sharing with others; a connection to personal history; a reference point of identity; and a status symbol. The multifaceted nature of the garden is clearly demonstrated by the range and scope of approaches to its definition.

1.5.7 Appropriate Terminology for the Thesis: Garden Tourism or Garden Visiting?

In order to provide the basis for the appropriate use of terminology in this thesis, some brief discussion of the concepts of garden tourism and garden visiting is required. Visits to gardens are undertaken by a range of visitors, including overseas visitors, domestic tourists and day-trippers. A recently defined term - *garden tourism* - has been used to identify the phenomenon of visiting gardens. The Scottish Tourist Board (2000) states that "Garden tourism is where the garden itself provides the main reason for visiting". More specifically, garden tourism refers to trips where the primary purpose is to visit one or more gardens and includes at least one night away from home. Garden holidays are widely advertised by mainstream and specialist tour operators (such as Cox and Kings and Boxwood Tours), and as Charlton (1998: 7) comments, "garden-visiting tours are a flourishing business". However, Evans (2001) suggests that while many people are interested in gardens, only a small minority would go on a garden-themed holiday. As a consequence, the day-visit market is likely to be the most significant in terms of volume and value.

The term *tourism* has a specific meaning (as identified by the widely accepted World Tourism Organisation definition), which is not necessarily appropriate for a study of garden *visiting*. Whether it is relevant to distinguish those whose visit constitutes part of a holiday (and, again, whether that holiday is for general interest or whether it is specifically focused on garden visiting) from those who are visiting on a day trip from home is debatable. For the purposes of this research, the more generic term *garden visiting* is adopted, as this does not differentiate between what might be an arbitrary division of garden visitors into tourists, day trippers and local residents. Whether the

visitors are tourists or day-trippers is not the major focus of attention - the fact that they are visiting the garden is the salient point. In other words, the resource context and the experience of that resource are germane to this study.

So, this research explores a broader conceptualisation of the visitation of gardens, rather than tourism habits *per se*. With this in mind, the terms *tourism* and *recreation* are used in this thesis to encompass all types of visitation and because garden visiting is both a tourism-related and a recreation-related activity, given the international recognition that day trips to attractions may be numerically more substantial when compared with tourist visits (Countryside Agency, 1998; Middleton, 2002).

McKercher (1996: 563) confirms that the grouping of tourists and day trippers into one category is an appropriate strategy in some circumstances because “the artificial distinction between tourism and recreation serves no practical management purpose, for tourists and non-tourists alike are part of the broader visitor management issue”.

Thus, for the purposes of this study, the definition of garden visiting is taken to be *a purposeful visit to a site managed on horticultural principles and of interest to visitors, by a tourist, day visitor or local resident*. Having established the basic definition that will underpin the research, the chapter now turns to an appraisal of the approach to the thesis.

1.6 The Parameters of the Thesis

While it is apparent that there has been a growth in garden visiting and in the numbers of gardens open to the public, the range of attractions and standards of management are poorly understood. In addition, the type of experiences that visitors seek from

visits to gardens and the factors determining visitor satisfaction in garden attractions have not been researched previously. With tourism in the UK in 1999 valued at over £63 billion, and domestic day trips alone worth £32 billion (British Tourist Authority, 2001), the economic importance of visitor attractions as an element of this revenue should not be overlooked. Indeed, the ETC *et al.* (2001) state that 413 million visits in 2000 created a revenue stream of £1.4 billion and provided 130,000 jobs. Applied research, which points to ways in which management decisions may be improved and the visitor experience enhanced, can assist in the strategic development of the tourism and the more generic leisure industry.

Additional factors need to be considered in relation to gardens, which are less relevant to other forms of attraction. Many gardens are open to the public primarily to raise funds for charities and thus operate in the informal environment. Many open on the basis of the owner's hobby and the desire to share their own garden with others.

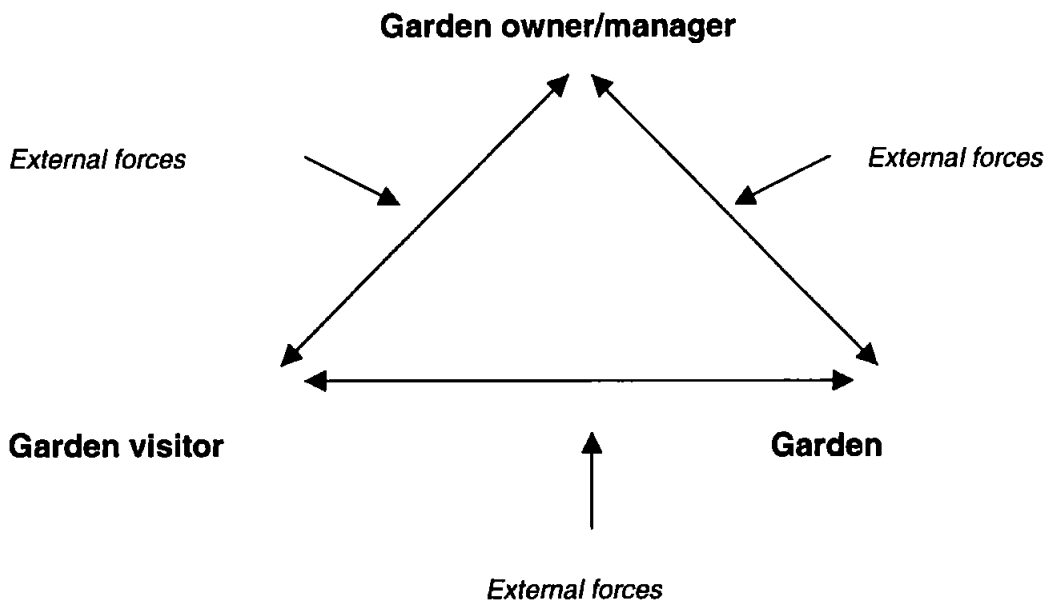
Other gardens are run on a more commercial basis and are classed by tourism organisations as visitor attractions. The range of gardens and the purposes for opening to the public are an essential consideration in this study as these variables may have an effect on how the garden is managed for visitors. Existing research does not adequately explain the diversity of these different modes of operation.

Two key themes are associated with gardens open to the public: the perspective of the owner or manager of the garden and; the perspective of the garden visitor. The aspect uniting these two dimensions of garden visiting is the *visitor experience*, explained by two reasons:

1. Opening a garden to the public for any motive or purpose is likely to include some consideration of the visitor – what they would like to see, how they would like to be treated and overall, the level of enjoyment gained from visiting the garden. This ‘customer-oriented’ approach is particularly relevant for gardens because the traditional understanding of the garden visitor, gained anecdotally and from snapshot observations of site-specific visitor surveys, reveals a more mature and discerning audience, seeking quality experiences during leisure time. Gaining the perspective of the garden owner as to how the visitor experience is managed provides a useful focus for study, as it relates directly to the interface between the visitor, the owner and the garden (Figure 1.2)
2. The garden visitor, in common with visitors to other types of attraction and in terms of being a consumer, expects or desires several benefits from a visit, which may be consciously or sub-consciously determined. There is no empirical evidence to suggest what motivates visits to gardens and the significance of the experience of visiting a garden. Understanding why gardens are increasingly viewed as popular visitor attractions and what is valued by the visitor can assist in the planning and management of gardens, enhance the visitor experience and sustain the future of gardens as attractions.

It is evident from this basic analysis of the lack of understanding of garden visiting that research findings should be derived from both the perspective of the garden owner and that of the garden visitor. Undertaking a study that considers two approaches to the garden experience will facilitate the identification of similarities

Figure 1.2 The Garden Visitation Interface



and differences in the management and experience of gardens. Gaps in the quality of the garden experience and provision of services are more easily extrapolated and the findings of the research are more likely to have practical application in the continuing development and management of gardens. With the context of the research in mind, it is now an appropriate point to outline the aim and objectives of the thesis.

1.6.1 Statement of Aim and Objectives

Aim

The overall aim of the research is to investigate the nature of the visitor experience associated with gardens open to the public in Great Britain.

The context of the research will be set by identifying the significance of gardens as

part of the visitor attraction industry in contemporary times (Chapter 1) and an analysis of the historical growth and development of gardens as a tourism and recreation resource (Chapter 2).

Objectives

The particular objectives of the research are to:

1. Identify the defining characteristics of gardens open to the public.
2. Identify the characteristics of garden visitors, the garden visit and the nature of the visitor experience from the perspective of garden visitors.
3. Determine the perceptions and attitudes of garden owners to managing the visitor experience.
4. Evaluate the issues affecting the future of gardens as a tourism and recreation resource and identify the developmental and management implications for gardens open to the public.

1.6.2 Methodological Considerations for the Thesis

While a detailed review of the methodology adopted in this research is presented in Chapters 3, 4 and 5, a brief statement outlining the major approaches taken is relevant at this stage to explain how the research for the thesis was approached. Data used in this research were obtained through both primary and secondary sources. Primary data are required to generate original information on a subject where very little is known and where no existing data exists. Original data were collected through three distinct stages.

Stage 1: Scoping Exercise

The development of a case study of Cornwall formed a scoping exercise that assisted in informing the methodology for the remainder of the research. A major reason for selecting Cornwall was based on the researcher's personal involvement with the development of the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall, which witnessed rapid growth as garden visitor attraction. Much of the appeal of the garden was experiential and the generation of a 'feel good factor' for visitors was the ultimate aim of the director, Tim Smit. In addition, a large variety and number of gardens exist in Cornwall and there is concerted private, public and voluntary sector effort made to promote gardens to visitors, with tourism as one of the most important industries in the county. These factors appeared to give Cornwall uniqueness among other areas of Britain and thus it was deemed to be a suitable area for initial investigation, with a view to extending the study to the national level if the pilot work yielded research issues and questions to be explored further. The scoping exercise involved a series of qualitative in-depth interviews with garden owners; an analysis of garden characteristics for gardens in Cornwall; and a pilot questionnaire for the national study of garden owners was piloted in Cornwall. The outcome of the scoping exercise in Cornwall is reported in Chapter 4.

Stage 2: National Survey of Garden Owners/Managers

A questionnaire survey to collect data from a broader set of respondents was considered to be the most appropriate method to explore a range of themes highlighted from the preliminary work on Cornwall. As the sample identified for the questionnaire survey was spatially dispersed due to the national scale of garden visiting, the most suitable form of data collection identified was the postal survey.

The survey was designed to collect data on the supply of gardens and focused on the defining characteristics of gardens and the management of the visitor experience. Chapter 5 presents a more detailed account of the background, methodology and findings of the survey.

Stage 3: National Survey of Garden Visitors

The third stage of the research was a questionnaire survey of garden visitors, which sought to ascertain visitor characteristics and the visitor perspective on garden visiting. The questionnaire was undertaken in thirteen gardens across England, Scotland and Wales and was designed to complement the survey of garden owners/managers by asking similar questions of visitors. Thus, the results of both surveys could be compared. Further expansion on the visitor survey can be found in Chapter 6.

1.6.3 Structure of the Thesis

Having established a context for the study, it is now possible to outline the major components of the thesis. The thesis comprises nine chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on a review of the literature from relevant specialisms, which assist in the understanding of the garden as a visitor attraction. The empirical work undertaken to meet the objectives of this thesis is reported and discussed in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 with analysis and synthesis of the key themes in Chapter 7, followed with future implications for managing gardens as visitor attractions in Chapter 8. Conclusions and future research themes complete the discussion in Chapter 9.

The stately home and its garden has long constituted a distinct form of visitor

attraction and so it is necessary to consider the development of country house visiting in order to contextualise the importance of garden visiting. **Chapter 2** explores this in detail, initially taking an historical perspective, with a focus on the early origins of house and garden visiting in the eighteenth century through to the phenomenon of garden visiting in contemporary Britain.

Chapter 3 provides a synthesis of published work on the visitor experience in relation to tourism and recreation behaviour. Essential to a consideration of the visitor experience, and further developing the work in Chapter 2, is an examination of the garden as a contemporary visitor attraction. The focus turns to the visitor experience and the factors that influence both the management of a garden from a manager (or owner) perspective and the experience of a garden from a visitor perspective. This work directly informs the methodology for the research. A framework for measuring the visitor experience is developed, based on an analysis of the preliminary qualitative stage and literature review.

A study of garden tourism in the south-western county of Cornwall, renowned both for its diversity of gardens and a well-developed tourism industry, is presented in **Chapter 4**. The findings of a scoping exercise are used to formulate the methodology for a macro-level study of gardens, reported in Chapter 5 and 6.

Chapter 5 includes a brief background on supply issues associated with tourism and recreation in order to provide a context for a study of the garden owner/manager perspective in relation to gardens. An outline of the methodology used to research the garden owner/manager approach to garden management is incorporated. The major

part of the chapter is a presentation of the results of the survey including a descriptive and analytical exploration of the data generated from the survey. **Chapter 6** follows a similar format, but details a survey of garden visitors and thus facilitates the generation of data to gain an understanding of the demand perspective in terms of garden visitation.

Discussion of the results from the surveys follows in **Chapter 7**, drawing parallels with relevant theory and literature. The chapter develops the findings from the results and highlights relevant themes and implications of the survey research. In particular, a comparison of owner/manager and visitor perspectives is made in order to identify gaps in provision and perception. Thus, the chapter provides a series of insights on issues relating to the management of the visitor experience, focusing particularly on the implications for gardens and garden visiting. A model of the visitor experience as it relates to gardens is presented.

Chapter 8 provides an overview of the management issues that are likely to become significant for gardens in the future, incorporating issues developed from the survey data and drawn from the literature on attraction management. Accordingly, recommendations for garden operators are generated. **Chapter 9** concludes the study and discusses themes for future research.

Chapter 2 The History and Development of Garden Visiting

2.0 Introduction

Garden visiting is not a phenomenon specific to the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, having a historical continuity traceable from the sixteenth-century. This chapter identifies the historical antecedents and accompanying development of garden visiting as a form of tourism and recreation. It is necessary to set the context of garden visiting by taking an historical perspective, since many gardens have been established for some considerable time, creating a tourism and recreation phenomenon which, according to Towner (1996), complements the rise of country house visiting. It is also apparent that many gardens were not created for visiting but through time have adopted, and adapted their facilities for, this function. Indeed, as Hunt (1964) comments, garden visiting is by no means a new pastime.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the factors influencing the evolution of the country house and garden as a visitor attraction, from its early origins to the present day. The depiction of the country house through time in social and economic terms is complex, incorporating political, financial, societal forces in combination, which have shaped the advancement and retreat of landed estates and the central role of the country house. In the context of a thesis on garden visiting, only a broad review of the key milestones is permissible and a full appreciation of detailed aspects of social change, the implications of legislation and government policy lies beyond the scope of this thesis, being more effectively provided by texts such as Mandler's *The Fall and Rise of the Stately Home* (1997). However, an examination of the literature identifies that in adopting an historical approach, garden visiting cannot be viewed in

isolation or as a distinct leisure pursuit and, thus, acknowledgement of the critical points in the origins of garden visiting is essential to an understanding of the phenomenon.

It is reasonable to argue, as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter, that the evidence for the evolution of garden visiting is in country house visiting and as a secondary attraction to visiting the countryside. In this way, gardens have progressively emerged as an attraction in their own right. With this argument forming the central focus, this chapter commences with a consideration of the early origins of garden visiting - embodied in country house visiting. Post-war pressures, linked with finance and inheritance issues, are recognised as a major turning point for many house owners and the move towards greater commercialisation of estates is acknowledged. Further, recognition of the increasing number of gardens open to the public, not necessarily part of the country house sector, is also discussed.

2.1 The Early Origins of Garden Visiting

The origins of present day large-scale participation in country house and garden visiting as a discrete activity can be traced back to the early Victorian period. Prior to this time, visiting country houses was a pastime predominantly of the upper class (Towner, 1996), thus distinguishing between the practice and the scale of garden visiting. In other words, garden visiting existed as a pursuit, enjoyed by a small number of societal elites, long before it became popular and widespread across all levels of society. Towner (1996) outlines the growth in country house visits by the affluent across Northern Europe from the sixteenth-century and noted that it was common for the upper classes to spend the weekend at a country retreat – a property

which might be owned outright, a rented house or visits to friends or relatives. In Britain, land was purchased and houses and gardens were constructed for weekend leisure as an alternative to a full-time life in the towns. The growth of pleasure villas around Edinburgh, for example, is observed by Gifford, McWilliam and Walker (1984) as early as the mid sixteenth-century. Such developments were commissioned by the aristocracy, politicians, wealthy merchants and professionals.

As the upper classes moved further into rural areas, a major theme of social life centred on visiting the country estate of friends and associates. Visits were made for special family events, such as christenings, or for festivals or hunting expeditions and generally consisted of several days (Towner, 1996). Girouard (1978) suggests that the large Elizabethan house became a social and cultural centre and Thomas (1983) notes that a growing taste for gardening as recreation became prominent. Hunt and Willis (1975) recognised the early origins of international visitation, where foreign visitors came to visit English parks in the 1700s to learn and admire, while the style of such grounds became a dominant feature as the park phenomenon diffused across Europe.

Indeed, it might be argued that some of the initial influences on garden development in England arose from the aristocratic form of cultural education, such as the Grand Tour. Travellers were eager to see for themselves the landscapes that were reflected in the Renaissance style that they so admired. Crandell (1993) described how these travellers became proficient in 'scene-hopping' with their travel itineraries carefully planned, enabling them to see the main sights without wasting too much time; coping with a kind of visual restlessness and desire for cultural consumption along similar lines to the modern-day tourist. The rejection of formal styles of garden (such as

French and Dutch designs) which had come to dominate the English garden until the early 1700s were consequently rejected in favour of a more natural approach. The new style of trying to create an enhanced copy of nature became the overriding fashion. As a result, it might be postulated that garden influences in this period may be directly associated with travel. The plant hunters, such as Forrest, Wilson and Farrer, travelled to exotic regions in search of new species to bring back to sponsors in Britain which is another dimension to gardens and travel.

Girouard (1978: 210) comments that walking or driving around the parkland or garden of one's own property or that of someone else was a significant part of aristocratic leisure time in the eighteenth-century: "guests or visitors, having done the circuit of the rooms, did the circuit of the grounds". 'Polite visiting', as it was called, usually focused on the appreciation of architecture or art collections and was generally undertaken by the urban elite on a small scale in the eighteenth-century. Landowners took pride in the presentation of their houses and gardens and landscaping became a major preoccupation on many estates towards the end of the eighteenth-century.

Towner (1996) notes that the fashion for landscape parks was first adopted in the Thames Valley, west of London, then spread through the Home Counties. Designers such as Lancelot 'Capability' Brown and later, Humphry Repton, were engaged to create the most desirable parks and gardens of the times (Horn, 1980). Ousby (1990) notes that many country houses and gardens attracted tourists, travelling on circuits of the country or on short visits from the towns. Jane Austen's novel *Pride and*

Prejudice, published in 1813, features this form of tourism where a London merchant family visit the Darcy estate in Derbyshire.

Gardens created in the eighteenth-century were a major attraction of their time. The landscape gardens of the early part of the century, with their temples, grottos, follies and man-made pre-defined vistas, attracted the most visitors. Many gardens achieved fame at this time and guidebooks, plans and proper opening times as well as tea-rooms by the end of the century, were all on offer to visitors (Tinniswood, 1998). In terms of the motivation for these early garden visitors, Tinniswood (1998: 80) observed that, for most tourists, the fact that the garden “was famous and had lots to see was probably quite enough to make a visit worthwhile”. Thus, in the eighteenth-century, garden visiting was a popular pursuit and visiting the grand landscaped parks such as Stourhead was *de rigeur* in fashionable circles (Owen, 1998).

The visiting phenomenon described so far was of little relevance to the working class population. Mandler (1997) suggests that the Victorian era was the first age of mass country house visiting. Increases in visits emerged for several reasons relating to both supply and demand, namely improved mobility, curiosity about country estates and the benevolence of the landed gentry. Opening houses to the public was not perceived as a way of generating revenue from the estate. In fact, in many cases, the reality was that house owners viewed opening to the public as a financial and logistical burden. However, the main rationale for house and garden viewing was as an act pursued out of benevolence, based on the notion that the land-owning classes had a social obligation to provide space and opportunity for recreation.

2.2 Managing Visitors in an Historical Context

Early attempts at managing visitors in both historic houses and gardens are identifiable from around the peak era of historic house visiting around the 1870s. First, a small number charged an entry fee as a means of controlling numbers, although most preferred not to implement this measure. Second, some estates placed a strict entry limit on the number of tickets available each day. In some cases, the tickets were supplied without charge, which allowed owners to implement the limit more easily. Third, some estates adopted the notion of the timed ticket (Mandler, 1997), which remains a common strategy in the contemporary management of houses and gardens, particularly those belonging to the National Trust (see Benfield, 2001).

Mandler (1997) reports on archival material relating to correspondence between the Head Gardener at Chatsworth (Thomas Speed) in 1883 and several of his colleagues in other gardens. This material is illuminating because it gives some evidence about the attitude to, and nature of, visitor management in gardens in the late Victorian period. Thomas Speed asked his colleagues what arrangements they had introduced to control visitor numbers and the costs incurred in maintaining their garden for visitors. The responses ranged from those who charged a nominal fee, such as Blenheim and Eaton (where visitors were charged one shilling each for entry), to those who were not charging, but considering doing so. George Glass, the gardener at Enville Hall in 1883, stated that the garden attracted large crowds and that management was required to cope with the numbers:

“I place a man at the entrance and he admits all who come. We do not allow any bottles or baskets to be taken in the grounds. They can be left at the gate. All parties are requested not to walk on the grass. I have a few men about the grounds just to see that parties are behaving

themselves... We do not allow any pic-nics or games to be carried on inside the grounds, only to walk quietly around." (Mandler, 1997: 197).

Belvoir, which charged only two old pence for entry, was quite different. The Head Gardener stated:

"The increased facilities offered by Railways bring a great invasion of visitors and I am sorry to say that no regulations exist to meet such circumstances...Should the Duke take up his residence at the Castle in the summer time he would find it annoying to have people all over the place." (Mandler, 1997: 198).

Concern was expressed about charging visitors in most instances. It was not the intention to prevent respectable working class people from visiting country houses at all and many landowners preferred to operate an informal system where there was no charge for entry but visitors could give tips to gardeners and servants.

Porteous (1996: 87) comments on eighteenth-century landscape gardens and visitor experience:

"A kind of outdoor theatre was in operation, and for the first-time visitor at least, a form of mood-management would be quite effective – tranquility along the lawn by the smooth river, agitation in the darker woods or seemingly 'unkempt' wilderness, surprise on rounding a corner to see a ruin, delight at a view of a temple-crowned crag, terror at attaining the summit of that crag, and reflection at the sight of a far-off, fortunately unsellable, ploughman slowly toiling in the fields."

Mandler (1997) reports that the regulation of visitors to country houses developed from the 1880s. It was the accepted norm to charge for entry by 1900 and many raised their entry charges in an attempt to regulate visits and subsidise the costs of opening to the public. For some landowners, the realisation that greater professionalism was the key to more successful house openings resulted in more

innovative ways of managing estates for visitors. The Marquess of Westminster, who owned Eaton Hall, tried to attract visitors by managing the estate purposely as a visitor attraction and publicised the opening schedule. Proceeds from entry fees were used to pay the four men who showed the house and garden, with the surplus forwarded to local charities. It can be argued that Warwick Castle displayed the highest degree of professionalism. At Warwick, guides were hired to take visitors around the property, the entrance fee was raised and opening times were widened and publicised. As a result, visitor numbers increased and the enterprise became commercially profitable. In 1886, a total of 20,000 visitors were recorded, which rose to 40,000 by 1905 when five guides were employed (Mandler, 1997).

2.3 The Rise of Rural Recreation

The growth of visits to country houses and estates mirrors the growth in countryside leisure in general, and, in essence, visiting country houses can be conceptualised as a form of countryside leisure. In this respect, it is necessary to understand the factors that stimulated demand for recreation in the rural environment. The critical factors in explaining the increase of visitors to the countryside in the nineteenth-century are transport improvements, increases in leisure time and disposable income, the desire to escape from urban life and changes in attitude to the rural environment. Most importantly, visits to the countryside were stimulated by urban demand in an attempt to escape the built environment and to undertake re-creation (Billinge, 1996). These factors have been well-documented in the literature on rural recreation and tourism (Glyptis, 1992; Patmore, 1983; Clarke and Critcher, 1985). Both urbanisation and industrialisation created demand to escape to the countryside but also the circumstances to constrain access (Glyptis, 1991; Clarke and Critcher, 1985). A

number of owners of estates opened up parkland to visitors for the purposes of informal recreation after a sense of assumed personal responsibility. Many large cities were relatively close to some of these parks, for example: Chatsworth House in Derbyshire was in close proximity to Sheffield and Derby; Alton Towers, Staffordshire was near Birmingham and the Potteries; and Tatton Park, Alderley Edge and Dunham Massey in Cheshire were close to Manchester and Liverpool. Thus, large populations had potential access to these open spaces. Mandler (1997) states that many estates open to the general public at that time contained houses of little interest, such as those designed in a neo-Classical style or contemporary style, which were out of favour, or disliked by those in search of the Victorian notion of heritage. However, this situation would prove to work for the mutual benefit of both visitor and owner as, while the visitors were only interested in the grounds, the owners could maintain a sense of privacy in not having to open the house.

Improvements in transport facilitated the growth in visits to country house estates from the nineteenth-century. An early example of transport provision enabling country house visiting are the steam boat trips operating from 1816 down the River Thames to Gravesend. The boat service linked to horse-drawn wagons taking visitors to Cobham Park, an estate open to the public in North Kent. Before the advent of the railway, which rapidly improved opportunities for countryside leisure for city dwellers, horse-drawn wagons indeed formed an important mode of transport for recreation. Such wagons, for example, took an average of 800 people on a summer Sunday to Chatsworth before the railway was completed nearby in 1849. Thomas Cook arranged excursions to historic houses and was in fact the first person to arrange

organised trips – the first trip being a road trip to Chatsworth in 1849 (Mandler, 1997).

The Railway Act of 1844 made provisions for cheaper travel for ordinary people on the principle of a penny for every mile travelled, which brought special outings for the less wealthy more within the realms of possibility (Patmore, 1983). The effects of improving access to transport and the mobility offered by the private car in the twentieth-century has arguably been the most significant precursor in the development of rural-based recreation. Prior to 1919, just 109,000 cars were registered on Britain's roads (Glyptis, 1990) and it was only the wealthy elite who had access to this kind of personal transport. In fact, buses revolutionised transport opportunities at this time and the extensive rural network assisted in opening up the countryside in a way that the more rigid and restricted framework of the railways could not achieve (Patmore, 1983). The noticeable growth period for private vehicles in the wider population occurred from 1950 onwards and from this time, the car "has been the underlying theme of the majority of recreational patterns" (Patmore, 1983: 34). Statistics issued by the Department of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Traffic Census (2001) show that 15.9 billion vehicle kilometres were travelled by cars in 1950, compared with 235.3 billion vehicle kilometres in 2000, which represents about 15 times the amount of car traffic (DEFRA, 2001).

Increasing leisure time, with many nineteenth-century workers able to take Saturday afternoons and Sundays off, assisted in providing more opportunities for leisure. Several nationally celebrated days in England, such as Easter and Whitsun, and the 1871 Bank Holiday Act which added the August Bank Holiday, provided more

holiday time. Although many attractions and services would be closed, Sundays became the favoured day for trips. The annual excursion, sometimes arranged by an employer for an entire workforce, such as Wakes Weeks, provided further opportunities for trips. Paid holidays, which became widespread in the 1920s and 1930s, allowed workers and their families to enjoy leisure time (Patmore, 1983). The trend for increasing amounts of leisure time has continued through to contemporary times. However, workers in the UK now have the longest working hours of all European workers (ONS, 2001).

Other underlying factors affecting the increase in country house visiting include the increasing appeal of heritage and the relationship between the aristocracy and the working class. Identifying the changes faced by historic house owners which made a substantial number turn to the commercialisation of their estates can assist in the understanding of the development of garden visiting. According to Mandler (1997), after 1870, English society appears to have developed a disinterest in history and the emergence of hostility towards the aristocracy was marked. Subsequently, the wider political climate brought about a transformation in visits to country houses and gardens. Greater challenges were faced by landowners in the light of the severe agricultural depression commencing around 1874. Competition from cheap foreign imports of food and the effects of the depression resulted in decreasing rents and land sale values (Howkins, 1991). Decreasing incomes from land, coupled with the costs of maintaining large houses, led to many estates being broken up or sold. Loss of the core estate would inevitably mean loss of status and landed income, so a rationalisation of holdings was the preferred course of action. Thus, the core estate or

'heartland' was often retained but marginal estates or land tended to be the most likely target for selling. Parkland was sometimes sold for urban or industrial development.

However, the country house remained the essential part of the self-definition of a gentleman and shrewd rebalancing of assets and investments was required to retain status in terms of estate and income (Howkins, 1991). Younger generations were less interested in the idea of conserving heritage or acting as benevolent providers of recreation. It was within this context that the realisation of the value of assets locked up in great estates was viewed more favourably than preserving cultural heritage, an attitude which Mandler (1997) terms as barbarianism, when the cultural and historical values of the country house were overshadowed by its economic worth.

The landed elite did not just experience a financial crisis, but a political one too. Democratisation of the electorate through political reform legislation of the late nineteenth-century gradually released the gentry's hold over the working classes. Further anti-aristocratic governments began to introduce policies to tax large incomes, such as death duties on transfers of land. The goal of the increasing tax burden was "to end the passive enjoyment of appreciating property values by 'idle' landowners, rural and urban" (Mandler, 1997: 174). Pressures on the aristocracy resulted in the closure of many historic houses, because they had been sold, demolished or the owners began to concentrate efforts on one house and made it a home, not a place to share with the visiting public. Mandler (1997) states that many houses in the late nineteenth-century became luxurious homes – a base for entertaining in the country, kept in the private sphere and not considered in the wider sense as national heritage.

From the 1880s, the pattern of visiting and the meanings attached to open houses and gardens began to change as demand for access to the countryside and enjoyment of historic houses and parks intensified. Fewer houses were open and the ones that remained so were more heavily regulated, with restricted visitor access. As more opportunities arose for improved countryside recreation for the masses, visits to stately homes began to decline. The Arts and Crafts movement influenced visits to areas that typified rurality and the vernacular heritage. As Mandler (1997: 217) notes, these people “had fallen in love with the country, but not...with the country house”.

A growing public interest in gardening and botany was also influential in the rise of interest in gardens, with botanical gardens first established in the major cities during the early 1800s (Chadwick, 1966; Lasdun, 1991; Garrod, Pickering and Willis, 1993). Through the late nineteenth-century and into the early twentieth-century, more opportunities for open-space recreation in urban areas began to emerge. Park and garden visiting was an activity particularly advocated by nineteenth-century social reformers and enabling legislation of the mid-part of the century permitted the establishment of urban parks (Patmore, 1983). A reflection of the greater extent of urbanisation that had materialised through the industrial revolution was evident in the development of parks in the nineteenth-century (see Billinge, 1996). The emerging paternalistic view of leisure emphasised improving forms of recreation (Taylor, 1995b) and open space provision was seen as part of this movement, with the parks and gardens function of municipal authorities developing from this period. Exposure to sun and fresh air and the opportunity to participate in active leisure was considered to be health-promoting (Worpole, 1997) and the perception of the welfare benefits of outdoor recreation prevailed in social policy in the 1930s and beyond. As Whitaker

and Brown (1971: 25) noted, modern parks are often still guided by the regulations set out in Victorian times, encouraging disciplined use and appropriate behaviour.

Benevolent attitudes began to change towards the end of the 1800s with the political climate and the views of many landowners towards visitors were transformed to the detriment. The visiting public, once looked upon by country house owners as considerate and grateful, became viewed as a mob that did not possess the capacity to appreciate fine things. An example of this new negativity is apparent in the view expressed by the owner of Farnley Hall (home to a collection of paintings by Turner), who would welcome “true lovers of art” but not “mere curiosity-mongers” or “idlers” (Mandler, 1997: 211). Public reaction to house closures was generally one of outrage and, in some instances, local disturbances resulted. A much quoted example of public rebellion occurred in Kent with the closure of Knole House and Grounds in 1874. Local traders claimed that closing the house to the public had a significant effect on business as many enterprises had been established to gain the benefits from the substantial numbers of visitors to the area. Local people felt their rights of way had been taken away as access to the parkland was removed (Mandler, 1997). In later years, this type of fervent reaction to the loss of access to a country estate was to diminish, probably as a result of increasing leisure opportunities elsewhere. Franklin (1989: 18) notes that the Victorian country house “was not for public viewing, as the eighteenth-century one had been”. The emphasis turned to privacy rather than the open gates of predecessors, although many houses did remain open, or closed for a period of years only to re-open at a future time.

2.4 Post-War Pressures on the Country House

One of the greatest pressures to hit landowners in the twentieth-century was the introduction of higher levels of taxation and death duties, building on the impositions of earlier anti-aristocratic governments. Many landowners began to suffer relative financial difficulties because tax rates were so high. The costs of maintaining a house in many instances could not be met through income, so capital had to be mobilised, indicating the onset of an economically unsustainable future for some owners of landed estates. A succession of tax laws, such as Capital Transfer (later Inheritance Tax) and Capital Gains Tax dealt heavy blows to landowners. By the end of the First World War, income tax, land tax and rates took about 30% of estate rentals and the 1919 budget increased the death duties on estates worth £2 million or more to 40% (Tinniswood, 1998), compared with 8% in 1904 and 15% in 1914 (Gaze, 1988). These levels were to be raised again during the 1920s and by 1930, were levied at 50% (Gaze, 1988).

Wartime led to the ruination of many fine houses through requisition for war use (by means of the Compensation Defence Act 1939), particularly those used for accommodating troops, which were subjected to enormous wear and tear (Mandler, 1997). War also took its toll on both estate owners, heirs and workers. Many men in landed society served in the wars and were killed, often leaving no heir to their estates (Clemenson, 1982). In some gardens, very few of the workers returned from the war. Estates were either sold, or only survived in a neglected state, because the spirit had been lost. Garden maintenance was often a low priority, as buildings demanded more urgent attention. Gardens are even more vulnerable to the vagaries of neglect than buildings as they deteriorate so rapidly through natural processes, and a great deal of

money is often required to restore a garden to its former condition (Gaze, 1988). A good example of garden neglect is the Victorian gardens of Heligan House in Cornwall, which remained untouched from the First World War until restoration in the 1990s. The gardening staff, who signed up for the army together and entered the same platoon, did not return from the First World War. A sad reminder of the story of these workers is the discovery and conservation of their signatures on the privvy wall in the Melon Garden, a list of names scribbled before their departure to the War (Samuel, 1998). Other gardens which did not fall into such severe neglect often needed new uses to revive them; for example, Sheffield Park Garden in East Sussex, which has been sympathetically extended and promoted to attract more visitors by the National Trust (Gaze, 1988).

Agriculture was increasingly viewed as a poor investment compared with portfolios of stocks and shares. Declining agricultural incomes, in part due to the difficulty of finding tenants for the farms, often rendered the estate inadequate in generating sufficient income to support the maintenance of a country house. At other times, agriculture boomed, particularly after the Agriculture Act of 1947 which introduced subsidies and incentives for landowners to produce as much as possible from the land in an attempt to avoid any future food shortages following the experiences of the Second World War. Land prices became high during the 1960s and 1970s with more prosperous farming and demand for development land. Thus, some landowners cashed in and realised their capital assets. Clemenson (1982) states that there were three benefits of sale for estate owners: first, to liquidate landed assets; second, to increase net incomes by re-investing land-based capital; and, lastly, to clear estate

debts. As a result, since 1979, more than 250 family estates have been sold, at a steady rate of 20 per cent of the total per year (Sayers, 1993).

2.5 Country Houses and Gardens in Contemporary Britain

Traditional agricultural estates have survived in a different form from that of their early origins as a result of the adaptation process to changing economic and social conditions (Clemenson, 1982). Estate owners, whether the landed gentry or an organisation such as the National Trust, have been proactive in finding new sources of income through estate diversification (Wigan, 1998). In post-war Britain, landowners have turned to the “management of their land as a business enterprise” (Clemenson, 1982: 115) and a range of strategies and activities have emerged, which are more highly structured and planned than previous approaches to financial buoyancy. Littlejohn (1997) explains that several variables can be identified which are likely to determine the economic survival of a country house. These factors include the wealth of the owner, the need for repairs, aesthetic values of the house, the appeal of the house contents and the prosperity of the estate enterprises, such as forestry and agriculture. Other recognised variables, of particular relevance to this study, are the attractiveness of parks and gardens, the proximity to centres of population, tourist areas or routes and the ability of the estate to market their product (whether it is tourist oriented or otherwise). Young (1981: 1) comments that the opening of so many stately homes to visitors since the 1950s is “one of the most remarkable aspects of the social revolution”. Young (1981) cites several examples of houses where owners have developed strategies for survival, mostly centred on opening their doors to the public. This action, Young suggests, strongly contrasts with the past when houses were kept in the private domain and the viewing public *en masse* were actively

discouraged (despite earlier evidence that there were many examples where visitors were encouraged).

The country house is particularly suited to recreation and tourism use and gardens as a setting for the house are no less important. Littlejohn (1997: 170) comments that “gardens are undoubtedly a major, perhaps the major draw of country houses”.

However, modern garden visiting includes a wide definition of gardens – not just those associated with historic or country houses. Many gardens are promoted in their own right without the support of a stately home and achieve very high visitor numbers (such as Wisley Gardens, Wakehurst Place and the Lost Gardens of Heligan as demonstrated in Chapter 1). In addition, the gardens belonging to the National Trust, whose first garden, Hidcote Manor, was acquired in 1948, achieve substantial annual visitor figures. Over 200 Trust gardens and landscape parks are open to the public throughout England, Wales and Northern Ireland. National Trust gardens and parks cover an area of over 36,000 acres (over 14,560 hectares) - added together this is bigger than the island of Jersey. Currently, seven out of the top 10 visited National Trust properties are gardens or properties with gardens or landscape parks.

While country house visiting is clearly not a new activity, perhaps what is more recent is the changing nature of house viewing as an essential enterprise within estate management and ultimately, survival. Littlejohn (1997: 93) comments that “the most monumental challenge, for the owners of big old houses in the country...is the cost of maintenance and repair”. Opening to the public is a popular method of offsetting these costs, not just because revenue generated from ticket sales can be ploughed back into maintenance budgets, but also because a house managed on a commercial basis

can be declared a business and associated tax benefits can be obtained. However, Massingberd (cited in Sayers, 1993: 10) comments that, according to the Historic Houses Association (HHA), many country house owners claim that insufficient revenue for maintaining and running a property is made through opening to the public.

Evidence for funding shortfalls exists in the data collected by Dartington Institute (1987). The Dartington Institute (1987), commissioned by the HHA, examined the employment generation associated with the opening of historic houses, parks and gardens to the public on a regular basis. It was estimated that 5,500 jobs were provided throughout England, Wales and Scotland. This figure represents about 71% of the total number of jobs in all commercial enterprises in historic properties. Some 60% of visitor-related jobs are in gardening, catering, domestic and guide categories. Indirect employment was estimated at 2,900 jobs and further indirect employment as a result of spending outside the property (such as pubs, hotels and shops) of about 2,500 jobs. Total direct and indirect employment for 1985 was estimated at around 10,900 jobs but refers to HHA properties only (over 1,200 properties). It is estimated that in 1985, a gross income of £24 million was generated from visitor admissions, catering outlets and retail sales, with a small proportion from conferences and special events. However, the Dartington Institute (1987: 39) suggests that “while a very small number of properties are true profit generators, these are almost certainly balanced by those cases where the full costs of property maintenance are not set against visitor/tourist accounts”.

In a contemporary study of garden visiting, it is fundamental to recognise that not all gardens open to the public have emerged as a result of the country house phenomenon. While the country house provided the precursor to the garden as a visitor attraction, it is by no means the only type of garden operating with the garden sector today. In fact, the opening of non-country house gardens has a relatively long background if the emergence of the National Gardens Scheme in 1927 is acknowledged (see Hunningher, 2001 and Appendix 1). From this point in time, the gardens of more ordinary residences have been opened to the viewing public and the Scheme has assisted in the creation of a new classification of gardens, associated with the private garden.

Accordingly, gardens open to the public in the latter part of the twentieth-century and beyond are not confined to those belonging to country houses. In addition to National Gardens Scheme gardens, a range of other types of gardens have emerged, including other conservation organisations, local authority gardens, privately operated garden visitor attractions and gardens operated as part of another attraction. Some of these gardens emanate from a country house backdrop, while others are more modern creations. The development of the garden as a visitor attraction reflects, to some extent, the evolution of the commercial leisure market and the emergence of sites created and/or managed for the visiting public. The visitor attraction concept is explored further in Chapter 3 and the diversity of garden categories that exist is examined further in Chapter 5.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has outlined the growth and development of garden visiting through the last two centuries and has established a context for a critical review of gardens as a tourism and recreation resource in contemporary Britain. It is fundamental to the thesis to recognise the historic continuity of garden opening which has shaped the contemporary use of gardens as visitor attractions. History has influenced the growth and development of the sector, reasons for opening and approach to management, both of visitors and the garden as an enterprise. Reasons for opening have evolved from benevolence to financial necessity for many country house owners, as estate assets have required further mobilisation to generate income for maintenance, conservation and to assure a greater overall level of economic viability. For most garden owners in the National Gardens Scheme, opening to the public did not start as a means of generating personal revenue but was associated with the more benevolent act of raising money for charity. For National Trust gardens, the prime motivator for opening is to raise money for conservation. In more recent years, the management of gardens as visitor attractions that are financially viable, yield a sound income stream and provide employment, has become a specific feature of the visitor attraction market in Great Britain. An appreciation of the garden in relation to the visitor attraction product is presented in Chapter 3.

3.0 Introduction

As this thesis is an exploratory study to gain insights into garden visiting, it is essential to identify the elements that are likely to influence the garden visitor sector of the attractions market. The empirical work undertaken and reported in ensuing chapters will substantiate, expand and bridge the issues emanating from both literature and survey findings. This chapter develops two major themes relevant to managing gardens for visitors in the context of the objectives of this thesis. The first theme is the study of the garden as a visitor attraction, which incorporates an understanding of the nature of visitor attractions and the conceptualisation of gardens as attractions. The second theme focuses on the management of gardens in relation to the visitor experience and considers how the visitor experience is defined and evaluated in tourism and recreation research.

3.1 The Context of the Garden as a Visitor Attraction

From a tourism perspective, using the framework of the study of visitor attractions facilitates the study of gardens. The literature and research on this area, however, is not particularly well-developed, as observed in a number of seminal studies (Lew, 1987; Leiper, 1990; Pearce, 1991) and the conceptual basis is weak. The lack of conceptualisation of visitor attractions means that this thesis has to present a more fundamental understanding of the garden at a number of different levels. In the context of visitor attractions, while they may be labelled as attractions, gardens possess and project layers of meaning to individual visitors. A visit to a garden might in one visitor's mind be just somewhere to visit on a day out, while another visitor to

the same garden might be visiting for an entirely different set of meanings: perhaps a place for contemplation or environmental appreciation. A secondary issue to recognise is that small, private gardens that open for the National Gardens Scheme may not be considered as visitor attractions at all. However, gardens are viewed by tourism organisations, such as the British Tourist Authority (BTA), English Tourism Council (ETC) and VisitScotland, as visitor attractions and so will be considered as such in this thesis, while acknowledging the caveat of the small, private garden.

3.2 What is a Visitor Attraction?

There has been much debate about the definition of visitor attractions (see Prentice, 1993; Wall, 1996; Yale, 1997; Swarbrooke, 2002 for commentary on a range of categorisations). It is apparent that agreement cannot be achieved on a precise definition because attractions encapsulate such a diverse range of sites (Lew, 1987) and sights (MacCannell, 1976). Pearce (1991: 46) presents an operational definition of a tourist attraction, which encompasses a broad spectrum of locations:

“A tourist attraction is a named site with a specific human or natural feature which is the focus of visitor and management attention”.

Pearce’s more conceptual definition is preferable to the specific but widely cited definition proffered by the English Tourism Council *et al.* (1999: 7), which states that a tourist attraction is:

“A permanently established excursion destination, a primary purpose of which is to allow public access for entertainment, interest or education; rather than being principally a retail outlet or venue for sporting, theatrical or film performances. It must be open to the public, without prior booking, for published periods each year, and should be capable of attracting tourists or day visitors as well as local residents.

In addition, the attraction must be a single business, under a single management...and must be receiving revenue directly from visitors”.

The definitions of Pearce (1991) and the ETC *et al.* (1999) are appropriate in the garden context, as most gardens will meet the criteria for a visitor attraction. While some gardens may not be primarily established for visitation (in the case of private gardens), many are nonetheless managed with the visiting public in mind. Further characteristics of attractions put forward by Walsh-Heron and Stevens (1990: 2) confirm and expand the function of a visitor attraction, defined as a place, venue or focus of activity. The elements of a visitor attraction are that it:

- sets out to attract visitors (day visitors from resident and tourist population) and is managed accordingly;
- provides a pleasurable experience and an enjoyable way for customers to spend their leisure time;
- is developed to achieve this goal;
- is managed as an attraction, providing satisfaction to customers;
- provides an appropriate level of facilities and services to meet and cater to the demands, needs and interests of its visitors;
- may or may not charge an admission fee.

Points of particular interest from Walsh-Heron and Stevens's (1990) list of relevance to this thesis include providing a pleasurable experience and satisfaction to visitors, and providing an appropriate level of services. However, gardens are likely to encapsulate most of the other factors.

Walsh-Heron and Stevens (1990: 3) define further criteria relating to management that assist in defining whether an enterprise is an attraction. The criteria are that “management must: perceive and recognise itself to be a tourist attraction; promote and market the attraction publicly; provide on-site management and staffing; and be recognised as a ‘tourist attraction’ by the visitor”. With regard to these aspects, only the more formal garden visitor attractions correspond completely with the set criteria. Owners of small private gardens that open infrequently may not consider or manage their gardens as attractions. Despite this discrepancy, visitors may still consider such gardens as attractions.

Walsh-Heron and Stevens (1990) note the problem of deciding when an attraction is an event and when an event is an attraction, particularly the case for some gardens which are open to the public for a short period of time. Walsh-Heron and Stevens (1990) note the example of Keukenhof Gardens, near Amsterdam, the Netherlands, which is only open for ten weeks a year to exhibit its spring flowers. During this period, the garden attracts over 80, 000 visitors from all parts of the world. For many British gardens, the festival idea is the focus for opening. The Spring Garden Festival in Cornwall provides a good example of where some gardens, which are not open at other times of the year, open up to show their collections of camellias, rhododendrons and daffodils. Walsh-Heron and Stevens (1990) also note the seasonal effects in arboretums and comment that these constant natural changes could be viewed as events, which may attract visitors. On a large scale, the cherry blossom and autumnal splendours of New England are attractions for visitors and this certainly operates at the micro-level with gardens. So, gardens can be classed as attractions and sometimes form the central focus of events.

3.2.1 Visitor Attractions: Product Considerations

Visitor attractions offer products and experiences. Visitors to attractions seek benefits and these benefits will depend on the nature of the attraction and the type of visitor. According to Swarbrooke (2002), the key to success for a visitor attraction is in matching the product to the benefits sought by the consumer. Kotler's (1994) view that products consist of three levels (Figure 3.1), and Swarbrooke's (2002) idea that Kotler's model may be adapted to a visitor attraction setting, is a constructive starting point for the analysis of the garden as a product. The core product is the central component and comprises the main benefits that will be identified by the visitor as a motivation for visiting. The second layer of a product is the tangible aspect, which visitors can purchase. The third aspect of a product is the augmented product, which includes the additional services a visitor receives and makes up the total product.

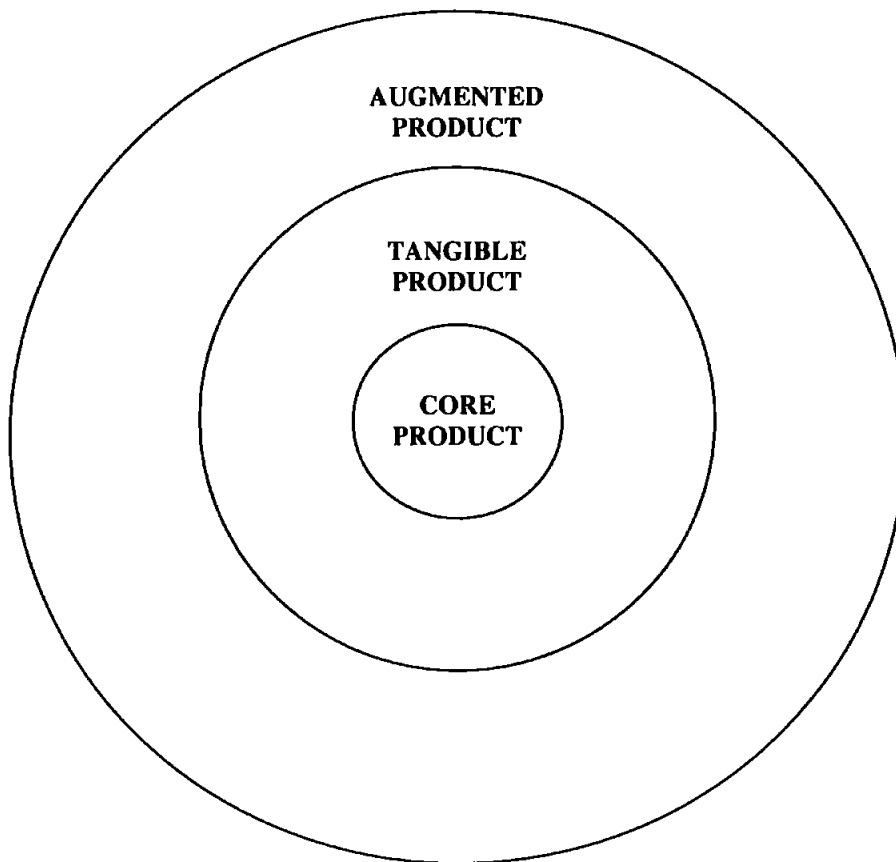
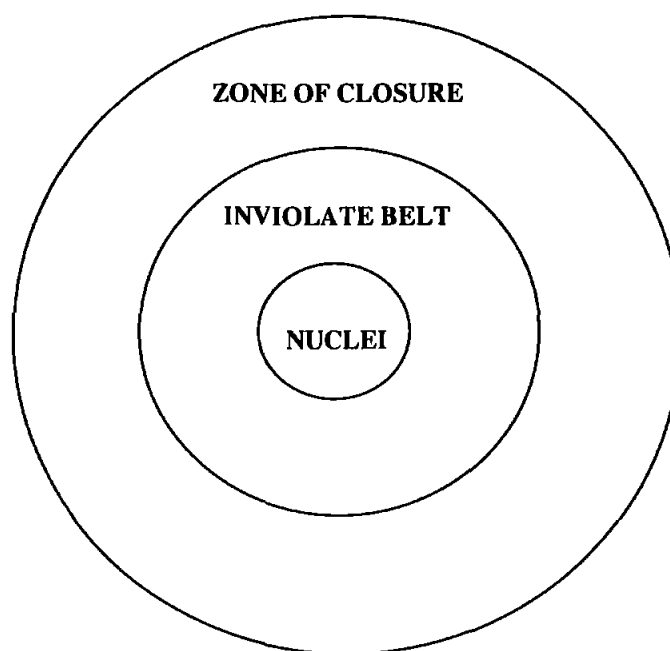


Figure 3.1 The Three Levels of a Product (after Kotler, 1994)

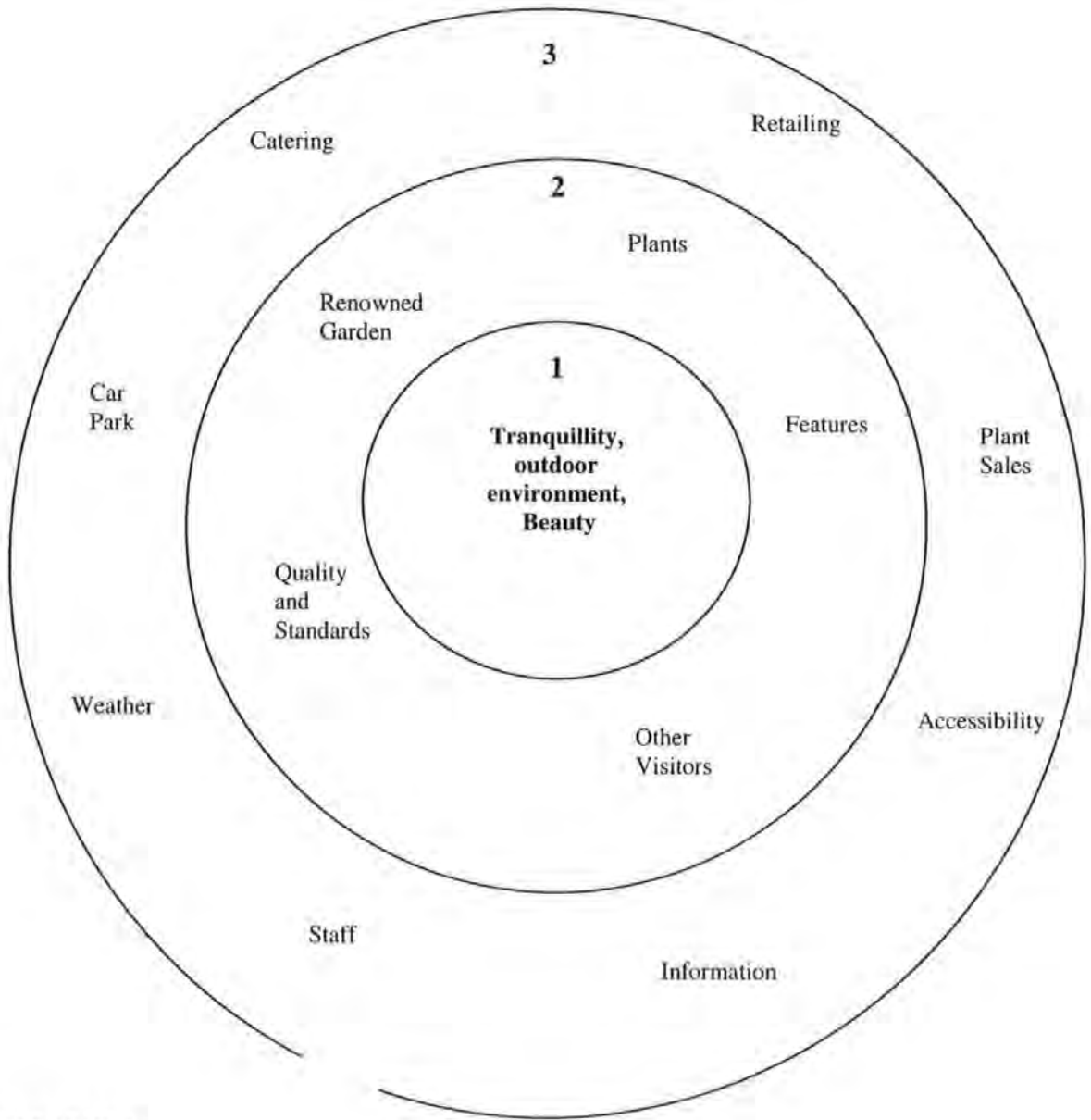
Gunn's (1972) conceptualisation of a tourist attraction also provides a foundation on which the garden can be modelled. Gunn identifies three zones in relation to the spatial layout of an attraction, the nuclei contains the core attraction and the zone of closure contains the ancillary services associated with the attraction, such as shops, car-park and tea-room. The inviolate belt is an area which protects the core product from the commercialised areas of the zone of closure (Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2 : Gunn's Model of a Tourist Attraction



Source : Gunn (1972)

Gunn's model bears close resemblance to Kotler's product dimensions and to gain some further insight into the garden as an attraction, the two models may be overlapped to produce a hybrid version, defining the spatial elements of a garden attraction and a product (Figure 3.3).



KEY

- 1 = CORE PRODUCT
or NUCLEI
- 2 = TANGIBLE PRODUCT
or INVIOLEATE BELT
- 3 = AUGMENTED PRODUCT
or ZONE OF CLOSURE

Figure 3.3 The Three Levels of the Garden Visitor Attraction Product

Source: Based on Gunn (1972); Kotler (1994).

3.2.2 The Garden as a Leisure Product

Jansen-Verbeke (1986) developed a framework with which to analyse tourism consumption and production in the urban context based on the idea of the 'leisure product'. This framework can be adapted and the garden as a leisure product can be identified as shown in Figure 3.4.

The facilities which gardens offer can be divided into primary elements, secondary elements and additional elements. While the range of elements available in gardens will vary, the framework developed identifies the widest scope of characteristics and facilities. This conceptual approach to gardens as a leisure product is inspired by the common features of the garden environment, visitor behaviour and management approaches identified from the scoping exercise reported in Chapter 4.

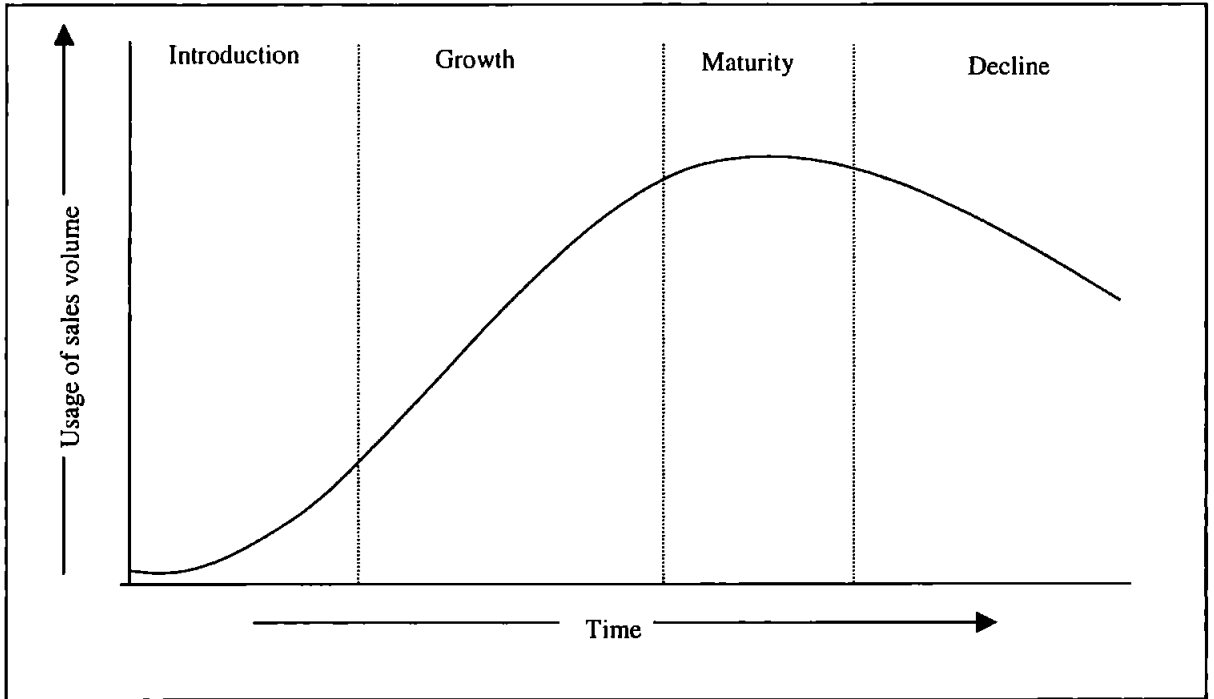
PRIMARY ELEMENTS		SECONDARY ELEMENTS
Activity Place	Leisure Setting	
<u><i>Leisure interest facilities</i></u> Guided walks Exhibitions Routes Self-guided trails Events and festivals	<u><i>Physical characteristics</i></u> Design Planting Garden features Garden buildings Water features	Tea-room Shop Nursery Seats
		ADDITIONAL ELEMENTS
<u><i>Physical features</i></u> Children's play area	<u><i>Social features</i></u> Welcome Friendliness Helpfulness Ability to answer questions Ambience Health and safety considerations	Accessibility Car parking Sign-posting Foreign language leaflets Information Plant labels

Figure 3.4 The Categorisation of the Garden as a Leisure Product

3.2.3 The Product Life Cycle

In relation to the evolution of products, a commonly cited analysis centres on the notion of the product life-cycle (see Kotler, 1994) (see Figure 3.5) and its adaptation to tourism in the tourism-area life-cycle (Butler, 1980). For purpose-designed visitor attractions, the life-cycle concept is quite relevant. However, for those attractions that were not originally designed for visitation, which describes many gardens open to the public, Swarbrooke (2002) believes that the model is of less relevance because it is difficult to identify the start of the introduction phase. In addition, for some gardens, opening to the public is not market-driven in the sense that a manufactured product is and subsequently, the life-cycle idea is of less relevance in the sense of management theory. Motivations for opening may be based on the need to derive extra revenue for maintenance or conservation work and the attraction market is not viewed as the core business. The 'core business' of the National Trust, for example, is conservation and education, not running visitor attractions, but visitor spend is required in order to fund such work (National Trust, 2001). However, it is still pertinent for operators of such attractions to be aware of market changes and product positioning as it becomes more difficult to attract visitors in a market characterised by over-supply of attractions and the need to attract visitors in order to fund conservation remains essential.

A crucial factor to acknowledge in the management of visitor attractions is that the long-term quality of the product and the visitor experience can be adversely affected by external and internal threats (Garrod, Fyall and Leask, 2002). Consequently, a strategy to focus efforts in managing potential impacts from the internal environment, that is, within the attraction itself, can assist a visitor attraction in striving towards a viable future. Stevens (1991:110) notes that attractions provide a "consumer product



Source : Swarbrooke (2002:51)

Figure 3.5 The Product Life-Cycle

which is based upon the unique experience and immediate point of sale consumption”, the implication of which is the need to emphasise visitor care. A clear understanding of the nature of the visitor experience and how it can be enhanced to achieve high levels of visitor satisfaction, according to the type of attraction and types of visitor, are variables that owners/managers can have a greater degree of control over in relation to the management of the attraction. So, what, precisely, is the visitor experience and how has it been researched in previous literature?

3.3 Visitor Attractions and the Visitor Experience

Swarbrooke (2002) comments that the visitor attraction product is now usually viewed as an experience. According to Clawson and Knetsch’s (1966) holistic approach to

the study and definition of the subject, the visitor experience incorporates five stages. The model derived is based on the idea that the experience is much more than a visit to a specific site and includes anticipation of the visit, travel to the site, the site experience, return travel and memory elements. The idea of a five stage model has been widely accepted by academics and practitioners in the field of recreation and tourism management. Clawson and Knetsch (1966) commented that each phase of the recreation experience merits serious research attention and greater focus in planning and operations management.

The visitor experience is a somewhat nebulous concept because, as Page (1995: 24) states, the tourist experience “is a complex amalgam of factors which shape the tourist’s feelings and attitude towards his or her visit”. Otto and Ritchie (2000: 405) note that leisure and tourism experiences are really the “subjective mental state felt by participants” and a form of experiential consumption. Accordingly, the visitor experience is likely to be different for each individual visitor as it forms through a series of value judgements based on emotional and physical responses to a site, and resulting in satisfaction/dissatisfaction with one or more components of the site.

3.3.1 The Garden Visit Experience

Prior to examining the conceptual basis of the visitor experience, some preliminary thoughts on the nature of the garden visit experience may be cast. According to Gardenvisit.com (2000), visiting gardens yields many pleasures: “One can be warmed by the sun, cooled by the rain, secluded in a place which is not often accessible”. Three specific kinds of pleasure in relation to garden visiting are noted by Gardenvisit.com (2000). First, the concept of design and the opportunity to observe

human ingenuity in the assembly of hard and soft landscaping to create gardens, at various periods in history. Second, the beauty and rarity values of plants as well as attractive combinations of plants. Third, the scenic qualities offered by gardens and the idea that some visitors, without a special interest in plants or design, simply like to see gardens which are scenically beautiful. These three forms of pleasure are what are embodied in the essence of garden visiting and certainly a feature of the visitor experience of garden visiting. Indeed, Mackellar Gouly (1993: 1) summarises that gardens can be enjoyed on many levels, including the simple *enjoyment of being outdoors in a pleasant environment, the appreciation of plants, design or history – in all, “our most accessible art form”*.

Certain attributes of a house and garden add to the appeal for visitors. In a stately home context, Sayers (1993: 20) comments that “it is the lived-in quality of the country house that contributes so much to the refreshment of visitors and the *genius loci* that is so often the source of inspiration”. Young (1981: 146) concurs with this value, stating that open houses that are homes to a resident family are “markedly different” and have a “more attractive atmosphere”. To what extent the same theory applies to gardens is unknown but gardens which are tended by owners and form a private space for owner enjoyment, as well as a public arena for public appreciation, may be different from those which are tended formally as gardens for the public. The differences between private gardens and more commercial enterprises will form a key focus of the research presented in this thesis.

Hall and Page (1999: 164) note that “there is a growing literature on tourist satisfaction... and what constitutes the experiential aspects of a tourist visit to a locality”. So, what other aspects comprise the garden visit experience and to what

extent are certain aspects more important than others? The primary research reported in Chapters 5 and 6 will provide answers to these questions, but in order to determine the parameters of the generic visitor experience, the discussion now explores the influencing factors that can be gleaned from the literature.

3.3.2 Factors Influencing the Visitor Experience

At a fundamental level, Yale (1997) states that the success of a tourist attraction lies in four critical areas. These are: accessibility; opening hours; on-site amenities, such as parking, visitor centre, signs and labels, shops, guides, refreshments, toilets, litter bins, seating and disabled provision; and off-site amenities, such as signposting, local accommodation and local services. At a broader level, Swarbrooke (2002) outlines the significance of four key factors that influence the success of attractions: the organisation and its resources; the product; the market; and the management of the attraction. This is summarised in Table 3.1. Swarbrooke (2002) states that there is no guarantee of success by following a set formula. An intangible quality or 'magic' is necessary as well as highly professional management and innovative concepts.

In relation to assessing visitor experience on-site, Swarbrooke (2002) asserts that a range of elements affect the experience beyond the core focus of the attraction. These elements include: the *tangible elements of the product* such as retail outlets, cafes, toilet facilities and site cleanliness; the *service delivery elements*, including the appearance, attitudes, behaviour and competence of staff; the expectation, behaviour and attitude of the *visitor*; and a number of factors that are largely *outside the control of either the attraction or visitor*, such as climatic conditions and the mix of people

using the attraction at one time. The visitor experience is the combination and interrelationship of these factors and will be different for each individual visitor.

Managing a visitor attraction to ensure visitor satisfaction presents a range of challenges. Clawson and Knetsch (1966: 170), in their seminal work on outdoor recreation point out that “the quality of the recreation experience is affected by the design, the investment and the management of outdoor recreation areas”. Heeley (1989) recognises that design issues, such as sign-posting and seating provision, present an image of the attraction to the visitor, which may or may not be favourable. Laws (1998) examines these issues further and comments that the contemporary management of an attraction can influence the visitor experience through design and resource issues. Coupled with the physical management of the site are the importance of customer care, acknowledging the crucial relationship between the staff, the service and the needs of the visitor. Laws (1998) comments that each element is important and a lack of care - whether it is in the signage, car parking, quality of catering or cleanliness of the toilets - can destroy the overall visitor experience. Schouten (1995: 260) states that the attitude typified by “Visitors: who cares about them, they come anyway, so why bother?” is beginning to change. However, as Schouten (1995) comments, in many cases there is still a gap between the product and visitor perception.

Graefe and Vaske (1987) provide some useful insights into the tourist experience, placing a particular emphasis on the influence of other visitors within the tourist site or destination. Visitor responses to perceived levels of crowding and impacts on the

Table 3.1 Factors Influencing the Success of Tourist Attractions

The organisation and its resources	Experience of developing and managing attractions	Financial resources	Marketing – see the management of the attraction				
The product	Novel approach or new idea	Location	On-site attraction	High quality environment	Good customer service	Visitor facilities	Value for money
The market	Growth markets – targeting markets which are likely to expand						
The management of the attraction	Experienced professional managers	Adequate attention to market research	Realising that marketing is not just about brochures and adverts	Long-term strategic view	Accepting importance of word-of-mouth	Planned marketing strategy with proper financing	Staff training

Source: After Swarbrooke (2002)

resource base materialise in terms of dissatisfaction with the site or, indeed, displacement of the visitor. The problem of crowding and perceptual carrying capacity has formed a substantial area for recreation research since the 1960s (for example, Wagar, 1964; Lucas, 1964; Shelby and Heberlein, 1987). A recent study by Garrod, Fyall and Leask (2002) indicates the significance of managing impacts at visitor attractions in order to ensure a satisfactory visitor experience.

In reality, the tourist experience is likely to be affected by a wide range of factors, some of which are inevitably not linked with the destination *per se*, but which hinge on the mood and personal circumstance of the visitor. Page (1995: 24) notes that the tourist experience may be affected “by individual, environmental, situational and personality-related factors as well as the degree of communication with other people.” The experience is also likely to be affected by the expectations and pre-conceived ideas that the visitor may possess prior to a visit, as well as the cultural origin of the visitor and prior socialisation (Weiermair and Fuchs, 1999). The recognition of these individual factors reflects the modelling of consumer-based experience (for example, Woodruff, Cadotte and Jenkins, 1983) when previous product experience or expectations influence the satisfaction/dissatisfaction process.

3.3.3 Difficulties in Researching the Visitor Experience

There are several inherent difficulties associated with researching visitor satisfaction. A visitor might be content with the core product but not with specific service elements, emphasising the flow of experiences notion conveyed by Beeho and Prentice (1997). Tourism operators and organisations are generally only concerned with the quality of the products that they are offering and thus approaches to quality

are limited to specific components of a visitor's total experience (Handsuh, 1996). It is impossible to control all the factors relating to the visit experience and it should be recognised that while a visitor may be completely satisfied with the core product and the tangible service elements, an external factor, such as the weather or transport infrastructure, might spoil the experience (Augustyn, 1998). Another factor to recognise is that satisfaction is not absolute and depends on individual needs, wants, expectations and experience. In addition, satisfaction thresholds inevitably change over time, as visitors gain more experience and industry standards advance.

3.3.4 Rationale for Researching the Visitor Experience

According to Swarbrooke and Horner (2001), two main factors underpin the need to ensure customers are satisfied with their visit experience. First, visitor satisfaction can encourage regular and repeat visitation, which is more cost-effective than seeking new visitors (see also Darnell and Johnson, 2001). Second, positive word of mouth recommendations work in the favour of attraction operators since minimal marketing input is required to attract new visitors. Word of mouth can work inversely too and the communication of bad experiences to friends and family are likely to negatively influence visit decision-making.

Consequently, managing the visitor experience is a vital, although complex requirement (Page *et al.*, 2001) in the operation of a visitor attraction and it is essential for attraction owners/managers to recognise the significance of the visit/visitor experience in sustaining visitor satisfaction and, inevitably, numbers. Understanding the visitor experience is a key factor in determining the success of a visitor attraction, such as a garden, and has wider implications for the public

perception of specific attraction sectors as day-trip destinations. The chapter now turns to an exploration of the nature of the visitor experience and a review of previous research on the subject.

3.4 Evaluating the Visitor Experience: Research Perspectives

Despite being a key research issue in recent years (Vitterso, Vorkinn, Vistad & Vaagland, 2000), the study of the visitor experience remains one of the least understood fields in tourism research. Beeho and Prentice (1997) note that the experiential aspects of tourism are often omitted from visitor survey research in favour of socio-demographic data collection and more easily identifiable issues, such as mode of transport used to access a recreation site. One of the major reasons for this neglect is that measuring the visitor experience is beset with conceptual and methodological problems (Vitterso *et al.*, 2000), not the least of which is agreeing on the way in which the experience is framed and measured. Ryan (1997) recognised that the complexity of researching the visitor experience is due to its highly subjective nature, based on perception and cognitive views of the environment, as well as the products that tourists consume. Otto and Ritchie (2000: 404) concur and state that in tourism, “emotional reactions and decisions prevail”. Beeho and Prentice (1997: 75) recognise that “visiting a tourist attraction is likely to involve a *flow* of experiences”, which further complicates its study as there is likely to be a series of experiences rather than one focus.

Laws (1998: 552) states that the “conceptualization of visitor management issues is at an early stage of development” and suggests that further research would be useful in constructing an explanatory framework. While there have been several attempts to

examine these issues in specific environments¹, there has been no systematic development of a visitor experience model which is applicable in a range of locations. As a gap in the existing knowledge, as well as a gap in the ability to assess the garden environment as a visitor experience, it has been decided that one of the outcomes of this project will be to devise a model of the visitor experience (see Chapter 7).

A substantial amount of research has focused on the visitor experience at heritage sites, presumably because, as Richards (1999) points out, 'heritage' alone is no longer sufficient in attracting visitors, and an understanding of visitors is a crucial aspect of ensuring future enterprise viability. Masberg and Silverman (1996) used a phenomenological approach to explore the experience of visiting a heritage site in Indiana and found that there was a need for more careful site management including the physical surroundings and in recognising the importance of site staff. The heritage experience was viewed as educational but enabled opportunities for social contact and activities that might be engaged in on-site. Thus, the research findings indicated the existence of a multidimensional experience of a heritage site.

Beeho and Prentice (1997) developed the use of the ASEB (Activities, Settings, Experiences, Benefits) grid analysis, a refinement of SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats), to gain insights into visitor experiences at the New Lanark World Heritage Village in Scotland. Experiences were found to be emotional, thought-provoking and overall an enjoyable educational experience. Jackson, White and Schmierer (1996) have also adopted a similar grid analysis approach to reporting tourism experiences by using open-ended measures in the

¹ For example: urban locations - Haywood and Muller, 1988; heritage attractions - Beeho and Prentice, 1997; crowded environments - Graefe and Vaske, 1987).

assessment of critical incidents on holiday. Having used the ASEB technique at the Ironbridge Gorge Museum (Beeho and Prentice, 1995) and at the Black Country Museum (Beeho and Prentice, 1996), Beeho and Prentice (1997) suggest that the grid analysis method allows the experiential components of tourism to be studied. It can provide qualitative consumer insights into tourism experiences and how they might be improved at a site or destination level. The ASEB approach appears to be a feasible methodology for on-site examination of visitor experiences but would be impractical to use on a wider scale because of its open-ended nature.

Laws (1998) explored the use of a service blueprinting approach in an exploratory study of the visitor experience at Leeds Castle, Kent. The method used in this study was the visitor diary, which indicated positive and negative effects on satisfaction. Four key areas were highlighted for management decisions: visitor approach to the site; signing; interpretation; and visitor flow management. Laws (1998) produced a conceptual blueprint of visitor management at the site, indicating a 'line of visibility', below which were the management decisions and above which were the experiences of the visitor. The central idea of the 'line of visibility' is that visitors should not be aware of the decisions made by managers.

Laws (1995) suggests that there are three main reasons why individuals may experience varying degrees of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in relation to visits to attractions. First, individuals have their own expectations, based on previous experiences, current situation and needs. Second, presentation of information can bore or excite people, depending on the visitor's level of interest, knowledge or understanding. Third, there may be service gaps, for example between consumer

expectations and management perception of consumer expectations which affect the visitor's overall enjoyment of the attraction.

Service delivery and quality is a well-established field of inquiry in the marketing and consumer behaviour literature. Tourism and recreation researchers have applied the notion of service quality in varied contexts, including outdoor recreation (MacKay and Crompton, 1988, 1990; Martin, McCool and Lucas, 1989), hospitality (Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Lee and Hing, 1995); travel services (Ryan and Cliff, 1997); the airline industry (Ostrowski, O'Brien and Gordon, 1993); wine tourism enterprises (O'Neill and Chartes, 2000) and more general tourism aspects (Fick and Ritchie, 1991).

A number of models have been developed to evaluate quality and customer satisfaction in business operations, the most notable of which is SERVQUAL (Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry, 1985). Considered as a seminal study in consumer behaviour, the basis of this evaluative framework is the difference between consumer expectation and perception of service, based on five generic service quality dimension necessary for customer satisfaction (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Dimensions of Service Quality Based on the SERVQUAL Principle

RELIABILITY	Ability to perform services dependably
RESPONSIVENESS	Willingness to assist customers and provide prompt service
ASSURANCE	Courtesy, trustworthiness and knowledge of staff
EMPATHY	Display caring attitude to customers
TANGIBLES	Presentation of physical facilities

Further development of the model has led to the emergence of a range of allied quality assessment frameworks, such as: LODGSERV, focusing on hotel experiences

(Knutson, Stevens, Wullaert, Patton and Yokoyama, 1991); HOLSAT to evaluate holiday experiences (Tribe and Snaith, 1998); and HISTOQUAL, which evaluates the quality provided in historic houses (Frochot and Hughes, 2000).

However, while the five generic dimensions of service quality are a useful starting place for researching the visitor experience in relation to services provided at gardens, this thesis is not limited to an exploration of service quality with its mechanistic focus on specific aspects of the visitor evaluation of how they were treated and dealt with in a service context. There is a danger with a pre-existing model in being too prescriptive and not allowing for the recognition of attraction-specific variables. In addition, the 'service encounter' as a measure is not necessarily a suitable focus, with a more broad-based approach required. Instead, a more holistic approach to the evaluation of garden visiting is required, given the paucity of baseline information on visitation. Consequently, it is more important to adequately scope, conceptualise and document the opening of gardens as recreation resources and the nature of the visitor experience before trying to measure expectation and performance in a garden setting. Instead, the more conceptual nature of the visitor experience from the perspective of both the visitor and the attraction is the focus.

While Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry (1985) identified five gaps between service providers and consumers, later work suggested that another gap existed, that between the customer and the provider perception of the experience (Brown and Swartz, 1989; Cronin and Taylor, 1994). Awareness of this gap arose much earlier in a tourism and recreation setting, as typified by: Witter's (1985) research on resort retailers and visitors; Martin, McCool and Lucas's (1989) study of wilderness managers and users;

Saleh and Ryan's (1991) study of hotel providers and guests; and more recently Vogt and Fesenmaier's (1995) paper on tourists and retailer's perceptions of service levels in an American Midwest destination.

It is evident from examining the available tourism research literature that the visitor experience is an under-researched subject, which is surprising considering the relatively advanced status of tourism management research. Indeed, Swarbrooke and Horner (2001: 162) comment that "not enough empirical research has been done to give us a clear view of what factors, precisely, determine the level of satisfaction of customers". It appears that several attempts have been made to delineate the features of the tourist experience, although there is no specific theory or model that provides an overarching view. The aim of this research is to construct and operationalise such a model using elements of prior work by other researchers coupled with primary research generated for this study.

In relation to urban areas, Haywood and Muller (1988) outline the factors to consider in evaluating the urban tourism experience (Table 3.3). These variables were selected as a result of a review of the literature on criteria for tourist attractiveness, city livability measures and other experiential attributes (Haywood and Muller, 1988). Table 3.3, while focused in this instance on the urban tourism experience, indicates that there are a number of general factors which can be applied to any tourism environment which functions as a destination. It highlights the diversity of components that may contribute to the overall level of satisfaction. It is clear that some factors are less easy to control than others and also that subjective factors can

affect the experience. However, it is evident that planning and management strategies are required to ensure that the highest standards are strived towards.

Table 3.3 Factors to Consider in Evaluating the Urban Tourism Experience

- Unpleasantness of the city's weather during the visit
- Adequacy of standards in hotel accommodation
- Cleanliness and upkeep of the city
- The city's setting and scenic beauty
- Safety from crime
- Ease of finding and reaching places in the city
- Whether the city makes a visitor feel like a stranger
- Choice of artistic and cultural amenities
- Pleasurability of walking or strolling about the city
- Amount of crowding and congestion
- Choice of nightlife and entertainment
- Choice of good restaurants
- Pleasurability of shopping in the city
- Attractiveness of price levels
- Friendliness and helpfulness of citizens
- Adequacy of healthcare in case of emergency

Source: Haywood and Muller (1988: 456)

While Haywood and Muller's (1988) framework relates very specifically to urban areas, it is a relatively straightforward task to re-work these factors to apply to alternative tourism locations. Most of the factors listed in Figure 3.2 are generic to a most visitor destinations, merely requiring some rewording to make appropriate to a particular setting. Redirection of Haywood and Muller's urban variables is quite justified as the authors used the criteria for touristic attractiveness generated by Gearing, Swart and Var (1974) and consumer experience variables from Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), as well as survey data from market research work on Canadian tourism (Tourism Canada, 1986). Thus, the measures used are tried and tested.

In the case of gardens, the framework can be adapted to focus on similar aspects of the visitor experience that directly relate to gardens (Table 3.4). In addition, the framework has been utilised in empirical work to assess the visitor experience (see Chapter 4 and 5 for a discussion on methodological aspects).

Table 3.4 Factors to Consider in Evaluating the Garden Visitor Experience

- The weather conditions at the time of the visit.
- The standard and quality of the garden and its features.
- The tidiness and upkeep of the garden and cleanliness of facilities.
- The setting and aesthetic value of the garden.
- Health and safety considerations.
- Accessibility of and ease of transport to the garden.
- Access for disabled and less mobile visitors to the garden.
- Warm and hospitable welcome extended to visitors.
- Provision of information for international visitors.
- The ambience of the garden as a place to walk around.
- The level of crowding and congestion.
- Range of events held in the garden.
- Provision of a good quality tea-room.
- The opportunity and pleasurability of plant purchasing and other retail opportunities.
- The price of entry to the garden and prices of other goods and services.
- Staff helpfulness in responding to visitor enquiries.

Source: Author adapted from Haywood and Muller (1988)

3.5 Conceptualising the Garden Visitor Experience

In order to focus the discussion on the nature of the garden visitor experience, several valuable models and theories have been identified that can assist in the conceptualisation of the garden as an experiential arena within a tourism and recreation context. Five such concepts are discussed in three thematic sections. First, the idea of the garden as space for visitation is posited by consideration of Pearce's (1991) development of Canter's (1975) idea of sense of place and Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone's (1992) evaluation of values for public spaces. The second

thematic section considers the perception of space and focuses on Grahn's (1991) perception of parks and open spaces. Lastly, Urry's (1990) notion of the tourist gaze in the context of visitor consumption of the environment. The component on the tourist gaze is more detailed than the previous two sections as the concept appears to have wider application to the data in Chapter 6. The relevance of each concept to the garden setting is discussed and applied in order to create a clearer picture of how garden visiting fits in with ideas on the conceptualisation of space.

3.5.1 Conceptualising the Garden as a Space for Visitation

(a) Canter (1975) and Pearce (1991)

Pearce's (1991) adaptation of Canter's (1975) model of the psychology of place provides a pertinent conceptualisation of the elements of the visitor experience. As shown in Figure 3.6, three elements are essential in the understanding of the experience of a specific location.

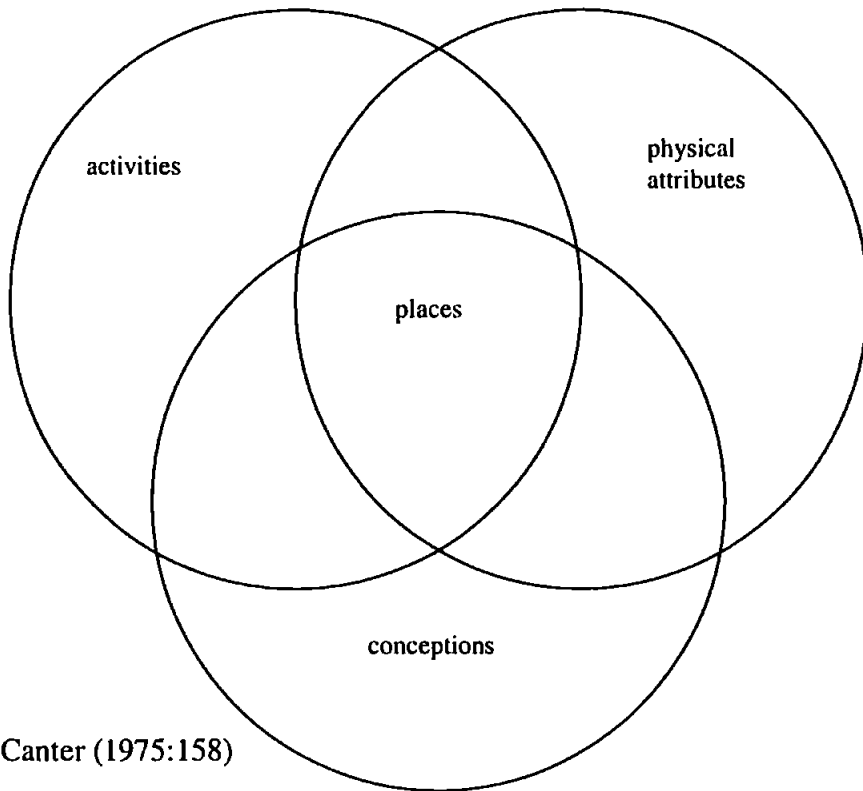
Canter's (1975) visual metaphor relating to the idea of 'sense of place' conveyed that a person does not fully identify a place until he/she knows what behaviour is associated with it, what the physical parameters of the setting are, and the ideas that people have about the place. Pearce (1991) theorises that the same three elements are required to form a successful tourist attraction – a clear idea of what the place is, where activities are understood and desired and in the physical sense, where the physical design and setting is pleasing to the visitor. Canter (1975) further postulates that places can be identified starting with any one of the major constituents and that appropriate links can be made between each grouping to ensure that use attributes are suitable for the space provided. In this respect, a garden visitor looking for peace and

a relaxing environment (*conceptions*) may want to stroll peacefully and sit and take in views of a garden (*activities*). The associated *physical attributes* required might be, for example, interesting plants, informal routes, adequate seating and quiet areas. The implication of this model is that if the three elements are sufficiently strong, then it is more likely that a visitor attraction will be successful in encouraging a positive visitor experience.

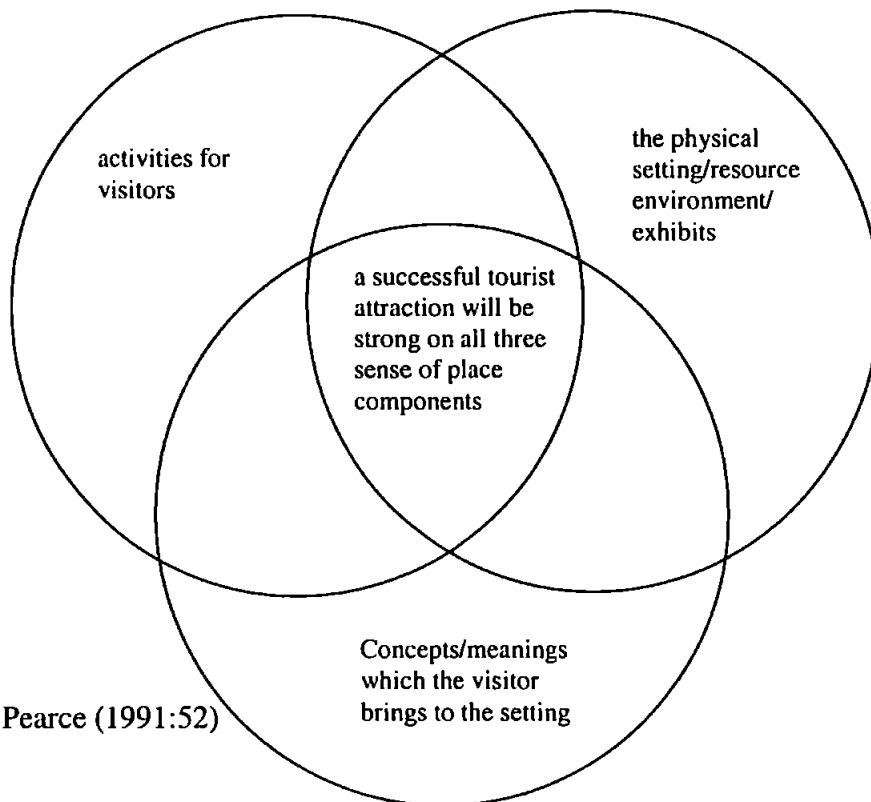
(b) Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone (1992)

A second framework (mentioned in Chapter 1) in which gardens may be placed is that proposed by Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone (1992: 345), who state that “well-functioning public spaces provide vivid examples of a society more egalitarian than we normally experience”. The authors argue that a temporary bond is created by seeing different people responding to the same setting in similar ways: “There may be a spontaneous exchange of smiles and, perhaps a conversation”. Even without direct communication, good public space supports peaceful parallel activity where individuals can pursue their own interests in harmony. In the instance of gardens, the generalist visitor content with strolling around a garden and enjoying the environment can co-exist with the more specialist visitor interested in observing plant species. Similarly, different social groups can be united by a sense of the peacefulness of the space and a sense of how to behave within it.

Carr, Francis, Rivlin and Stone (1992: 20) provide a useful framework for evaluating primary values for public places (Table 3.5).



Source: Canter (1975:158)



Source : Pearce (1991:52)

Figure 3.6 Canter's Visual Metaphor and Pearce's Adaptation to Visitor Attractions

While the Carr *et al.* (1992) framework is designed to be of direct relevance to parks, applied to gardens open to the public, the framework demonstrates the range of values that can be attributed to the garden as space. The garden is a responsive space because it is, to a greater or lesser extent, depending on management policy, designed to serve user needs. Different gardens will serve different user needs in various ways. For example, a plantsperson's garden with limited visitor facilities will suit the needs of the botanist seeking an active experience of discovery or education but would not necessarily meet the needs of a general day visitor seeking a pleasant environment with well-developed visitor facilities. The match between visitor needs and the garden owner perception of the visitor experience needs to be close to ensure that user needs are met. The research presented in this thesis aims to address this issue further.

Table 3.5 Framework for Evaluating Primary Values for Public Places

TYPE OF SPACE	PRIMARY VALUES
RESPONSIVE	Designed to serve user needs, such as comfort, relaxation, activity, passivity, discovery, exercise, gardening or conservation.
DEMOCRATIC	Protect the rights of users. Accessible to all, freedom of activity and temporary claim of ownership. Gives sense of power and control.
MEANINGFUL	Allow users to connect place, personal lives and wider world, relating physical and social context with history, future, culture, biology and other worlds.

Source: Adapted from Carr *et al.*, (1992: 20)

It is more difficult to apply the second type of space to the garden but user surveys of the nearest example – the park – confirm an association with the democratic value (Hall and Page, 2002). However, the garden visitor is given a temporary feeling of ownership during a visit and, like visitors to historic houses, there is the potential for visitors to experience what it might feel like to own that house or garden.

Accessibility is provided by owners and, from the point of view of the benevolent landowner opening up a garden to share its beauty with the wider public, the aspect of democratic space is given further support.

The third category of space, that of meaningful space, is reflected in a wide range of gardens. Garden visitors may connect with some gardens in a spiritual way at a personal level. Some gardens present a sense of the past and the present – especially garden restorations, such as Hestercombe in Somerset, or historically important gardens, such as Hampton Court Palace. Another example is the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall, where sense of place and spirit created by the story of the garden dereliction and recent restoration is brought to life by the story of the Victorian owners and workers who created the gardens and never returned to them following the First World War. This poignant association between the recovered artefact and its workers creates a social, historical and cultural context and gives meaning to the garden beyond its essential charm as an environment or visitor attraction.

3.5.2 Perception of the Garden Environment: Grahn (1991)

Perception of gardens from the visitor's point of view is poorly understood, although perception of parks has received a significant amount of attention from researchers.

Grahn's (1991) study on deep structures of the mind and the perception of parks and

green spaces used information given in 1,600 park reviews by users to identify how people relate to the environment which they are using. Grahn divides parks into robust or ornamental categories and define these as the two major classifications. Subdividing these categories, Grahn developed eight characteristics which can be found singly or in combination in the park setting (Figure 3.7).

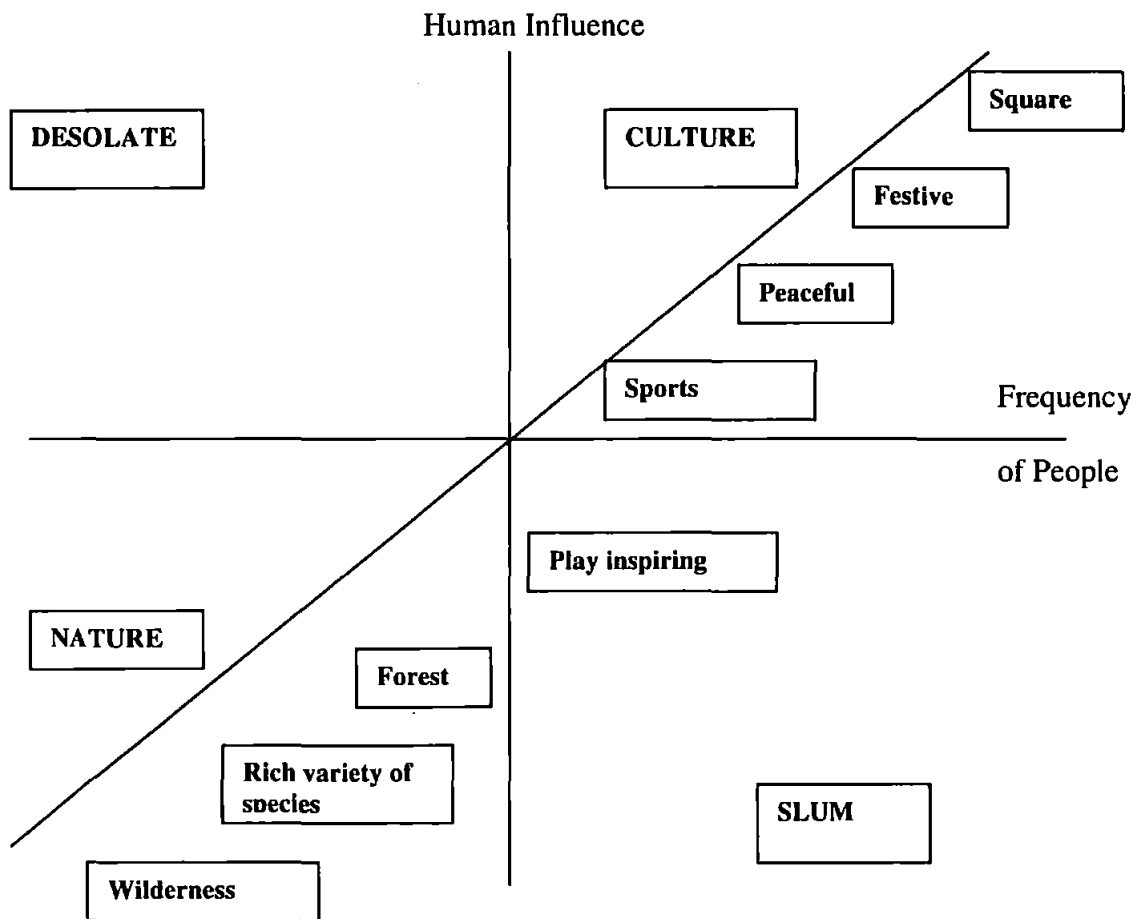


Figure 3.7 The Positive and Negative Characteristics of Parks (Grahn, 1991: 18)

Gardens, in practice, are more likely to fit into a narrower range of characteristics than parks as they tend to have a high degree of human influence in management terms and would tend to fit in with the 'peaceful' category in many cases. However, this analysis would preclude the vast array of gardens open to the public. Some gardens are 'play inspiring', not necessarily from the child's perspective but from a more creative use of design and implementation. Some sculpture gardens achieve this type of effect. Other gardens are managed for wildlife and contain a rich variety of species, with gardening based on permaculture principles providing a good example of such management.

3.5.3 Garden Visitors as Consumers of Place: Urry (1990)

Tourism demand as a form of consumption has emerged as a theme in the literature on the sociology and geography of tourism (Meethan, 2001; Shaw et al., 2000). Most notably, the work of Urry (1990, 1995) on the notion of the 'tourist gaze' has gained wide recognition. Developing Foucault's idea (1976) of the medical gaze and MacCannell's (1976) earlier work on sightseeing as consumption, Urry (1990: 1) suggests that tourists observe the environment with "interest and curiosity...in other words, we gaze at what we encounter." So, the gaze is one way of understanding the experiential elements of demand. Viewed as "visual consumption of the environment and Urry (1995: 191) outlines five forms of the tourist gaze (see Table 3.6).

A range of factors are involved in producing the tourist gaze, but the main premise rests on the identification of differences from everyday/ordinary experiences.

According to Urry (1990), objects suitable for the tourist gaze include: a unique object; a particular sign; an unfamiliar aspects of what was previously considered ordinary; an ordinary aspect of life undertaken by people in unusual contexts; a sign

which indicate that a certain object is extraordinary; and carrying out of familiar tasks in unusual environments.

Table 3.6 Forms of the Tourist Gaze

ROMANTIC	Solitary
	Sustained immersion
	Gaze involving vision, awe, aura
COLLECTIVE	Communal activity
	Series of shared encounters
	Gazing at the familiar
SPECTATORIAL	Communal activity
	Series of brief encounters
	Glancing at and collecting different signs
ENVIRONMENTAL	Collective organisation
	Sustained and didactic
	Scanning to survey and inspect
ANTHROPOLOGICAL	Solitary
	Sustained immersion
	Scanning and active interpretation

Source: Urry (1995: 161)

Acknowledging that visitors view gardens in different ways impacts on the application of the tourist gaze in relation to garden visiting. In essence, garden visiting is not likely to fit neatly into one form of the tourist gaze but instead cover several forms. In explanation of how garden visiting relates to the tourist gaze, if one considers the grand schemes of seventeenth century gardens or the sweeping qualities of the eighteenth century landscape parks, both of which required great vision as well as much work on the ground, it is clear to see the applicability of the *romantic gaze*. The visitor may spend some time in the garden, may be solitary (particularly the case

in a landscape park) and is likely to view the garden with awe in relation to the landscape before them.

However, garden visiting may also be viewed in terms of the *collective gaze*, as it is often a communal activity, undertaken in the company of other people and comprises a series of shared encounters. Some gardens tend to be familiar environments, where visitors can compare their own gardening experiences with those observed in the garden visited. Thus gazing at the familiar is applicable and is particularly apparent in private gardens, opened on a limited basis by the owner for charity open days, which are more likely to be considered as ordinary gardens, not visitor attractions. While it is less obvious that gardens fit the environmental and anthropological gazes, it can be argued that the *spectatorial gaze* is relevant. Again, the communal activity and series of brief encounters applies but in this case, glancing at and collecting different signs is appropriate. Signs may refer to either being able to confirm to fellow garden enthusiasts that a visit has been made to a specific garden ('collecting' gardens) or perhaps may involve the purchase of goods from the garden, where plants, or another commodity, may be a signifier (MacCannell, 1976) of the garden visited.

Meethan (2001: 83) argues that the notion of the gaze is problematic and that it "cannot adequately account for multiple, different, conflicting interpretations...". However, Urry's gaze idea can be more loosely interpreted and there appears to be no reason why one cannot use more than one form of gaze to attach to different types of garden and different types of visitor. While the gaze notion may not be universally accepted, the concept does give a functional framework for appreciating the way in which demand for garden visiting is constructed. For gardens, it is the visual

distinctiveness which sets them apart – gardens open to the public rely on this to attract visitors and thus the consumption idea is a central tenet.

In terms of relating gardens to the tourist gaze, Urry's (1990) differentiation between everyday and extraordinary experiences is a valuable analytical tool, particularly with reference to the six identified aspects of what constitutes a distinctive tourist gaze.

- First, recognition of the gaze in relation to a unique object or place, somewhere that is famous for being famous, akin to a pilgrimage to a sacred centre. There are many gardens which have notoriety as places to visit, for example, Giverny in France (Monet's garden), which some 400,000 visitors flock to each year because it is so famous and which is suffering from severe wear and tear as a result; and other famous gardens including Kew Gardens, England (1,000,000 visitors per year) and Monticello, Virginia (550,000 visitors per year). Giverny and Monticello are unique places due to their associations with famous people, while Kew is world famous as a botanic garden.
- Second, the seeing of signs relates to gardens inasmuch as visitors choose to see gardens which signify a certain style, such as a typical English cottage garden or a Japanese garden. Here the semiotics of gardening connotes different meanings to the observer and will generate responses.
- Third, seeing an unfamiliar aspect of what is normally considered to be familiar is of relevance in a garden setting where visitors may be introduced to

new or alternative styles of gardening, such as 'moon gardening' (Harris, 2002) and organic techniques.

- Fourth, seeing ordinary aspects of social life observed in different contexts as part of the tourist gaze may be related to gardening in a famous garden – usual task being undertaken but in an unusual or awe-inspiring environment.
 - Fifth, carrying out unusual tasks and activities in an unusual environment also draws in the latter aspect and may also highlight gardens with a noteworthy setting, which provide a unique context.
 - Sixth, seeing a sign that something is out of the ordinary even though it does not seem so in a garden could refer to a label which denotes that a plant is rare, or bred in that garden or that the garden was designed by someone famous.
- This analysis is by no means exhaustive but gives an impression of how elements of producing the tourist gaze benefit the garden environment.

The notion of the tourist gaze assists in understanding tourism and recreation as consumption and thus how visitors experience and 'consume' environments. While the idea of the tourist gaze is not the focus of the research, it is valuable to the process of understanding why people visit gardens and assists in attaching meanings to garden visiting. Thus, the tourist gaze provides an interesting introduction to the consumer of the garden environment, that is, the visitor. To pursue this theme, the notion of the gaze will be applied to the results of the survey of garden visitors reported in Chapter 6.

3.6 Conceptual Approaches to Researching Garden Visiting

Yin (1994: 9) states that a literature review is not about determining answers about what is known about a subject but a review process of “previous research to develop sharper and more insightful *questions* about the topic”. It is with this review of the literature on the tourist experience in mind that a new conceptual model of the visitor experience is required, which may be adapted for use in a variety of locations but which will serve the purposes of researching the experience of garden visitors. The use of conceptual frameworks developed to research other forms of space and visitor attraction provide a way forward in constructing a research paradigm that will enable appropriate data collection and reveal relevant information about how garden owners and garden visitors perceive the garden visiting experience.

Having reviewed a number of different approaches to researching the visitor experience, which aspects of the research can inform the study of the garden visitor experience? Clawson and Knetsch’s (1966) recreation experience concept is a useful starting point from which to view the nature of a visit in its broadest sense, although in practical terms is too all-encompassing for this thesis, which aims to impart understanding of on-site issues. Haywood and Muller’s (1988) outline of the visitor experience in urban areas, despite its context, exhibits many parallels with other forms of space, including attractions. Indeed, the framework can be easily adapted to the garden environment (Table 3.3) to assist in drawing up criteria for assessing the visitor experience. A focus on the more experiential aspects of garden visiting, developed from a modification of Haywood and Muller’s (1988) study is more appropriate than the perspective developed from services marketing, namely approaches such as SERVQUAL and HISTOQUAL. Such an approach is of limited

relevance because visitor satisfaction and service quality are not the entire focus of this study, and so it has been deemed inappropriate to adopt a similar method for assessing the visitor experience. Whilst some researchers might pursue this avenue of inquiry, it is not one where specific expectation/performance measures developed through SERVQUAL were deemed useful.

While the use of the ASEB grid method is an effective method of revealing perceptions of tourist destinations and some attractions, it does not provide a sufficiently relevant set of categories to which garden experiences can be attributed and is not necessarily appropriate in the garden context. Such a technique runs the risk of failing to emphasise the specific issues linked with garden visiting. One final approach, that advocated by Laws (1995), is the idea of service blueprinting. The blueprinting format offers an interesting method of revealing the visitor experience but its qualitative nature makes it too cumbersome for practical use on a wider scale. Furthermore, it has not been widely tested and proven to be a robust survey approach to a complex environment, such as a garden, where the concept of service provision is not the underlying rationale of the visitation. Bearing these conceptual issues in mind, an evaluation of alternative methodological approaches to the research is detailed in the next section.

3.7 Alternative Methodological Approaches to the Study of Garden Visiting

The study of the visitor experience in gardens incorporates interdisciplinary interests and can be researched in the context of disparate methodological paradigms. Valid research approaches include qualitative techniques, such as the use of semiotics, participant observation, interview techniques and focus groups, as well as quantitative

survey-based methods of data collection. The potential contribution and shortcomings of the most germane methods will now be evaluated to justify the methodology adopted in the research reported in this thesis.

3.7.1. Semiotics

Semiotics utilises the study of language and the way different signs, symbols and other non-verbal structures are used to signify and represent. In a semiotic system, meaning is derived from a triadic relationship between the designatum (the object/concept), the sign (the signifier used to represent the object) and the interpretant. Semiotics have been recognised as a valid construct in tourism research since the 1980s (see MacCannell, 1989; Selwyn, 1993) and, in particular, have been widely used in studies of tourism marketing (Echtner, 1999). Methodologies incorporating semiotics in tourism research include the analysis of relationships between the tourist, marketing images and the place, such as Dann's (1999) study of travel writing as a promotional vehicle, and Bhattacharya's (1997) analysis of image presentation in the Lonely Planet guide-books and tourist experience in India. Generally, semiotics research has concentrated on the analysis of tourist brochures and destination image. Echtner (1999) indicates that research to date is of limited value in the understanding of tourism management as methodologies have not been developed sufficiently to provide tangible outcomes with a management focus. In addition, there is no empirical research in the tourism marketing literature on tourist experience of a destination.

In relation to the study of gardens, a permissible direction for developing the research would have been to take a semiotics approach in order to understand how the visitor

experience was socially constructed by the garden visitor (or interpretant). A semiotics approach might have involved an analysis of the way in which the visitor was attracted to select a specific garden to visit and the role of symbols and signs in the individual marketing and promotional activities of specific gardens and garden associations. Such a research focus might have commenced with a scoping exercise conducted in a sample of gardens to ascertain how visitors valued each place. This approach might yield insights into the importance attached by visitors to garden design as a factor encouraging or deterring them from visiting. Thereafter, the results of the scoping exercise could be used to construct an epistemological methodology for the analysis of visitor information leaflets and other interpretive material provided in each of the sample gardens.

An approach based on semiotics would have placed some significant limitations on the scope of the research. Gardens which choose not to advertise would be excluded from such a research project. Similarly, gardens with very limited leaflets (such as those in black and white) may not truly represent the actual garden experience. Defining the tourism experience as that “communicated by the language of tourism marketing” (Echtner, 1999: 53) would have placed unnecessary limits on the study. Such consideration might be more appropriate once a complete appreciation of the dynamics of garden visiting had been established. In addition, the degree to which the visitor experience is influenced by promotional or interpretive material is debatable, as influences are likely to be generated by a range of tangible and intangible elements of a destination. Indeed, it is this range of aspects that is worthy of study in relation to revealing the extent to which facets of a destination might affect the visitor

experience. Moreover, because Gallagher (1983) undertook research on guide-books in relation to historic gardens, the validity of repeating the approach was questionable.

More significantly, integrating the semiotics perspective within the rationale of the research would have adversely affected the balance and nature of the thesis. Such an approach would have been of limited value to this study given the restricted application and value of such a perspective and the need to establish a macro rather than a micro perspective of issues affecting the visitor experience. An assessment of marketing on visitor decision-making could be incorporated into other methodological approaches, such as a questionnaire survey. The semiotics of garden visiting is, perhaps, a topic more suited to a follow-up study that might enrich and build upon the knowledge and understanding gained from a baseline study once an understanding of garden visiting had been established.

3.7.2. The Effect of Garden Design Attributes

Another means of evaluating the visitor experience of the garden environment would be to explore the visitor response to physical design attributes of gardens. In particular, the effect of a garden's design on influencing visitor flows and the propensity for people to cluster at certain points in the garden might have been examined. Visitor reactions to various styles of planting and special features within the garden could be collected. Such an investigation might provide valuable information on aspects of the garden visit for garden owners and managers. Using observation and participant observation techniques, the identification of visitor patterns and behaviour would be possible, leading to an evaluation of the components of the visitor experience.

To gain further insights, the use of qualitative techniques, such as visitor diaries and interviews could be utilised. This approach was used by Laws (1995) in an examination of visitor reactions to Leeds Castle, Kent and by Markwell and Basche (1998) in a study of ecotourist experiences. One form of qualitative consumer market research which could be adapted in tourism research is that based on observation techniques (see Cooper and Schindler, 1998). Observational research in a garden context might take the form of accompanied visiting, where the researcher joins visitors on their perambulation of a garden. This type of approach might provide significant experiential data in relation to garden visiting and would be particularly useful in revealing detailed patterns and perceptions of one or a small number of sites. The approach could not be justified in this research where the imperative was to obtain data that would assist in informing micro and macro planning and management strategies for garden attractions. There is, nevertheless, scope to pursue this kind of approach in the further development of the present research, although the diverse range of gardens would mean that a representative sample of gardens might not easily be constructed.

3.7.3. Interviews and Focus Groups: Garden Visitors

One further method that might have been employed to explore the social and psychological components of garden visiting was the use of in-depth face-to-face interviews and/or focus groups with individual visitors on a qualitative basis. These interviews would have been largely semi-structured, with the respondent able to talk freely around a set of key questions to provide comparability between respondents. The desired outcome would be to understand the traits, nuances and features of visitors' experiences of gardens. In this way, it would be possible to construct a

framework of what was deemed important by each visitor. Examples of previous tourism and recreation research using focus groups includes the work carried out by Arden (1995) in formulating a visitor management strategy for the Hadrian's Wall area in Northumberland and Harrison, Burgess and Limb's research on the perception of urban recreation among residents of London (1986). In-depth interview methods were utilised by Connell (2000) in an assessment of the links between tourism, social responsibility and a university, and in a study by Fallon (2001) on power relations in the Indonesian destination of Lombok, where hotel managers and local community representatives were interviewed. Overall, it is apparent that focus group and in-depth interviewing techniques are most appropriate in case study work involving an exploration of a single destination or where scoping of issues is required to build a clearer picture of a particular subject. It is also suitable where the research topic is sensitive or where substantial probing of the respondent view is likely to be required.

Given the resources and the time involved in qualitative interviews, a much smaller sample size would have been selected. In recognising the diversity of individual characteristics inherent in both visitors and the visitor experience, it would have been more difficult to construct a model of the visitor experience of gardens. There would have been a great deal of validity in seeking to develop constructs and research findings in a more exploratory, qualitative manner had an inductive or 'grounded theory' approach to garden visiting been adopted (as described by Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Using such an approach, no *a priori* assumptions on the nature and extent of gardens as visitor attractions would have been made at the outset. In reality, however, it might be argued that such a stance would not have adequately reflected previous

research on both the tourism visitor experience and the recreational qualities of gardens, as Chapter 1 outlines.

Exploratory interviews could certainly have formed the basis to develop the study in a more qualitative direction by utilising an interview and focus group approach where issues of visitor management could be ascertained from garden owners and visitors on a smaller, more regional sample and in an in-depth and semi-structured manner. An interview and focus group approach has many merits in terms of developing a close relationship with the target sample so that the respondents feel less inhibited about imparting information. There is a danger, however, that the evidence might arguably have skewed the results gained, as the respondents and the researcher may introduce bias that could be difficult to account for in analytical stages. In addition, comparability is reduced in using a less structured approach with a smaller sample.

Acknowledging the limited existing knowledge base on the visitor experience and gardens in the UK, it was decided that a qualitative approach would only be employed as a starting point in this research to scope the nature of the issues. So while qualitative work was not the central focus of the methodology, there was nevertheless an element of qualitative evidence built into the research in the initial stages, as advocated by Ryan (1995). Furthermore, open-style questions in a questionnaire format, directed both at owners/managers and visitors, would be proficient in generating qualitative style information from respondents. In addition, there were a number of reasons why further qualitative work was not undertaken in a visitor context (recognising that qualitative interviews with garden owners formed part of the scoping exercise). First, garden owners by their very nature are passionate and

inveterate garden visitors and insights on managing and visiting gardens could be gathered in the qualitative scoping exercise through in-depth interviewing. Subsequently, the researcher was satisfied that the range of issues identified by the garden owners were sufficiently representative and wide ranging to enable the validation of what comprises the visitor experience of a garden. Second, the identification of a framework for measuring the components of the visitor experience, derived from Haywood and Muller (1987) highlighted the basic themes and issues relating to the visitor experience in a more generic context. Focus group work or interviewing garden visitors would not have been likely to have produced any further issues of significance.

3.7.4. Quantitative Survey: Garden Visitors and Owners/Managers

Smith (1995: 42) stated that “surveys are, arguably, the most important source of information for tourism analysis, planning and decision-making”. Indeed, there is a strong quantitative antecedent in tourism research. Questionnaire surveys continue to play a significant role in the understanding of tourism and leisure as a business and as part of contemporary society, as well as the more specific field of tourist satisfaction (Ryan, 1995). A continuing and consistent problem in relation to tourism research, as identified by Page *et al.* (2001), is that there is a failure to focus on the clear parameters of what is being observed. While a qualitative approach would be of value in helping to understand what visitors are observing in a garden context, one of the main problems with such an approach is it allows too much flexibility and scope in establishing the parameters of a garden experience. Such an approach may be very valuable for an in-depth study at a limited number of locations, but it does not allow a wider assessment of the garden experience to be formulated at a number of

geographical scales. Indeed, the qualitative perspective of a garden may be so individualised to each respondent that, without a degree of structure to the response outcome, no consensus of the visitor experience could possibly be formulated. Furthermore, in establishing a framework of a garden experience, a more tightly structured approach based on a quantitative formulation enables the respondent and researcher to provide a more rational focus around a commonly agreed set of ideas that can subsequently be tested on a garden by garden basis. A useful outcome of this approach is that it also enables the construction of a nationally applicable study from which valuable baseline information on garden visiting can be developed to understand the nature of the phenomenon at this geographical scale.

A combination of postal and on-site self-completion questionnaires for garden owners/managers and visitors respectively offered a database founded on a widely dispersed geographical sample, rather than on a smaller sample utilising qualitative methods. It is also widely accepted within studies of tourism research (such as Ryan, 1995) that quantitative research techniques utilising questionnaire surveys with Likert scales can yield data with a high degree of reliability and replicability in time and space. Self-completion postal surveys are a relatively inexpensive, highly time-efficient and effective means of reaching a specific sample (Finn, Elliot-White and Walton, 2000). In addition, one particularly important aspect of quantitative survey methodology is that the exploration of relationships between variables is readily permitted. Tests of statistical association could be conducted to explore the influence of certain variables on the identification of patterns within garden visiting and garden visitor management.

A range of drawbacks epitomise questionnaire survey methods, especially self-completion forms. As the respondent has to answer questions in the absence of the researcher, there is no opportunity to clarify the meaning of a question and likewise, the researcher cannot probe an unclear response. Such issues highlight the importance of providing clear instructions for the completion of a questionnaire, very plainly worded questions which cannot be misinterpreted, as well as an obvious, logical structure. As Finn, Elliot-White and Walton (2000) comment, providing an incentive to the respondent to return a completed questionnaire is common practice although may add to the costs of the research. Perhaps more significantly, gaining a representative sample is more difficult as the respondents are 'self-selecting'. While the weaknesses of the survey method are acknowledged, these disadvantages were outweighed by the potential to establish a nationally-based and statistically valid database on garden visiting.

Accordingly, while recognising the value and virtues of a qualitative approach, it was decided that, in a field where virtually no previous work of a quantitative nature existed, there was a primary need to establish a body of data upon which other methodological approaches might be built. The aim of this thesis is to establish a quantitative basis upon which to gauge the scale, scope and extent of the research issues and to understand the national, regional and local scale of garden visiting in relation to the garden owner and visitor perspectives. In this respect, a representative snapshot of garden visiting in Great Britain could be generated to provide a substantive contribution to the knowledge and understanding of gardens as a tourism and leisure resource.

3.7.5. Conclusion: Alternative Approaches to Researching the Visitor Experience

The reasons for concentrating on a quantitative study, rather than on a more qualitative study, was a pragmatic one and rested on the need to define the scope and extent for the research which would be achievable and robust. Further, the outcome of organising and executing a large-scale national survey of gardens was appealing given the potentially rich and detailed nature of the resulting database.

Given these arguments, the most satisfactory way to proceed was with the implementation of a quantitative survey. However, the design of further qualitative research that could enrich, enliven and enhance the quantitative methodologies in further studies of garden visiting is not precluded. This research should be viewed as the starting point for more detailed analyses of the garden experience using alternative research methods to examine evolving research objectives.

3.8 Constructing the Methodology

The previous section justifies the use of a mainly quantitative method, allowing the collection of information from a geographically dispersed population and meeting the research requirement of ensuring transferability, validity and coverage of the garden attraction sector. However, it was appropriate to commence the study with some qualitative work based on grounded theory in order to establish a context for the research and to acknowledge a wider range of views than is possible from a review of literature. Having decided on a mixed approach to the generation of data, the process of which methods to select was relatively straightforward. The initial stage of research would take the form of a small-scale qualitative inquiry, with the purpose of scoping and establishing the major areas of interest and concern from a management

perspective. This information would then be used in combination with key themes emerging from the literature review on the visitor experience to produce a framework which could be adapted for use in a questionnaire survey. It was deemed appropriate to study the garden experience from both the perspective of the garden owner/manager and the garden visitor, thus identifying any significant differences and similarities. Two questionnaire surveys were required to achieve this aim.

3.8.1 Outline of Methodology and Selection of Study Areas

Three stages of research were identified:

1. A scoping exercise, involving qualitative interviews with key informants, observations and limited data analysis focusing on gardens in one region. In line with the mixed methods approach, a case study approach was chosen to examine the management of gardens at the micro level in Britain to scope the issues and to frame the exploratory study. To undertake a study of this nature, the following criteria were generated to assist in the selection of an appropriate region:
 - a large number of gardens;
 - a large variety of gardens;
 - a large variety in garden ownership;
 - a regional focus on promoting gardens for tourism;
 - a public and private sector involvement in promoting gardens to visitors;
 - an established tourism and recreation market.

Consideration of suitable areas according to these criteria led to the selection of Cornwall as a distinctly suitable County in which to conduct preliminary research. No other region in Britain appeared to be pursuing garden tourism so vigorously and in no other comparable region are there so many gardens open to the public. In addition, there are some more cogent reasons why Cornwall is an appropriate location for studying garden tourism. These factors are detailed in the next chapter.

2. A national survey of garden owners, involving an examination of the *supply* of garden experiences (Chapter 5);
3. A national survey of garden visitors, centred on an exploration of the *demand* for garden visiting (Chapter 6).

In order to generate empirical evidence to examine the research theme, it was essential to select a geographical framework where sample garden owners and visitors are representative of the wider population of garden owners and visitors. For the second and third part of the research, a large population was sought and thus the region selected for investigation was England, Scotland and Wales, that is, Great Britain. The reasons for selecting Great Britain as a study area comprise:

- a long tradition of garden visiting exists in Great Britain and it is a well-established activity – the garden possesses quintessentially British associations and Kellett (1982) argues that the private garden, at least, is a distinctly English feature;
- compared with many other countries where visiting gardens is a recreational activity, Great Britain has a longer history of garden visiting (see Appendix 1

- for National Gardens Schemes in other countries);
- garden visiting is a current marketing initiative for national and regional tourism organisations in Great Britain, such as the BTA;
 - a significant number of garden owners can be contacted, providing a sufficiently large population for statistical analysis and generalisation;
 - a wide geographic spread of data may highlight significant regional differences and therefore regional trends to be explored;
 - England, Scotland and Wales form a coherent area of study, which does not limit the study by setting out arbitrary borders, which might be the case in a more regionally focused study;
 - a national study provides a substantive body of work which has the potential to inform international research on current issues in gardens and the nature of the visitor experience at an applied and a theoretical level.

It was deemed appropriate to exclude Northern Ireland from the study (thus, Great Britain rather than United Kingdom) due to a different set of influencing factors in tourism and leisure choice and a very small number of garden attractions.

3.8.2 Secondary research

An exploration of the available statistics on garden visiting was undertaken, with information gleaned from the English Tourism Council and VisitScotland. In addition, an overview of the popularity of gardening as a leisure pursuit provided some useful contextual information. Reports issued by Mintel, Euromonitor and government documents, including the General Household Survey were consulted. Other secondary research included obtaining a clear picture of the types and numbers

of gardens open to the public in Britain. This required consultation of a range of sources, including the Good Gardens Guide, the National Gardens Scheme Yellow Books for England and Wales, and Scotland, the BTA website containing a list of gardens, several publicity leaflets for county wide garden openings and tourist information leaflets. Using these sources, a database of gardens was constructed which would be used in a national survey of gardens.

3.9 Summary

Wagar (1964) wrote that unless there was a commitment to quality experiences from recreation managers, only substandard recreation for visitors would be achieved.

While Wagar was writing in relation to preservation of recreation and the wilderness experience, it is a view that has become increasingly significant with the proliferation of tourism and recreation sites and opportunities in recent years for tourism environments. The postmodern age has witnessed a large increase in the range of visitor attractions in Britain and as a result, the visiting public has to make certain decisions about visiting particular venues based on a complexity of factors including location, appeal, cost and perceived benefit or a combination of factors. It is evident that professional approaches to researching visitor satisfaction are necessary as visitors' expectations increase and there is a greater urgency to ensure competitive advantage in the visitor attraction market.

This chapter has examined the nature of the visitor experience, the manner in which it has been researched and the conceptualisation of different elements in the experience of garden visiting, which will be referred to later in the thesis. The framework derived from Haywood and Muller (1988) can be used in the construction of survey

variables to evaluate the garden visitor experience. Schematic models of the garden as a leisure product and a space have been outlined, identifying the primary, secondary and additional elements of garden environments in terms of the overall experience on offer to visitors. Finally, the chapter has identified the approach to the research upon which the thesis is centred, the results of which are now reported in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the approach to the scoping of garden visiting as a research theme. Undertaking a preliminary stage of work prior to the main research was considered to be an appropriate strategy to pursue as the results would indicate the feasibility, interest and latitude of the research subject. The scoping exercise would also assist in identifying the parameters of the research subject, which initially might be too broad to achieve meaningful results. The role and importance of gardens in Cornwall are explored in the context of economic development, and the strategies implemented to enhance the garden resource and expand visitation are highlighted. Following on from this review, the characteristics of the gardens of Cornwall will be analysed using available secondary data in the form of a marketing leaflet. From this analysis, a typology of gardens is constructed. Observations made at two contrasting gardens are reported, which emphasise the difference in types of garden. Finally, the results of a survey questionnaire, which formed a pilot to the national survey of garden owners reported in Chapter 5, are presented to give further insights into the management of gardens in the County.

4.1 Rationale for Selecting Cornwall as a Research Focus

Cornwall, the south-western most county in England, was selected as a study area in this research for several highly significant reasons. The economy of Cornwall is weak, having been subject to long-term changes in its staple industries – mining, fishing and agriculture. Most notably, GDP per head in Cornwall is significantly less than the UK average (71.2, where UK = 100) (ONS, 1995) and average earnings are

similarly depressed. Gripaos (1996) suggests that Cornwall's industrial structure is largely driven by service provision (that is, health and social care) and tourism. Cornwall is now one of the most deprived regions of the UK and is recognised at the level of the European Union as one of the few areas in the UK requiring financial support, through Objective 1 funding, to assist in the strengthening of the economic base. A report to Cornwall County Council (Brown, 1999) showed that approximately 100,000 (20 per cent of the total County population) live in wards with high levels of social exclusion and deprivation. A summary of socio-economic statistics that demonstrate the extent of structural social and economic problems in the county is produced in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 Cornwall's Structural Problems

FEATURE	STATISTICS
Low GDP per head	69 per cent of EU average 1995
	71 per cent of UK average 1995
Low earnings per head	Male earnings 77 per cent of GB average 1997
	Female earnings 81 per cent of GB average 1997
High unemployment	140 per cent of GB average Jan 1998
Severe decline in traditional employment sectors	Full-time agricultural workers fell 24 per cent 1988-1996
	The last tin mine, South Crofty, closed in late 1990s
Fragmented industrial structure	Wide scatter of small towns
	44 per cent of employees work in firms with less than 25 employees 1995small firms
	24 per cent of work force self-employed 1996
	Over dependence on tourism
	11 per cent of employment in manufacturing
Peripheral location	Lack of high speed rail link
	Distant from regional centres
	High living costs
	Inadequate infrastructure

Source: Adapted from Brown (1999)

New strategies to combine economic and environmental/social sustainability are being implemented in the County, the most significant of which is the recent successful bid for Objective 1 status from the European Union, which is likely to bring in several million pounds of pump-priming funds. As a major and already successful industry, which makes the most of the County's environmental assets, tourism is viewed as one of the key growth areas for the Cornish economy. Gardens are a strong feature of tourism supply in Cornwall. Marketing images, campaigns and large well-known attractions such as Heligan and the Eden Project have developed the resource for public consumption since the 1990s. The freely available brochure *Inspirational Cornwall* produced by the Cornwall Tourist Board contains a double page feature on 'Inspirational Gardens' and states

"Cornwall has the knack of taking your breath away, and as well as the of the dramatic grandeur of the coast and the moors, the county has yet another trick up its sleeve – its great and glorious gardens."

(Cornwall Tourist Board, 2000: 8)

Cornwall is, indeed, one of the most important counties for the number and variety of gardens open to the public. Cornwall, according to Cornwall Enterprise (2000), is the "Garden Capital of the World", perhaps a somewhat dubious statement but nonetheless a powerful marketing tool. To contextualise the choice of Cornwall as a study area, the ensuing discussion examines the broad context of tourism in the County and the role of gardens as a tourism and recreation resource.

4.2 Tourism in Cornwall

According to Cornwall Tourist Board research (1999), tourism is one of Cornwall's largest industries, accounting for about 24 per cent of the County's GDP and

employing 15 per cent of the workforce. Some 4 million visitors are attracted and generate about £800 million and the average length of stay is about 7 days. Tourists to Cornwall tend to originate from London and the South-East, the Midlands and within the South-West. Many are repeat visitors. The main reasons for visiting Cornwall are the beaches and the number of places of interest to visit. Cornwall is within the South-West Tourism region which is the most significant generator of tourism trips in Great Britain (English Tourism Council *et al.*, 2001). In the Tourist Board's strategy document "*Towards 2020: A Tourism Strategy for the SouthWest*", it is stated that gardens comprise 9 per cent of the West Country region's attractions. Gardens are considered to be one of the four strengths (sea and coastline, gardens, countryside and cultural heritage) and it is stated that opportunities to package and market to targeted segments on a themed basis exist.

Traditionally, tourism in Cornwall has relied on the family beach holiday product, which remains the most central feature of holiday breaks to the County. However, wider recognition of alternative and inland attractions and areas has emerged in recent years as tourist demand, expectations and aspirations have risen and tourists are increasingly discerning. Heritage and garden attractions are a significant part of this alternative product and form one of the most important locations which tourists choose to visit while on holiday in the County, as identified in the annual Cornwall Holiday Survey 1999 (conducted by the Tourism Research Group at University of Exeter and reported by Cornwall County Council, 2001). Concern about the volume of tourism trips in the recession of the early 1990s has stimulated discussion on how to generate more effective returns from the tourism trade in the County. An unusual move for a local authority is the production of a detailed tourism policy, which aims

to improve the performance of the industry and to assist in wider social and economic development.

The policy drafted to stimulate Cornish tourism (Cornwall Tourist Board, 1999)

includes policy directions of direct relevance to gardens as tourist attractions.

Specifically, relevant policies include increasing business at times in the shoulder and off-peak season, providing new or changed facilities and protecting/enhancing the built and natural environment. The idea of identifying and developing niche and specialist markets is central to the enhancement of the garden visitor attraction as the main market for Cornish tourism is traditionally the coastal holiday. Supporting development which has the potential to contribute to sustained tourism growth and encouraging initiatives which improve the quality and distinctiveness of the environment fit with garden attractions, as they tend to be based on the quality of the environment.

Gardens can assist in the development of tourism in several ways. Most of the Cornish gardens are small-scale enterprises and many are open primarily to raise funds for charity, which has the potential to assist in the wider distribution of tourist income. Cornish gardens reflect part of the Cornish heritage – the associations with the nineteenth-century plant hunters and the horticultural enthusiasm of some of the land-owning gentry has given Cornwall probably a unique place in the story of British, even international, garden history. The crucial aspect for the development and management of garden attractions in Cornwall is to provide an opportunity to attract more visitors to the county to specifically visit the gardens and to increase the spending of the more general visitor. Justification for garden attractions appears to be

on economic grounds but with environmental and visitor objectives running in parallel. The pursuit of economic objectives is certainly evident in the philosophy behind the Cornwall Gardens Development Project, which will be discussed in detail later.

4.3 Gardens in Cornwall

The promotional literature in the Cornwall Gardens leaflet states the following:

“Lying further south and west than anywhere else in the UK, Cornwall enjoys one of Britain’s mildest climates. Shores washed by the Gulf Stream bring early springs and long lingering summers and a micro-climate along the South coast enabling a greater range of plants to grow here than anywhere else on earth. Glorious gardens litter the county as a legacy of centuries of botanical passion – with gardens young and old, neglected, rescued and still in the making – a veritable Who’s Who that no garden lover should miss. None will feel their life is complete without having set foot in Cornwall – the garden capital of the world”.

(Cornwall Tourist Board, 2000)

The County enjoys a mild climate, as a result of the effects of the Gulf Stream. A microclimate exists along parts of the southern coast, with its many estuaries and sheltered valleys, allowing plants from exotic locations to flourish. Rainfall is relatively high (annual average is 1000 millimetres) and humidity is unusually high, according to Pett (1997). Frosts do occur in winter (approximately 15 days), although the temperature is generally milder than most other parts of the country, ranging from a mean of 6 degrees centigrade in January to 16 degrees centigrade in July. The average number of hours of sunshine per day is 4.5 (The Met Office, 1999). As a result of a favourable combination of the climate, soils and topography, many gardens have been developed taking advantage of the natural conditions.

The history of gardens in Cornwall can be traced back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries when farming and mining became prosperous and the profits of these industries allowed manor houses to be built and existing houses improved. The eighteenth century saw great prosperity for many landowners and thus the means and opportunity to develop their grounds. Garden design in Cornish gardens tended to follow the fashions of the times, such as formal gardens in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, landscape parks and remodelling of nature in the eighteenth century. In the nineteenth century, desire for exotic species for planting in Cornish gardens led to the sponsoring of plant hunters. Rhododendrons and camellias were among the most numerous species brought back from regions such as the Himalayas. Hybridisation became a popular pursuit for garden owners, perhaps the most renowned being J.C. Williams of Caerhays (see Williams, 1999).

Archival material demonstrates that the attractiveness of gardens to visitors in Cornwall is not a new phenomenon. A 1909 article by Bastin published in a travel newspaper (Hornsby, 1910: 110), depicted the plants and gardens in Cornwall, encompassing both native and exotic species, with great eloquence:

“Geraniums clamber up to the first floor windows of the charming villas in Penzance, bearing literally hundreds of bunches of blooms. Groves of palms and tree ferns are delightful features of many gardens, whilst there are many places where the banana tree attains to fine proportions”.

In the context of influencing visits to Cornwall to see gardens, the following phrase is noted:

“All these things anyone can prove for himself by a short week-end in the west country”.

The early twentieth-century was a time of impoverishment for the Cornish gardens. Many of the great estates never recovered from the ravages of the First World War, most notably in the numbers of staff who did not return from fighting (see Smit, 1997). Economic changes in the fortunes of the estate owners, as described more generically in Chapter 2, led to many estate break-ups and sales. However, the Cornish garden retains a strong presence in the early twenty-first century. Many large gardens are now operated by the National Trust or private enterprise and there are a great number of post-war gardens as well as the small-scale private gardens managed solely by their owners. Thus, the gardens sector in Cornwall is dominated by the private and not-for-profit sectors, in line with visitor attractions generally.

Since the mid 1990s, the marketing of a wide range of Cornish gardens open to the public has become high profile. There are about 70 gardens in the County but specific categories of garden tend to be marketed in different ways. The following publications are the key sources of information on gardens to visit in Cornwall:

- the National Gardens Scheme book outlining gardens open on a national basis including Cornwall plus a smaller pamphlet specifically defining sixty or so gardens in Cornwall open for charity fund-raising;
- the Gardens of Cornwall Open Guide produced by the Cornwall Gardens Society and the Cornwall Tourist Board, supported by the National Trust and detailing the seventy gardens open to the public in the County (Cornwall Gardens Society and Cornwall Tourist Board, 2000);
- the Great Gardens of Cornwall leaflet encompassing the joint and co-operative marketing venture of an increasing number of gardens – 12 in 2000;

- the National Trust Gardens Guide – there are six gardens open in Cornwall under the direct management of the National Trust; and, in addition, the singular efforts of each garden to promote their particular garden experience to the consumer;
- national guides such as the Good Gardens Guide published annually (and described as “the essential reference book for all garden visitors should be recognised as providing important coverage of the best Cornish gardens. The 2000 edition of the Guide (King, 2000) contains 47 gardens in Cornwall out of a total of just over 1000 gardens contained in the Guide.

Consequently, the concerted marketing effort flags Cornwall as a County for garden visiting but is this piecemeal approach to promotion sufficient alone? The potential for gardens to add significantly to the Cornwall tourism product is encapsulated in the objectives of the recently formed Cornwall Gardens Development Project.

4.3.1 The Cornwall Gardens Development Project

The potential value and significance of gardens in Cornwall has recently been harnessed by local government. In line with strategic thinking on tourism in the County, the Cornwall Gardens Development Project was established in 1999 by Cornwall Enterprise with the assistance of Objective 5b grant aid and private matched funding from garden owners. The main premise of the Project is based around attracting a greater number of visits to Cornwall through developing and marketing gardens as tourist attractions. The aims and objectives of the Project are encapsulated in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2 The Objectives of the Cornwall Gardens Development Project

Improve, enhance and market Cornwall' profile as a quality visitor destination by improving and developing the garden product as a quality visitor experience
Attract more visitors to the County through the promotion of its gardens. Visitors will be sought from markets internationally, nationally and regionally
Attract visitors to the County on a year round basis by developing and marketing specialist initiatives outside the conventional summer holiday season
Attract valuable visitors to the County by improving the product range to enable further promotion to a targeted market
Increase direct and indirect employment
Increase training in horticultural, catering, retail and marketing skills by creating an increased demand for employees with these skills

Source: Cornwall Enterprise (2000: 7)

At the time of writing, Cornwall's Objective 1 bid for European funding has been accepted and bids for capital projects for garden development have been submitted, the outcomes as yet unknown. However, it is clear that gardens in the County are fully recognised as an important resource for tourism and, beyond that, sustainable economic development. The need for a detailed case study is further supported by the existence of a policy background focusing on gardens as a tourism theme and the desirability of identifying the significant issues in managing gardens for visitors should be of paramount concern to both policy-makers and operators alike.

4.3.2 Garden Visiting in Cornwall

Data on Cornish tourism is available through the annual Cornwall Holiday Survey. The 1999 survey indicates that a large proportion of tourists to Cornwall are in the A, B or C1 social groups and the majority are in paid employment. Some 58 per cent of those questioned in the survey had visited, or were going to visit, gardens during their stay. Prior to 1999, data on visitor numbers to the Cornish gardens has been non-existent. However, in the last year, a survey has been carried out under the auspices of the Cornwall Gardens Development Project to establish base levels of visiting. The

1999 Cornwall Gardens Visiting Survey considered responses from 33 of the 70 gardens in the county. Estimated visitor numbers from these gardens were 548, 202 (Cornwall Enterprise, 2000). It was found that while visitor figures for the County reach a peak in July and August, fewer gardens are open to the public at this time than in April and May. As the spring theme of many of the gardens only readily permit spring opening, a disparity between demand and supply of the Cornwall gardens product is identifiable.

The objectives of marketing different facets of the Cornish tourism product are to extend the season, to develop packages with tourism operators and to ensure compatibility with environmental quality. Targeting key markets wisely is supported by a number of authors such as Hale (2000: 5) who states that “attempting to please everyone by appealing to the lowest common denominator is not really a strategy at all”. The ensuing result of fewer but better tourists (low volume – high value visitors as advocated by protagonists of sustainable tourism) may fit the Cornish setting more appropriately. Gardens are well-placed to fit in with a different philosophy of tourism planning which incorporates a more tightly controlled and targeted approach to markets and products.

Overall, in a strategic framework, it can be observed that gardens are viewed as an integral part of the tourism product of the West Country region and more specifically of Cornwall, with further public sector investment to develop their potential and value as visitor attractions. The discussion now concentrates on the current methods used to generate visitor interest in the Cornish gardens and the product range available to the visiting public.

4.4 Exploring the Scope of Gardens Attractions in Cornwall

The aim of this section is to summarise the component parts of the scoping exercise, conducted as part of the approach to the main research in this thesis, to provide a firm foundation for study. The exercise consisted of three elements:

- (1) Part 1: Analysis of promotional leaflet;
- (2) Part 2: Series of in-depth interviews with key informants;
- (3) Part 3: Distribution of pilot questionnaire.

Each of these components is now detailed.

Part 1: Extrapolation of Information from Promotional Leaflet

The annual leaflet produced by the Cornwall Gardens Society and the Cornwall Tourist Board provides sufficient information to undertake an analysis of the gardens open to the public in the County. The information available allows a perfunctory evaluation of the basic elements of each garden including ownership, opening details, charges, size and description. Extrapolation of this data allows some understanding of the characteristics of the gardens by means of basic frequency analysis. The distribution of gardens in Cornwall is mapped in Figure 4.1.

(i) Ownership

The majority of Cornish gardens are in private ownership and operated by individuals opening up their own gardens to visitors. Overall, 55 of the 69 gardens are privately owned (80 per cent) and, by and large, operated by resident owners. Just three of these 55 are categorised slightly differently; two are managed by a private trust and one is owned by a limited company. The public sector, generally in the form of



Figure 4.1 Distribution of Gardens in Cornwall in 2000

The map below shows the distribution of gardens in Cornwall. Two gardens have been highlighted and these will be discussed in depth later in the chapter. There is no specific pattern to the spatial location of the gardens although there is a preponderance of sites around the creeks and estuaries of the south coast, particularly the Fal, Fowey, Helford and Tamar, and some of the more wooded valleys inland. There are relatively few gardens in the north of the County, which reflects the harsher climate and more exposed landscape of that area, with fewer sheltered locations from the prevailing Atlantic winds.

County or District Councils, operates five of the 69 gardens and the voluntary sector, in the guise of the National Trust and one small-scale protection society account for the remaining 9 (13 per cent).

(ii) Visitor Access

The opening hours of some of the gardens with 29 per cent open for a limited number of days every year (generally from 1-5 days) solely for the purposes of raising revenue for selected charities reflects the large number of the gardens operated by individual private owners. Limited opening dates and times typify a large proportion of the gardens, as private gardens open only on specific days for charity.

Interestingly, the national picture indicates that only 7 per cent of garden attractions are open for less than 30 days (English Tourism Council *et al.*, 1999).

In the broader context, 22 per cent of Cornish gardens are open all year. For these gardens, there seems to be no overriding defining characteristic, although it is possible to identify a number of public sector owned gardens and those of the Great Gardens initiative with its strong promotional image. Some 30 per cent of the gardens are seasonal in opening arrangements, in this case defined as open for 6 to 11 months on an annual basis. The most common opening periods are from March or April to October to take advantage of the busiest months for tourism, the best of the gardens and the weather. However, there are some gardens that open on a more limited seasonal basis, usually when the garden is at its peak visual display, for example March to May or April to June (19 per cent of gardens).

With reference to the national statistics, it is clear that there is a distinct pattern in garden opening – a number open all year but the great majority opening for business in April and closing at the end of October. Seasonality is somewhat characteristic of tourist attractions in Britain, although it can be seen that gardens are particularly unlikely to be open in the off-peak months compared with other attractions, with visitor numbers and plant displays directly affected by weather conditions.

(iii) Size

Gardens in Cornwall are predominantly small. In general, the majority of the gardens, for which an acreage is available, are 5 acres or less in size (56 per cent). A few (18.5 per cent) are of medium size (defined as 6-20 acres). A further 25.5 per cent are more sizeable (21 or more acres) 4 of these are between 50-100 acres but no garden exceeds 100 acres.

(iv) Charge

An evaluation of the entry charge for each garden reveals that 50 per cent charge between £1.01-£2.00 (44 per cent of gardens nationally charge in this bracket according to ETB *et al.*, (1996)), the average price being £1.64. The mean average admission charge is well below the national average of £2.27 (ETB *et al.*, 1996). Only 6 per cent of gardens in Cornwall charge more than £3.00, usually because entry may include some other attraction, such as a house, for example, Trerice. Some 10 per cent of the Cornish gardens offer free entry or entry subject to discretionary donations.

(v) Implications of the Leaflet Analysis

The rudimentary study outlined in the previous section enabled the construction of a broad typology of gardens open to the public (Table 4.3). The typology is based primarily on the visitor experience as defined by the range of facilities on site: in other words, a continuum relating to the level of production of the visitor experience, ranging from elementary gardens, to enhanced, established and exploited gardens.

The elementary category is appropriate for the large number of private gardens that open for a minimal number of days. The enhanced gardens refer to those which have more than a basic set of facilities for visitors but where the management policy is to keep development low-key. Established gardens focus on those which fall between enhanced and exploited – those in the mid-range of facilities in terms of range and access. The exploited category incorporates the type of garden which is solely managed for visitors and has the facilities to cope with a broad range of visitors, interests and abilities. The phrasing in this instance is not intended to be derogatory but connotes the use of space and the extent of commercialisation. The space may be socially constructed as well as providing an enjoyable garden experience and will be highly developed for the visiting public. In Cornwall, only a small number of gardens fall into the ‘exploited’ category. This typology provides a basic framework from which to view the gardens in Cornwall and which is adapted for use in a national context (see Chapter 5).

Table 4.3 Typology of Gardens

ELEMENTARY	Small, privately owned, limited opening, limited facilities, not designed or managed specifically for visitors. Typical garden – residents own garden open just for charity on a few days every year.
ENHANCED	Low key, less limited opening and facilities, managed for visitors. Typical garden – country house garden resident owned, diversified business to supplement income or provide access to garden without causing excessive disturbance to resident lifestyle.
ESTABLISHED	Mid-profile, mid-ranging facilities, wide-opening policy, managed for visitors. Typical garden – private, public or voluntary sector run, where the garden visitor is the core business.
EXPLOITED	High profile, wide range of facilities, created and/or managed specifically for visitors and open for most of the year. Typical garden – private, public or voluntary sector run, highly promoted, high capacity for visitors and considered as a visitor attraction.

To operationalise the typology, two gardens have been identified for a further in-depth analysis of the visitor experience. The Lost Gardens of Heligan typify the type of garden which is described as ‘exploited’ and the gardens at Caerhays Castle represent the ‘enhanced’ category of gardens. The next section explores the background, layout and management of the two gardens, which together form a relatively clear comparison of different types of garden and garden experience.

4.5 Part 2: Operationalising the Typology of Gardens

An appreciation of the background to the development of the gardens is useful in understanding why they represent different approaches to garden visitor management. Two gardens were chosen through the author’s own knowledge of the gardens sector in Cornwall and extensive visitation between 1992 and 2000. The location of each of the two gardens is shown on Figure 4.1. Heligan and Caerhays are approximately five miles apart, on the south coast of Cornwall between St. Austell and Falmouth. The

work undertaken to construct these case studies was based on observations of each garden and a selection of informal methods, which represent a participant observation approach to the collection of data (Jones, 1993). In this respect, the researcher acted as a garden visitor but retained objectivity and distance in order to generate a clear understanding of the characteristics and recreational potential of the garden, as well as some indication of the overall experience.

In the case of Heligan, the author spent several weeks, during 1992-3, working in a voluntary capacity at the garden undertaking a series of garden maintenance tasks and was accommodated in a restored cottage within the estate. The author spent time with one of the directors, John Nelson, and also had conversations with Tim Smit, another director. In addition, much time was spent with those working on site. In the case of Caerhays Castle Gardens, observations were based on several visits during a week's stay at a local farm owned as part of the Caerhays estate, the tenants of which had extensive knowledge of the garden. Apart from an informal conversation with the employee in the ticket sales and plant centre, no other contact occurred with the estate owners. For each garden, as much literature was amassed as possible, including all marketing information, guide books and books and television programmes on Cornish gardens.

4.5.1 The Lost Gardens of Heligan: An Exploited Garden

The gardens at Heligan grew up around Heligan House, the domain of the Tremayne family since the 16th century. The estate once comprised approximately 1000 acres surrounding the fishing villages of Mevagissey and Gorran Haven. The gardens were established from the late 18th century by Henry Hawkins Tremayne and left to

succeeding generations to continually develop (Smit, 1997). The focal point of the gardens were the productive areas – a walled kitchen garden with areas for vegetable and exotic fruit production, a walled flower garden for fruit and flower production. The distinguishing features of these areas were the magnificent brick walls and Paxton glasshouses. The produce from these gardens were utilised by the family and estate dwellers and the more unusual species were grown for symbolic purposes – the newest species of flower or the most exotic fruits grown in one's own garden were status symbols. Heligan was particularly well known for its early preponderance into pineapple growing for example. The pleasure grounds, including Flora's Green with its marvellous collection of rhododendrons and camellias, the ravine, the grotto, the Italian garden and the jungle, provided a wide range of garden environments (see Figure 4.2).

The notable aspect of the gardens at Heligan today is the story of how, since the First World War, the entire garden fell into a state of dereliction. The Tremayne family lost interest in the estate, selling the house as flats in 1970. The story of how the garden was discovered by Tim Smit and his colleagues in 1990 and transformed into one of Cornwall's most significant tourist attractions is well-known. It has been documented in a book (Smit, 1997) and in two Channel 4 television six-part series as well as a large amount of media coverage from the local to the international level. The story is in itself an amazing feat of manpower and organisation but is also typified by the romantic images of waking this "sleeping beauty... gently from her slumbers" (Heligan Manor Gardens Project, 1993). It seems to be this image which has captivated the minds of the visiting public. Indeed, the name of the gardens has been altered to further emphasise a magical spirit, from Heligan Manor Gardens to the

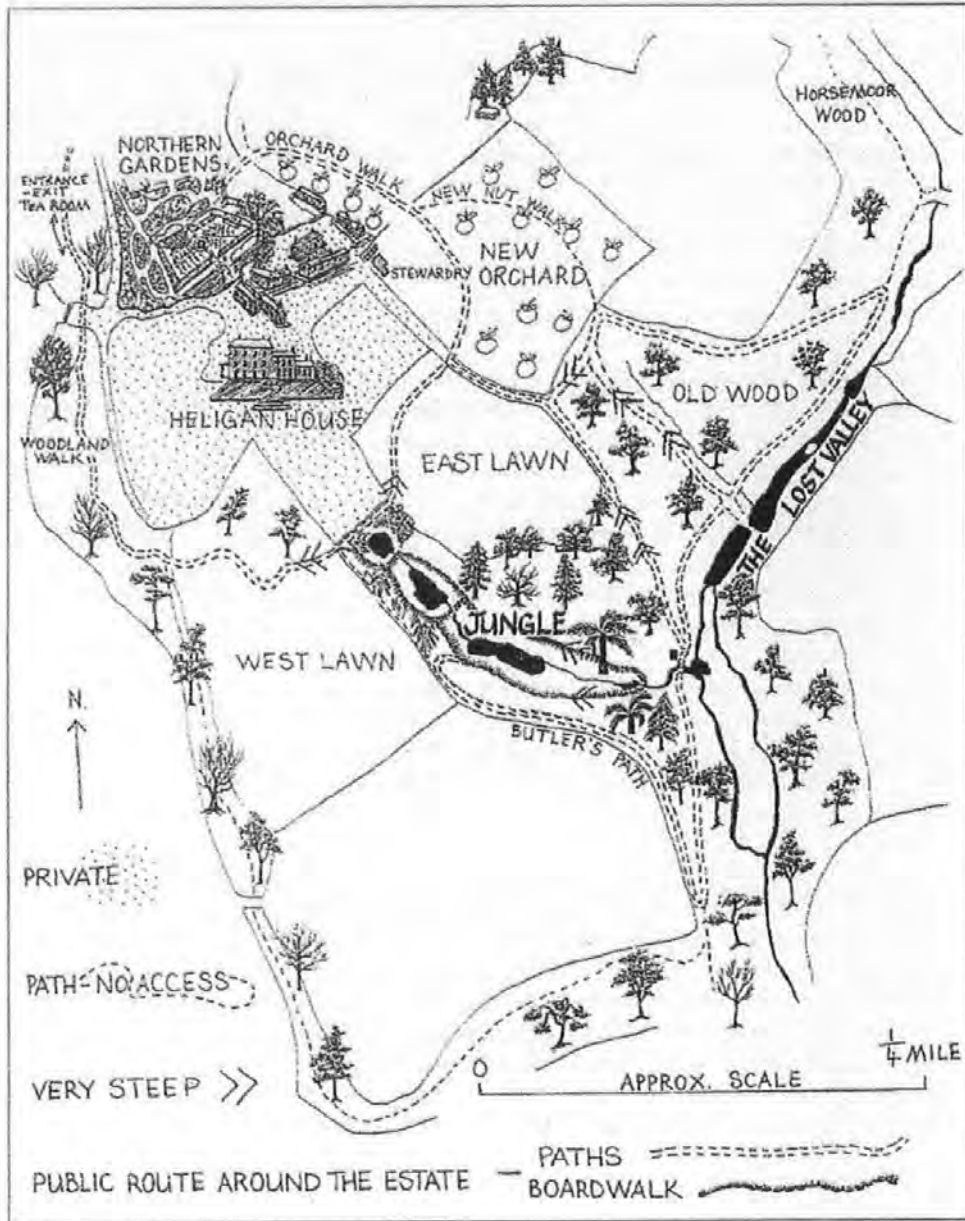


Figure 4.2 Map of the Lost Gardens of Heligan

more marketable Lost Gardens of Heligan. Arguably, the gardens are no longer lost with several hundred thousand visitors every year visiting the garden. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some early visitors to the garden feel that the garden has lost its former spirit—it has been replaced with a superb garden and visitor attraction but the intangible feelings of discovery and spirituality have gone. However, the “lost” tag and the story of the restoration remains the pull for visitors. The management policy is to continue with this strategy until the charm starts to fade, then will be replaced by the main attraction of a garden exhibiting one of the best examples of horticultural practice in the country (Howlett, 2000, personal communication).

Heligan is a good example of a garden which attracts the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) (see Chapter 3). The garden attracts the romantic gaze as an environment which inspires awe, as well as the spectatorial gaze in relation to its splendour as a garden and because of the restoration process which has been so widely documented on television and through books (particularly Smit, 1997), magazines and newspapers. There is also an element of the anthropological gaze inherent in the story of Heligan and its social context, with many visitors feeling a personal attachment because they have a link with the historical development of the garden. The main features of the garden as a tourist attraction are now well developed. The site has been carefully planned to incorporate the needs of visitors and to ensure a positive visitor experience. The tourist infrastructure includes substantial car and coach parking areas, toilets, two tea rooms, a licensed bar and restaurant serving food fresh from the garden, plants sales, a retail outlet, information, a ticket kiosk and on-site office. Apart from a new tea room located near the top of the jungle in a recently acquired dwelling, the service elements are located at the entrance to the garden leaving the actual garden free from

what might be termed “tourist clutter”. The planning of the facilities is a good representation of Kotler’s notion of the product (1994) and Gunn’s model of a tourist attraction (1972), with services placed in a zone of closure and not detracting from the core product (see Chapter 3). The experience of leaving the service area, crossing the main drive to the house and then entering the garden through a tunnel of old rhododendron with its twisted trunks seems to have a desirable effect in this sense. The garden is interpreted through static and discrete information boards in strategic places, through the guide book and through guided tours.

The garden is open all year, seven days a week, and is a popular location for both local resident and tourist visits. The garden has received a great deal of media attention throughout the restoration period and as a result has been featured in a variety of national newspapers and gardening magazines as well as on the television – both feature programmes and news clips. The story has captured the imagination and is well-favoured by the media and general public. The key part of this process has probably been the personality and charisma of Tim Smit, the Director of the project to restore the gardens.

The layout of the gardens does not direct visitors in any particular way. The guide-book asks visitors “to be intrepid and curious!” While path surfaces are suitable for most users, there is a policy to keep the secret feel of the garden intact – as a result, some low hanging branches and greenery may have to be avoided or brushed out of the way. The aim of the garden managers is not to create a perfect or prim garden: while the garden continues to develop post-restoration, there is a need to keep some of the spirit of the lost garden to remind visitors of the story. The intention is to provide

a living and working garden, not one where time stands still or where the visitors can always find a pristine view. Seeing gardeners at work is part of the experience – for example, watching how Victorian gardening techniques are being brought back into use and how much work is put into maintaining the gardens using organic and more traditional, labour intensive techniques.

It is clear that the visitor experience has been designed to give more to than the average garden may give – the restoration story, the working areas, the craftsmanship and horticultural aspects - in addition to the beauty of the gardens and the surrounding environment. There is also a strong element of commercialisation. It is possible to buy Heligan branded products in the shop. The visitor can take away with them a little piece of Heligan whether it be a video about the garden, a book, a plant or a mug (perhaps a form of, what Watson and Kopachevsky (1994) term, mass trinketization). The idea of branding in a garden is relatively new, although long-standing institutions like Royal Horticultural Society and National Trust gardens demonstrate similar 'branded' products on sale in garden shops and on-line. Along with the tangible element of the Heligan product, the visitor may take away a unique experience – an understanding of the restoration process, an image of the people associated with the garden in historic terms and a visual memory of the horticultural achievements. What has happened in this case is that the story, or the marker as defined by Leiper (1990), has become the distinctive sight not the garden. Rojek (1993) terms the process of making additions, which are needed to differentiate the site from other sites (or sights) of a similar nature, as adding value. McCannell (1976) states that all tourism attractions are cultural experiences and have a sign-value. He comments that it is the

semiotics of tourism or the manufactured signifiers of certain experiences which are important – not the actual use-value itself.

In effect, what has been described above is what Urry (1995) terms as the “spectatorial” form of the tourist gaze. Garden visiting is usually a communal activity: visitors tend not to be in isolation and it is generally expected that one will see other visitors. It can also be described as a series of brief encounters with the garden environment. It is possible to take away souvenirs and symbols of the encounter, such as a photograph or a postcard, and as Urry points out, the spectatorial gaze involves glancing at and collecting signs. The experience is not just about walking around a garden to observe the plants and to enjoy the tranquility, garden owners and managers are thinking more creatively about how they can enhance the visitor experience through a number of different routes – many of which are based on commercialisation. While there seems to be a basic level of service offered (teas and toilets) many gardens have followed the route of providing retail outlets, restaurant facilities and a package of minor commodities which add value to the visit.

4.5.2 Caerhays Castle Gardens: An Enhanced Garden

The gardens at Caerhays surround the magnificent nineteenth-century Caerhays Castle, located just behind the remote, sandy cove of Porthluney on the south coast of Cornwall between Mevagissey and St.Mawes. Caerhays Castle Gardens represent the ‘enhanced’ type of gardens because they are low-key, have limited seasonal opening days although are managed with visitors in mind. However, visitors are not the key source of income for the Caerhays estate. Garden visitors are only allowed access periodically, thus preserving the privacy of the resident of the castle. The Castle,

commissioned by John Bettesworth Trevanion in 1807, was designed by John Nash – one of the few of his castles to survive today. The Castle cost much more than had been anticipated - the family fell into debt and were forced to sell the estate.

However, it was not until 1853 when the Castle was almost derelict that the estate was finally sold to Michael Williams, a local industrialist. The change in ownership was significant for the development of the gardens at Caerhays as Williams's grandson, John Charles Williams, was to prove influential as a horticulturalist. J.C.Williams wrote a horticultural diary at Caerhays. He showed an interest in orchids, ferns and bamboo as well as the hybridisation of daffodils, becoming well-known in Royal Horticultural Society circles. In 1905, the Chelsea nurseryman James Veitch asked J.C.Williams to experiment with some rhododendron seeds brought back from China by E.H.Wilson. The establishment of this link was to be the start of further close ties with plant hunters, for example George Forrest began to collect for Caerhays from 1910 through to the 1920s.

The garden evolved in terms of new plantings up until the mid-1930s , with further plantings of rhododendrons, camellias and a variety of trees. Little thought was given to design because, in many cases, the eventual height and shape of a plant was unknown, particularly when grown in a non-native environment. The essential element was selecting a suitable site for each species to grow successfully. Following the death of J.C.Williams in 1939 and the Second World War, when much of the garden staff team was depleted, the garden developed “quietly”. The estate is still under the ownership of the Williams family (Caerhays Estates, undated). The map of the gardens shows the layout, path network and location of the castle (Figure 4.3).

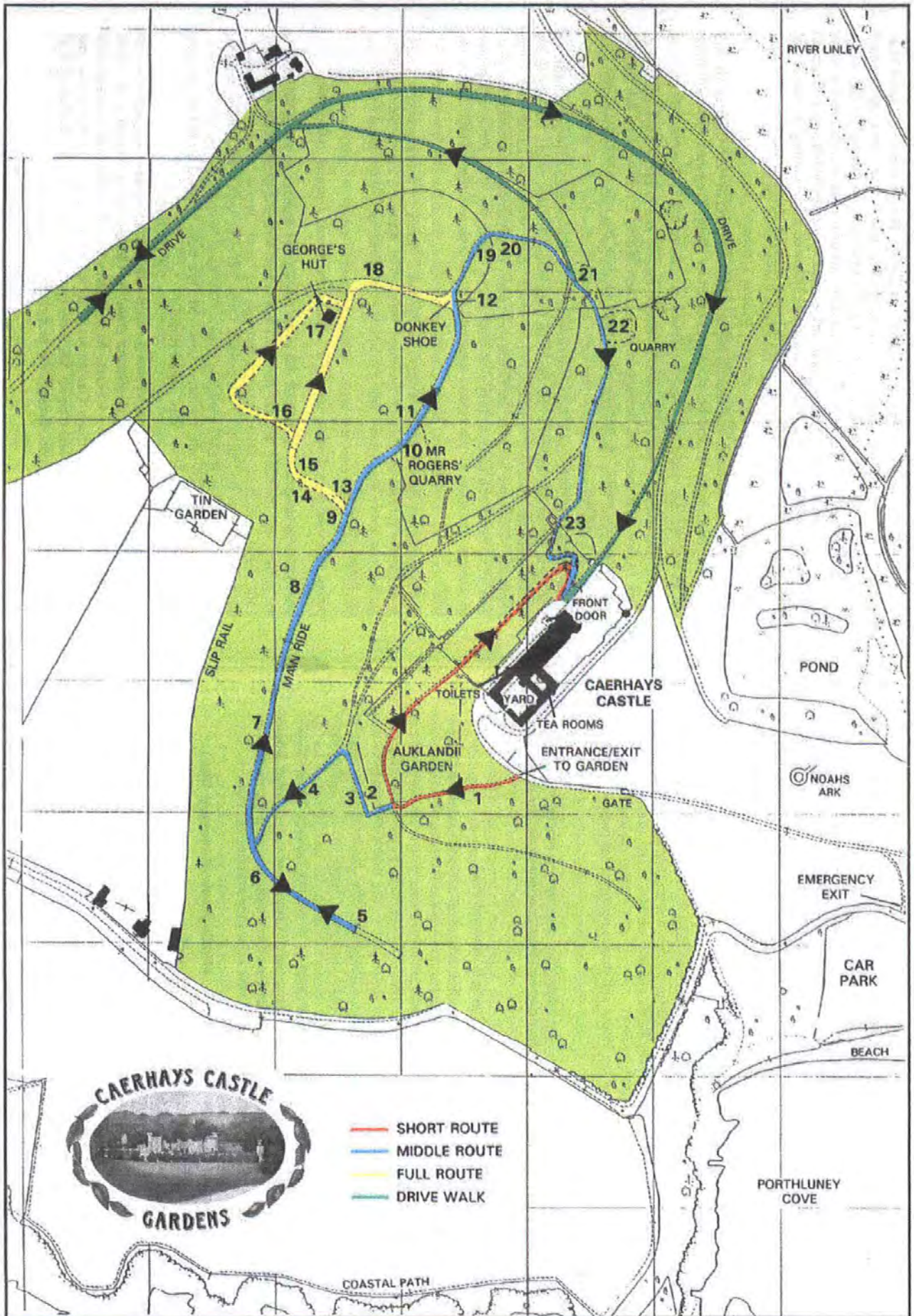


Figure 4.3 Map of Caerhays Castle Gardens

The garden has been open to the public for a number of years but is strictly limited to a few weeks in the year, in spring when the camellias and rhododendrons are at their best. The garden tends to be opened on a few selected days, not usually at weekends, and a policy of keeping visitor numbers low operates. The estate is not easily accessible, being away from main tourist routes and not having white on brown tourist signs to direct visitors. In addition, the lanes leading to the area from all directions are narrow and twisting. The visitor facilities are low key and the main point of a visit is for the quiet enjoyment of plants. As the garden is so well-stocked with a wide range of rhododendrons and camellias, it is likely that the garden will attract keen plantspeople as well as those with a general interest. Labelling of species is effective although there is little interpretation within the garden, again indicating the nature of the visitor for who this experience is primarily aimed.

There is probably a limited amount of time that visitors can spend at Caerhays. It is not designed to be a full day out and some visitors may find that even half-a-day is too much time. The amount spent on site will probably depend on the visitor's knowledge and interest in the plants. A camellia specialist, for example, may easily find that a great deal of time can be spent looking at each variety, examining growth habit and condition. Occasionally, the Castle is open to the public at an additional charge which provides extra interest. There are a few facilities on site designed to enhance the visitor experience. A tea-room is housed in the Castle, there are toilets and a ticket kiosk with plant sales. To guide visitors around the garden, three trails have been designed. These trails depend on what type of route the visitor wishes to take around the garden according to length and steepness but all routes meet back at the Castle (see Figure 4.3). The trails are outlined in the Guide Book which the

visitor must purchase and are defined by colour coded posts in the garden. Thus, the visitor experience at Caerhays is distinctly much less managed and commercialised than at Heligan. Visitor facilities are provided to ensure the comfort of visitors but are low-key and exist to serve the practical needs of the visitor in an area which lacks other suitable services.

4.5.3 Summary: The Garden Experience in Two Gardens in Cornwall

Table 4.4 illustrates the key differences between the exploited and the enhanced garden, using the results of the analysis of the two case examples.

Table 4.4 Key Differences Between Enhanced and Exploited Gardens

	ENHANCED - CAERHAYS	EXPLOITED - HELIGAN
FLOW OF INFORMATION	Low level of interpretation	High level of interpretation
	Basic information in printed form	Detailed information in printed form
MARKETING	Targeted approach to specialist market	Opportunist approach to wide market
	Little use of media	Use of variety of media
	Low profile	High profile
VISITOR PROFILE	More specialised audience	General audience
	Narrower age profile	Wider age profile
SERVICE PROVISION	Range of basic facilities	Range of highly-developed facilities
ENTRY	Low to medium pricing policy	High pricing policy
	Limited seasonal opening	Open all year
VISITOR EXPERIENCE	Not formally designed	Designed
	Free-form	Pre-determined by owner
VISITOR MANAGEMENT	Low threshold carrying capacity	High threshold carrying capacity
	Low-key, concentration on garden maintenance and development	High key, concentration on visitor experience and garden maintenance and development

The two case examples provide a strong contrast. Caerhays Castle Gardens has no pretensions – it is a relatively simple garden characterised by an adherence to horticultural protocols. There is a story to be learned at Caerhays about the building of the Castle, the pre-eminence of the Williams’s involvement in cross-breeding camellias and, of course, the story of the family. The interpretation is low-key and the overall visitor experience will depend on the type of visitor. To some, the atmosphere and the setting is the experience: it needs little interpretation or “markers” to prove its existence. The Lost Gardens of Heligan, through financial necessity, has a different objective. The representation of a story has been the key signifier and this has created the “magic” of the gardens which people are able to identify with, whether they have visited the gardens or not.

The inherent value of the typology approach centres on the facilitation of segmentation of the garden visit market. It has already been established in Chapter 1 that garden visitors are not a homogenous group. Visitors will be attracted to different types of garden depending on their interest in gardening, mobility, desire for social interaction, purpose in visiting, desire to use retail and catering outlets, mood and with whom they are visiting, among a range of other aspects (see Chapter 6 for more information on motivations for garden visiting and Chapter 8 for a discussion on modelling the visitor experience). An understanding of the differences in gardens open to the public can assist in the marketing of garden sites as visitor attractions. Accordingly, it is easier for visitors desiring certain types of experiences go to the appropriate kinds of gardens. In this way, satisfactory visitor experiences are more likely.

4.6 Part 3: Preliminary Qualitative Interviewing

With the view that some empirical data collection at a national level would be required, the scoping exercise advanced to a consultation stage involving experts on garden visiting in Cornwall. In order to construct a relevant and informed survey questionnaire and ultimately to obtain useful data, some preliminary qualitative interviewing was undertaken. In-depth discussions allowed the researcher to engage with the specifics of the research area and highlighted unknown or underestimated dimensions, as well as identifying the degree of significance of emerging issues.

The aim of this stage of the research was:

- to assess issues facing gardens as tourism and recreation resources in order to assist the drawing up of an informed research questionnaire.

The objective of the interviews were:

- to establish which factors underpin a successful garden attraction;
- to establish the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing gardens open to the public;
- to understand the significant issues in relation to managing garden visitors;
- to explore issues at an applied and strategic level (i.e. to assess the current issues facing those drawing up tourism strategies and those involved with developing gardens initiatives).

The interviews were designed to be largely unstructured in nature to allow relevant aspects to emerge without too much steer from the interviewer. However, this is not always a satisfactory method of collecting qualitative data and therefore a list of *a priori* issues based on the objectives was constructed prior to the interview giving the researcher a basic structure of subjects upon which to base the interview. This allowed some comparability between different informants and the opportunity to explore common themes in more depth.

Interviews were arranged with key informants involved in garden management, identified on a regional level from an exploration of strategic tourism initiatives and gardens open to the public. In addition, a snowball technique was used where one respondent suggested another person who might be suitable for interview. In the very small world of gardens in Cornwall, it was found that links between garden owners were quite well-formed and each had a relatively good knowledge of other gardens. Julia Price, for example, suggested that Pine Lodge Gardens and Trebah would be useful to visit. The author's knowledge of Heligan, combined with Major Hibbert's recommendation, stimulated a visit to interview the Marketing Director. Similarly, recognition by the author and all other interviewees suggested that the Eden Project, as a new and large-scale tourism attraction on a garden theme, would be a valuable case to explore. Thus, the key informants interviewed were:

- Julia Price, Cornwall Gardens Development Project Officer, Cornwall Enterprise (Cornwall Tourist Board). This respondent represented the strategic view of gardens in a tourism context and was able to inform on

planning, management and developmental issues. She also provided initial key contacts in networking with garden owners.

- Colin Howlett, Marketing Director, Lost Gardens of Heligan and Great Gardens of Cornwall. This respondent represented the most visited fee-charging garden attraction in the County at around 240,000 visitors per year and would be able to talk about managing for visitors on a large scale.
- Ray and Shirley Clemo, Owners of Pine Lodge Gardens, St. Austell. These respondents represented the smaller, private garden and would be able to inform about issues affecting management from a private owner perspective.
- Major Tony Hibbert, Trebah Gardens Trust. This respondent was identified as the key informant on developing and managing a larger private garden for visitors, with a high level of knowledge on marketing and development, and from the perspective of a Trust.
- David Meneer, Director of Strategic Marketing, Eden Project. A visit to one of Great Britain's Millennium projects based loosely on the garden theme was deemed appropriate. Although not a garden as such, issues relating to the management of the visitor experience would be a useful addition to the study findings, particularly with projected visitor numbers of 750,000 in the first year of operation.

4.6.1 Methodology

The interviews took place during September and October 2000. The researcher travelled to each of the gardens (and to the offices of the Tourist Board in Truro in the case of the Gardens Development Project Officer) following a pre-arranged date and time for each visit. In the case of each garden, a minimum of two hours was spent

with each owner. The visit normally comprised a detailed dialogue with the owner centred on a set of researcher-defined issues and the subsequent discussion generated was normally quite substantial. It was deemed essential to ask a series of similar questions to each respondent so some comparison could be made between respondents (see Appendix 2). Thus, a range of *a priori* and emergent themes were developed in each interview. Each garden visit also included a walk around the garden with the owner and a discussion of a wide variety of aspects from the garden history to the design and the visitor management techniques employed. Each interview was recorded on tape using a dictaphone and later transcribed.

4.6.2 Findings from the Preliminary Qualitative Research

The interviews yielded invaluable information on aspects of garden tourism.

Issues of significance for gardens covered a wide range of aspects. From the transcribed interviews, key and recurring themes were highlighted and have been extrapolated. The themes which arose from the interviews were:

- the importance of marketing (process, relationship with tourist boards, tour companies and media, cost, co-operatives, effectiveness and whether they possess a unique selling proposition);
- improving and maintaining the quality and standards of the garden (managing wear and tear, planning, high standards of maintenance where appropriate, variety of plants and labelling);
- providing good ancillary visitor services (refreshments, shop, plant sales, toilets, car park and information);
- providing a range of activities;

- consideration for and care of the visitor (visitor welcome, managing crowds, feel good factor, answering questions, meeting gardeners, personal touch, children, good staff and safety);
- maintaining visitor numbers (repeat visitation, competition and adding new features);
- long-term survival (finance, ownership, inheritance and Trusts);
- increasing garden diversity and opportunities for all year round opening;
- financial issues (profit, breaking even, subsidising garden, Trusts, employing staff, entry charge and secondary spend);
- management skills of the owner (running a visitor attraction, knowledge of plants and ability to deal with visitors).

The interview with Julia Price revealed certain information that needed to be considered in the research design. First, garden owners are difficult to extract information from and sometimes this necessitates a personal visit. Second, information on Cornish gardens had recently been collected for the purposes of a grant application for Objective 1 funding, hence a potential problem existed in asking respondents for similar information. Third, very little is known about garden visitors other than anecdotal evidence from individual gardens and lifestyle research findings from national surveys on gardening as a pastime (see Chapter 1). As there is a paucity of information on garden visiting, a visitor survey would seem appropriate to conduct in the future. Finally, the reasons why Cornwall is successful as a garden County might be very straightforward – climate, history and number of gardens – and further research might prove fruitless on a county basis, therefore, necessitating either a wider geographic approach or a visitor angle. The critical insights offered by Julia Price

vindicated the decision made to draw the parameters of the research study wider than Cornwall and to employ a supply (garden owner) and demand (garden visitor) angle.

Insights gained from the qualitative interviews allowed a clear picture of the issues for garden owners and managers in relation to operating a garden open to the public.

Using the information obtained through the interview process in combination with the framework for evaluating the visitor experience put forward by Haywood and Muller (1988), a range of issues relevant to the garden experience were developed and synthesised to create a series of questions forming part of a questionnaire for garden owners.

4.6.3 Survey Design

As the survey was intended to gain an understanding of the use, perception and management of gardens as a recreational resource and the factors affecting the visitor experience, data were required on a series of topics and issues. The main areas included: an outline of gardens including characteristics and ownership; visitors to the garden; visitor management; aspects affecting visitor enjoyment; and future aspects likely to affect the management of the garden. Combined with Haywood and Muller's (1988) framework for assessing the visitor experience and an awareness of the five dimensions of service quality based on the SERVQUAL principle, the data derived from the key informants provided a sound basis on which to frame the issues of relevance in the survey research.

From the results of the preliminary interviews, it was clear that interviewing garden visitors would be key to gaining further critical insights about garden visitation in the

UK. This would allow one to combine supply and demand perspectives and would generate a more comprehensive view of the significance of garden tourism. These visitors are likely to display a wide range of characteristics, both tourist and resident categories, motivations, behaviours and interests. In addition, two surveys from different perspectives would provide a more encompassing view of the garden visiting phenomenon. Thus, it was decided to use the same framework for assessing the visitor experience in a survey of garden owners (see Chapter 5) and a survey of garden visitors (see Chapter 6).

4.6.4 Cornwall Gardens Pilot Study

Having devised a suitable questionnaire in relation to the survey objectives, a pilot survey was undertaken using a 100 per cent sample of gardens open to the public in Cornwall. The survey took the form of a postal survey to enable complete and cost-effective geographic coverage of the county and was sent out in early October 2000 to the 68 gardens. The aim of the pilot was to gain feedback on the suitability of the questions, questioning style and structure. Indeed, it was because garden owners in Cornwall are organised well in terms of marketing and development initiatives and would be able to give reasonable feedback on the questionnaire content and an expected high response rate, that Cornwall was deemed to be a useful area in which to conduct a pilot test. Of the 68 survey forms sent out, 34 were returned, giving a 50 per cent response rate.

It should be noted that some minor wording difficulties were noted in the questionnaire and amendments were considered to be worthwhile for ease of analysis in the main questionnaire. In particular, a question asking respondents to rank the

effectiveness of marketing techniques used to attract visitors to their garden was not answered adequately by most respondents and resulted in a poor level of information. The question was revised to ask what they thought their most successful marketing technique was, as it appeared that many of the garden owners knew very little about how visitors were hearing about their garden but could generally identify the most important mechanism. These amendments have not changed the essence of the questionnaire, rather they have simplified the structure. As the majority of questions remained the same, it was possible to use the questionnaires in the main survey, with some minimal recoding. Thus, the pilot test results can be used in the final analysis of the main survey without difficulty.

4.6.5 Description of Results

As the pilot test was undertaken to establish the relevance and validity of the questionnaire, only a small number of survey forms were distributed. Thus, it is impossible to present anything more than a basic analysis of the data including frequency counts, based on the 34 responses returned. The findings, however, give a flavour of the data collected and give an indication of how more representative findings might be used in a more sophisticated statistical analysis. It should be noted, of course, that the responses received here do represent 50 per cent of the gardens open to the public in Cornwall so have potential use as a representative number in relation to a micro-study of the County. So, in addition to providing a test-bed for the research, a useful picture of the county's garden profile was built which extends the data collected by the Cornwall Gardens Development Project (Cornwall Enterprise, 2000).

(i) Garden profile

The most cited type of garden was that of the 'plantsmans' variety, that is a garden created for the interest and diversity of its plants. As such, when asked if there was anything particularly noteworthy about the garden, 27 per cent stated that plant collections were the most noteworthy aspect. The majority of respondents (70 per cent) owned the garden for which they had completed a questionnaire, while 30 per cent were employed to manage the garden. In terms of the length of time of ownership/employment, 9 respondents had owned/managed their garden for 10-20 years and similarly for 30-40 years. Only seven garden owners had been at the garden for less than 10 years. Opening times tended to focus in the spring to autumn period, although quite a significant number of gardens were open in the spring only or just for a few days. Only 18 per cent were open all year. Most of the gardens (88 per cent) were not created purposely as a visitor attraction

(ii) Motivation for Opening Garden to the Public

A large proportion of gardens were originally opened for charity (59 per cent), with a smaller number opened to generate revenue to maintain the garden (15 per cent or 5 gardens), as a business enterprise (three gardens) and for educational purposes (two gardens).

Other reasons for opening included the desire to share the garden with other people or specifically, as part of a gardens open scheme, such as the National Gardens Scheme. Respondents were asked whether their reasons for continued opening had changed. A total of 82 per cent of respondents replied their original reasons had not changed. Of the 18 per cent whose reasons had changed, the overriding factor was financial.

(iii) Facilities

Three-quarters of the gardens offered some kind of catering service, the most frequently cited was that of teas and cakes/biscuits (44 per cent). Six of the gardens operated a licensed restaurant service. All of the gardens offered some form of interpretation.

(iv) Visitor Information

Just under two-thirds of the garden owners had not undertaken any form of visitor survey. Of the 12 gardens that had undertaken survey work, 8 had used the results to inform their marketing strategy. In terms of visitor numbers, 17 gardens received 2000 or less visitors in 2000 and only 4 gardens received over 100,000 visitors (Table 4.5). The lack of survey work is probably related to the small visitor numbers received at many sites and seems to indicate that only larger attractions are more likely to undertake formal surveys.

Table 4.5 Visitor Numbers in 2000 in the Gardens of Cornwall

Visitor Numbers	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent
2000 or less	17	50.0	54.8
2001-10000	3	8.8	9.7
10001-25000	2	5.9	6.5
25001-50000	2	5.9	6.5
50001-100000	3	8.8	9.7
100001-150000	1	2.9	3.2
200001-250000	2	5.9	6.5
More than 300000	1	2.9	3.2
Total	31	91.2	100.0
Missing	3	8.8	
Total	34	100.0	

None of the garden owners considered visitor numbers to be decreasing, while 41 per cent thought that numbers were staying about the same and 47 per cent thought that numbers were increasing.

Reasons for visitor increases cited tended to veer towards the notion that there is generally more public interest in gardening and gardens in current times. When asked about the general description of garden visitors that befitted their particular garden, 70 per cent stated that 'general interest' visitors were the main type, 7 per cent described their visitors as having horticultural interests, and the remainder were classed as day trippers. In terms of the age range of visitors, it is clear that the majority are mature/retired, with two-thirds in these categories. 62 per cent of garden owners did not feel that visitor types are changing. However, of the respondents who thought that garden visitors were changing, higher media profile and wider interest in gardens were cited as the main determinants of change. The travel trade, such as tour operators and coach companies, were considered to be of some importance in attracting visitors to the gardens by half of the garden owners. However, 23 per cent of garden owners do not deal with the travel trade at all, and a further 29 per cent considered the trade to be of no importance to their garden.

(v) Visitor Management

While 38 per cent of respondents stated that visitor use of the garden did not result in any damage, some gardens reported wear and tear, and small incidents of theft (generally of cuttings and plants) and littering were reported. Several tasks were cited as being necessary to ensure appropriate garden maintenance for visitors, including grass reseeding, path raking and litter collection. Some 28 per cent of respondents

stated that no garden maintenance tasks were required. Only 3 of the garden owners reported that there were sometimes too many visitors in their garden. Of these, 2 owners had introduced measures to limit numbers, including a limit on numbers to the garden at any one time and a limit on the number of group visits. Furthermore, 50 per cent of the garden owners planned to expand their visitor numbers, 44 per cent desired to maintain current numbers and only 3 per cent wished to reduce numbers.

In terms of future management, garden owners were asked to state what they considered to be the most important issue affecting their garden in relation to opening to the public. Two aspects were equally important here. The first reflects the age of many of the garden owners and the concern about health and the ability to continue maintaining and opening the garden. The second issue relate to the increasing costs of opening to the public, indicating that many gardens open to the public do so at a loss.

(vi) Visitor Experience

Respondents were asked to score their opinion of the importance of several aspects of the visitor experience in relation to their garden. The aspects which were considered to be 'very important' to the visitor experience were the condition of the weather, the pleasurability of strolling around the garden, the friendliness and helpfulness of staff and provision of toilets.

In gauging opinion on other aspects of the visitor experience, respondents were asked to state their view in accordance with a series of attitude statements. Of the aspects which respondents strongly agreed with, the most significant is that visitors are made to feel welcome on arrival in the garden and during their visit and that visitors leave

happy. Open questioning on the subject of the most important factor in visitor enjoyment revealed that the welcome (28 per cent) is considered to be the most important aspect. The second factor is the quality of the garden (19 per cent) and the third is having a good café/shop (23 per cent).

(vii) Implications

A consideration of the survey results for gardens in Cornwall yields a basic profile of gardens in Cornwall, which are characterised by the following aspects:

- small, privately owned with well-established owner in residence
- plantsman's garden with interesting/special plant collection
- originally opened for charity
- limited seasonal opening
- attract 2000 or less visitors per year
- attract visitors with a general interest in gardens
- favour personal approach to visitors
- plan to expand or maintain visitor numbers

The survey of garden owners in Cornwall highlights several significant issues.

Considerable concern is demonstrated in relation to the viability of the garden due to the increasing age or failing health of the owner. Increasing costs of maintaining the garden are also widely cited as a future constraint on opening as a visitor attraction.

Such issues are interesting as they do not relate directly to visitors and there are more concerns about the management of the site and personnel issues. The 50 per cent of garden owners stating that they plan to increase visitor numbers indicates a desire to expand and develop the gardens and open to the public for longer. Financial help

through the Cornwall Gardens Development Project is now available for those gardens wishing to draw up a development plan.

4.7 Summary: Use of Preliminary Investigation

The primary intention for undertaking preliminary research was to act as a scoping exercise for the main research on garden visitation in a national context. In this respect, the tasks undertaken as part of this initial investigation have assisted in research process in three dimensions. First, the scoping work has aided the understanding of the garden as a recreation resource. The exploration of two gardens using a participant observation approach allowed a more focused approach to scoping the parameters of the visitor experience in relation to different types of gardens, and the construction of a typology of gardens. The use of the case study of Cornwall has illustrated the significance of gardens to the local tourism product and the emphasis placed upon gardens by the local authority and other public sector agencies.

Accordingly, the rationale for a more rigorous understanding of the garden as a recreation resource is confirmed. Second, the identification of issues relevant to managing gardens for visitors has been facilitated and, through the use of qualitative interviewing, it was possible to develop a more enhanced appreciation of the garden owner perspective and the concept of the visitor experience. Third, the questionnaire for the main research has been trialled and amended where necessary for use in a national context.

Having conducted this preliminary work and achieved valuable results that provide a background for and inform the main study, the emphasis now turns to the application

of the research at a national level. Chapter 5 explores the results relating to the issue of managing a garden for visitors from the perspective of garden owners/managers.

5.0 Introduction – Understanding Supply Issues

This chapter examines the garden visitor experience from the supply perspective, using data generated from a questionnaire survey of garden owners and managers within Great Britain. An examination of the supply perspective is significant in the study of gardens for several reasons. Not only does a supply perspective provide an opportunity to assess the organisation and distribution of gardens open to the public, it facilitates a more in-depth study of the scope and range of management issues relating to the provision of visitor services and experiences.

Work on the visitor experience tends to focus on the visitor perspective and the way in which the experiential elements of a visit are produced by specific enterprises. The visitor experience is, to some extent, shaped by the management philosophy and practice of a visitor destination or attraction. Potentially, gaps may form between the manager's perception of the services that visitors need to enjoy their visit and the actual needs and desires of visitors. Thus, an understanding of how owners/managers view the visitor experience is a key aspect in the study of the visitor experience and supply issues in relation to gardens raise a range of conceptual issues, for example, the planning and management of gardens open to the public. Sessa (1983) commented that supply issues relate to the provision of goods and services in meeting tourism demand and are expressed as tourism consumption. Hence, the tourist becomes a consumer of place (see Urry, 1995) in terms of the physical and psychological aspects of a destination, as conveyed in Chapter 3. The visitor experience is, then, a

significant area of study in relation to understanding the operational aspects of visitor attractions.

Sinclair and Stabler (1992) and Hall and Page (2002) state that the issue of supply in tourism is a neglected area of study, often based on simplistic descriptions of the industry. Shaw and Williams (1994) and Agarwal, Ball, Shaw and Williams (2000) argue that the production of tourism experiences offers new directions for research and that there are large gaps in the knowledge about tourism production. Lew (1987: 54) states that “although the importance of tourist attractions is readily recognised, tourism researchers and theorists have yet to fully come to terms with the nature of attractions as phenomena both in the environment and the mind”. Thus, a study of gardens open to the public as visitor attractions in the context of both supply and demand assists in developing an understanding of a specific type of attraction. By exploring the importance of gardens to the visitor, as well as the influence of location, management and other fundamental issues, one can begin to understand the significance of environmental and psychological factors in the meaning of gardens as visitor attractions.

5.1 National Survey on Gardens Open to the Public

The first survey undertaken as part of the research presented in this thesis focused on the garden owner or manager as the respondent. For the survey reported in this Chapter, a more refined set of objectives was generated from the stated aims of the thesis in order to guide the researcher in constructing a focused, yet sufficiently comprehensive, questioning schedule. The overall aim of the survey was to analyse approaches to managing the visitor experience in gardens. The objectives were to:

- ascertain the characteristics of gardens open to the public;
- identify motivations for running garden tourism attractions;
- explore owner perceptions of visitors;
- determine the range of approaches to managing the visitor experience in relation to a number of variables.

These objectives were developed following the initial scoping work reported in Chapter 3, so that a national cross-section of garden owners could be derived, thereby drawing more representative findings of the management of the visitor experience in Great Britain.

5.2 Methodology

The study of tourism and recreation has a broad epistemological and ontological base and may be approached from both positivist and interpretivist perspectives (Botterill, 2000). It was noted in Chapter 3 that the scope of this research encompasses a broad understanding of the experience of garden visiting at a national level and that to achieve reliable and valid results, a quantitative approach would be most appropriate. This standpoint is justified by the notion that to achieve a broad understanding, a quantitative approach is desirable, while to achieve a deep understanding, a qualitative approach would be more applicable. However, a reasonable degree of more in-depth material can be generated through a quantitative methodology according to the style of questioning employed, a point further elaborated on in the section on Survey Design.

A secondary aspect to consider in the selection of methodology is the identified need to undertake a base-line survey as little information currently exists on the subject of gardens in a recreational context. Thus, an attempt to evaluate aspects of garden visiting is a fundamental premise of the research with the use of measurement and indicators to provide empirical data on the research area. Bryman (2001: 66-7) notes three factors that predicate the use of measurement techniques in social research. These factors are: first, the ability to detect “fine differences” between people; second, the ability to generate a “consistent device” for measuring; and third, the ability to make more precise estimates about the degree of relationship between variables. Indicators are less directly quantifiable but nonetheless facilitate the measurement of concepts, such as perceptions and opinions. Using measures and indicators to gather information on the subject of garden visiting would thus provide a substantive basis from which to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of gardens in a recreational context. The type of research conducted in this instance is cross-sectional in nature, as it entails the collection of data from more than one case at a single point in time. In addition, the research aims to collect quantifiable data in connection with two or more variables which are then examined to determine patterns of association (Bryman, 2001).

5.2.1 Research Method

The most suitable method of eliciting data in this instance was by means of a questionnaire survey. As a wide geographic area would need to be covered by the survey, face-to-face interviewing was impractical and thus either postal or telephone survey methods are commonly used to reach a dispersed sample population. As a substantial sample population had been selected, a postal survey was decided on as

the most practical method, in terms of time, cost and respondent interest. As Page, Forer and Lawton (1999) note, a decision has to be made with regard to resources available and that a balance between sample size, resources available and the need to gather as representative a sample as possible must be struck. With resource implications in mind, a survey using postal questionnaires was decided on as the most appropriate method of data collection. Self-completion mailed questionnaires are cheaper to administer, limit interviewer effects and are often convenient for respondents as opposed to other forms of survey. However, there is a greater risk of missing data as the interviewer cannot prompt or probe to ensure completeness in the data collection. Other difficulties include; respondent fatigue, low response rate and the limit which may be imposed on the type, and number and nature of questions. Also, the problem of 'mindlessness' may affect survey research (Ryan, 1995: 54), where those partaking in recreation activities may not recall activities or experiences because motivations and activities are not necessarily processed in a conscious manner. So while the researcher may be expecting respondents to recall their experiences in a rational and logical way, actual behaviour may not be at all goal oriented or even remembered.

Steps were taken to assist in improving the response rate. A covering letter was written outlining the reasons for the research and an explanation was given as to why the respondent had been selected. Each letter was personalised with the respondent's name and address and signed by the researcher, as suggested by Dillman (1983) and confidentiality was assured in line with standard procedures for ethical codes of behaviour in survey research. The covering letter was printed on University of Stirling headed paper, thus emphasising that the research was for academic, not

commercial, purposes. A postage paid envelope was included for the return of the questionnaire. The covering letter is included in Appendix 3. It was gleaned from the preliminary qualitative fieldwork that the questionnaire would be of interest to many garden owners and managers, which would potentially assist in raising the response rate.

5.2.2 Survey Design

Having determined that a questionnaire approach would be adopted and that a postal survey method would be used, a series of questions were drawn up in line with the objectives of the survey as stated earlier.

A range of question types was included in the survey design. The questionnaire is included in Appendix 3. Most questions were of the closed type, with tick box answers. Respondents were given clear instructions on how to respond. Likert scales were used to identify responses to the perceived importance of specific elements in determining the visitor experience in each respondent's garden and the extent of agreement or disagreement with a range of statements relating to the respondent's garden. A five-point Likert scale was used, as an odd number allows the use of a neutral position and would appear to be the optimum number in maintaining respondent consistency by providing easily identifiable choices.

It was deemed suitable to ask open questions among garden owners and managers because the respondents would be aware of the issues being raised and would be able to give informed answers. A closed approach may not be sufficiently sensitive to pick up on issues that may be of relevance to the research. In addition, the generation of

more qualitative data was considered to be of benefit to the research for the purpose of gaining further insights into visitor management in gardens. Ryan (1995: 144) notes that “the final choice must refer to the purpose of the research...”. The purpose of the research was to obtain an understanding of the supply perspective and, acknowledging that gardens and garden owners were likely to cover a wide spectrum of categories, a less structured approach in some parts of the questionnaire was the most suitable way of eliciting the required information.

The format of the questionnaire was arranged using five sections:

Section 1: Your Garden

The questions in this section related to type of garden and year of opening in an attempt to classify gardens. The second part of this section aimed to explore the original motivation for opening a garden and whether the reasons for opening had changed since that time in order to establish the context of gardens opening to the public.

Section 2: Facilities in the Garden

In order to establish the type of facilities that each garden offered, a series of questions were drawn up examining visitor services. The questions in this section referred to facilities such as catering, interpretation, information, car park, toilets and a range of other features. One question focused on the range of facilities provided for visitors when the garden first opened and the facilities provided for at the time of the survey in an attempt to understand how gardens have changed through time in relation to visitors.

Section 3: Marketing

The importance of marketing was highlighted in the preliminary qualitative work and thus formed one of the foci in the questionnaire. The main objective was to find out the most effective method of attracting visitors to gardens and to establish whether visitor feedback was obtained through survey work. The main aim of the visitor feedback question was to establish to what extent visitor comments were acknowledged and acted on by garden owners and managers.

Section 4: Visitors to your Garden

In order to gauge the type of garden being described, the visitor numbers for the year 2000 were requested. Respondents were asked to indicate whether numbers were increasing, decreasing or staying the same through time and to give their thoughts as to why that might be the case. A general description of the majority of visitors to the garden was asked for from a list of three possibilities, along with information on age profiles, types of visitors and importance of the travel trade. Respondents were asked to indicate whether their garden was a tourist attraction or a private garden. The responses obtained in this section would assist in assessing the degree of commercialisation of the garden and the level of success in attracting visitors.

Section 5: Managing the Visitor Experience in your Garden

The final section of the questionnaire focused on gauging the perception and opinion of respondents in terms of the visitor experience. The main focus of this section was the use of Likert scales designed to measure the degree of respondent acquiescence in relation to:

- a series of questions on the importance of a range of elements designed to be part of the visitor experience;
- a range of statements about managing the visitor experience.

Respondents were asked by means of an open question to state what they considered to be the three most important factors in ensuring visitors enjoyed a visit to their garden. Questions relating to carrying capacity were included and respondents were asked to indicate whether they had introduced any measures to limit visitor numbers. In the light of the work by Benfield (2001), Garrod, Fyall and Leask (2001) and the earlier conceptualisation of impacts by Graefe and Vaske (1987), this issues appeared to be an appropriate line of inquiry (see Chapter 3). At the end of this section, some ancillary questions were included mainly for classification purposes. These included garden opening periods and adult admission charges, whether the respondent was the owner or manager of the garden, length of time the respondent had owned or worked in the garden. The final question asked respondents what they saw as the most important issue in relation to the management of their garden for visitors in the next few years. This question was left open, with the recognition that a wide variation of answers would materialise that would be insensitively treated by use of pre-coded closed options. Respondents were asked whether they would be prepared to assist in any further research and, if so, to provide contact details. The replies given here would be an important part of forming the sample for the next stage of research focusing on garden visitors.

The design and layout of the questionnaire was given careful consideration, with the questionnaire fitting on to four sides of A4 (or two pages). Thus, the questionnaire

did not appear to be too long when first opened by the respondent and the layout was easy on the eye with different question formats. A pilot survey was designed and carried out prior to the main survey to establishing the suitability of questions and questioning styles, as reported in Chapter 4.

Bryman (2001: 29) states that “three of the most prominent criteria for the evaluation of social research are *reliability, replication and validity*”. Reliability refers to whether the results of a survey are repeatable. The survey procedures presented in this thesis are replicable as the methods used are simple to repeat if necessary. Internal validity, which refers to the adequacy of the research design in measuring what it sets out to measure, was assured by a considered approach to survey design. The use of an inductive approach to constructing the questionnaire using the results of qualitative fieldwork findings and rigorous testing of the questionnaire through means of a pilot study provided sound evidence of the effective operation of the questionnaire. Carefully drawn up variables would make it possible for causal inferences to be made.

5.2.3 Selecting the Sample

To avoid sampling error as much as possible and because the number of gardens open to the public in Great Britain provides a feasible survey population with which to work, an attempt to collate the contact details for all regularly opening gardens open to the public was made. A baseline survey which attempts to assess garden visiting is appropriate in this context due to the paucity of knowledge on the sector, a feature reiterated in many other areas of tourism and leisure (see Page, Forer and Lawton, 1999).

In order to establish the total population, a database comprising the contact person and address for 1, 223 gardens in England, Scotland and Wales was constructed using a variety of information sources. Only gardens opening on a regular or commercial basis were included in the sample. In relation to gardens open for a few hours per year, it is arguable that such gardens are not attractions and inclusion in the survey was ruled out from a practical perspective. It was decided to exclude these gardens from the survey because little attention would be focused on the visitor and the questionnaire would seem irrelevant to the owners and the garden. The pilot survey indicated that owners of such gardens in Cornwall were less likely to complete a questionnaire because they felt that their garden was too small to be of relevance to the study. In addition, there would be a danger of results being skewed by too many inappropriate gardens. Accordingly, gardens were selected from a number of sources, as detailed in the following section.

(i) The Good Gardens Guide

As an initial stage, *The Good Gardens Guide 2000* (King, 2000) was consulted. The Good Gardens Guide is an independent, annual guide to the best gardens to visit in Great Britain. The gardens are selected through a process of inspection and owners do not pay for or have any influence on selection. *The Good Gardens Guide 2000* contains over 1, 000 gardens in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, the Channel Islands and parts of Europe accessible within a day's drive of the Channel Tunnel. Selection of gardens from England, Scotland and Wales sections allowed a diverse geographic coverage in the sample and a wide range of gardens in various forms of ownership. All gardens in this book were included, apart from those which constituted urban parks, numbering 861. It should also be noted that *The Good Gardens Guide*

2000 includes a number of small, private gardens. These gardens were included in the sample because it was considered that more high-profile gardens would be more in tune with the needs of visitors.

(ii) The National Gardens Scheme 'Yellow Book'

The 'Yellow Books' of the National Gardens Scheme of England and Wales (National Gardens Scheme, 2000) and Scotland's Garden Scheme (Scotland's Garden Scheme, 2000) were examined next. As nearly 4,000 gardens are listed in the two National Gardens Scheme handbooks, many of which are solely open for the NGS for short periods of time each year, it was decided to sample the gardens according to frequency of opening. Gardens selected from the Yellow Books were taken from those identified as opening on a regular basis, as it was deemed that such gardens would be more attuned to managing their garden for visitors. Such gardens are listed at the start of each county's garden listings and identification was made on this basis.

(iii) Other Sources

Other sources from which to ascertain garden locations included: the website Gardenvisit.com (Gardenvisit, 2000); the British Tourist Authority list of gardens (BTA, 2000b); the National Trust handbook (England and Wales, and Scotland); and Area Tourist Board promotional leaflets. Each source was cross-referenced in order to identify gardens not already included in the database; for example, most of the BTA listed gardens were already in the database but it was essential to check for omissions.

The selection procedure was not designed to select a certain quota of garden categories, according to geographic location or type. Instead, as large a sample as

possible was sought with the aim of including all gardens open to the public on a regular basis. Accordingly, the sample of 1, 223 gardens is inclusive of all the gardens labelled officially as 'visitor attractions' by tourism organisations as well as all of the regularly opening smaller, private gardens. Subsequently, the sample is considered to be as representative of gardens open to the public as possible.

5.3 Survey Outcome

The questionnaire forms were sent out to all 1, 223 in March 2001 with the covering explanatory letter and a pre-paid envelope for ease of return. Some 593 forms were returned resulting in a 48.4% response rate. The response rate is considered to be favourable, as many postal surveys in tourism research appear to achieve a much lower return with 30% being common (see Page, Forer and Lawton (1999) in relation to surveys of tourism enterprises; TRRU, 1983). External validity, that is, the ability of the results to be generalised was assured by the use of a representative population, covering all gardens open to the public as visitor attractions and a substantial proportion of private gardens. In relation to spatial representation, roughly similar percentages can be noted in terms of the survey population and the sample (Figure 5.1).

During the course of the survey, the outbreak of Foot-and-Mouth Disease across Great Britain occurred (see Sharpley and Craven, 2001). The implications of constrained access to countryside areas for garden visits were variable, with severe restrictions on movements in rural areas in some regions (for example, Wales, the West Country and the North-West) and less draconian measures elsewhere (for example, Central and Northern Scotland). It is difficult to know to what extent the

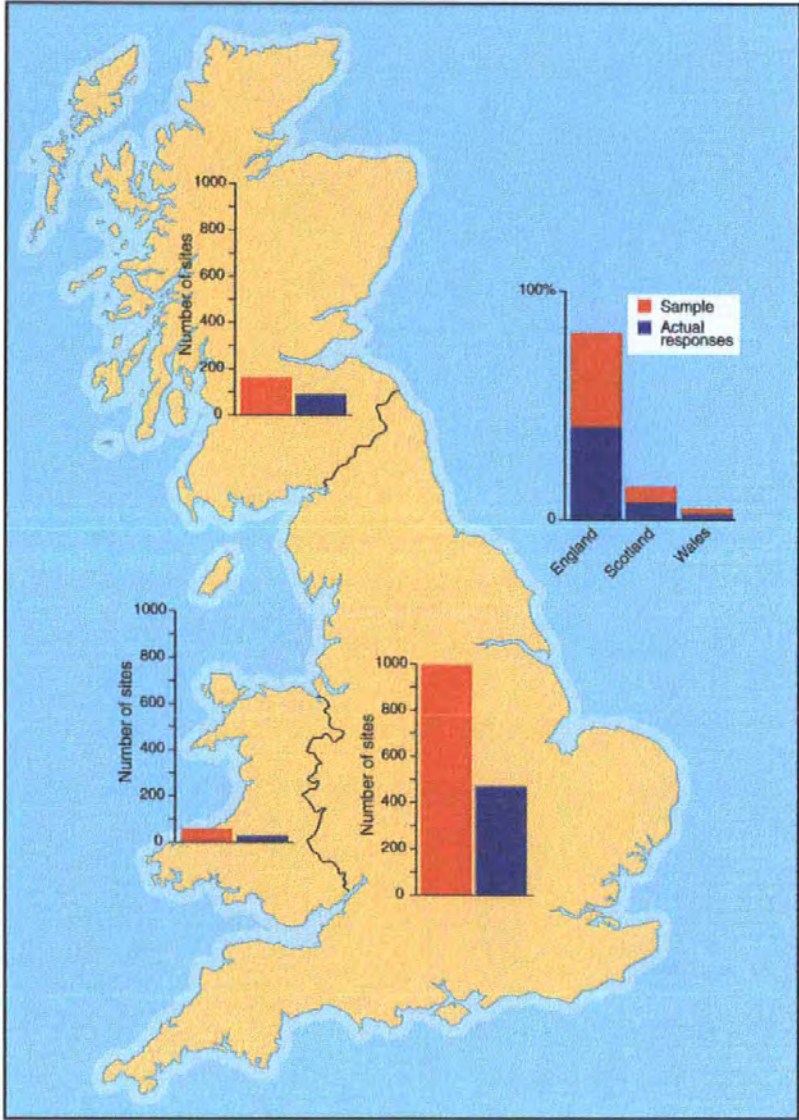


Figure 5.1 Location of Gardens Surveyed and Response Rate

Foot-and-Mouth phenomenon skewed the number and spread of responses, as it is not possible to find out the cause of non-response. However, the examination of the geographic representation of gardens (which appears to be the most relevant measure to use) in relation to the total population does not appear to highlight any significant features.

5.4 Analysis of Survey Results

The questionnaire forms were coded and inputted into a computer package for statistical social research (SPSS version 10.0). Analysis of the data was conducted on two levels. The first comprised a basic frequency analysis to establish preliminary findings. A number of cross-tabulations were produced in order to identify any significant relationships between dependent variables and the management of the visitor experience. Category and geographic location of garden appeared to emerge as the most useful discriminators in terms of observing differences and associations in the data set. Chi-squared tests were performed to test the degree of association between variables, by means of the Likelihood Ratios test of association. P-values more than 0.01 were regarded as insignificant, possibly somewhat conservative but due to the large number of tests being performed. A more sophisticated multivariate statistical analysis using factor analysis was employed to facilitate meaningful groupings in key data.

5.4.1 Categorisation of Gardens

Small private gardens accounted for 51.1% of the sample, 13.3% were part of an historic house (not National Trust), and 11% were classed as private commercial gardens (Table 5.1). The sample included gardens which were part of a National Trust/National Trust for Scotland (NT/NTS) house (7.9% of the sample) and 5.1% were NT/NTS gardens (that is, without a house open to the public as part of the overall experience, such as Malleny Garden, Mid-Lothian). There were a small number of other types of garden, such as nursery gardens (4.2%), where the garden has been created as an adjunct to a plant nursery enterprise or where such a business has been developed on top of a successful garden open to the public. Some 2.5% of the sample gardens formed part of another attraction, which was not a historic house. Gardens belonging to another organisation, such as local authorities or conservation organisations, formed 1.9% and botanical gardens accounted for 1.5% of the sample.

Table 5.1 Categories of Gardens

Category of Garden	Frequency	Valid Percent of Gardens
Private garden	303	51.1
Part of historic house	79	13.3
Private tourist garden	65	11
Part of National Trust property	47	7.7
National Trust garden	30	5.1
Nursery garden	25	4.2
Part of other attraction (not historic house)	15	2.5
Other organisation garden	11	1.9
Botanical garden	9	1.5
Other	9	1.5
Total	593	

It appears that gardens which form part of other attractions (not including an historic house) were more concerned with attracting higher visitor numbers when adding new

facilities. While most garden attractions desired to attract more visitors through new facilities, some gardens aimed to maintain visitor numbers, particularly the case for National Trust properties and gardens, and nursery gardens. The only anomaly is seen in the category of private gardens, where over 50% of gardens had not been altered in any way in relation to visitor facilities.

Botanic gardens are outstanding in forming the category of garden with the longest opening times at 88.9% opening all year round. While the majority of gardens appeared to be open at least between spring and autumn, that is for the length of the main tourist season, private gardens were noted for their limited opening with 38.8% open for a few days per year and 22.1% open by appointment only.

The more commercial enterprises tended to charge higher admission prices. Some 33.3% of gardens which form part of other attractions charged over £4.00. For gardens forming part of an historic property (not National Trust), the figure was 25.8% over £4.00 and for private tourist gardens, 20% charged more than £4.00.

Admission prices are normally higher for gardens which form just part of an overall attraction as one is paying to see other elements, such as an historic house or a museum. Private gardens tended to charge the lowest admission prices, with only 5% charging £3.00 or more. Most private gardens admission charges fell into the category £1.00-£2.00 (68.9%). Some gardens did not charge an admission fee – these tended to mainly be gardens belonging to conservation organisations (not National Trust) at 18.2% and nursery gardens (24%). Nursery gardens were usually attached to a retail business so an entry charge could be waived.

Cross-tabulation between category of garden and status of respondent (that is, whether the respondent was the owner or manager of the garden) yielded a distinct result. Some 96.3% of private garden respondents were the owners of the garden. The majority of nursery garden respondents (84%) were owners. In contrast, all botanic garden respondents and over 90% of National Trust respondents were employees. The result for conservation organisations was also relatively high (72.7% of respondents were employees). In the other categories of garden, there was a reasonable balance of owners and employees.

The final significant cross-tabulation to be examined is that of length of time at the garden and category of garden. All of the categories show that the respondent had been at the garden for a reasonable length of time. However, there are two marked results. Very few private garden respondents had been at the garden for less than 5 years (3.7%) and the majority had been at the garden for more than 11 years. For National Trust garden respondents (more likely to be employees than owners), some 59.3% had been at the garden for less than 5 years. A short time-serving owner/manager is distinctly out of line with other categories and most probably reflects the career structure which the National Trust has established for gardeners-in-charge at their properties, where gardeners tend to move on in order to advance.

Cross-tabulations in relation to category of garden and other variables indicates some points worth noting. Private gardens tend to exhibit quite distinctive characteristics compared with other gardens, exemplified by the 79.8% of private gardens which were opened for charity fund raising and the 98.7% of private garden owners who do not consider their gardens as visitor attractions. Some 51.4% of the private gardens

had made no additions to their gardens in terms of visitor services, for example, only 1% have licensed restaurant. Opening times tend to be more limited than the commercial gardens with 38.8% open only for a few days every year and the private gardens have a low entry charge, with 71.2% charging less than £2. Private garden owners are mainly long-term owners, with 87.2% having owned their garden for more than 10 years. The implications of these results are discussed further in Chapter 7.

According to the English Tourism Council, the Scottish Tourist Board, Wales Tourist Board and the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (2000), 69% of England's 4,500 visitor attractions are owned and operated by the private sector and not-for-profit sector. The gardens sector appears to be dominated by the private and not-for-profit sectors.

5.4.2 Garden Description

As a general question, respondents were asked to identify the most applicable description of their garden (Table 5.2). While plantsman's gardens formed the largest category, the sample also comprised a significant number of historic gardens.

Table 5.2 Types of Garden

Type of Garden	Frequency	Valid Percent of Gardens
Plantsmans garden	153	26
Historic garden	145	24.6
General interest garden	111	18.8
Landscape garden/park	52	8.8
Restored garden	46	7.8
Other	33	5.6
Garden with special plant collection	15	2.5
Arboretum	13	2.2
Sub-tropical garden	12	2
Contemporary garden	9	1.5
Total	589	
Missing cases	4	

Cross-tabulation of type of garden with geographic location of gardens indicates that there are more restored gardens and landscape parks in the South-East than statistically expected. The sample contained more historic gardens in the North-West, but fewer in the South-West, than expected. More sub-tropical gardens were located in the South-West than expected. Two-thirds of the sub-tropical gardens in the sample are located in the climatically more suitable environment which the South-West of England offers. The results of a likelihood ratio test performed shows that the results are significant at the 0.05 level.

5.4.3 Geographic Location of Gardens

Gardens responding to the survey were located across Great Britain, although many were located in the south of England. This pattern reflects the supply of gardens, with a large number located in the South-West, South and South-East regions (see Figure 5.2). Some 15.3% of responses were from Scotland and 5.1% from Wales; the remainder, nearly 80%, were accounted for by English gardens.

The existence of significant relationships between the location of gardens and other variables were tested by Chi-squared Likelihood Ratios test of association. The results of the tests showed that there were only a few statistically significant relationships at the 0.01 and 0.05 levels, although some intriguing patterns emerged from the data. These findings are explored at relevant points through the ensuing discussion.

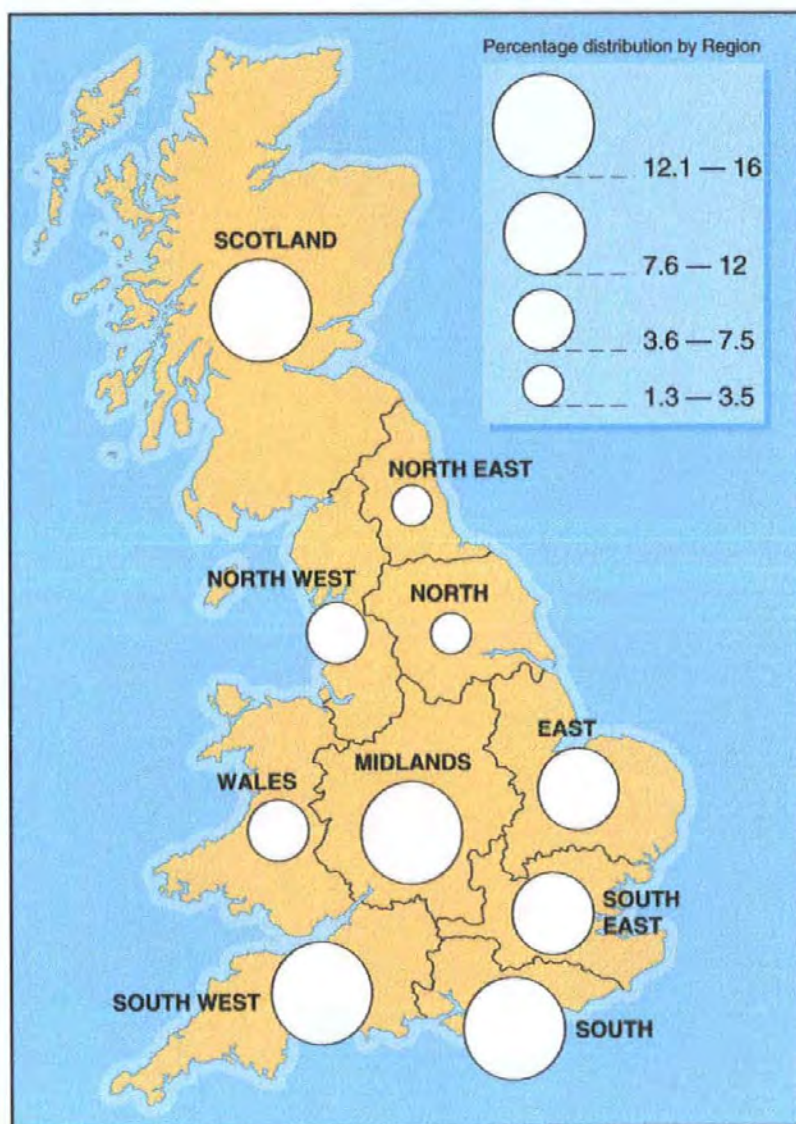


Figure 5.2 Location of Gardens:

Percentage Distribution of the Survey Response by Region

The proportional circles represent the percentage distribution of the survey responses by region.

Chi-squared tests identified substantially more private gardens in the South and East of England and the Midlands, but fewer than expected in the South-East. A higher than expected number of private tourist gardens were located in the South-West and nearly 30% of such gardens were located in this region. Thus, it is clear that the main tourist receiving area of the country contains a substantial number of garden tourist attractions. The South and South-East together contained another 30%. In Scotland, there were fewer than expected private tourist gardens but more National Trust for Scotland gardens – indeed, 36.7% of the National Trust garden responses were received from gardens in Scotland. Gardens forming part of an historic house appear to be more likely to be found in Scotland, the North and the North-West, as well as the South-East.

5.4.4 Garden Ownership

In terms of ownership, 67.5% of respondents owned the garden which they were representing. Nearly 32% of respondents were employed to manage the garden by organisations, such as the National Trust and other organisations, as well as private enterprise. The remaining 0.7% of respondents were acting as Trustees. There were no geographical differences in relation to whether garden operators were owners or managers. In terms of length of time that the respondent had owned or managed the garden, responses showed a normal distribution (Figure 5.3). With a mean ownership of garden ownership between 11-20 years, a low turnover and substantial investment period in the development of a garden is reflected.

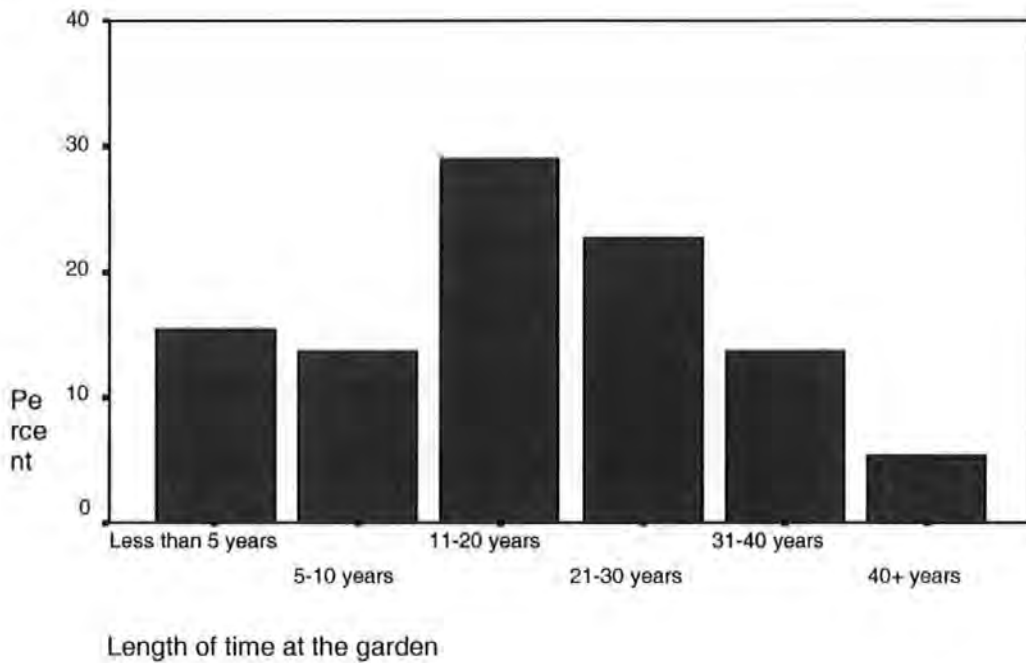


Figure 5.3 Length of Time Respondent Owned/Managed Garden

5.4.5 Reasons for Opening Gardens to the Public

The main reason for opening the garden was for charity fund-raising (51.9%). A further 19.6% of respondents cited the main reason was as a means of maintaining the garden and another 11% as running a business enterprise (Figure 5.4). The main secondary reason for opening was to share the garden with others (18.6%). Gardens do appear to be quite unusual in that the number originally opening for charity fund-raising (for external charities, not the garden as a charity as in the case of some houses and gardens) is a feature unique to gardens in the attractions sector. The significance of charity openings is undoubtedly a manifestation of the successful National Gardens Scheme. While attractions tend to open up for a variety of reasons, including preservation of heritage, generation of income and for entertainment (English Tourism Council, 2000), charity fund-raising is a factor that is peculiar to the garden sector.

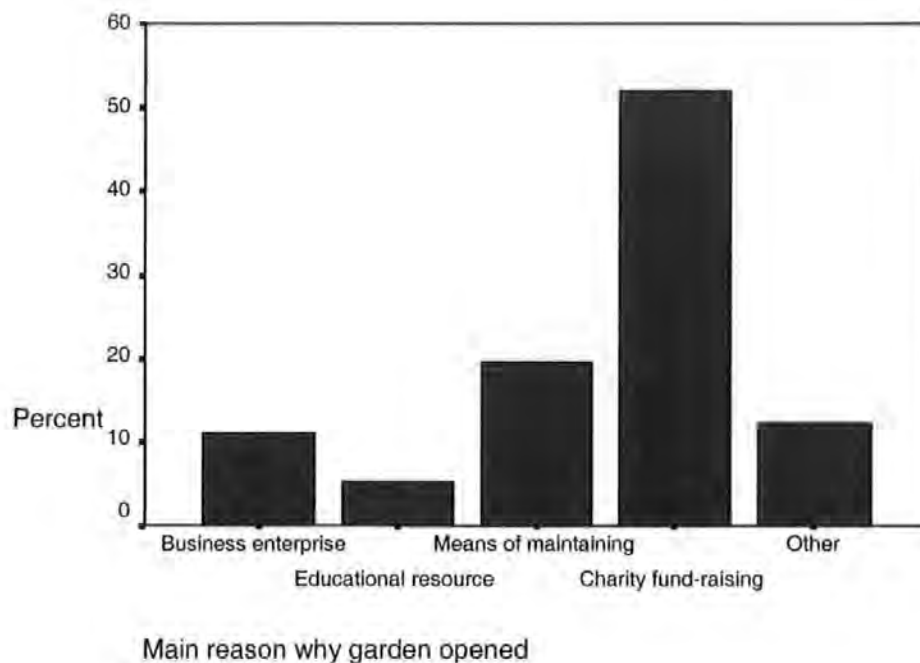


Figure 5.4 Reasons for Opening a Garden to the Public

When asked whether the main reason for remaining open to the public had changed through time, 20% of respondents stated that their reasons had changed. Financial reasons emerged as the main motivation in this respect, having moved from charity fund-raising purposes, with gardens not being financially viable without visitors to support their upkeep.

Cross-tabulation of category of garden with main reason why the garden was initially opened yields some interesting results. Private gardens overwhelmingly opened for charity fund-raising purposes (79.8%). Historic houses, National Trust properties, National Trust gardens and other conservation organisation gardens opened primarily as a means of maintaining the property/garden. It is astonishing that only 11.1% of gardens opened as a business enterprise. These gardens are mainly confined to a

garden as part of another attraction which is not an historic house (60% opened as a business enterprise) and nursery gardens, that is, those gardens run in conjunction with a nursery business (32%).

The cross-tabulation between category of garden and whether the main reason for opening had changed revealed some significant associations. Few of the private gardens had changed their main reason for opening (84.4%), similar to gardens which form part of other attractions, National Trust properties and gardens, and other conservation organisation gardens. The categories of garden which had changed more significantly were botanic gardens (44.4% had changed their original remit for opening) and nursery gardens (44.0%), and private tourist gardens to a lesser extent (32.3%).

It was explored why these particular gardens had changed their reasons for opening, and it was found that the overriding reason was linked to financial issues. Changes in motivation tended to be manifested in two forms: first, botanic gardens, originally opened as an educative and scientific resource were now under greater pressure to derive self-supporting income generation from visitors; and second, nursery gardens, which had sometimes developed from a hobby had turned into fully-fledged businesses with income generation as a new priority.

Surprisingly few gardens were created as visitor attractions (9%). However, 29% of owners considered their garden as a visitor attraction today, intimating that gardens tend to become a product for visitor consumption once they have been established for some years. In the survey, 64.8% of gardens were described as private gardens.

Private gardens are the least likely category of garden to have been created as a visitor attraction (98.7%). More commercial operations such as gardens which form part of other attractions and private tourist gardens were created as attractions (28.6% and 27.7% respectively).

Figure 5.5 illustrates the year of first opening to the public for the sample gardens.

While it is clear that some gardens have a long tradition of opening to the public, with 13 gardens open prior to 1900 and the earliest garden open was recorded in 1642 (Alderley Grange, Gloucestershire), a marked number of gardens opened in the twentieth century. The figures indicate a substantial increase in garden supply from 1970 onwards.

The illustration in Figure 5.5 indicates a series of phases in relation to gardens opening to the public for the first time, where number of peaks of varying magnitude are noticeable. In the 1920s and 1930s, the time of the initial rise of the leisure society, gardens may have been built and opened to reflect growing mobility of middle and upper middle class, particularly if one bears in mind the rising popularity of the car and the small increase in day trips to locations in rural areas (Towner, 1996). Cross-tabulating year of opening with main reason for opening suggests that a larger than expected number of gardens opened in the period 1926-1950 for charity fund-raising. With the establishment of the National Gardens Scheme in England and Wales in 1927, the substantial number of gardens opening up at this time for charity follows suit.

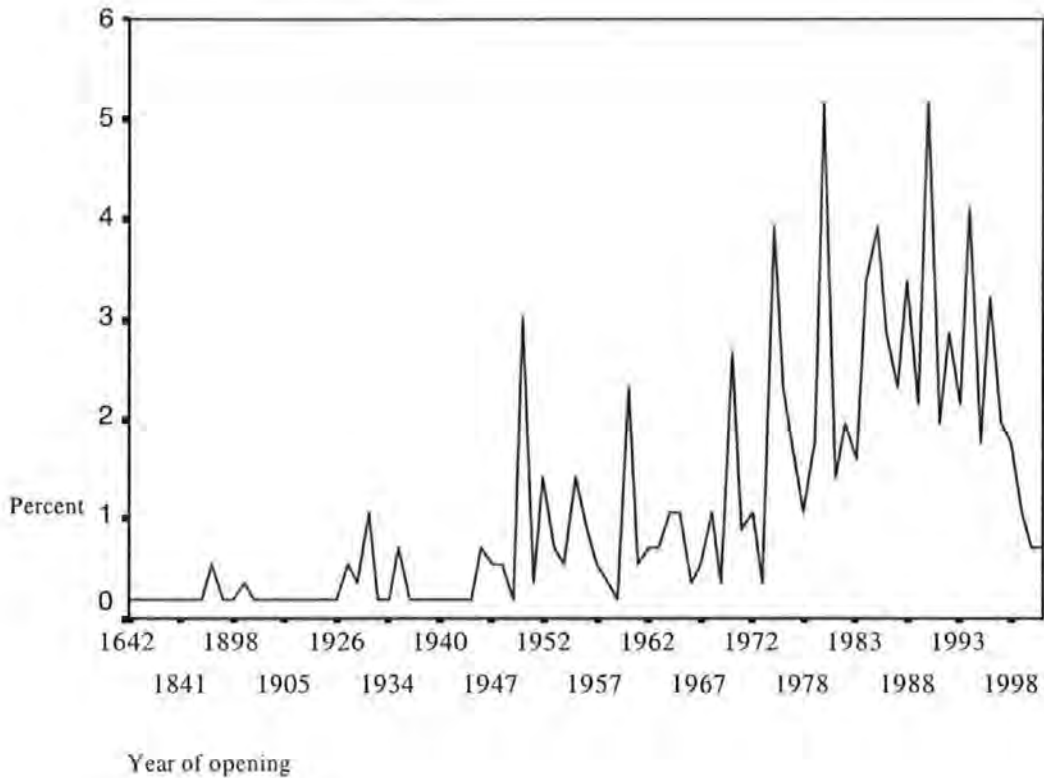


Figure 5.5 Year Gardens First Opened

The peak in the 1950s and 1960s again relates to increasing mobility but it is also interesting to note from the cross-tabulation that revenue generation to fund maintenance was of greater importance as a main reason for opening (1951-1975), a reflection of the pressures on country house owners as discussed in Chapter 2. Indeed, the latter assertion is supported by a three-way cross-tabulation between year of opening, category of garden and main reason for opening, which shows a greater than expected number of gardens as part of a historic house being opened in the period 1951-1976, when compared with other types of gardens.

The last quarter of the twentieth century was notable for the rise in the commercialisation of visitor attractions and Figure 5.5 shows a considerable increase in the numbers of gardens opening to the public for the first time. Cross-tabulation indicates a greater number of gardens than expected opening as a business enterprise in the period 1976-2001, particularly significant in private gardens and private commercial gardens. Thus, the eminence of the private sector in the supply of the garden experience by means of a business enterprise in the period 1976-2001 is established.

Figure 5.5 indicates a decrease in the number of gardens opening to the public in the latter part of the 1990s. It may be argued that the reason for this decrease is related to the over-supply of gardens open to the public. Over-supply of formal leisure opportunities is a thorny issue in contemporary tourism and recreation and has been witnessed across a range of recreation resources, particularly in the attractions sector. Closures of visitor attractions do occur on a frequent basis, as reported annually in *Sightseeing in the UK* and gardens are not exempt from this fate. Some 59 gardens out of a total of 859 attractions have closed between 1978 and 1999 (ETC *et al.*, 2000: 34).

5.4.6 Visitor Services in Gardens

In terms of facilities available to visitors, the following arrangements in gardens were identified:

- 38.1% of gardens have a shop open
- 70.2% have plant sales available
- 76.8% provide teas

- 81.4% provide toilet facilities
- 77.5% provide a car park
- 52.5% sell a guide book/leaflet
- 15.8% provide a children's area
- 41.9% provide guided walks
- 42.4% organise special events

The responses obtained here indicate the relative importance of certain facilities. The provision of toilets appears to be the most significant (presumably as health and safety legislation requires visitor attractions to have toilets), followed by a car park and refreshments. This finding is interesting as it mirrors the words of Major Tony Hibbert of Trebah Gardens, quoting the Duke of Devonshire in the preliminary qualitative stage of this research, who stated that the most important aspects to provide for visitors are toilets, car parks and teas. In terms of retailing, while a general shop appears to be less of a feature in gardens, a plant sales area seems to be more important. Thus, it might be inferred that garden visitors wish to buy plants over and above other retail items. The facility least provided by gardens is a children's area, which might be for two reasons. First, it is perceived that few families with children visit garden, thus such an area is not required. Second, it might be the case that garden owners do not wish to provide a play area for reasons linked with spoiling the ambience, peace and quiet and attracting undesirable visitors, namely noisy children. In relation to the national average for all attractions providing facilities, the ETC *et al.*, (2001) state that 85% of attractions provide retail outlets and 55% provide catering services. Thus, it appears that gardens are more likely to provide catering than other types of attraction.

Cross-tabulations show that there is a significant statistical association at the 0.01 level between the extent of service provision and the type of garden. Very few private gardens have a shop (9.6%), whereas most other types of garden operate this kind of facility, particularly pronounced in the case of historic houses and National Trust properties and gardens with over 70% operating a shop in each case. In terms of plant sales, and as might be expected, the pattern appears to be that those attractions which are specifically gardens as opposed to parts of other attractions are more likely to operate a plant sales area. Private gardens are remarkably well-represented in plant sales, although the extent of sales are likely to be minimal and based on cuttings from the garden rather a more commercialised nursery establishment. Teas are offered by a large proportion of all gardens. However, a slightly higher than expected number of commercial gardens offer teas, and fewer private gardens (significant at the 0.05 level). There is a similar finding in relation to provision of toilets: while most gardens have this facility, provision is lower in private gardens.

Car-parking provision is lowest in relation to botanic gardens, presumably due to the urban location and Victorian origins of many of these gardens. Private gardens, too, show a lower percentage in relation to other gardens – simply because these gardens are generally private residences with parking limited to normal residential capacity. Private gardens are also quite different to other gardens in the production of guide-books, with only 25.6% of such gardens offering guide material. The limited number of gardens offering guide-books is probably explained by the number of small, private gardens in this category. As such gardens only open on limited basis, a guide-book is too expensive to produce for such occasions. Nursery gardens were also found to be

limited in the production of guide-books presumably because their main remit is in the sale of plants rather than in interpretation.

Gardens forming part of another attraction were more likely to possess a children's area than any other type of garden. An explanation for the existence of play areas in gardens forming part of another attraction is that this category, such as zoos and wildlife parks, is likely to attract the family market and provision of activities for children is a central aspect of the visitor experience in such attractions. Private gardens showed the lowest percentage provision of children's areas which is not surprising given the nature of small gardens open for limited times. The National Trust and National Trust for Scotland comprise the largest category of gardens providing both guided walks and events. Presumably, the educational remit of the Trust and the policy of widening access to all sectors of the population reflects the need to attract, entertain and inform a cross-section of the visiting public and events and events might attract a wider or different set of visitors to a site. In addition, the need to increase visitor numbers to generate revenue for conservation work by providing add-on events is a key remit of the Trust's work and inspiring support is one of the four objectives set out in the National Trust's Strategic Plan 2001-2004 (National Trust, 2001).

Cross-tabulation between services provided with visitor numbers in 2000 yields some statistical association through chi-squared analysis. Gardens with visitor numbers of 2,000 or less show a huge difference in the observed and expected figures, identifying a low propensity for gardens with low visitor numbers to open retail outlets.

Conversely, all gardens with 10,000 or more visitors a year show higher than expected

figures in relation to opening a shop. A second association occurs with the test relating to availability of teas, with more than expected numbers of gardens with visitor figures over 10,000 offer teas. Similar results are ascertained for provision of toilets, car-parks, guided walks and guide books, although the threshold is lower in these cases with gardens over 2,000 visitors incorporated into the 'more than expected' bracket. The data shows that the provision of children's areas tends to be more highly associated with gardens receiving more visitors. Events are more likely to take place in gardens where visitor figures are above 10,000 per annum.

In relation to geographic location of the garden, cross-tabulation with services provided yielded three significant associations. The number of gardens with teas available was higher than expected in the East and the Midlands but lower than expected in Scotland (as discussed later). Similarly, gardens with toilets saw a higher than expected number in the Midlands and Wales, with a lower than expected number in the South and Scotland. An explanation of these findings is not obvious.

However, it appears that gardens located in areas that have to make more effort in attracting visitors may be considering the needs of the potential market for garden visitors. Some 21.5% of gardens with a children's area are located in Scotland, which is a higher than expected amount. The North also demonstrates a higher than expected number of gardens with facilities for children (11.8%) but there are fewer gardens with such facilities in the South-East (6.5%), South-West and the Midlands.

5.4.7 Changes in Service Provision

In order to track the changes in visitor service provision through time, the questionnaire asked respondents to indicate what facilities were provided when the

garden first opened. Table 5.3 shows the figures relative to the facilities provided today. The percentage change column denotes the large increase in services. While it is not possible to include any time factors in this analysis, as the survey gardens have been open for varying numbers of years, it is reasonable to suggest that the supply of visitor services increases through time from when a garden first opens to the public. The growth may be explained by a growing sophistication and increase in commercial opportunities related to both consumer requirements and evolution of the business. In relation to the latter assertion, the life-cycle of the garden as a visitor attraction product is the primary consideration (see Chapter 3). Development, expansion and consolidation of the attraction and the addition of extra services to expand the commercial base of the enterprise, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, has been a major focus of activity for visitor attractions in Great Britain.

Table 5.3 Comparison of Visitor Services when Gardens First Opened and Today.

Service type	Service provided when garden first opened		Service provided today		Percentage change
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	
Shop	14.2	83	38.1	225	+271.1
Plant sales	42.5	248	70.2	414	+166.9
Teas	52.6	308	76.8	453	+147.1
Toilets	62.2	363	81.4	480	+132.2
Car park	65.2	381	77.5	457	+119.9
Guide book	26.5	155	52.5	310	+200
Children's area	4.6	27	15.8	93	+344.4
Guided walks	15.2	89	41.9	247	+277.5
Events	13.3	78	42.4	250	+320.5

To gain further insights into the addition of visitor services, respondents were asked to state the main reason why they had added new facilities. While 36.6% of respondents had not made any additions, 37.2% stated that additions had been made to attract

more visitors. Some 12.1% of respondents replied that further additions were necessary to maintain visitor numbers and 0.3% made changes to keep ahead of competitors. However, there were some varied and quite personal reasons why further additions had been made to the complement of visitor facilities, accounting for the remaining 16.8% of the sample. Overall, the findings would appear to confirm the earlier argument relating to commercialisation.

Respondents were also asked to state what type of catering service was provided in the garden, if one was provided at all. Given the high margins available to owners in hospitality and catering, a surprising 21.9% of gardens did not provide any refreshments. Table 5.4 shows the remaining results. Respondents noted on their survey form the highest level of provision of catering service and this should be borne in mind in interpreting the results. Thus, those providing a licensed restaurant also provided light meals and teas.

Table 5.4 Levels of Catering Service Offered in Gardens

Catering service	Frequency	Valid Percent of Gardens Providing Service
Teas and cakes/biscuits only	242	41.1
Light meals	98	16.6
Licensed restaurant	94	16
Full hot meals (not licensed)	26	4.4
No catering service	129	21.9
Total	589	
Missing cases	4	

In terms of garden location, it appears that gardens in Scotland are much less likely to offer a catering service than expected. Some 37.4% of gardens in Scotland do not

offer refreshments of any kind, which is substantially higher than any other region (the second highest figure is 25.5% for the South West of England). The lack of refreshment facilities in gardens in Scotland is surprising given the isolated nature of some of the gardens and the lack of nearby tea-rooms and restaurants. Some gardens do not charge an entry fee to visitors who want to just use the services of a shop, plant sales area or refreshment facility. In order to establish the numbers of gardens falling into this category, respondents were asked to state whether ticket purchase was required for use of such ancillary services. The number of gardens not requiring the payment of an entry fee to use services was 50.5%. Whether this indicates a lack of a truly commercial approach is debatable. Some highly entrepreneurial gardens practised a no fee for entry to tea-room and shop policy and considered it positive to attract regular repeat visitors who may just want to come for a cup of tea and buy a plant rather than look round the garden again. If an entrance fee was charged, then that visitor may not return at all and the additional spend is lost.

5.4.8 Information and Interpretation

In an attempt to gauge the extent of information sources in gardens, respondents were asked to identify from a list of options which services were provided for visitors.

Table 5.5 displays the results.

The results indicate that informal conversation is the most widely used source of information for visitors, provided by both owners/mangers and garden staff. Personal interaction allows the exchange of knowledge and experience between gardener and garden visitor, which is often a valuable and rewarding interchange for one or both parties.

Table 5.5 Sources of Information in Gardens

Information source provided in gardens	YES frequency	YES percent of gardens	NO frequency	NO percent of gardens
Guide-book	275	47	310	53
Informal conversation	451	77.1	134	22.9
Plant identification labels	333	56.9	252	43.1
Audio-visual display	36	6.2	549	93.8
Guided tours	254	43.3	331	56.6
Display boards	187	32	398	68
Maps	224	38.3	361	61.7

n.b. 8 missing cases

It is notable that only a very small numbers of gardens run more sophisticated audio-visual displays. The absence of capital intensive information displays would seem to denote that many gardens are reasonably low key in their approach to visitor information. While the emphasis on the minimalist interpretation should not be viewed as a criticism, it is suspected that information provision relates strongly to the needs of the market and the environmental attributes of the gardens. The influence of the boom in postmodern, industrial tourism in the 1990s may have a role to play in the interaction between gardener and visitor, where the process and practice of gardening is of interest as a marketable commodity to visitors. The discussion of the tourist gaze in Chapter 3 highlights the form of gaze where visitors see an ordinary aspect of their life, namely, gardening, within a new context, such as a beautiful or famous garden.

5.4.9 Marketing Gardens

The most effective method of attracting visitors appears to be through the National Gardens Scheme (40.3%), which is discussed earlier in Chapter 2. However, this figure needs to be considered against the number of private gardens who would rely more on this method than other more commercial gardens. Further probing of this

statistic is therefore required. The second most effective method cited was editorial in magazines or on television at 16.7%. It should be noted here that in most cases, respondents are not often clear as to which method of marketing is the most effective in attracting visitors in reality. Thus, a degree of uncertainty is introduced to these results, which should be treated as perceptions rather than factual responses. The results of this question are summarised in Table 5.6. It is also worth mentioning that just over half of the gardens produced a promotional leaflet. Aside from key national schemes, the findings identify the limited range of effective distribution channels for marketing. The ETC *et al.* (2001) state that 92% of all attractions use leaflets for promotional purposes, 64% have a website, 61% organise commercial advertising and 53% market through guidebooks. Table 5.7 indicates the relative effectiveness of these methods in attracting visitors.

Table 5.6 Most Effective Perceived Method of Attracting Visitors to Gardens

Method	Frequency	Valid Percent of Gardens
National Gardens Scheme	210	40.3
Editorial	87	16.7
Advertising	80	15.4
Garden leaflet	40	7.7
Word of mouth	29	5.6
National Trust book	26	5
Tourist Board	24	4.6
Co-operative marketing scheme	7	1.3
Books	4	0.8
Other	14	2.7
Total	521	
Missing cases	72	

Cross-tabulation of most effective method of attracting visitors with garden location reveals some significant differences and regional variations. Tourist Board promotion appears to be more important in the South-West and Scotland than in any other

regions. Gardens in the South-West have been boosted by the success of the promotion of the gardens in Cornwall by the Cornwall Tourist Board (see Chapter 4). For Scotland, a country heavily reliant on VisitScotland to attract tourists, the perception is that the Tourist Board has achieved some degree of success. Through the Area Tourist Boards, the promotion of gardens at a regional level is beginning to take a high profile in Scotland, for example the Perthshire Tourist Board and the Argyll, the Isles, Loch Lomond, Stirling and the Trossachs Tourist Board both distribute substantive garden leaflets. Editorial shows a significantly higher than expected result in terms of a method of attracting visitors for both the South and the Midlands. For both of these regions, advertising yields a less than expected number of responses. The National Gardens Scheme appears to be particularly important in the Midlands, Scotland and the South as a means of attracting visitors to gardens. A three way cross-tabulation, this time including visitor numbers in 2000, to identify whether these trends are explained by the visitation levels in these regions identified that there were a larger number of gardens attracting 2,000 or fewer visitors in the South, in Scotland and more marginally in the Midlands.

In terms of obtaining visitor feedback, only 25.7% of garden owners had ever undertaken visitor surveys. Those that had undertaken a survey, used the results specifically to inform marketing (31.3%), to improve existing facilities (16%) and to develop new facilities (1.4%). Some 47.3% of owners used results for a combination of the three aspects and 4.2% used the results for other purposes. The small number of garden owners undertaking survey work relates to the low number of visitors recorded at many sites. Cross-tabulation of visitor numbers in 2000 with whether visitor surveys were undertaken yields a significant association at the 0.01 level. The

data indicates that the propensity to undertake visitor surveys is higher in gardens where the visitor figures exceed 50,000. There is an anomaly in the form of gardens with visitor figures between 2,001-10,000, where more gardens than expected conducted visitor surveys. The interest in visitor feedback for these garden owners might be explained by gardens which are emerging as visitor attractions, or by owners who wish to expand their gardens. Brunt and Dunster (1997) highlighted that visitor surveys tend to be undertaken in attractions that receive visitor numbers over 250,000 per year. From this, it might be deduced that garden attractions are more focused on visitor feedback than attractions in general.

5.4.10 Visitor Trends

Owners were asked to provide an estimate of visitor numbers to their garden in the year 2000. In some 49.6% of gardens, 2,000 or less visitors were received, while 18.9% received between 2001 and 10000. About 6% of gardens achieved visitor figures over 100,000 (Figure 5.6). The ETC, STB, WTB and NITB (2000) reported that in 1999, 57% of attractions receive fewer than 20,000 visits per year, with 76% receiving less than 50,000 visits per year. Only 7% of attractions reported over 200,000 visits, similar to gardens. Thus, the garden sector tends to attract very small numbers of people to gardens although this trend is accounted for by the large number of small private gardens with limited opening hours.

Although not a statistically significant result, patterns in the data suggest that higher than expected numbers of visits were made to gardens in the 2,000 or less visitor category in the South, East and Wales, with fewer in the South-East and the North-West.

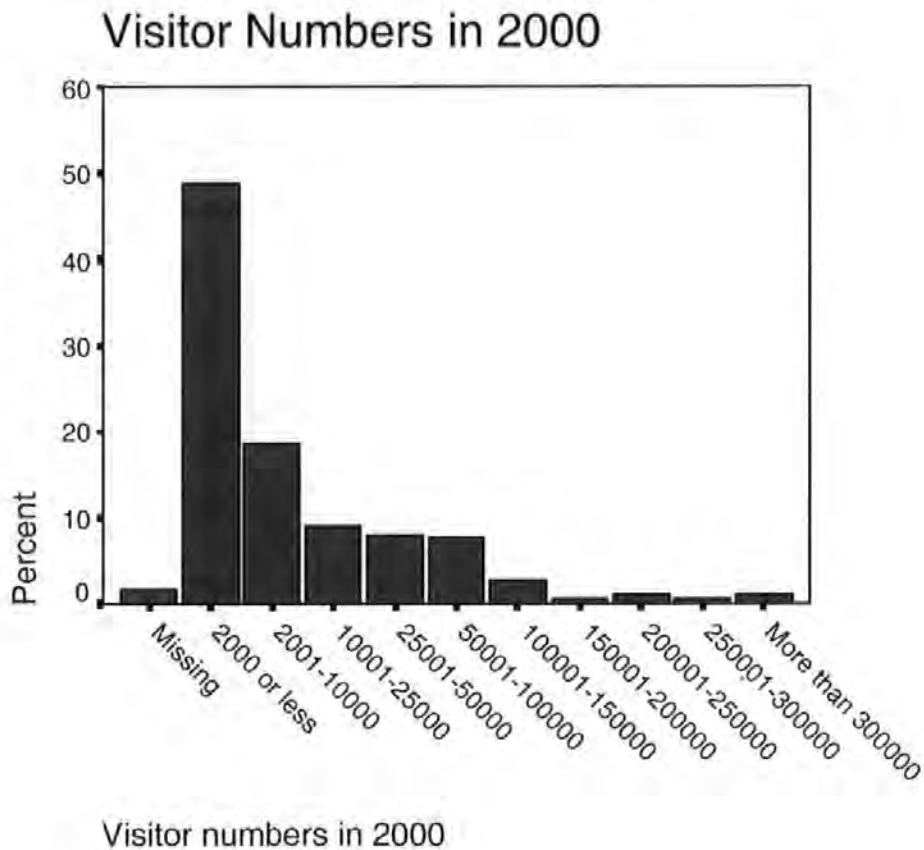


Figure 5.6 Visitor Numbers to Gardens in 2000

Most gardens reported an increase in visitor numbers over time (49.7%), while 30.3% thought that numbers were static. The reasons cited for increases in numbers were varied. However, 34.9% considered that there was more public interest in gardens and another 34.9% considered that improved marketing of the garden had assisted in attracting more visitors (see Table 5.7). The results obtained seem to adequately reflect findings for all attractions by the ETC *et al.* (2001), who state that increases in visitor figures to attractions were explained by advertising (25%) and development of a new attraction/feature (12%). Where the garden results differ is in respect of the increased interest in gardens.

Table 5.7 Reasons for Increase in Visitor Numbers

Reasons for increase in visitor numbers	Frequency	Valid Percent of Gardens
More public interest in gardens	98	34.9
Improved marketing of garden	93	34.9
New attraction in garden	30	10.7
More visitors to the area	11	3.9
Other	44	15.7
Don't know	24	

Cross-tabulation of visitor numbers in 2000 with visitor trends gave a significant result at the 0.01 level. Gardens with visitor numbers of 2,000 or less appear to be more vulnerable to changing visitor numbers, illustrated by a much lower rate of increase than other categories of garden and accounting for 54.1% of the gardens experiencing a decrease in visitor numbers over time. In addition, in terms of those gardens where the visitor numbers are staying static, 69.1% of such gardens are those with visitor numbers of 2,000 or less. Such figures could be explained by the limited market appeal of small, private gardens.

Further cross-tabulations of visitor trends with garden location shows that significant regional variations exist (Table 5.8). Strong growth in garden visits in the South-East is notable, with 62.3% of gardens indicating an increase in visitor numbers over time. The patterns which emerge reveal that while there are some encouraging rates of increase in garden visitors, a substantial number fall into the static category, particularly in the South-East and North-East regions.

A somewhat alarming result emerges in the case of the North of England, with a relatively high rate of decline. Scotland, too, shows a high rate of declining and static

visitor numbers. The implications of such trends need to be understood and acted upon by garden operators.

Table 5.8 Trends in Visitation and Geographic Location (percentage of gardens reporting increases, decreases and similar visitor numbers since opening)

REGION	Increasing	Decreasing	Static
South	41.6	10.1	46.1
South-East	62.3	13.0	20.3
South-West	46.2	8.8	38.5
East	47.8	13.0	33.3
Midlands	56.9	16.7	20.8
North-West	60.5	23.3	16.3
North-East	42.9	14.3	42.9
North	42.9	33.3	14.3
Wales	53.3	10.0	26.7
Scotland	43.3	20.0	30.0

N.B. Percentages may not add up to 100 as 'don't know' category has been excluded from the table.

Decreases in numbers were reported by 14.8%, mostly accounted for by greater competition from other attractions (see Table 5.9). Competitors were viewed as other gardens, other visitor attractions, Sunday retailing (traditionally, a favourite day for visiting gardens) and a general perception of an increase in leisure opportunities. Competition is reflected in the finding of the ETC *et al.* (2001), who found that competition from Sunday retailing accounted for 11% of reasons for decreases and competition from new attractions (11%). The response given by some respondents, 'most locals already visited', denotes the local nature of the market for some of the gardens. The inference is that small, private gardens with minimal opening hours have limited appeal to visitors from outside the area (or an owner perception of this being the case).

Table 5.9 Reasons for Decrease in Visitor Numbers

Reason for Decrease in Visitor Numbers	Frequency	Valid Percent of gardens
Competition from other attractions	45	53.6
Reduced openings	12	14.3
Reduction in visitors to the area	9	10.7
Most locals already visited	6	7.1
Other	12	14.3
Total	84	
Missing cases	14	

Two other aspects were also explored in relation to the opening of the garden in 2000.

First, the seasonality of garden opening was explored (Table 5.10). This table demonstrates the highly seasonal nature of garden opening, with only 20% of gardens open all year round, no doubt reflecting the lack of plant interest during the winter period. The remaining gardens are highly variable, with a large number open for the usual visitor season around the spring to autumn period but over 30% of gardens open on a very limited basis. For all attractions, the ETC *et al.* (2001) state that 40% are open all year round and 60% are seasonal. The gardens which are open for only a few days or by appointment only are exclusively private gardens, where the owner is resident on site and the garden is attached to their permanent place of residence. Most of these gardens are open for charity through the National Gardens Scheme as opposed to any other purpose.

Table 5.10 Opening Scheme for Gardens in 2000

Open	Frequency	Valid Percent of gardens
Spring-Autumn	195	34.3
A few days	129	22.7
All year round	114	20.1
By appointment	64	11.3
Summer only	55	9.7
Spring only	11	1.9
Total	568	
Missing cases	25	

Second, respondents were asked to state the standard entry charge for an adult in 2000 (Table 5.11). The entry charges overall appear to be quite modest when compared with admission charges for visitor attractions in Great Britain, with 78.9% charging less than £3.00. In 2000, the average adult admission charge to attractions was £3.52 (ETC, *et al.*, 2001: 27), although about 50% of UK attractions charge £3.00 or less. Around 19% of attractions do not charge for admission according to the ETC *et al.* (2001), however, the garden owners survey shows that 5.1% of gardens do not charge admission. The comparatively low rate is explained by the high propensity of gardens to open for charity fund-raising where the owner does not operate on a profit-basis.

Table 5.11 Standard Adult Entry Charge in 2000

Charge band	Frequency	Valid Percent of Gardens
No charge	29	5.1
Less than £1.00	3	0.5
£1.00-£2.00	265	46.7
£2.01-£3.00	151	26.6
£3.01-£4.00	59	10.4
£4.01-£5.00	40	7.0
£5.01-£6.00	18	2.3
Over £6.00	8	1.4
Total	568	
Missing cases	25	

While the overall patterns of entry charge in relation to location are not easy to explain in some instances (for example more gardens in the North of England charge more than £4.00 than any other region), there are some interesting insights to be gained from this analysis. Wales stands out as the region which charges the lowest admission prices, where 80% of gardens charge £2.00 or less. The North-East of England comes second, with 71.4% of gardens charging £2.00 or less, confirming the ETC *et al.*'s (2000) analysis of attraction admission prices, with Northumbria

exhibiting the lowest prices in England. Scotland is also a relatively inexpensive region in which to visit gardens, with 67.5% of gardens charging £2.00 or less. The North of England has the highest garden entry prices, with 76.2% of gardens charging between £2.00 and £6.00, compared with Scotland, where only 19.7% of gardens charge in this bracket. The average entry charge for all gardens was £3.74 with a standard deviation of £1.30.

5.4.11 Garden Visitors

The description of the majority of garden visitors by owners in the sample was that the majority had a general interest in gardening (60.5%), although nearly a third visited simply as a pleasant day out. Fewer than 10% of visitors were classified as those possessing specialist horticultural knowledge. Although not a statistically significant result, patterns emerging from the data indicate that more garden visitors than expected in the South-West have a general gardening interests and fewer are just seeking a pleasant day out. The converse is true for the North-West, with fewer people with garden interests and more emphasis on those looking for a pleasant day out. This trend could be explained by high propensity of retired residents in the South-West and as Chapter 1 suggested, more mature people show the highest interests in gardening of all age ranges.

Contrary to the perceived image of garden visitors comprising older age groups, a mix of ages was reported. However, the significance of the 'grey market' should be noted (Table 5.12). Reported age groups were often based on the owner's perception, as few gardens had specific data to report on visitor age profiles, although were able to give a general impression.

Table 5.12 Perceived Age Profile of Garden Visitors

Age Group	Frequency	Percent of visitors
Mostly retired (60+)	20	3.6
Mostly mature (40-60)	46	8.2
Mix of retired and mature	125	22.4
Mostly younger (18-39)	3	0.5
Mix of mature and younger	1	0.2
Mix of all ages	230	41.1
Don't know	134	24
Total	559	
Missing cases	34	

Respondents gave some indications about group visits to their garden. Coach groups appear as a significant feature in visit profiles, with 65.1% of gardens reporting that such groups visit their garden. School groups were not a large market sector, with only 23.3% of gardens receiving such visits. Family visits are of some significance too, with 51.5% of gardens stating that families visited their garden. However, this figure needs to be examined with the findings from the age profile in mind. Garden owners were asked if they thought garden visitors were changing and 25.5% replied in the affirmative, citing a wider interest in gardens as the main reason (see Table 5.13). However, 413 (69.6%) respondents did not think that garden visitors were changing.

Table 5.13 Explanations of How Garden Visitors are Changing

How garden visitors are changing	Frequency	Valid Percent of Respondents
Wider interest in gardens	38	27.9
More young people interested	28	20.6
Higher media profile	25	18.4
More family interest	16	11.8
Looking for high standards	7	5.1
More overseas visitors	4	2.9
Unsure	1	0.7
Other	17	12.5
Total	136	
Missing case	44	

The traditional view of gardening as the pursuit of older people has, however, been challenged by the notion of 'instant gardens', which appeal to young, busy people who want to enjoy their gardens and use them as social spaces but have insufficient time, skill or patience to create a garden (Intel, 2000; Euromonitor, 1999).

Similarly, the results appear to confirm that a younger audience in garden visiting is emerging. The results also indicate that the role of the media should be recognised in raising the profile, interest and participation in gardening, as the Scottish Tourist Board (2000) also suggest.

5.4.12 Visitor Impacts

Questions relating to impacts and visitor management were asked. Just over 51% of garden owners reported that visitors caused damage to the garden (see Table 5.14). In natural resource-based attractions, like gardens, there is an inevitable trade-off for owners and managers between maintaining the garden in pristine condition and inviting visitors into the garden. The most widely reported problem was general wear and tear, followed by theft of garden materials (plants, cuttings and statuary). Theft was cited as a significant problem in a small number of gardens, several of which were small gardens whose owners had decided not to open in future due to the severity of the problem. However, overall, there appears to be low level of reported damage to gardens other than by the predictability of wear and tear.

Table 5.14 Visitor Impacts

Type of impact reported in garden	Frequency	Valid Percent of Gardens
Litter	77	13.3
Wear and tear	250	43.3
Theft	110	19.1
Damage to plants	55	9.5

In relation to specific tasks, 60.8% of owners stated that tasks were required to reduce the effects of visitor use, including path raking (47.6%), turfing (36.2%), litter collection (21.2%) and 27.8% stated that some areas in the garden required cordoning to stop visitors from entering.

5.4.13 Carrying Capacity

Questions relating to carrying capacity were included to assess the extent to which gardens could accommodate visitor numbers. Only 15.4% of garden owners thought that there were sometimes too many visitors in the garden. Of those, 29.5% had introduced measures for limiting numbers, including limiting opening, limiting numbers, limiting group visits and timed ticketing (Table 5.15). The measures are standard techniques used by visitor attractions to manage visitors (Swarbrooke, 2001).

Table 5.15 Types of Limiting Measures in Place in Gardens where Capacity is Occasionally Exceeded

	Frequency	Valid Percent of Gardens
Limit opening	4	4.6
Limit numbers	3	3.4
Limit group visits	3	3.4
Timed ticketing	3	3.4
Group tours only	2	2.3
Limit parking	1	1.1
Other	14	16.1
No plans to limit visitors	57	65.5
Total	87	
Missing cases	12	

It is interesting to note that only a small number of respondents were putting any measures in place. In addition, a large variety of measures were mentioned, some of which were very particular to certain gardens, hence the size of the 'other' category in

Table 5.15. It seems that carrying capacity problems are not a significant issue for most gardens, other than a few of the larger garden attractions which are perceived as being of a national or international notoriety, such as Sissinghurst (Benfield, 2001).

5.5 Analysis of the Visitor Experience

A substantial number of questions relating to the visitor experience were included in the owner/manager questionnaire. One set of questions asked respondents to rank on a Likert scale of 1 to 5, the relative importance of certain components of the visit experience. The components were generated as described in Chapter 3 from Haywood and Muller's (1988) analysis of the visitor experience, adjusted to be of relevance in the garden setting and incorporating elements generated from the initial qualitative fieldwork. Garden owners were asked a series of questions about their attitude to certain facets of managing the visitor experience. The full results are displayed in Tables 5.16-5.19. As a general overview, the results gained from the questioning show the following results.

(i) Weather Conditions

Some 60.8% of respondents consider the weather conditions to be very important to the experience of the visitor, with good weather adding significantly to visit satisfaction. Only 4.2% of respondents considered the weather to be of little or no importance.

(ii) Tidiness of the Garden

The quality and standards of the garden are crucial aspects of the visitor experience, with 38.8% of respondents stating that tidiness of the garden was very important and a

further 42.1% quite important. Some 6.5% of respondents did not consider tidiness to be of importance.

(iii) Setting of the Garden

The garden's setting in the landscape was considered to be very important by 47.6% of respondents and a further 32.2% thought setting was quite important, yielding a total number of garden owners of 79.8% (458 respondents) considering setting as important. Some 10.8% of respondents stated that setting was not important.

(iv) Visitor Well-being

The importance of safety from crime was considered to be of little or no importance by over 47% of garden owners, with a further 21.6% unsure. In terms of health and safety issues on site, 342 (62.6%) of garden owners thought that such aspects were sufficiently addressed. However, 69 (12.6%) gardens thought that they needed to address health and safety issues better. Of some concern are the 24.9% of garden owners who are unsure on this matter.

(v) Accessibility

The importance of ease of access around the garden was considered to be quite important by 46.9% of garden owners and very important by a further 20.5%. Some 64% of respondents thought that access for less able visitors was good, although 17.5% considered their gardens to be poor in this capacity. In terms of access to the site, 82.6% of respondents (460) thought that their garden was open at convenient times for visitation, with only 9 gardens believing their opening hours to be a problem.

(vi) Pleasure

The significance of the overall pleasurability of strolling around the garden is demonstrated by the overwhelming 94.1% of respondents who considered this to be an important aspect. It seems that in most gardens, visitors are encouraged to follow their own routes and decide which paths to take. Only 18.2% of garden owners (103) prefer visitors to follow a set route. Only 14 respondents (2.4%) did not judge this aspect to be of importance. Most respondents assume that it is important that there is always something to see throughout the garden opening season (92.6%).

(vii) Staff

Staff were deemed to be an important feature adding to the visitor experience, with over 60% citing friendliness and helpfulness of staff as very important. In relation to friendliness of staff, 88.5% of respondents regard to be important. However, helpfulness is also observed to be a crucial aspect in the visitor experience, for example, a visitor might want to know the name of a plant or may wish to gain information about the growing habit of a particular species. A similar number of respondents considered helpfulness to be an important factor, at 88.5% (487 respondents).

(viii) Visitor Services

Features such as tea-rooms and shops in gardens were considered to be quite important and of no importance by similar numbers of respondents. In terms of tea-rooms, the overall finding is that such services are perceived to be important by 336 garden owners (61.1% of respondents). Curiously though, 23.6% of the sample (130 respondents) thought that a tea-room was of no importance in the visitor enjoyment of

their garden and a further 5.6% stated such a service was of little importance. The response in this instance is probably explained by the number of respondents who do not operate a tea-room at their garden. In the case of visitors who might visit the garden for the tea-room as well as the garden itself, 43.3% of respondents (246) perceived this occurred in their gardens.

A similar pattern emerges from an analysis of responses in relation to the importance of a shop or nursery. While 49.7% (266) of respondents considered a shop to be important, 36.8% thought that such a service was not important. Some 37.9% of garden owners (214) believed that visitors would come for the shop provided at their garden, as well as to visit the garden.

Interestingly, events in the garden were considered to be relatively unimportant by 338 garden owners (64.5% of respondents) and only 115 (21.9%) thought events were important. Foreign language leaflets were considered by 62.4% (327 respondents) as of no importance to the visitor experience. Presumably, the relative disinterest in foreign language leaflets reflects the lack of overseas visitors received by gardens. With the existence of British Tourist Authority campaigns to attract overseas visitors to British gardens, garden owners may need to consider the needs of foreign visitors in the future.

A sufficiently sized car park was considered to be important by 56.8% of the sample (310 respondents). However, 30.2% (165 respondents) did not believe a car-park to be important. The lack of importance of a car-park is probably explained by the

number of small garden respondents who do not have space to create car-parks or whose opening times do not warrant the building of such a facility.

The response to welcoming children in gardens was an interesting one. Some 74 garden owners (12.8%) stated that children were not welcome in their garden. More positively, 29.1% strongly agreed that children were welcome to their garden. As noted earlier, only 15% of gardens surveyed offer a designated play area for children.

(ix) Plant Information

Opinion on the importance of providing plant labels was split, with some considering the labels to be very important and others feeling that they are of little importance. Overall, 49.8% (272 respondents) stated that plant labels were important, while 31.3% (171 respondents) thought that such information was not important. Some 62.9% of garden owners deemed the information provided for visitors in their garden to be sufficiently detailed. However, 15.4% (86 respondents) of respondents thought that their information provision was inadequate.

Table 5.16 Importance of Elements of the Visitor Experience

Percentage of respondents

	Very important	Quite important	Not sure	Of little importance	Of no importance
Weather conditions	60.8	31.0	4.0	2.8	1.4
Tidiness of the garden	38.8	42.1	12.6	5.8	0.7
Garden's setting	47.6	32.2	9.4	7.1	3.7
Safety from crime	12.6	18.7	21.6	17.9	29.2
Ease of access	20.5	46.9	19.1	10.1	3.4
Pleasurability of strolling	67.2	26.8	3.5	1.0	1.4
Friendliness of staff	64.2	24.4	5.3	1.3	4.9
Helpfulness of staff	62.4	26.2	4.7	1.6	5.1
Reasonable entry charge	26.8	49.9	11.6	8.2	3.4
Tea-room	23.5	37.6	9.6	5.6	23.6
Nursery/shop	18.3	31.4	13.5	8.0	28.8
Range of events	5.7	16.2	13.5	14.5	50.0
Stock of foreign language leaflets	2.1	7.1	12.8	15.6	62.4
Sufficiently sized car park	21.6	35.2	13.0	10.6	19.6
Provision of plant labels	15.2	34.6	18.9	17.2	14.1

Table 5.17 Descriptive Statistics – Importance of Elements in Determining Visitor Experience

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Importance of weather conditions	574	4	1	5	1.53	.82	.665
Importance of tidiness of garden	565	4	1	5	1.88	.89	.797
Importance of garden's setting	574	4	1	5	1.87	1.08	1.170
Importance of safety from crime	541	4	1	5	3.33	1.39	1.935
Importance of ease of access	565	4	1	5	2.29	1.01	1.021
Importance of pleasurability of strolling around	574	4	1	5	1.43	.74	.545
Importance of friendliness of staff	550	4	1	5	1.58	1.01	1.016
Importance of helpfulness of staff	550	4	1	5	1.61	1.02	1.044
Importance of reasonable entry charge	559	4	1	5	2.11	1.00	1.008
Importance of tea-room	550	4	1	5	2.68	1.49	2.220
Importance of nursery/shop	535	4	1	5	2.98	1.51	2.282
Importance of having a range of events	524	4	1	5	3.87	1.34	1.786
Importance of stocking foreign language leaflets	524	4	1	5	4.29	1.07	1.140
Importance of providing plant labels	546	4	1	5	2.80	1.29	1.655
Importance of sufficiently sized car-park	546	4	1	5	2.71	1.42	2.028

Table 5.18 Importance of Additional Elements of the Visitor Experience

Percentage of respondents

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Visitors are made to feel welcome	80.4	17.4	1.2	0.3	0.7
Access for less able is good	26.5	37.4	18.5	12.0	5.5
Visitors come for shop/nursery	16.8	21.1	18.1	13.7	30.3
Visitors come for tea-room	13.9	29.4	17.4	10.7	28.5
Health and safety issues could be better addressed here	1.8	10.8	24.9	37.7	24.9
We welcome children	29.1	44.3	13.8	8.3	4.5
Information provided is detailed enough for visitors	19.0	43.9	21.7	10.4	5.0
The garden is open at convenient times for visitors	36.1	46.5	12.2	3.8	1.4
There is something to see throughout our opening season	59.6	33.0	4.0	1.2	2.1
We prefer visitors to follow a set route around the garden	6.5	11.7	9.0	41.5	31.3
We hope visitors leave happy	66.4	28.4	2.8	1.4	1.1

Table 5.19 Descriptive Statistics - Extent of Agreement with Statements about Garden

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Visitors made to feel welcome	581	4	1	5	1.24	.56	.308
Access for less able visitors is good	577	4	1	5	2.33	1.15	1.324
Visits made for shop/nursery as well as garden	564	4	1	5	3.20	1.48	2.200
Visits made for tea-room as well as garden	568	4	1	5	3.11	1.45	2.091
Health and safety issues could be better addressed	547	4	1	5	3.73	1.01	1.022
Children welcomed in the garden	578	4	1	5	2.15	1.07	1.146
Information provided for visitors is sufficiently detailed	558	4	1	5	2.39	1.06	1.128
Garden open at convenient times for visitors	557	4	1	5	1.88	.87	.750
Something to see throughout opening season	569	4	1	5	1.53	.81	.658
Prefer visitors to follow set route	566	4	1	5	3.79	1.19	1.417
Concerned that visitors leave happy	571	4	1	5	1.42	.72	.511

5.5.1 Cross-Tabulations Between Category of Garden and the Importance of Elements of the Visitor Experience

Chi-square tests were carried out on this series of cross-tabulations, that is, between category of garden and importance of elements of the visitor experience. Initially, all of these tests were statistically unreliable as more than 20% of cells had an expected count of less than 5. Recoding of the categories of garden and the scale of importance was necessary to rectify the number of empty cells. While some of the original sensitivities of the data are lost by doing recoding, it does help to provide more meaningful results. The existence of significant relationships between these variables were tested by Likelihood Ratios tests of association, where P-values greater than 0.01 were regarded as insignificant and where no more than 20% of cells have expected counts of less than 5. Significant associations were generated from the importance of: safety from crime, nursery/shop, range of events, stocking foreign language leaflets, and sufficiently sized car-park in relation to the category of garden. While statistical associations were only found in five of the tests, a commentary on all of the cross-tabulations is provided as some interesting patterns emerge from the data.

While most respondents considered tidiness of the garden to be an important element of managing the visitor experience, private garden owners and those managing other conservation organisation gardens were the least likely to concur. Just under 10% in each case considered tidiness not to be of importance. In relation to safety from crime, private garden owners were least concerned with this issue, with 57.4% of respondents considering this issue not to be important. Conversely, respondents representing gardens forming part of another attraction were the most concerned category, with 73.3% considering this to be an important issue. Otherwise, there was

a reasonably balanced response between the degree of importance of the issue of safety from crime. The result seems to indicate that small private gardens are not subject to crime, whereas other forms of attractions attract more criminal activity because they attract a more diverse visitor base, or because as sites they are more prone to theft. While the majority of garden respondents considered the friendliness and helpfulness of staff to be important, in both case private garden owners scored the lowest, with 84.2% and 83.5% respectively of respondents considering these aspects to be important in the visitor experience.

Some notable results were extrapolated from cross-tabulations between the category of garden and the importance of various visitor services. Some 35.8% of private garden owners thought that a tea-room was not important in determining the visitor experience along with 46.2% of other gardens (including Botanic and nursery gardens). This result is interesting because most other categories of garden show high scores in relation to the importance of a tea-room. An example is that for private tourist gardens, 73.3% of respondents considered a tea-room to be important. Likewise, private garden operators did not consider a shop/nursery to be important in visitor enjoyment of their garden, with only 38.6% of respondents stating that a retail outlet was important, which contrasts with private tourist gardens at 64.5%. However, the 'other' category scored the highest with over 70% of operators considering a shop to be important. This figure is likely to be skewed by nursery gardens, where the purpose of the garden is to encourage the visitor to purchase plants seen growing there.

In relation to the importance of providing a range of events, those gardens which are operated by the public and voluntary sector were the only categories of garden to consider such events important to the visitor experience. Some quite distinct patterns emerged in the cross-tabulation between range of events and category of garden. For private gardens, 85.8% of respondents said that events were not important in determining the visitor experience in their garden. A much larger proportion of respondents from National Trust properties and other conservation organisation gardens considered events to be important. The importance attached to events is probably explained by the underpinning remit of voluntary and public sector organisation properties, where public education and widening visitor participation are viewed as two of the main operating priorities. Some 66.7% of respondents from other conservation organisation and 42.7% of National Trust representatives gardens thought that a range of events were important. The main difference between the two types of respondent was that 30.7% of National Trust respondents were unsure about the importance of events, whereas the figure was zero for other conservation organisation gardens.

Very few of the gardens considered stocking foreign language leaflets to be an important issue. Whether this reflects that garden owners/managers had not considered the needs of international visitors or that there is a lack of resources to translate existing guides, or just that the gardens did not attract many international visitors, is not known. Of those respondents who rated stocking such leaflets as more important, most gardens were more likely to attract larger numbers of international visitors, including gardens which form part of other attractions (20% thought that

stocking foreign language leaflets was an important factor in determining the visitor experience), National Trust properties (19.2%) and other historic houses (18.3%).

The majority of respondents considered a car-park to be an important element of the visitor experience. The only notable exception in terms of category of garden was the private gardens. Only 46.1% of private garden respondents thought that a sufficiently sized car-park was important. This result is probably explained by the number of smaller gardens which form part of a private residence, where there is only car-parking adequate for a household rather than a purpose-built car-park that may be found at a larger visitor attraction. Presumably, respondents do not believe that this factor has significant bearing on the visitors that attend their garden openings. The 'other' category of garden also scored a relatively low percentage at 53.7%. A suggestion for this low score is that botanic gardens, which are included in this grouping, are located in towns and cities, and often have no car-parking facilities. The same is true for the miscellany of other gardens, such as some of the local authority gardens which were included in the sample population. Respondents who considered a sufficiently sized car-park represented gardens forming part of another attraction (80%), and National Trust properties (72%). Considering that a large percentage of garden visitors, as indicated in Chapter 6, travel to gardens by car, the importance of a car-park should not be overlooked by garden owners and managers.

Some variable results were gained from the cross-tabulation between the importance of providing plant labels with category of garden. The gardens which are likely to attract larger volumes of visitors appear to attach greater importance to providing plant labels, with the exception of the National Trust (38.7% of respondents felt it was

important to provide labels). Those gardens where respondents considered plant labels to be important were other conservation organisation gardens (72.7% of such gardens), private tourist gardens (64.5%) and 'other' gardens (61%). As other gardens include botanic and nursery gardens, labelling is of paramount importance.

5.5.2 Cross-tabulation Between Geographic Location of Garden and Importance of Elements of the Visitor Experience

Significant associations were yielded by garden's setting, range of events, foreign language leaflets, at the 0.05 level. Setting appears to have achieved higher than expected results in the South-West, Wales and Scotland. Presumably, the beauty and scenic qualities of these regions is viewed as a significant attribute of a garden. In relation to events, it appears that garden owners in the South-West in particular believe events to be of no importance. Gardens in the North, North-West and Scotland show a higher propensity to consider events to be quite important. An explanation for the predisposition of gardens in Northern Britain towards events is a need for gardens in these areas to diversify away from the natural environment product base, which might be adversely affected by the weather. The garden owners who consider foreign language leaflets to be important are located in the south of Britain, most notably the South-East, South, and to a lesser extent, the South-West. Overseas visitors are more likely to stay in these areas and thus a greater demand for translated information will be required in the South.

5.5.3 Cross-tabulation Between Visitor Numbers and Importance of Elements of the Visitor Experience

Cross-tabulations and generated likelihood ratios showed significant relationships with the following variables: importance of tidiness, safety from crime, tea-room, nursery/shop, events, foreign language leaflets and car-park. In most cases, the explanation for each association is similar and linked with the obvious notion that the more visitors a garden receives, the more likely it is that certain elements will be perceived as more important. In relation to the importance of tidiness, garden owners receiving fewer than 2,000 visitors per year seem to be less concerned about the condition of the garden as part of the visitor experience. The level of tidiness is presumably linked with a 'lived-in' feel of the garden, which many visitors find appealing (see Chapter 3). Tidiness appears to be a more important factor for gardens with higher visitor figures, particularly between 50,001 and 100,000. In these gardens, there may be a higher expectation of neatness from the owner and visitor perspective. Gardens with visitor numbers over 10,001 appear to be more concerned about visitor well-being in relation to crime. Gardens with visitor figures up to 10,000 are less concerned than statistically expected about crime.

Gardens receiving over 10,001 visitors per year perceive a tea-room and a shop/nursery to be important facets of the garden in relation to visitor enjoyment. In the same way, the visitor number association also applies to holding a range of events, stocking foreign language leaflets and providing a sufficiently sized car-park.

Gardens receiving fewer than 10,000 visitors per year show a significantly lower than expected figure in each case and gardens attracting in excess of 10,000 visitors show a higher than expected number of responses to the above points.

5.5.4 Cross-tabulation Between Status of Respondents and Importance of Elements of the Visitor Experience

The final variable examined in relation to the importance of elements of the visitor experience was status of the respondents, that is, whether the respondent was the owner or was employed to manage the garden. Significant relationships were found with tidiness, safety from crime, friendliness of staff, helpfulness of staff, nursery/shop, events, leaflets and car-park variables.

The analysis indicates that owners consider tidiness, safety from crime, friendliness and helpfulness of staff, nursery/shop, range of events, foreign language leaflets and a sufficiently sized car-park to be less important than employees. The results gained are not entirely surprising as many resident-operated gardens are small, private gardens, which do not warrant a range of visitor services. In addition, safety from crime is less of an issue in a garden which receives few visitors and where the owner greets all visitors and where visitors can be easily observed within the garden. However, the supposition that employed managers have a better understanding of the visitor experience and the elements of which it is composed could be justified from these results. Further research in Chapter 6 on differences between owners and managers allows further insights to be made.

5.6 Multivariate Analysis of Survey Results

In the previous section, descriptive statistics were presented using simple frequencies and some cross-tabulations. However, within statistical analysis of data generated from survey research, a range of multivariate techniques are commonly used to explore the complexities of the data set and the likely statistical relationships that

exist. In this section, a more in-depth analysis of the data relating to the visitor experience is presented. The most appropriate method of analysis was deemed to be a factor approach, a method of defining groupings in the data. Factor analysis identifies a hidden structure in a data set, comprising a number of statistically independent factors or variables (Hair, *et al.*, 1998; Smith, 1989). The factors are weighted averages of the original variables. They are designed to explain as much of the variation as possible using principal components analysis, while being easy to interpret and independent of each other through the use of varimax rotation.

Factor analysis of the importance of elements of the visitor experience identifies five factors which explain 62.08% of the variance. However, the five factors are skewed to three factors and do not provide a balanced consideration of the data. While a three factor solution only explains 47.87% of the variance, it provides improved ease of interpretation and thus the following three factors have been identified from the analysis:

1. **Importance of services** – explains 26.26% of the variance and includes the importance of the tea-room, shop/nursery, events, car-park, foreign language leaflets and plant labels.
2. **Importance of ambience** – accounts for 13.38% of the variance and includes the weather conditions, pleasurability of strolling, staff friendliness and helpfulness and reasonable entry charge.
3. **Importance of environment** – accounts for a further 8.23% of the variance and includes tidiness and setting of the garden, safety from crime and ease of access.

Factor analysis was also applied to the additional elements of the visitor experience, explored in the extent of agreement and disagreement with a range of statements. This analysis suggests three factors, explaining 46.75% of the variance. The factors are:

1. **Visitor welcome** – accounts for 22.84% of the variance and includes items related to the visitor welcome, accessibility, welcoming of children, opening at convenient times, as well as ensuring that there is something to see in the garden and a general concern that visitors leave happy;
2. **Services** – explains 13.81% of the variance and includes the importance of making visits made for shop/nursery and tea-room as well as garden;
3. **Information** – accounts for 10.1% of the variance and relates to provision of information and setting out of routes in the garden.

The factor analysis in both cases enables a clearer view of the elements of the visitor experience to be formulated as the results assist in reducing the visitor experience to its component parts. The factor analysis relating to the importance of elements of the visitor experience suggests three key factors in the determination of the visitor experience, which are broadly termed: services, ambience and comfort. The second factor analysis suggests three factors: visitor welcome, services and information. The findings from the two factor analyses are comparable in terms of the labels attributed to each set of variables. Thus, the significant features of the visitor experience in relation to the style of management of gardens are based around the services provided for visitors (physical elements), the treatment of visitors (social elements), the

ambience of the garden (environmental elements) and the information provided (educative elements).

5.7 Factors Influencing Visitor Enjoyment of Gardens

Respondents were asked to state what they felt was the most important factor in ensuring that visitors enjoyed their visit. As the question was an open type, a true representation of what respondents consider important has been elicited. The most cited factors included the weather (22.2%), the visitor welcome (20.7%) and the quality of the garden (including colour, plants) at 18.2%. This question allowed a clear picture of the significant elements to be built up, the results of which could be used to construct a comparable question in the visitor survey. Table 5.20 displays the responses to the question, which have been collapsed into similar categories for ease of interpretation.

Table 5.20 Most Important Factor in Ensuring Visitors Enjoy Visit

	Frequency	Valid Percent of respondents
Weather conditions	121	22.2
Welcome	113	20.7
Quality/standard of garden	99	18.2
Interest	38	7.0
Helpful/friendly staff/owner	33	6.1
Peaceful and relaxing	32	5.9
Personal approach	27	5.0
Setting	15	2.8
Value for money	8	1.5
Provide information	7	1.3
Good teas/café	6	1.1
Visitors able to relate to own garden	6	1.1
Freedom to wander	5	0.9
Plant sales	4	0.7
Other	31	5.7
Total	545	
Missing cases	48	

5.8 Issues for the Future Management of Gardens

Garden owners were asked to identify the most important issue in the future management of the garden in relation to visitors. Maintaining high standards accounted for the largest number of answers (18.4%), followed by developing and improving the garden (14.1%) and finance limitations (11.7%) (see Table 5.21).

Mintel (2002) state that attractions need to renew to attract repeat visitation and that younger and more affluent ABC1 visitors expect development and change (of particular relevance to gardens in Scotland, which attract a wider age profile). Accordingly, it is encouraging to see that substantive numbers of respondent recognise the need to develop their garden and add new features.

For just over 10% of gardens, increasing age and failing health was viewed as the most significant factor. Age and health factors mostly affect private gardens, which are often run directly by an ageing owner. In these instances, solutions to overcome the problems associated with passing on the garden to an heir are often considered. Trusts are one way of ensuring the future survival of a garden, such as a private trust (for example, the Trebah Garden Trust) or organisations such as the National Trust. However, the National Trust is unlikely to accept a garden without a significant endowment, which will provide financial support for maintenance and running costs.

In terms of the geographic variations in concerns, four issues are of particular note. Age/health issues appear to be a particular concern in the South-West, possibly explained by the apparent number of older private garden owners in the region. Maintaining high standards has been highlighted by garden owners in the South-East, perhaps explained by the increasing pressure of competition from other attractions

and leisure pursuits or the increasing sophistication of consumers in the South-East of England.

Table 5.21 Issues for the Future Management of Gardens as Visitor Attractions

Issue	Frequency	Valid Percent of Respondents
Maintaining high standards	96	18.4
Developing and improving	74	14.1
Finance	61	11.7
Age/health	55	10.5
Attracting visitors	51	9.8
Reducing opening	38	7.3
Promotion of garden	30	5.7
Competition from other attractions	22	4.2
Adding new features	22	4.2
Employing good staff	17	3.3
Attracting visitors to the area	9	1.7
Other	48	9.2
Total	523	
Missing cases	70	

The need to retain privacy/reduce opening times has been conveyed by some gardens in the South, with similar pressure on private gardens unable to cope with visitor numbers and unhappy about garden expansion or enhancement. For Scotland, concerns are of a more structural nature, relating to attracting visitors to the country let alone attracting visitors to gardens. The future financing of gardens has been highlighted as a specific concern by garden owners in Scotland (see Chapter 7 for more discussion on geographic variations).

5.9 The Role of External Agencies in the Management of Gardens

It has already been recognised that, in addition to private individuals, a range of organisations own and/or manage some of Britain's gardens that are open to the public. Most notably, the National Trust is a key corporate player involved in garden

management. There are two National Trusts in Great Britain: the National Trust for England and Wales (NT); and the National Trust for Scotland (NTS). These organisations are administered, funded and organised separately and are not the same entity. Thus, immediate questions that arise are whether there are differences between the garden management styles of National Trust and non-National Trust owners and whether there are differences in approach between the Scottish Trust and its counterpart in England and Wales. These questions will be addressed below.

The care and presentation of National Trust (NT and NTS) properties is commonly perceived as portraying a unified style, influencing such aspects as a designated opening season, provision of a tea-shop and car park, and corporate advertising. Whether this assumption is entirely justified, however, is somewhat open to debate. Each garden property is different and, as the National Trust for England and Wales itself states, they comprise “the most diverse group of private gardens in the world” (National Trust Estates Garden Section, 1996). As such, each garden has unique qualities, and their management and presentation, while underpinned by the core values of the Trust, depends mostly on the local team of custodians and employees. Accordingly, a range of services may be found in National Trust gardens that reflect the particular nature and scale of each garden, and take into account its own record of visitor numbers and visitor expectations.

Similar to other private gardens, this research has shown that service provision in some National Trust gardens is actually rather limited (for example, one toilet and a small muddy car park), while in others, the most highly developed services may have been established (such as multiple retail outlets, a licensed restaurant and other

extensive facilities). In other words, it is not really possible to identify a separate group of 'corporately owned' gardens and to distinguish these from all the 'privately owned' gardens that are open to the visiting public. Enhanced service provision and advanced levels of professional management are not simply determined by corporate ownership as many privately owned commercial gardens offer similar services and exhibit comparable professionalism. Instead, it may be argued that the sophistication of the services on offer, irrespective of ownership, represents a response to the needs of the visiting public, the wishes of the donor and the characteristics of the site.

Turning now to examine the possible role of corporate management in relation to the presentation and management of the physical characteristics of the garden (as opposed to the facilities on site), it may be noted that, irrespective of the character of ownership (corporate or private), most gardens have a long-term plan that guides development. Such plans take into account the personal, cultural and environmental influences on the development of the garden, as well as its contemporary qualities and content. One example where the NT recognises that plans are needed to retain the historic values of a garden are those created by Gertrude Jekyll. Some of Jekyll's original garden designs are accurately maintained, such as the White Garden at Barrington Court, Somerset. In other gardens, however, where there is little historic or design precedent, but where the garden has been taken on by the Trust for other reasons, the garden plan may be allowed to evolve more naturally. For example, in Malleny Garden, Edinburgh, the Head Gardener is given freedom to decide what to plant and has recently developed a vegetable garden and a wildlife area. In this garden, the role and input of the NTS is minimal and the Head Gardener is able to

direct the garden in the way he sees as appropriate (Deacon, 2001, personal communication).

Although rather more research is needed, it is suggested that NTS gardens may in fact be managed in a less bureaucratic manner than those owned by the NT, most probably explained by the more limited resources of the Scottish organisation. In exploring the question of the role of the corporate management of gardens, a future extension of this project might be to compare in detail the approaches of garden-owning organisations both in the UK and elsewhere. Notwithstanding the need for further study, it is argued here that Head Gardeners are generally left with some degree of autonomy in the management and presentation of the garden. National Trust policy in both Scotland and England and Wales is that gardens are managed locally and run by small groups, including the Property Manager (Head Gardener), gardeners and a Regional Trust advisor, who can bring specialist knowledge and advice to the garden. However, the role of the advisor is not incorporated on a day-to-day basis and may be limited to an annual visit (Deacon, 2001, personal communication). Garden staff are encouraged to identify opportunities for the garden and to seek funding within the Trust and from outside bodies for new projects. Accordingly, the skills and abilities of Head Gardeners are recognised, reflecting their role as professional managers of visitors and gardens, with their own view as to what features and factors will affect visitor satisfaction and appreciation of the garden environment.

While it should be acknowledged that there is scope for further research on the role of corporate owners of gardens in their management, it is contended here that different ownerships do not have a significant effect on visitor management. There was no indication from the response to the owner survey that the Trust exercised rigid or

absolute control over the shaping of the visitor experience. Indeed, a high degree of freedom in the management of some National Trust gardens was apparent. It was evident that National Trust owner/manager responses were not distinctly different from the responses of other types of owner/manager. Thus, the objectives of the survey reported in this chapter are more firmly focused on the perceptions and opinions of those managing the experience 'on the ground', whose daily remit incorporates the handling of visitors, as opposed to more 'institutional' influences.

5.10 Summary

This chapter has detailed the results obtained from a survey of garden owners in Great Britain. A substantive amount of information has been presented with regard to the context of opening gardens to the public and it appears that on the whole gardens have not developed as a commercial form of enterprise and that the private owner is a dominant force in the sector. For many garden owners, developing visitor services has resulted from recognition of visitor needs in the context of an increasing sophistication of the leisure market. There does appear to be a reasonable understanding of the visitor derived from personal observation and instinct as opposed to objective surveying of visitors. How apposite these reflections are will be revealed by a visitor survey, reported in the ensuing chapter. In addition, this chapter has raised some important issues with regard to the management of gardens for visitors and has highlighted a range of aspects which will influence future management strategy in relation to visitation. While the next chapter undertakes a similar analysis in relation to garden visitors, themes arising from both the supply (garden owner/manager) and demand (garden visitor) analyses are further developed in Chapter 6.

Chapter 6 The Garden Visitor Experience - Demand Perspectives

6.0 Introduction – Understanding Demand Issues

In Chapter 5, the perception and experiences of garden owners were reviewed to provide a basis for establishing the issues and problems associated with the garden as a visitor attraction. In this chapter, the relationships explored in Chapter 5 are developed in relation to the visitor's perspective. In contrast to Chapter 5, the focus of the chapter is on the outcome of a national survey of garden *visitors*, undertaken in the summer of 2001. The research background and methodology, and the results obtained are examined using univariate, bivariate and multivariate methods; and emergent themes are highlighted and discussed in the last part of the chapter. Central to this chapter is the recognition of relevant literature and conceptual understanding of the context of the research. Chapter 3 provided an overview of the demand perspective in terms of gardens as a product. The results of the garden visitor survey reported in this Chapter allow an exploration of the nature of demand and consumption in relation to garden visiting, which are fundamental to an appreciation of the visitor perspective.

Demand is the basis upon which researchers conceptualise how visitors choose and pursue a range of opportunities in leisure time. Thus, a consideration of demand in relation to garden visiting can assist in understanding motivation, needs and experiences, as well as being a useful indicator of changing trends. Hall and Page (2002: 60) state that, "an understanding of tourism demand is a starting point for the analysis of why tourism develops, who patronises specific destinations and what appeals to the client

market". Quite simply, as Song and Witt (2000: 1) argue, "tourism demand is the foundation on which all tourism-related business decisions ultimately rest". Demand is a significant concept in this thesis as the basis for examining the visitor experience and the elements that form the most and least desired features of a visit. Consumption, too, is a concept that requires some recognition, and in particular, the visual consumption of place is a relevant theme in relation to garden visiting as it describes the nature of a garden visit. Urry's (1990) notion of the 'tourist gaze' (see Chapter 3) provides a useful framework for understanding the way in which gardens are experiential in nature and the gaze idea is used to formulate some theoretical notions about garden visiting which are then considered in the themes generated by the survey research.

While, as Pearce (1995) notes, geographers have not been at the forefront of demand related research, Smith (1995) states that recreational geographers observe demand at four different levels, including the amount of products that will be consumed at various prices, actual levels of recreation participation, unsatisfied component of recreation participation and the desire for a psychological experience. The study of actual levels or current consumption has tended to dominate geographical perspectives on recreation demand (see, for example, Patmore, 1983), with an emphasis on spatial and temporal site-specific research, while social psychology, economics and related disciplines have been more concerned with behavioural aspects (Hall and Page, 2002). In addition, studies of tourism demand are often characterised by an interdisciplinary research approach, reliant on theoretical underpinnings from sociology and psychology (Shaw, Agarwal and Bull, 2000). This thesis aims to link the two themes of current

consumption and behavioural aspects of leisure demand (and supply) in order to provide a clear understanding of the phenomenon of garden visiting.

Hall and Page (2002: 61) note that “the factors which shape the tourist decision-making process to select and participate in specific forms of tourism is largely within the field of consumer behaviour and motivation”. Argyle (1996) acknowledges the significance of gender, age, social class, retirement, unemployment, social relationships, personality and socialization in affecting leisure behaviour. While intrinsic factors are of significance, extrinsic factors, such as marketing, societal norms and pressures, knowledge, information and images of destinations have a role to play in influencing leisure choice. Models of tourist motivation, such as Crandall’s list of motivations (1980), Kabanoff’s list of leisure needs (1982), Krippendorf’s travel motivators (1987), Dann’s conceptualisation of travel motivation (1981), Pearce’s travel career ladder and a plethora of tourist typologies from 1970s and 1980s, such as the work by Cohen (1972, 1979), along with demand models, such as Uysal’s (1998) model of tourism demand, explore the effect of a range of diverse influences. Essentially, leisure demand results from a variety of social, economic, demographic and psychological factors peculiar to the individual (Argyle, 1996; Ryan, 1997; Hall and Page, 2002). Consideration of the motivations for garden visiting must be placed within the framework for understanding leisure motives in order to reflect previous research and current knowledge. Accordingly, the study of garden visitors must incorporate levels of use (current consumption), motivations, needs and experiences in order to inform the literature on recreation demand.

6.1 National Survey of Garden Visitors

It was noted in Chapter 5 that the scope of this thesis encompasses a broad understanding of the experience of garden visiting at a national level and a need to undertake a base-line survey to establish the context of garden visiting was identified. A substantive data collection process would provide a basis from which to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of gardens in a recreational context. Thus, the second survey undertaken centred on the garden visitor as the respondent. A more refined set of objectives were drawn up to assist in the design of the survey. The overall aim of the survey was to evaluate the characteristics of garden visits, while the objectives were to:

- establish visit and visitor characteristics;
- identify the most valued aspects of visiting gardens;
- determine the factors affecting the visitor experience.

In addition, an overriding objective was to be able to draw comparisons with the findings of the survey of garden owners and managers in order to identify similarities and differences in perceptions and needs, as a basis for providing a more holistic understanding of garden visitation and management, especially with regard to the visitor experience.

6.2 Methodology

The methodological justification for the approach to research at this stage is similar to that of the survey of garden owners/managers, reported in Chapter 5 (section 5.2). It is

essential to note that because one of the requirements for the survey results was to compare findings with the garden owner/manager survey, the research design for the visitor survey needed to reflect the former. More precisely, the same questions would be required to justify comparisons and provide meaningful commentary on the supply and demand perspectives. Consequently, drawing up the research method for the visitor survey bore close resemblance to that of the garden owner/manager survey. It was recognised that “tourism experiences may be particularly prone to customers overrating their experiences” due to the inherent element of pleasure associated with tourism (Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1995: 766). However, the self-completion format may encourage visitors to provide more representative answers as they have time to reflect on experiences.

6.2.1 Research Method

In tandem with the owner/manager survey, the garden visitor research was undertaken by means of a questionnaire survey. Deciding the specific method of contacting visitors was problematic for several reasons. First, a substantial sample population of garden visitors was required in order to be representative of the overall population of garden visitors and to provide sufficient data for statistical analysis. Second, the sample population would need to be specifically targeted as finding garden visitors among a general population could pose difficulties. Third, a wide geographic area would be required in order to provide a sufficiently dispersed spatial representation of gardens throughout Great Britain. Fourth, a range of gardens would need to be used in the survey in order to detect

similarities and differences in types of garden visitor. Finally, resource implications needed to be taken into consideration.

With these aspects to the fore, the most appropriate method of data collection was the use of a self-completion questionnaire survey of garden visitors, which would take place in a number of gardens across Great Britain. Self-completion was the only cost effective method of surveying a disparate population while obtaining a sufficiently dispersed geographic spread of data. While face-to-face interviewing may often appear to be the best method of surveying, in this instance the impracticability of placing an interviewer in several gardens outweighed the advantages. The generic advantages and disadvantages of self-completion questionnaires were outlined in Chapter 5. In addition, respondents at recreation sites are often more amenable to assist with surveys than in other environments as they tend to be more relaxed, and willing to convey positive and negative experiences on site (TRRU, 1983).

Recognising the limitations of response rates to self-complete questionnaires, several steps were taken to encourage more positive reaction to the survey. A covering letter, printed on University of Stirling headed paper, was attached to the front of the questionnaire explaining the purpose of the survey and how respondents were being selected. Confidentiality was assured and it was emphasised that the survey was for academic, not commercial, purposes. Respondents were asked to return completed questionnaires to the garden owner before departure. The covering letter is included in

Appendix 4. In addition, respondents were given the opportunity to take part in a prize draw if they completed a questionnaire, with the prize being a box of chocolates.

6.2.2 Survey Design

A series of questions were drawn up in line with the objectives of the survey. The survey design incorporated a range of question types and styles. The questionnaire is included in Appendix 4. For ease of completion and to ensure that data was collected as effectively as possible, most questions were of the closed type, with tick box answers. Respondents were given clear instructions on how to respond. In order to gain comparative data with the owner/manager survey, the same five-point Likert scales were used to identify responses to the same areas, namely the importance of specific elements in determining the visitor experience in gardens generally and the extent of agreement or disagreement with a range of statements relating to garden visiting. Several open questions were asked in relation to the respondent's visit to a garden on the day of the survey. It was deemed appropriate to use an open approach as different gardens may have produced very different responses and a closed approach may not be adequate in allowing the researcher to interpret the findings. In addition, more open answers would be useful in giving feedback to the garden owners and managers who would be assisting in the research process.

The format of the questionnaire was arranged using four sections:

Section 1 You as a Garden Visitor

This section comprised a series of questions about the respondent of a general nature, which would ease the individual into the questionnaire and not appear to be too intrusive or difficult to answer. Respondents were asked about the regularity of visit-making to gardens, about the other types of attractions they visited, whether they were a garden owner, and at what age they had become interested in garden visiting. Respondents were also asked to select one description from three options as to the type of garden visitor that they considered themselves to be. This question would have direct comparability with the owner/manager survey.

Section 2 Facilities in the Garden

The list of facilities listed in the owner/manager survey was utilised in a question in this section, where respondents were asked to state whether a facility was 'very important', 'important' or 'not important'. Activities undertaken on garden visits were asked about and a question on whether the respondent had ever visited a garden just to use the shop or refreshment facility was included. Motivation for garden visiting was established by means of a Likert scale using a series of statements where respondents indicated the extent of agreement with reasons for visits. Similarly, in line with the owner/manager survey, visitors were presented with a question on the marketing of gardens and which methods they had used to gain information about gardens to visit.

Section 3 Your Visit Today

This section related specifically to the visit made by the respondent to a garden on the day of the survey. Questions were designed to elicit the following information: repeat visitation, reasons for visit, mode of travel, where their journey had started from that day, whether the trip was made from home or a holiday location, where the respondent had first heard about that garden, who the respondent was visiting with, how much time they had spent at the garden, what they had liked most, what they had liked least about the garden and whether they had any suggestions to improve the garden.

Section 4 What Affects your Enjoyment of Gardens?

The main focus of this section was a repetition of the two sets of Likert scales which were first used in the owner/manager survey. Respondents were asked to respond in terms of referring to gardens generally, rather than the one visited that day. The key idea underpinning the use of the Likert scales in both surveys was to compare and contrast the perceptions of garden owners/managers and garden visitors. A discussion of the comparisons made is presented in Chapter 7. Respondents were also asked to indicate the three most important factors influencing enjoyment of gardens from a set list of 13 factors, established from the survey of garden owners and managers (the factors were elicited from the question asking owners/managers to identify the three most important factors in determining visitor enjoyment of their garden). Finally, at the end of this section, three personal questions were asked, ascertaining gender, age group and occupation of the chief income earner in the respondent's household. Personal questions were included at the end of the questionnaire in line with advice which suggests that any

offence caused by such questioning will have less impact on the completion of the questionnaire at this stage (TRRU, 1983). Thus, at the very least, respondents not wishing to give personal details may still complete the questionnaire, leaving the final section blank. Additionally, it is hoped that respondent interest in the questionnaire topic may lead to completion of all questions.

6.2.3 Selecting the Sample

The survey of garden owners and managers reported in Chapter 5 included the opportunity for respondents to take part in further research, which would take the form of a visitor survey in their garden. The request for assistance in this way would then lead to the construction of a sampling framework for the visitor survey. The approach to the research design at this stage comprised collating positive responses, drawing up a sampling framework, selecting a quota and finalising the sample. It was decided to aim for the distribution of 1, 500 visitor survey questionnaires, the response from which would provide a sufficient number for data analysis.

Out of the 593 survey responses in the garden owners survey, nearly 100 positive replies were returned in relation to helping with further work. However, offers of assistance (many of which were written at the end of the questionnaire form or in an accompanying letter) were of varying magnitude and, in reality, some of the garden owners did not anticipate being asked to assist a lengthy visitor survey. Consequently, gardens willing to participate in visitor survey work needed to be identified and, in addition, a sampling frame was required to select a practicable number of gardens to be involved. The aim of

the sampling procedure was to gain the assistance of gardens which represented the typology in an approximate way, thus, obtaining responses from different types of garden. The sampling process was not intended to be too prescriptive, but acknowledging that it would be beneficial to include survey results from a range of garden types.

The sampling frame was constructed using a framework for the selection of gardens representing certain types, levels of visitation, levels of visitor services and geographic location, derived from the scoping exercise and based around the typology of gardens presented in Chapter 4. The factors used to construct the sampling framework included: range of facilities (wide range or few, ascertained from response to a question about facilities in the owner questionnaire, on provision of car park, toilets, tea room, shop, events, play area, plant sales, guide book, guided walks); catering facility (restaurant, light meals, teas or no facility); visitor numbers per annum (<2,000, 2-10,000, 10-25,000, 25-50,000, 50-100,000); trend in visitor numbers (increasing, decreasing or staying the same), visitor age profile (all ages, 60+ mainly, 40+ mainly); year of opening; opening schedule throughout year (few days, seasonal, all year round); admission charge; and whether the garden is run by a manager or the owner. From these variables, the typology including elementary, enhanced, established and exploited gardens was applied to give further depth to the findings. Table 6.1 shows the range of variables used to select gardens.

Gardens were also selected according to broad geographic location. The aim of surveying in gardens in different geographic locations was to ensure that data was not limited in scope by visits in one geographic area, which may not be representative of all garden visits. Selection of geographic area was based on the percentages of gardens in England (80%), Scotland (15%) and Wales (5%) ascertained from the original population of gardens in the owner/manager survey.

A selection of 40 appropriate gardens was made using a sampling frame, with the aim of achieving a final sample of approximately 15 gardens. The 40 garden owners and managers were contacted by letter, thanking them for returning a completed survey form and for kindly agreeing to consider taking part in further research. The next stage of the research was outlined and garden owners and managers were asked if they would be willing to take part. As a small incentive, those who agreed to take part would be entered in a prize draw to win a box of chocolates and, more valuably, would be presented with the survey results for their garden. Out of the 40 gardens selected, 15 owners and managers agreed to assist in the research. However, two decided against participating at a late stage, and consequently the final number of gardens taking part was 13. Eight gardens were located in England, four in Scotland and one in Wales, a slightly skewed version of the percentages of gardens in each region but broadly acceptable. The locations of the participating gardens are illustrated in Figure 6.1 and a summary of their characteristics is provided in Table 6.1. A more in-depth description of the survey gardens and some illustrations can be found in Appendix 5.

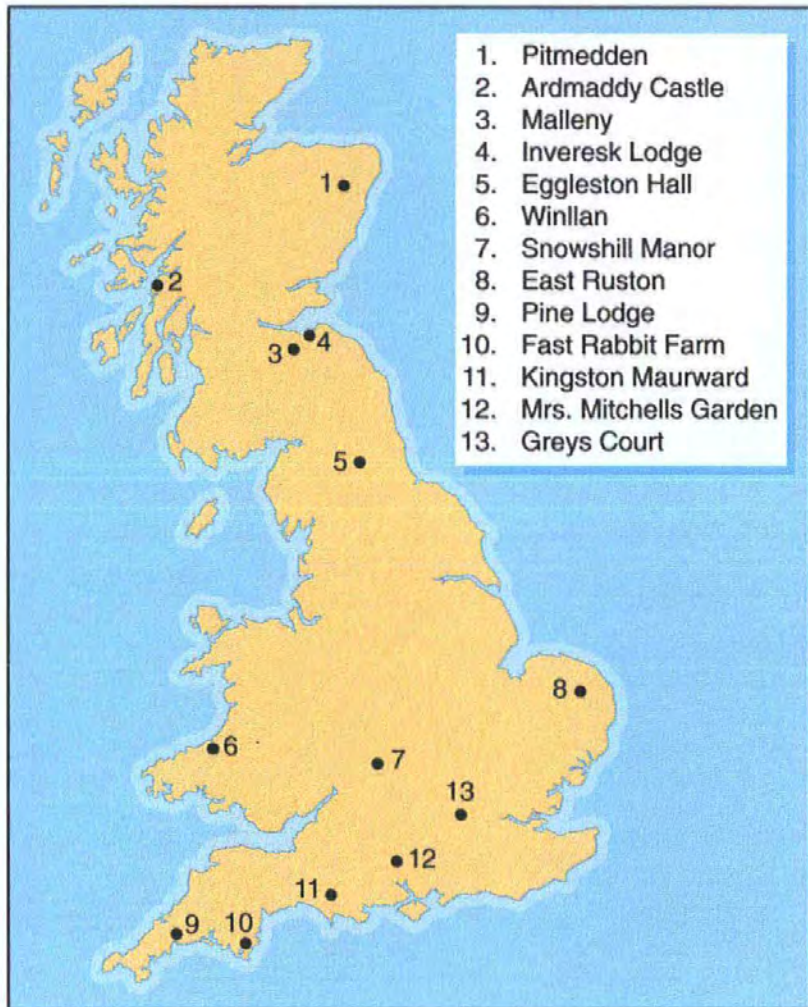


Figure 6.1 Location of Participating Survey Gardens

Table 6.1 Framework for Selecting Sample Gardens and Characteristics of Participating Gardens

NAME	TYPE	DESCRIPTION	NOTED FOR	FACILITIES	CATERING	VISITOR NOS	TREND	AGE PROFILE	OPENED	OPEN	CHARGE	RUN
Pine Lodge Gardens	Established	Plantsmans	Unusual plants	Wide	Teas	10-25,000	Increase	60+	1985	Apr-Sep	£3	Owner
Eggleston Hall Gardens	Established	Plantsmans	Old buildings	Wide	Light meals	10-25,000	Increase	All ages	1984	AYR	£1	Owner
Snowhill Manor Garden	Exploited	Historic	Organic	Wide	Restaurant	50-100,000	Increase	All ages	1951	Mar-Nov	£3	Employed
Fast Rabbit Farm	Enhanced	Plantsmans	Farm/Nursery	Wide	Teas	2-10,000	Increase	All ages	1993	Few	£2.50	Owner
Mrs. Mitchells	Elementary	Plantsmans	Small	Few	None	<2,000	Increase	All ages	1995	Few	£1	Owner
Winllan	Elementary	Wildflower	Wildflowers	Few	None	<2,000	Decrease	40+	1980	May-Jun	£2	Owner
Kingston Maurward Gardens	Established	Historic	Period design	Wide	Restaurant	10-25,000	Increase	D/K	1990	AYR	£3.75	Employee
Grey's Court	Established	General interest	Wisteria	Wide	Teas	10-25,000	Same	40+	late 60s	Apr-Sep	£4.60 (h/g)	Employee
East Ruston Old Vicarage	Established	Sub-tropical	Diversity	Wide	Teas	10-25,000	Increase	All ages	1995	Apr-Oct	£3.50	Owner
Inveresk Gardens	Enhanced	Plantsmans		Few	None	<2,000	D/K	All ages	1961	AYR	£2	Employee
Malleny Garden	Enhanced	General interest	Yew trees	Few	None	2-10,000	Increase	All ages	1969	AYR	£2	Employee
Pitmedden Garden	Established	Historic	Recreation	Wide	Teas	10-25,000	D/K	40+	1956	May-Sep	£4	Employee
Ardmaddy Castle	Elementary	Historic	Setting	Few	None	2-10,000	Increase	40+	1985	AYR	£2	Owner

Garden owners and managers who agreed to take part were sent a package of 100 questionnaires, a pack of pencils and a set of instructions, outlining the research methodology and logistics of executing the visitor survey. Those administering the survey were asked to use a random method of sampling visitors and to distribute questionnaires equally at weekends and weekdays. Although it was impossible to undertake on-site monitoring of the administration of the survey apart from in one garden, telephone calls and emails with garden owners assisted in the process of checking that the survey was implemented in the correct way. Garden owners were keen to complete the survey in an appropriate manner and asked questions if they were unsure of any aspect. It is accepted that limitations exist in this style of research, but such flaws were deemed acceptable in the light of the volume of data collected.

While four of the gardens in the sample were owned by either the National Trust/National Trust for Scotland, there were no significant concerns about skewing the results. The lack of a “corporate style” of visitor management within the National Trust as outlined in Section 5.9 means that there is substantial diversity of approach in the presentation and care of its gardens. Consequently, the garden management of the National Trust exhibits more similarities than differences with the approaches of private garden owners. The National Trust does not represent a separate or distinct genre of garden visitor management.

6.3 Survey Outcome

The questionnaires were distributed in the first two weeks of June 2001 and garden owners/managers were asked to return all completed forms by the end of July 2001. Therefore, the survey period was determined to be six weeks. Some 1,200

questionnaires were distributed in the 13 gardens taking part in the survey. A total of 546 questionnaires were returned, yielding an overall response rate of 45.5%. Some gardens provided more responses than others. Gardens returning the most responses included East Ruston Old Vicarage Garden (119 responses), Malleny Garden (94 responses) and Pitmedden Garden (82 responses). Two gardens returned a minimal number of questionnaires, these being Fast Rabbit Farm (4 responses) and Inveresk Lodge Garden (8 responses). Despite the low response rate in these two gardens, the questionnaires were still used in the main data coding exercise, but the gardens could not be used in any meaningful way for cross-tabulation purposes other than to explain particular anomalies at each site, if appropriate. Response rates are indicated in Table 6.2. The questionnaire forms were coded and inputted into SPSS version 10. A similar approach was taken to the owner/manager survey in relation to analysis, with univariate, bivariate and multivariate method employed. The results are reported in the remainder of this chapter.

Table 6.2 Number of Survey Responses from Participating Gardens

Garden	Frequency	Valid Percent of Gardens
Pine Lodge	47	8.6
Eggleston Hall	23	4.2
Snowhill	12	2.2
Fast Rabbit	4	0.7
Mrs. Mitchell's	17	3.1
Winllan	20	3.7
Kingston Maurward	11	2.0
Greys Court	51	9.3
East Ruston	119	21.8
Inveresk Lodge	8	1.5
Malleny	94	17.2
Pitmeddon	82	15.0
Ardmaddy	58	10.6
Total	546	100.0

6.4 Analysis of Survey Results

In order to establish the basic findings of the research, frequencies and percentages were run initially. Following this, a series of cross-tabulations and chi-squared Likelihood Ratio tests of association were run. The description and analysis of results comprises a discussion of the characteristics of garden visitors and moves later to an analysis of the visitor experience.

6.4.1 Social Characteristics of Garden Visitors

In terms of demographics, 36.2% of visitors were above the age of 60, and 48.4% were between 40 and 60 years of age (see Table 6.3). This pattern appears to confirm traditional analyses of garden visitors as being more mature.

Table 6.3 Age of Visitors

Age range	Frequency	Valid Percent of Visitors
More than 60	195	36.2
40-60	261	48.4
18-39	78	14.5
Less than 18	5	0.9
Total	539	
Missing cases	7	

Cross-tabulation between age and distance travelled to the garden appears to suggest that those over 60 are more likely to travel further to a garden than other age groups. However, while there appears to be a significant relationship, there is no statistical association between these variables. Market research conducted by tourism organisations indicates a broad spread of target markets for garden tourism, although the major concentration is with the 50 plus age group (Scottish Tourist Board, 2000;

British Tourist Authority, 2000; Cornwall County Council, 2000). The results from the study of garden visitors appears to concur with the findings of tourism organisations.

A significant association is yielded by a cross-tabulation between age of respondent and geographic location of survey garden visited. The result indicates a difference between gardens in Scotland and those in Southern England, Northern England and Wales. Visitors to gardens in Scotland show a much younger age profile, with 20% of visitors in the age group 18-39, compared with 11% in Southern England. Fewer than expected visitors to gardens in Scotland were over the age of 60, but the converse is true in England and Wales. Similarly, there were more than expected numbers of visitors aged 18-39 in Scotland but in England and Wales, the situation was reversed.

Some 65.6% of questionnaires were completed by females, although as gender was not identified as a means of achieving a representative sample, it may not be a reliable measure in this instance. In relation to classifying respondents according to social class criteria, using occupational classification as set down by the Market Research Society (1992) allowed determination of broad social groupings. Of the total proportion of respondents, 49.3% were classed as social group B, with 80.2% of respondents in groups A, B and C1 (see Table 6.4). This result highlights that garden visitors tend to be characterised by those in the professional and white collar occupational groups. In comparison with statistics for the UK population (see Table 6.4), it is clear that garden visitors over-represent social groupings A-C1, and under-represent social groupings C2-E.

Table 6.4 Occupational Groupings of Respondents in Comparison with UK Population

Social Group	Frequency	Valid Percent of Visitors	Percent of UK Population (MRS, 1992:8-9)
A	41	8.6	3.0
B	234	49.3	14.0
C1	106	22.3	26.0
C2	73	15.4	25.0
D	19	4.0	19.0
E	2	0.4	13.0

Cross-tabulation reveals that a higher than expected number of respondents over the age of 60 were classed as group A. A higher number of 18-39 year olds were classed in group B, but lower than expected numbers of this age group were found in C1 and C2 groups. Conversely, higher than expected figures for C1 and C2 were found in the over 60 group, and for C2 in the group 40-60 years.

Cross-tabulation of social class with distance travelled to the garden revealed some important points. First, it appears that the number of visitors travelling less than 10 miles to a garden accounted for a greater number of C1, C2 and in particular, D and E occupational groupings. To give an example, 57.9% of those categorised as group D travelled less than 10 miles. This contrasts with group A, where only 19.5% of group A respondents had travelled less than 10 miles. A chi-squared test does not reveal a statistical association in this instance, but the pattern that emerges is intriguing. The results suggest that those in professional and managerial occupations are more likely to travel further to visit a garden and those in semi-and unskilled positions are more likely to travel a short distance. No significant association was found in relation to geographic area of garden and occupational grouping.

6.4.2 Frequency of Garden Visiting

The majority of visitors who completed questionnaires were frequent visitors to gardens, demonstrated by the number of respondents visiting at least once a month (47.1%) and those who visit a few times a year (47.7%). Only 5.2% of respondents visited gardens less than once a year (Table 6.5). These results might indicate the existence of a distinct population or market of garden visitors.

Table 6.5 Frequency of Visits

	Frequency	Valid Percent of Visitors
At least once a month	254	47.1
Once or twice a year	257	47.7
Less than once a year	28	5.2
Total	539	
Missing cases	7	

A small number of gardens attracted visitors who stated that they visited gardens less than once a year. Such gardens tended to be the larger, more well-promoted gardens, including Pitmedden Garden (12.2% of its visitors went to gardens less than once a year). An explanation for this pattern of visiting is provided by the apparent success of marketing such gardens in attracting less frequent garden visitors.

To gain further insights into the nature of the garden visitor, a series of questions were asked relating to the leisure habits of visitors in terms of visiting other types of attraction. It was found that 82.9% of garden visitors also visited historic houses while only 8.6% visited theme parks (see Table 6.6). This result gives some indication of the type of visitor who is attracted to gardens, showing a strong propensity to visit cultural and natural attractions, but not purpose-built theme parks with their associated characteristics of noise, amusement and adventure.

Table 6.6 Other Attractions Visited by Garden Visitors

	Frequency	Percent of Garden Visitors
Historic houses	452	82.9
Natural attractions	388	71.2
Museums and galleries	370	67.9
Wildlife sites	324	59.4
Theme parks	47	8.6

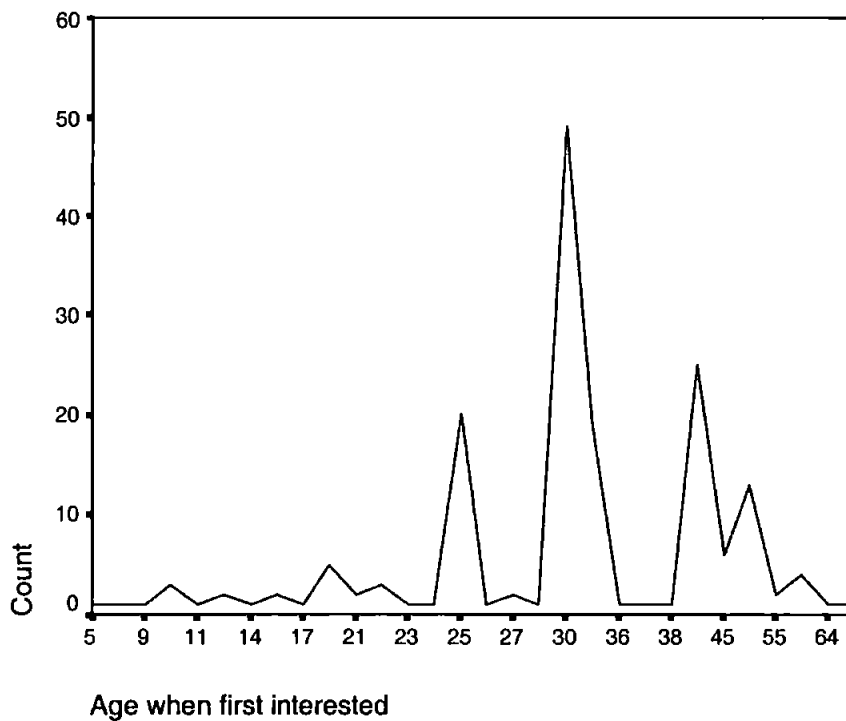
A question eliciting the day of the week when garden visits tended to be made found that 56.1% of visitors made visits on both weekdays and weekend days, while 20.3% of visits were made at weekends only. Thus, garden visiting is not an activity that takes place solely at weekends. The result also indicates that gardens attract a large number of people who are not necessarily at work, who may be on holiday or retired.

6.4.3 Development of Garden Visiting as an Interest

In order to find out whether garden visiting is an interest which develops at a certain point in an individual's life-cycle, visitors were asked whether they had always been interested in garden visiting. Some 69.9% of respondents confirmed that they had always been interested in gardens. Respondents who stated that they had not always been interested in garden visiting were asked to estimate at what age their interest had developed. Of the 30.1% of respondents who had not always been interested in garden visiting, a significant proportion became interested around the ages of 25-40 years. Several respondents commented that their interests arose as a result of owning their own garden for the first time. Only one respondent said that they did not have an interest in garden visiting at all. A small number of respondents (10.5%) became interested at or below the age of 20 and a similar number corresponds with reaching the age of 50 or more (see Figure 6.2). Thus, the most common age range where interest in gardens establishes is the young adult to middle years category, with a

mean of 32.97 years (standard deviation of 11.43), and most probably linked with changes in lifestyle, namely purchasing a house with a garden.

Figure 6.2 Age Respondent First Became Interested in Garden Visiting



Mintel (2000) state that similar to other leisure pursuits, gardening interest usually reaches full fruition among those who are retired and have the time necessary to cultivate the soil, propagate plants and grow their own edible produce. Garden visiting appears to follow a similar pattern, although there is substantive interest in the pre-retirement years.

To establish whether there is any association between garden ownership and propensity to visit gardens, respondents were asked to state whether they were a garden owner or not. It was found that the overwhelming majority of visitors (94.8%)

were garden owners suggesting that garden visiting is strongly linked with garden ownership. Examining the data for individual survey gardens, there is little variation between each of the gardens. Only Kingston Maurward stands out with 81.8% of visitors as garden owners, a lower figure than all of the other gardens. As Kingston Maurward contains substantial parkland, some difference may be accounted for with some visitors simply wishing to visit to enjoy the outdoor environment.

6.4.4 Profiling the Garden Visitor

Visitors were asked to choose one of three descriptions that best fitted their perception of themselves as garden visitors. Most visitors (69.9%) selected the description 'visitor with a general interest in gardening', while only 10.3% considered themselves to have a 'specialist horticultural interest'. The remainder (19.7%) were visitors 'seeking a pleasant day out'. Further exploration of this variable yielded some significant results. There is a statistical relationship at the 0.01 level between the type of visitor, in terms of the three descriptors, and the frequency of visits made to gardens. Those with a special horticultural interest exhibited a much higher than expected number of people who visited gardens at least once a month, with 69.8% of respondents in this category visiting at least once a month. However, those just seeking a pleasant day out showed a greater than expected number of respondents who visited a few times a year or less than once a year – overall at 69% of this category of visitor. Thus, those with a special horticultural interest are more likely to be frequent visitors to gardens. The same is also true, but to a lesser degree, for those with a general interest in gardening where 47.4% visit gardens at least once a month.

There is not a statistical association between social class and description of visitor although it does appear that groups A and B are more highly represented by those

with a special horticultural interest. In terms of age and visitor type, a statistical association at the 0.01 level was revealed. Those in the 18-39 years group appear to be more likely to be seeking a pleasant day out when visiting a garden. Special horticultural interests appear to be most represented in the age category 40-60 years. General gardening interests are more representative of the over 60 age group.

Cross-tabulation between description of visitor and geographic location of garden showed a preponderance of garden visitors in Scotland to be those just looking for a pleasant day out and there were fewer visitors with interest in gardening or specialised horticultural interests than statistically expected. Conversely, in Southern England, more visitors possessed special horticultural and general gardening interests than expected. The implication of this results appears to be that the gardens in Scotland were of appeal to tourists and day-trippers looking for a pleasant outdoor environment whereas in the South, more purposeful visits were embarked on to satisfy garden interest. Further cross-tabulation showed a higher proportion of holiday visitors to gardens in Scotland than in the South of England and a significant chi-squared value. In the South of England, 66% of garden visitors were day-trippers from their place of residence, compared with 46% in Scotland. Interestingly, there is a significant relationship between origin of visitor and main reason for visiting the survey garden. Briefly, it appears that more garden visits in Scotland are for casual reasons and those in the South of England are more purposive. This association is discussed in more detail in the section on reasons for visit.

6.4.5 Importance of Visitor Services

The relative importance of a number of additional features that might be found in garden attractions was ascertained in a series of questions. Visitors were asked to state whether they considered a feature to be 'very important', 'important' or 'not important'. The results are displayed in Table 6.7. The most significant service appears to be the provision of toilets, with 62.2% of respondents selecting 'very important' and a further 33.3% stating 'important'. Similarly, a car park was considered to be 'very important' by 63% and 'important' by 31.2%. Events were deemed to be unimportant in gardens (82.8% of respondents regarded events 'not important') and, likewise, children's areas (76.1%). It is clear that in terms of retailing aspects, a shop is relatively unimportant, but a plant sales area is more of a requirement for some visitors. This area is further developed later in the chapter when the factors affecting visitor enjoyment are explored.

Table 6.7 Relative Importance of Visitor Services in Gardens

Percent of visitors

	Very important	Important	Not important
Shop	7.2	31.1	61.7
Plant sales	25.0	50.2	24.8
Tea room	29.2	48.0	22.8
Toilets	62.2	33.3	4.4
Car park	63.0	31.2	5.8
Guide-book	8.2	47.2	44.7
Guided walks	3.6	27.9	68.5
Events	2.0	15.2	82.8
Children's area	6.4	17.5	76.1

It was deemed worthwhile to ask visitors whether a garden visit had ever been made solely to use a secondary or associated attraction, namely a shop or a tea-room.

Interestingly, only 18.5% of visitors had ever visited a garden for one of these purposes.

Cross-tabulation between importance of services and the geographic location of survey gardens yields significant associations. In relation to the importance of a shop, garden visitors in Scotland and Wales considered such a facility to be less important than those in the South of England. In contrast, garden visitors in Scotland, and to a lesser extent in Wales, considered plant sales areas to be of less importance than visitors to garden in the South of England. Presumably, this finding is explained by those on holiday not wishing to buy plants to the same degree as those on a day-trip from home. A tea-room, toilets, and car-park are less important to visitors to gardens in Scotland and Wales than visitors to gardens in England. An explanation for these finding might be that holiday visitors on a sightseeing trip may not plan a lengthy stop in a garden and thus may take tea and use toilets in another location. The lack of importance of a car-park does not yield any obvious explanations. Guide-books seems to be more important to visitors to gardens in the South of England than to any other region. Children's play areas more important to garden visitors in Scotland. The survey revealed that there were more visitors to gardens in Scotland in the age range 18-39 than in the other regions, which might explain a higher propensity to desire facilities for children. Indeed, further cross-tabulations shows that a much higher than expected number of garden visitors in Scotland were family groups with children under the age of 16, which confirms the analysis.

6.4.6 Visitor Behaviour in Gardens

Respondents were asked to state the types of activities undertaken on garden visits, other than viewing the garden (Table 6.8). The overriding pastime was sitting in the garden, with 74.7% of visitors selecting this option. Only small numbers of visitors engaged in more active forms of leisure during visits, such as painting (5.9%), although 51.5% of respondents took photographs and 48% took notes about plants. Correspondingly, garden visiting appears to be a relatively passive pursuit.

Table 6.8 Activities Undertaken during Garden Visits

Activity	Frequency	Percent of visitors undertaking activity
Photography	265	48.5
Nature study	205	37.5
Painting	32	5.9
Picnicking	167	30.6
Sitting	408	74.7
Chatting with others	271	49.6
Taking notes on garden/plants	262	48

6.4.7 Motivation for Garden Visiting

Reasons for visiting gardens were also explored. Using Likert scales, visitors were asked to rate which reasons explained their motivation for visiting gardens. The main reasons are summarised in Table 6.9. It is worth noting that 'visiting a nice environment' and 'visiting for tranquility' scored highly, with 53.2% and 51.3% of respondents respectively agreeing strongly. Visiting to pick up ideas for one's own garden also achieved a high score, which supports the findings of the question on visitor activity in gardens outlined in the section on visitor behaviour, which illustrated that 48% of visitors took notes on garden and plants.

Table 6.9 Reasons for Visiting Gardens*Percent of visitors*

Reason	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Tranquility	51.3	43.5	2.5	1.7	1.0
To enjoy horticulture	47.4	43.5	6.1	2.3	0.8
Somewhere to go	15.4	44.4	13.7	17.8	8.7
Nice environment	53.2	41.9	2.9	1.3	0.8
To be with others like me	8.4	23.4	25.2	23.6	19.5
Can visit with group	4.1	12.1	18.6	29.5	35.7
To get ideas for own garden	48.0	36.3	9.0	3.8	2.9

Generally, it seems that people predominantly visit gardens to enjoy the peace and quiet, along with the natural environment. The idea of socialising and communal visiting does not appear to be a strong motivator for visits. In particular, visitors in Scotland made visits to gardens because they were pleasant environments in which to spend time, more than visitors in any other region. This result suggests that the garden visitor in Scotland might be a more generalist recreationist than a garden-focused individual.

A multivariate factor analysis focusing on motivations for garden visiting indicates that three components explain 67% of the variation in the data. The three groupings are:

1. Social

Social components account for 28.9% of the variance and include the reasons relating to other visitors, namely 'to be with others like me' and 'to visit with groups'.

2. Horticultural

Relating to the physical aspects of the site in terms of the cultivated environment, horticultural elements account for 21.6% of the variance and include reasons 'to enjoy horticulture' and 'to get ideas for own garden'.

3. Setting

A further 16.5% of the variance is accounted for by aspects relating to the setting or garden environment. Reasons include 'for tranquility', 'for somewhere to go', and 'for a nice environment'.

The factor analysis is useful in reducing the data to a more meaningful set of explanations on motivations for garden visiting.

6.4.8 The Nature of the Garden as a Space for Visitation

In Chapter 2, a framework of evaluating primary values for public places was presented (Carr et al., 1992). To recap, three types of space were identified – responsive, democratic and meaningful – and the primary values associated with each space were identified (see Table 2.2). Having examined gardens from a user perspective, this is a useful juncture to apply Carr *et al.*'s model to the findings of the survey. To a large extent, the survey findings indicate that gardens open to the public represent the responsive type of space because they serve user needs including relaxation (apparent in the 94.8% of visitors who visit gardens because of their tranquil environment), passivity (74.7% of visitors sat in the garden visited), activity (such as photography with 48.5% of visitors partaking in this pursuit), exercise (a few visitors indicated that the garden was a good opportunity for a walk) and discovery in

relation to gardening (taking notes on garden and plants was an activity undertaken by 48% of visitors and 84.3% of visitors visit gardens generally to get ideas for their garden). In relation to democratic space, there is little of relevance except that a reasonable number of respondents considered the freedom to wander around the garden to be an important factor in influencing enjoyment of a garden visit. In addition, the pleasurability of strolling was considered to be important by nearly all of the respondents. Thus, freedom of activity appears to be one of the key aspects of visiting a garden and this links to Carr *et al.*'s (1992) definition of primary values for democratic space. Ascertaining the primary values in relation to meaningful space, Carr *et al.*'s (1992) last type of space, is difficult given the nature of the survey. A more in-depth study examining the psychology of garden visiting would be required to generate information which would provide evidence of the garden as meaningful space. This is undoubtedly a valuable area of research as understanding how people connect with gardens can help to inform approaches to the sensitive management of the garden environment (see Chapter 9).

6.4.9 Response to Marketing

In order to ascertain how visitors obtain information on what gardens to visit, respondents were asked to state whether a visit to a garden had ever been motivated by a number of different marketing influences. The overwhelmingly important aspect in this instance is word of mouth, with 83.4% of visits prompted in this way. The least used channel is the internet, with a mere 8.3% of visitors having consulted a web site (Table 6.10).

Table 6.10 Forms of Marketing which have Motivated Garden Visits

Form of marketing	Frequency	Valid Percent of Visitors
Magazine	357	66.0
Newspaper	331	61.2
Word of mouth	451	83.4
Commercial advertising	77	14.2
Leaflet	327	60.4
Web site	45	8.3
Show/exhibition	133	24.6
Discount scheme	59	10.9
TV programme	319	59.0
National Gardens Scheme	305	56.4
Book	223	41.2

What emerges is that aside from word of mouth, media (magazine, newspaper and television) are influential as well as leaflets. This result corresponds with the findings of the scoping exercise, where garden owners perceived that making good links with journalists and garden writers was essential, thus achieving positive editorial which is both influential and, of course, a cost-effective means of attracting visitors. The National Gardens Scheme is also highly influential in attracting visitors to gardens, both with its high profile Yellow Book and the bright yellow posters on roadsides which denote open gardens. The effectiveness of information sources is re-assessed in the forthcoming section relating to a visit to a specific garden.

6.5 Visits to Participating Survey Gardens

A series of questions relating to the garden that the respondent was visiting on the day of completing the questionnaire were raised. Some 39% of visitors had been to the survey garden before. Some of the gardens appeared to achieve slightly higher rates of repeat visitation than others, for example around half the visitors to Pitmedden and Malleny Gardens had visited before.

6.5.1 Information Sources for Visits to Survey Gardens

Respondents were asked how they first heard about the garden to which they had made a visit that day. Similar to the broader picture of how visitors tend to find information on gardens as outlined in the previous section, 34.9% cited word of mouth as the source of information. The next most important was a promotional garden leaflet (15.7%). Less significant mechanisms were exhibitions, discount schemes, the Royal Horticultural Society, and the internet (see Table 6.11). It is, indeed, interesting to note that the internet only accounted for 0.4% of visitor information sources and that more traditional methods achieve much higher useage. Presumably, the internet use rate reflects a more mature population, which is less likely to use technology as a source of information. However, it is likely that internet use will increase in the future. Quite obviously, National Trust literature is an important marketing tool for member gardens, although other information sources are shown to be significant too (Table 6.12).

Table 6.11 Information Sources for Visits to Survey Gardens

Source	Frequency	Percent of visitors
Word of mouth	173	34.9
Leaflet	78	15.7
National Trust	58	11.7
Road sign/passing by	36	7.3
National Gardens Scheme	36	7.3
Magazine feature	30	6.0
TV programme	17	3.4
Newspaper article	14	2.8
Books	10	2.0
Coach tour	8	1.6
Show/exhibition	5	1.0
Commercial advertising	4	0.8
Web site	2	0.4
Other	25	5.0
Total	496	
Missing Cases	50	

Table 6.12 National Trust Gardens: number of visitors who first heard about garden through National Trust literature

Garden	Percent of visitors using National Trust literature as information source for the visit
Greys Court	38.8
Snowhill	25
Inveresk Lodge	28.6
Malleny	19.8
Ardmaddy Castle	0
Pitmedden	21.6

6.5.2 Travel to Survey Gardens

In line with similar surveys of visitor attractions and rural locations, the majority of visits had been made by means of the private car (89.2%) as shown in Table 6.13.

Table 6.13 Mode of Transport to Survey Gardens

Mode of transport	Percent of visitors
Car	89.2
Coach	4.4
On foot	4.0
Public transport	1.3
Cycle	0.6
Taxi	0.6
Total	544
Missing cases	2

In some cases, car-based visitors comprised 100% of the visitor total, for example, Pine Lodge Gardens and Eggleston Hall Gardens. Generally, car-useage reflects the more rural location of the gardens, although Pine Lodge is close to a town and public transport routes, so rurality may not be the only explanation. In other cases, car use was much lower than other gardens. Specifically, Winllan Garden visitors (60% arrived by car) were more likely to arrive by means of an organised coach tour because the garden is open on a more limited basis and also because it attracts visitors with specific interests who are more likely to arrange a collective visit. The other

garden attracting fewer car-based visitors was Malleny Garden (74% arrived by car). A larger percentage of visitors than any other garden travelled to the garden on foot (16.1%) as the garden is located close to a settlement and attracts local visitors. In addition, Malleny Garden was the only garden where visitors used public transport, again most probably due to the garden's proximity to a large city.

Using the Automobile Association CD-Rom disk *Milemaster*, it was possible to calculate three aspects of importance in relation to travel to gardens: travel time to garden; travel distance to garden; and travel cost. While it is accepted that journey times and costs may be disrupted by delays, the figures presented give some general indications of the relative importance of each element.

(i) Travel Time to Garden

For more than half of the respondents, travel time was 30 minutes or less (see Table 6.14). About 15% of respondents travelled for more than one hour to visit a garden, including 5% who travelled for two or more hours (see Figure 6.3). The mean average travel time was one hour and thirty three minutes, while the mode and median were one hour, giving some indication of the general catchment area for gardens. However, catchment areas are likely to vary according to the draw of an individual garden.

Cross-tabulation of each garden with travel time indicates a wide variety of travel times in each case. For visits to Malleny Garden, 72.5% of visits took less than 15 minutes, while for more rural gardens, such as Ardmaddy Gardens, journey times were considerably longer, as would be expected. It is certainly clear that many

visitors are prepared to embark on relatively lengthy journeys to visit some gardens. It should also be noted, however, that some gardens are nearer centres of population than others, which influences journey times for each garden. Thus, the length of journey time for a garden is not necessarily an indicator of the willingness to travel long distances to that garden by a proportionately large population – it may reflect the geographic spread of the population as well as the degree of marketing of the garden.

Table 6.14 Travel Time to Survey Gardens

	Frequency	Valid Percent of Visits
0 - 15 minutes	148	28.6
16 - 30 minutes	132	25.5
31- 45 minutes	111	21.5
46 minutes – 1 hour	52	10.1
1.01 – 1.15 hours	21	4.1
1.16 – 1.30 hours	10	1.9
1.31 – 1.45 hours	8	1.6
1.46 – 2 hours	9	1.7
2.01 – 3 hours	13	2.3
More than 3 hours	13	2.5

(ii) Travel Distance

In terms of travel distance to the garden from a home or holiday base, 32.3% of visits involved a travel distance of 10 miles or less (see Table 6.15). Just over 37% of visits involved distances of 20 miles or more. The longest distance travelled was 230.1 miles but this was an isolated case. The mean average travel distance to the survey gardens was 25.84 miles, with a standard deviation of 36.93.

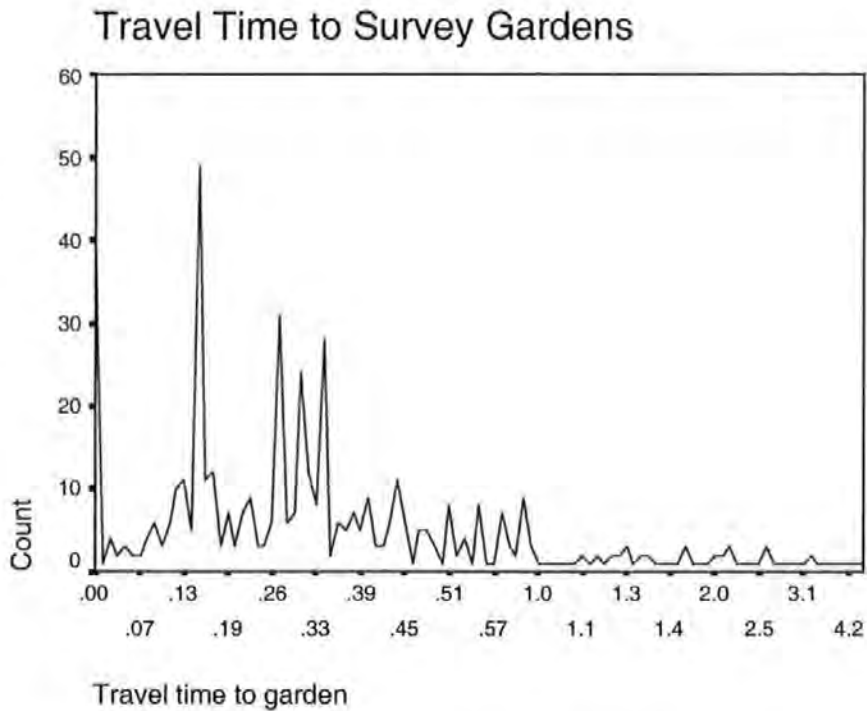


Figure 6.3 Travel Time to Survey Gardens (hours/mins)

Table 6.15 Travel Distance to Survey Gardens

	Frequency	Valid Percent of Visits
0 – 1 miles	41	7.9
1.1 –5 miles	19	3.7
5.1 – 10 miles	107	20.7
10.1 – 25 miles	197	38.1
25.1 – 50 miles	98	19.0
50.1 – 75 miles	23	4.4
75.1 – 100 miles	12	2.3
100.1 – 150 miles	11	2.1
150.1 – 200 miles	7	1.4
More than 200 miles	2	0.4

Observations of particular note when specific gardens were cross-tabulated with travel distance related to the length of journey that some visitors were prepared to travel.

While in most cases, visitors had travelled 25 miles or less to visit a garden, there were some notable exceptions. Some 12.3% of visitors to East Ruston had made a

journey of 100 miles or more, which is possibly a reflection of the growing reputation of the garden as a place to visit among garden enthusiasts as well as some carefully considered marketing. In addition, Winllan Garden in rural Mid-Wales, which is renowned for the owner's special interest in wildflower conservation, attracted a large proportion of visitors from more than 25 miles away, with 63.2% of visitors traveling between 25.1-50 miles. Considering Winllan is a relatively small garden with minimal opening times, it is clear that visitors are prepared to travel further to see a garden with a specific interest.

Other gardens attracting visitors from some distance away included the more well-known National Trust/National Trust for Scotland gardens, presumably as a result of promotion. Good examples of these gardens are Greys Court in Oxfordshire, Pitmedden Garden near Aberdeen and Ardmaddy Castle Garden near Oban, all of which attracted large percentages of visitors from some distance. Some gardens also attracted a large number of people from the local area, for example Pine Lodge Garden in Cornwall welcomed over 27% of visitors from within one mile of the garden. Malleny Garden near Edinburgh attracted 17.6% from Balerno, the local village, which indicates that local residents form an important market sector for the garden.

It is also worth noting an urban-rural dichotomy, with some rural gardens attracting visitors from greater distances than gardens located on the peri-urban fringe. Examples include the rural location of Eggleston Hall Gardens in County Durham, where 68.4% of visitors travelled between 25.1-50 miles to reach the garden, compared with Malleny Garden on the outskirts of Edinburgh, where 72.6% of

visitors travelled 10 miles or less to access the garden. Greys Court, which lies close to major urban centres attracted a substantial number of visitors from between 5.1-10 miles, as well as further afield. Thus, the proximity of a large population probably assists in boosting visitor numbers to popular gardens.

(iii) Travel Cost

Using the AA Milemaster CD Rom Disk with average travel costs per mile calculated for each journey, it was possible to calculate an approximate cost for each trip to a garden made by survey respondents. However, it should be noted that the cost relates to a trip by car rather than by any other mode as travel costs need to be comparable and public transport costs are not available. In any case, the majority of trips were made by car. Information relating to travel costs shows that the most expensive journey was £64.43. However, 82.2% of visits cost £10.00 or less (see Table 6.16). The mean average travel cost was £7.25 with a standard deviation of £10.34.

Table 6.16 Travel Cost of Garden Visit

Cost (£ pounds sterling)	Frequency	Percent of visits
Up to 2.50	160	30.9
2.51 – 5.00	122	23.6
5.01 – 7.50	87	16.8
7.51 – 10.00	55	10.6
10.01 – 15.00	40	7.7
15.01 – 20.00	17	3.3
20.01 – 25.00	13	2.5
25.01 – 30.00	4	0.8
30.01 – 40.00	9	1.7
More than 40.00	10	1.9

In line with the discussion on travel distance, cross-tabulations identified the cost of travel to each garden by the sample population. For some gardens, proportions of

visitor travel cost were relatively high, for example 47.4% of the visits made to the rural, isolated Eggleston Hall Gardens fell into the cost category of 10.01-15.00. In addition, visitors to Winllan shouldered high travel costs, with 68.5% of visits costing between 7.51-15.00. For other gardens, travel costs were much lower. For example, for 45.5% of visitors to Pine Lodge Gardens, the travel cost was 2.50 or less. The highest proportion of visits made where the travel cost was 2.50 or less was in the case of Malleny Garden, with 71.4% of visits in this category and 88% of visits cost less than 7.50.

6.5.3 Garden Visitors

In order to ascertain whether garden visits were being made by day trippers or tourists, visitors were asked whether they had travelled from their home or a holiday base that day. Some 55.1% of visitors had travelled from home and 44.9% were on holiday. These figures illustrate the significance of day trips as a generator of visitors to attractions. As might be expected, there was significant variation between gardens in respect of home and holiday-based visitation. Gardens attracting a high number of holiday-based visitors included Pine Lodge Gardens (70.2% of visitors were on holiday), Pitmedden Garden (70.7% of its visitors) and Ardmaddy Castle (91.4% of visitors). These three gardens are located in popular holiday areas of Great Britain; Cornwall in the case of Pine Lodge, and the Highlands of Scotland in the case of Pitmedden and Ardmaddy Castle Gardens. Ardmaddy Castle, in particular, is situated on the West Coast of Scotland near Oban in a beautiful setting on a loch-side and close to touring roads.

Cross-tabulation of the origin of the visitor with travel distance revealed some noteworthy points. It appears that a larger number of trips than expected of less than 10 miles were made by those travelling from their home. In other words, gardens attract a significant number of local residents on day trips. Conversely, while only a small number of trips were made entailing a journey of more than 75 miles, most of these visits were made by those travelling from their home. Here, the situation seems to be that trip to gardens involving a long distance are made from home. Many visits made by those on holiday entail journeys of between 10 and 50 miles.

A large number of visitors were accompanied by a partner (45.9%). It is also valuable to note that 12.7% of visitors were family groups with children under the age of 16 (see Table 6.17). Other groups include group visits made without arriving by coach, or a group of friends. The number of visits made by single people is significant. It is assumed that the garden environment is an attractive one for people on their own as it is quiet and safe. Presumably, a more mature market connotes that there will be a proportion of widowed spouses and divorced people in this group.

Table 6.17 Visitors to Survey Gardens

	Frequency	Percent of visitors
Partner only	249	45.9
Alone	82	15.1
Family, no children	81	14.9
Family with children less than 16 years	69	12.7
Other group	42	7.7
Coach party	20	3.7

The results from some gardens indicate a higher than expected number of families with children under the age of sixteen visiting. Three of the Scottish gardens, including Ardmaddy Castle (27.6% of its visitors), Malleny (20.2% of its visitors),

and Pitmedden (14.6% of its visitors), attracted more families than expected. The explanation in the case of Pitmedden and Ardmaddy Castle is most likely to rest with the high number of holiday-based visits and family outings. For Malleny, the impression gained from the survey was that many local residents liked to take their children to the garden as it was a safe place for them to play. In addition, on one survey day, a toddler's group outing was taking place. This evidence certainly reverses the popular opinion that gardens are not visited by families with children.

The main reason for the respondent visiting a garden on the day of the survey was determined by means of an open question where the visitor's own response was noted. A diverse range of reasons were put forward as shown in Table 6.18. The most popular reasons were simply to have a day out (15.1%), to enjoy a garden (14.9%) and for interest (13.4%). Such responses indicate that a large number of visits are made for general reasons rather than for specific pursuits. Having said that, it is important to note the fragmented nature of motivations for garden visiting.

Reasons for visiting gardens may be related to the tourist gaze, as discussed earlier in the chapter. The form of gaze which tends to be expressed most clearly by garden visiting is the spectatorial. The spectatorial gaze is illustrated by some of the reasons for visiting, including to get ideas for own garden (certainly, those who are visiting to get ideas for their own garden are glancing at and collecting signs and symbols of that garden), to see something specific in the garden (such as a plant collection), to see a National Trust house which the garden is attached to and just for a day out. The idea of visiting to be a 'spectator' is inherent in these reasons for visiting. In contrast, it can be argued that the anthropological form of the gaze is demonstrated by visitors

Table 6.18 Reasons for Visiting on Day of the Survey

	Frequency	Valid Percent of Visitors
Saw leaflet	5	0.9
To enjoy a garden	79	14.9
For interest	71	13.4
To see progress of the garden	15	2.8
To see something specific	38	7.2
To buy plants	16	3.0
To get ideas	16	3.0
Day out	80	15.1
Yellow Book	3	0.6
Recommended	32	6.0
Group visit	27	5.1
Been before	35	6.6
Magazine/TV feature	8	1.5
Weather	15	2.8
National Trust/to see house	20	3.8
Show someone else	24	4.3
For children	23	1.5
Just passing by	8	1.7
For a walk	9	0.9
Other	5	4.5
Total	529	
Missing cases	17	

who have visited the garden before and for those who are revisiting to see progress.

This type of visiting requires a more sustained immersion in the garden and its development over time, where the visitor builds a relationship with the environment.

Those visitors who are visiting as part of a group visit, as well as those who are visiting to show someone else or those who are visiting because it is somewhere to take children illustrate the collective gaze. Lastly, the romantic gaze is inherent in the reasoning of those visitors who purely wish to enjoy a garden or perhaps those who are visiting for interest.

In an attempt to apply the forms of the tourist gaze to the reasons for visiting gardens, it is clear that the gaze is a suitable framework of analysis as it usefully defines the

broad type of consumption. Table 6.19 outlines the breakdown of reasons when applied to the notion of the gaze. Some of the more minor reasons for visiting are not appropriate to the gaze and have been omitted. The gaze, however, does assist in explaining the major reasons for garden visiting. Table 6.19 also includes a classification of visits in terms of whether they constitute a purposive or casual visit. Purposive visits are those where there is a specific reason for visiting the garden, while casual visits are typified by less specific reasons.

Table 6.19 The Tourist Gaze and Reasons for Garden Visiting

Reason for Visit	Form of Tourist Gaze	Type of Visit
For a day out	Spectatorial	Casual
To enjoy a garden	Romantic	Casual
For interest/curiosity	Spectatorial/Romantic	Casual
To see something specific	Spectatorial	Purposive
Been before	Anthropological	Casual
Group visit	Collective/Spectatorial	Purposive
To show someone else	Collective	Purposive
To get ideas	Spectatorial/Romantic	Purposive
To see progress	Anthropological	Purposive
Magazine/TV feature	Spectatorial	Purposive
Yellow Book	Spectatorial	Purposive
Saw leaflet	Spectatorial	Purposive
To buy plants	N/a	Purposive
Recommended	N/a	Purposive
Weather	N/a	Casual
To see National Trust Property/other attraction	N/a	Casual
For children	N/a	Purposive
Just passing by	N/a	Casual
For a walk	N/a	Casual

From the analysis of the form of tourist gaze (Table 6.19), the spectatorial gaze accounts for 35.7% of visits, the romantic gaze 14.9%, the anthropological gaze another 9.4% and the collective gaze accounts for a further 9.4%. The percentage of

visits labelled as purposive is 35.9% and those of a more casual nature comprise 59.2%. An additional 5% remains unclassified due to 'other' unclassified reasons.

Taking a geographic perspective to the data, there is a significant association between the main reason for the garden visit and location of survey garden. The data suggests that some major differences exist between gardens in Scotland and those in Southern England. In Southern England, where visitors are more likely to be day-trippers than tourists, reasons for visiting tend towards the purposive. Reasons that show higher than expected numbers of responses are to see progress, to get ideas, to show someone else and to act upon a recommendation. In Scotland, each of the reasons of importance in the South of England yields a less than expected number of respondents, with fewer visits made to buy plants, get ideas, to show someone else or because the garden was recommended. In this part of Britain, the data shows more than expected numbers of respondents visiting for the more casual reasons of just enjoying a garden or because they were passing by. In Scotland, 64% of visits were made for casual reasons compared with 29% for specific purposes. In Southern England, 57% of visits were casual, whereas 41% purposive.

The geographic application of the tourist gaze indicates that while spectatorial visits are more common than romantic visits, garden trips in Scotland show more of a tendency to the romantic gaze, while those in the South of England tend towards the spectatorial (Table 6.20). The percentages in Table 6.20 refer to the percentage of reasons given for visiting a garden in the specified region.

Table 6.20 Geographic Application of the Tourist Gaze

	Spectatorial	Romantic	Collective	Anthropological
South of England	121 (48%)	32 (13%)	24 (10%)	15 (6%)
Scotland	93 (40%)	45 (19%)	19 (8%)	19 (8%)

6.5.4 Dwell Time at Survey Gardens

The amount of time spent on a garden visit on the day of the survey by respondents was generally in the range of between one and three hours, with only minimal numbers staying for less than one hour or a whole day (see Table 6.21). This indicates that visiting a garden appears to be a pursuit for part of a day rather than a full day.

Table 6.21 Dwell Time at Survey Gardens

	Frequency	Percent of visits
Less than one hour	42	7.8
One to two hours	264	49.2
A morning or afternoon	201	37.4
A whole day	30	5.6
Total	537	
Missing cases	9	

Some 18.1% of visitors to Malleny Garden stayed less than one hour which might reflect the level of repeat visiting by local residents (49.5% had visited before). For Ardmaddy Castle Garden, over 17% of visitors stayed less than one hour, perhaps because visitors are on a car-based tour on holiday and are stopping off briefly to look at sites, rather than immersing themselves in the garden for a longer period of time.

6.5.5 Opinion of Garden Visited

Visitors were asked to comment on the garden to which they had made a visit to on the day of the survey. This part of the analysis examines three aspects: first, the

feature most liked about the garden; second, the feature least liked about the garden; and third, any suggestion the visitor had for improving the garden. A wide range of responses were elicited, reflecting the open nature of the question. As a substantial amount of data has been generated in relation to specific gardens, only the main points of relevance to garden visiting in more generic terms are reported here. The responses to these questions have been greatly appreciated by the garden owners who co-operated in the survey as direct feedback from visitors has been made available to them in return for their assistance. Garden owners were provided with a verbatim list of responses to each of the open questions, as well as a summary of the percentages when the data was reduced.

(i) Aspect Most Liked About Survey Gardens

In relation to what visitors most liked about the gardens they had visited that day, 18.1% commented specifically about the plants and planting schemes in the garden, 15.2% emphasised the peace and tranquility of the garden as the most liked aspect, and 14.6% noted the variety in the garden in terms of style and plant range. A total of 9.4% of visitors said that they liked everything about the garden. The range of aspects most liked by visitors is displayed in Table 6.22.

Of those stating that peace and tranquility was the aspect liked the most, 35.4% of visitors had visited Malleny Gardens. The location of the garden, on the outskirts of Edinburgh, and the potential for the garden to provide a haven of tranquility in an otherwise busy urban environment, most probably explains this figure. Visitors who had been to Pine Lodge Gardens commented on the changes and improvements (indicating repeat visitation), labelling and high standards of maintenance as aspects

which they liked most. At East Ruston Garden, the concept of inventiveness¹ was highlighted by visitors, as well as plants sales and improvements. Pitmedden was singled out for its high standards of maintenance; Ardmaddy Castle for its walking routes and setting.

Table 6.22 Aspect Most Liked About Survey Garden

	Frequency	Percent of visitors
Plants/planting	94	18.1
Peace/tranquility	79	15.2
Variety	76	14.6
Everything	49	9.4
Design/layout	45	8.7
Specific feature (not plants)	35	6.7
Aromas/colours	20	3.8
Inventiveness	18	3.5
Setting	18	3.5
Beauty	16	3.1
High standards	14	2.7
Tea room	9	1.7
Plants for sale	8	1.5
Staff friendliness/helpfulness	8	1.5
Changes/progress	8	1.5
Philosophy of garden	4	0.8
Routes/information on routes	4	0.8
Labelling	4	0.8
Other	11	2.1
Total	520	
Missing cases	26	

(ii) Aspect Least Liked About Survey Gardens

Correspondingly, the overriding comment noted in response to ‘what have you liked least about this garden?’ was ‘nothing’ – thus, it appears that 49.4% of visitors were totally satisfied with their experience of the garden visited. The most mentioned aspect least liked about the garden was in fact an uncontrollable factor – that of the weather, accounting for 14% of visitor dislikes (Table 6.23). Other less controllable

¹ Inventiveness refers to originality and creative design in the garden

factors affected garden visitors enjoyment as illustrated by the category ‘personal influences’. These influences included aspects unique to the individual, such as coping with their children who did not want to visit the garden, not having left enough time for their visit and health problems on the day. Thus, it is important to recognise that many factors affecting enjoyment of a visit are out of the control of garden owners. The results in Table 6.22 illustrate that aspects least liked are not easy to categorise and some issues will affect some gardens more than others. However, what does emerge quite clearly is that a large percentage of visitors are satisfied with the garden they visited, certainly a positive feature of garden visiting.

Table 6.23 Aspect Liked Least About Survey Garden

	Frequency	Percent of visitors
Nothing	236	49.4
Weather	67	14.0
Other visitors	24	5.0
Lack of labelling	16	3.3
Personal influences on respondent	15	3.1
Road access/car park	14	2.9
No tea room	8	2.3
Having to leave	10	2.1
Site specific feature	10	2.1
Tea room	8	1.7
Insufficient information on garden	7	1.5
Charges	7	1.5
Lack of seats	6	1.3
Opening hours too short	4	0.8
Lack of colour	3	0.8
Poor maintenance	2	0.4
No plant sales	2	0.4
Garden too small	2	0.4
Commercialisation	2	0.4
Lack of litter bins	1	0.2
Other	31	6.5
Total	478	
Missing cases	68	

Mrs. Mitchell's Garden, Hampshire, scored the highest rating in terms of visitors who said there was nothing that they did not like about the garden (84.6% of visitors to the garden). The weather accounted for more dislikes in the gardens of Scotland than the gardens in the south of England. As many gardens would have expected, certain gripes emerged about specific gardens. For example, the rough track leading to Malleny and the small car park was highlighted by visitors (42.9% of visitors who noted a problem with road access had visited Malleny); and a lack of plant labels at Greys Court, East Ruston and Malleny were noted.

(iii) Improvements Suggested by Visitors

Encouragingly for garden owners and managers, 62.7% of visitors said that no improvements were required in that garden. Of the improvements suggested, the most cited aspect was that of improved labelling of plants (11.4%), indicating that a number of respondents required more information about plant names in the garden visited. Plant names could be desired purely for interest or may be required by visitors wanting to make a note of plant and purchase it for their own garden. Other minor aspects are noted in Table 6.24.

In terms of the individual gardens, 90.7% of visitors to Pine Lodge Gardens stated that no improvements were necessary, the highest number of responses in this category for any of the gardens. All gardens, except for Inveresk Lodge achieved more than 50% of respondents stating that no improvements were needed. For Greys Court, East Ruston, Malleny and Ardmaddy Castle Gardens, the main suggestion was to improve plant labeling. East Ruston visitors also suggested more seats, more garden information and that improvements should be made to road signs. The

addition of a refreshment facility at Malleny was also suggested, along with better maintenance of one of the garden features (the water feature).

Table 6.24 Improvements Suggested by Visitors in Survey Garden

	Frequency	Percent of visitors
None needed	298	62.7
Improve labelling	54	11.4
Improve maintenance of specific feature	22	4.6
Provide more seats	16	3.4
Improve/add tea room	16	3.4
Provide more information/interpretation	13	2.7
Add specific feature to garden	9	1.9
Improve road signs	6	1.3
Extend opening times	4	0.8
Add/improve toilets	3	0.6
Better access for less able and pushchairs	3	0.6
Improve car park	3	0.6
Add litter bins	2	0.4
Add/improve plant sales	2	0.4
Be less commercial	1	0.2
Add events	1	0.2
Other	17	3.6
Total	475	
Missing cases	71	

6.5.6 The Visitor Experience

A substantive part of the questionnaire focused on the visitor experience of gardens. Respondents were asked to consider the factors which affect their overall experience of visiting gardens in general (that is, not just related to the garden visited that day). As in the owner/manager survey, respondents were presented with the five-point Likert scales derived from Haywood and Muller (1988) (Chapter 3) and the scoping exercise (Chapter 4). The full results are displayed in Tables 6.25-6.28 and the main findings are detailed in the following sections. It should be noted that the implications of these findings are discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

(i) Weather Conditions

Over 84% of visitors (454 respondents) considered the condition of the weather to be an important determinant in the enjoyment of a garden visit. However, 66 visitors stated that the weather was not important (12.2%). The large number of visitors who consider weather to be important illustrates the influence of an uncontrollable factor on the visitor experience, to which all outdoor attractions are subject.

(ii) Tidiness of the Garden

The condition of the garden in relation to its tidiness was an aspect of importance for 75.6% of respondents (402 visitors), although only 25% of respondents (133 visitors) thought that tidiness was very important. It is, though, worth noting that nearly a quarter of respondents do not rate tidiness as an important factor for enjoying a garden visit (92 visitors).

(iii) Setting of the Garden

The setting of the garden in the landscape was valued by 86.7% of visitors (463 respondents). Only 7.8% of visitors (42 respondents) thought that the setting was not important.

(iv) Visitor Well-being

Response to the question about safety from crime was met by a mixed response. Some 52.6% of respondents considered this to be an important issue, although many others did not think about crime when visiting gardens as additional comments on the questionnaires demonstrated. Some 29.1% of visitors (152 respondents) did not think that safety from crime was an important issue in the garden environment, although a further 96 respondents were unsure about the issue. Generally, visitors did not show a significant concern about health and safety (39.1%), compared with other aspects of the garden.

(v) Accessibility

Accessibility in the garden setting refers to disabled people, those with physical mobility problems and parents with small children in pushchairs. The criticality of ensuring good access is signified by some 78.1% of visitors, who agreed that it was important to them that access for the less able is good. Only 17.5% of visitors (93 respondents) stated that ease of access was not an important determinant in their enjoyment of a garden visit. In relation to access to the garden, just under half of the respondents (49.1%) thought that gardens should be open all year round than just on a seasonal basis, although 23.8%

disagreed and 27.2% of respondents indicated that they were unsure about their response to this statement. In terms of financial accessibility, 88.1% of visitors considered a reasonable entry charge to be important. Although it is inevitable that visitors do not wish to pay high admission prices, it should be borne in mind that high fees may detract from visitor enjoyment, especially if the garden fails to meet expectations.

(vi) Pleasure

The most significant aspect affecting the visitor experience appears to be the pleasurability of strolling around the garden, with 65% of visitors stating this component as very important overall, and a further 31.2% stating 'quite important'. Overall, the importance of pleasurability of strolling is pointed out by 96.3% respondents (515 visitors). Some 74.4% thought that it was important that there was something to see in a garden that was open. It seems that visitors are not generally in favour of visiting gardens out of the gardening season or when the garden is not in peak condition. Visitors demonstrated a desire to be allowed to wander freely in gardens, with 63.2% agreeing that they do not like to follow a set route. Overall, 95.3% of visitors stated that they generally feel happy after visiting a garden, emphasising the spiritually uplifting effect of gardens.

(vii) Staff

Both friendliness and helpfulness of staff are judged to be important aspects of the visitor experience. Respondents appear to have strong views about staff attitude, with 42.4% (227 visitors) and 44.8% (239 visitors) considering friendliness and helpfulness

respectively to be very important. Overall, more than 90% of respondents stated that these aspects were important. The importance of visitor welcome is stark in the 90.6% of respondents who concurred that they liked to be made welcome to a garden. In fact, 41.9% stated that they strongly agreed with the statement.

(viii) Visitor Services

According to 486 respondents, a vital feature appears to be a toilet facility (91.5% considered toilets to be important on site). Another important facility is the provision of a car-park. As a significant number of visits are made by car, it is clear that demand will exist for a safe environment in which to park. Some 77.4% of respondents (408) considered a car-park to be important, with 21.1% of these stating that a car-park was very important. A mere 12.3% did not think a car-park was important, a figure which mirrors that of non-car users to gardens.

With regard to refreshment services, 64.6% of respondents (344 visitors) considered a tea-room to be important in their enjoyment of a garden visit, while 23.3% thought a tea-room unimportant. Some 55.7% of visitors stated that a shop/nursery was important to them, although 30.1% did not think a retail outlet was important. However, further probing shows that while people visit gardens occasionally just to patronise a shop or nursery (60.2%), slightly fewer people visit just for a tea-room (55.7%). The results so far appear to indicate that garden visitors seek an element of comfort and convenience on visits, with the provision of refreshments, car-parking and toilets. The opportunity to

purchase plants is slightly less significant, but still an important element in the visitor experience for many visitors.

Aspects receiving lower scores in relation to specific factors include the importance of a range of events and foreign language leaflets. Only 9.2% of visitors (47 respondents) deemed events to be an important aspect of their enjoyment of gardens. Presumably, events are viewed as secondary to visiting the garden *per se*, and that, while events might be attended and enjoyed, such occasions do not form one of the main attractions for garden visitors. Foreign language leaflets were considered unimportant by 75.6% of visitors, presumably as the majority of garden visitors were domestic visitors. There was a mixed response to the statement 'it is important to me that children are made welcome'. Some 26.8% of respondents disagreed with the statement, which probably reflects the visitor requirement for peace and quiet and the generally more mature age profile of garden visitors. However, more than half of the respondents (51.1%) thought that it was important that children are made welcome in gardens.

(ix) Plant Labelling

It appears that a large proportion of visitors like to have detailed information about the garden they are visiting (62.9%). Only 13% did not require detailed information. More specifically, the visitor requirement for plant labels is very strong, with 86% of respondents (454) stating that plant labels were important to their enjoyment of garden visiting.

Table 6.25 Importance of Elements of the Garden Visitor Experience*Percentage of visitors*

	Very important	Quite important	Don't know	Of little importance	Of no importance
Weather	31.7	52.5	3.5	10.9	1.3
Tidiness	25.0	50.6	7.1	15.2	2.1
Setting	35.8	50.9	5.4	6.7	1.1
Safety from crime	24.5	28.1	18.4	15.3	13.8
Ease of access	31.4	43.4	7.7	15.2	2.3
Pleasurability of strolling	65.0	31.2	3.0	0.6	0.2
Friendliness of staff	42.4	48.4	6.0	2.8	0.4
Helpfulness of staff	44.8	47.0	5.4	2.6	0.2
Reasonable entry charge	40.7	47.3	4.9	6.1	0.9
Tea room	22.7	42.5	11.5	18.2	5.1
Shop/nursery	11.6	44.1	14.1	22.5	7.6
Range of events	2.2	7.0	17.4	42.5	30.9
Foreign language leaflets	3.5	11.3	9.6	26.0	49.6
Car park	21.1	56.4	10.2	7.6	4.7
Plant labels	44.5	41.5	5.9	5.3	2.8
Toilets	57.6	33.9	4.5	2.6	1.3

Table 6.26 Importance of Various Elements of the Visitor Experience to Garden Visitors: Descriptive Statistics

	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Importance of weather	4	1	5	1.98	.95	.908
Importance of tidiness	4	1	5	2.19	1.04	1.083
Importance of setting	4	1	5	1.87	.88	.766
Importance of safety from crime	4	1	5	2.66	1.36	1.850
Importance of ease of access	4	1	5	2.14	1.09	1.187
Importance of pleasurability of strolling	4	1	5	1.40	.60	.356
Importance of friendliness of staff	4	1	5	1.70	.74	.543
Importance of helpfulness of staff	4	1	5	1.66	.72	.512
Importance of entry charge	4	1	5	1.79	.86	.742
Importance of tea room	22	1	23	2.52	1.94	3.749
Importance of shop/nursery	4	1	5	2.70	1.16	1.352
Importance of range of events	4	1	5	3.93	.98	.956
Importance of foreign language leaflets	4	1	5	4.07	1.17	1.359
Importance of car park	4	1	5	2.19	1.01	1.011
Importance of plant labels	4	1	5	1.80	.97	.935
Importance of toilets	4	1	5	1.56	.81	.654

Table 6.27 Additional Elements of the Visitor Experience: Descriptive Statistics

	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
I like to be made welcome when I visit a garden	4	1	5	1.70	.71	.504
It is important to me that access for less able visitors is good	4	1	5	1.98	.92	.852
I sometimes visit gardens for the shop as well as garden	4	1	5	2.51	1.17	1.366
I sometimes visit gardens for the tea room as well as garden	4	1	5	2.66	1.25	1.553
I am concerned about health and safety in the gardens I visit	4	1	5	2.93	1.15	1.332
It is important to me that children are made welcome to a garden	4	1	5	2.74	1.22	1.494
I like to have detailed information about gardens I visit	4	1	5	2.34	.95	.904
Gardens should be open at all times of the year	4	1	5	2.65	1.08	1.159
It is important that there is something to see in a garden open to the public all year round	4	1	5	2.12	.97	.941
I like to follow a set route around the garden	4	1	5	3.63	1.04	1.077
I generally feel happy when I have visited a garden	4	1	5	1.58	.62	.387

Table 6.28 Additional Elements of the Visitor Experience

Percentage of visitors

	Strongly agree	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Strongly disagree
I like to be made welcome when I visit a garden	41.9	48.7	7.3	1.7	0.4
It is important to me that access for less able visitors is good	32.7	45.4	14.9	5.1	1.9
I sometimes visit gardens for the shop as well as garden	19.4	40.8	14.5	19.8	5.5
I sometimes visit gardens for the tea room as well as garden	18.3	37.5	12.4	23.7	8.1
I am concerned about health and safety in the gardens I visit	10.6	28.5	27.7	23.4	9.8
It is important to me that children are made welcome to a garden	14.1	37.1	22.1	14.8	12.0
I like to have detailed information about gardens I visit	17.8	45.1	24.1	11.6	1.5
Gardens should be open at all times of the year	14.3	34.8	27.2	19.6	4.2
It is important that there is something to see in a garden open to the public all year round	26.6	47.8	15.4	7.8	2.5
I like to follow a set route around the garden	3.0	13.8	19.9	44.1	19.1
I generally feel happy when I have visited a garden	48.0	47.3	3.7	0.7	0.2

6.6 Analysis of the Visitor Experience

While a selection of cross-tabulations have already been referred to in this chapter, the focus of this section is on the dependant variables used to explore the importance of the visitor experience, which is the central interest of the research. Choice of independent variables identified from the questionnaire included origin of the visitor (whether the visitor had travelled from home or was on holiday), occupational group, age, type of visitor (horticultural interest, general gardening interest or just seeking pleasant day out) and frequency of visits made by the visitor. A more in-depth exploration of the data generated from visitor experience questions, involving cross-tabulations and chi-squared testing for statistical association was undertaken. The analysis focused on the socio-demographic variables age and occupational group, and the other variables were selected in order to provide a classification base. The results of the cross-tabulations are discussed in the ensuing sections.

6.6.1 Cross-tabulations between Origin and the Factors Affecting Enjoyment of a Garden

There were no significant differences between those on a day trip and those on holiday in relation to the importance of elements of the visitor experience. However, some points gleaned from the analysis are worthy of note. Home visitors seem to consider ease of access to be slightly more of an issue than holiday visitors. Home visitors seem to consider a tea-room to be slightly more important than holiday visitors (66% compared with 60% of respondents respectively). An explanation might be that holiday visitors visiting as part of an itinerary maybe going to another destination for refreshments

whereas home visitors may be going just to the garden for their day out. In relation to the importance of a shop/nursery, visitors from a home base consider this facility to be very important. Some 68.9% of the responses indicating that a shop was a very important service at a garden were visitors from home. Holiday visitors seem to think that foreign language leaflets are more important than visitors from home.

6.6.2 Cross-tabulations between Origin and the Additional Elements of the Visitor Experience

Similar results were ascertained in the cross-tabulations between origin of visitor and the additional elements of the visitor experience, explored through a range of statements about the visitor experience with which the respondent indicated their degree of agreement or disagreement. Thus, no statistical associations were found. Small differences were found in some cases which concur with the findings of the previous section. Access for less able visitors, a tea-room and a shop/nursery facility seemed to be marginally more important to home visitors.

6.6.3 Cross-tabulations between Social Class and the Factors Affecting Enjoyment of a Garden

In relation to occupational groupings, there are no statistical associations with the importance of elements of the visitor experience. However, some interesting patterns are revealed in some cases which are worthy of mention. Statistical testing is made difficult in terms of social class as the survey only picked up a small number of those representing groups D and E. In particular, group E respondents made up just two of the total sample

population, which more than likely represents their inclusion in the garden visitor population. The importance of tidiness in the garden is deemed to be slightly more important to those in occupational group A than any other group. Similarly, the setting of the garden is considered to be more important by group A respondents. In terms of importance of safety from crime, a greater than expected proportion of group B respondents thought that this was not important. Ease of access was considered to be marginally less important than the other groups. Respondents representing groups A and B considered both the friendliness and helpfulness of staff to be less important than the other occupational groups. The importance of a reasonable entry charge was considered to be less important by group A respondents, presumably as this grouping has a higher disposable income for leisure spending than other groupings.

6.6.4 Cross-tabulations between Age and the Factors Affecting Enjoyment of a Garden

Cross-tabulations between age and the importance of elements of the visitor experience revealed several statistical associations. A reasonable entry charge appears to be considered more important by those in the 18-39 age group, presumably as this age group may have less disposable income than the other groups. While the retired are often cited as those who have the least disposable income, this is a variable dependent on social groupings, that is, those in the occupational groups A and B based on their occupation prior to retirement, are more likely to have greater spending power than many other groups as well as the time to make day visits or go on holiday. In the case of gardens, the skewed occupational grouping profile indicates that many of the retired people are likely

to enjoy higher income levels than average for those over the age of 65. There is a statistical association at the 0.01 level in the case of age and entry charge if the age category less than 18 is removed (only accounting for 5 respondents).

There is a difference between the importance attached to the existence of a tea-room at a garden and age. Those over 60 appear to consider a tea-room to be much more important than the other categories. To illustrate this difference, 75.3% of those over 60 think a tea-room is important, whereas 59% of 40-60 year olds and 56.6% of those between 18-39 years thought that a tea-room was an important facility in a garden. Again, there is a significant relationship if the category 'less than 18' is removed. Those over 40 are more likely to think that a shop/nursery is an important facility compared with those 18-39, presumably because those over 40 show a greater propensity to purchase plants than those less than 40, although this claim cannot be substantiated. In relation to the importance of a range of events in gardens open to the public, there is a marginal difference between age groups. There appears to be an increasing interest in events with decreasing age, for example, 10.7% of 18-39 year olds consider events to be important, compared with 7.3% of those over 60. In relation to car parking, those over 60 consider a sufficiently sized car-park to be more important than other groups and those 40-60 years think a car-park is more important than those 18-39 years and there is a significant relationship in this instance. More mature visitors may desire easy access, which might explain the results. While plant labels are considered important by all groups, there is a significant relationship between those who consider labels important with increasing age.

For the cross-tabulations where there were no statistical associations, some general points are worthy of mention. It appears that those over the age of 60 show a greater than expected number of responses in relation to the importance of the garden's setting. In terms of the importance of safety from crime, respondents in the age category 40-60 appear to be less likely to consider that this is an important issue. However, those over 60 and those between 18-39 seems to be more concerned about safety from crime. Ease of access appears to be an issue that becomes more important with increasing age, thus, those over 60 show a greater than expected number of respondents who consider ease of access to be important, compared with those in the 40-60 age group and 18-39 age group (the latter group considers the issue less important than the other two categories). In relation to both friendliness and helpfulness of staff, there is a marginal difference between those over 40 and those under 40, the latter group appearing to be slightly less concerned about staff attitude.

6.6.5 Cross-tabulations between Visitor Description and the Factors Affecting Enjoyment of a Garden

Cross-tabulation of the variables linked to the visitor experience and the pre-determined categorisation of visitors has revealed some significant associations. Three categories of visitor were constructed prior to survey work as a result of existing knowledge of the garden visitor market and through the scoping exercise. The categories include: those with a special horticultural interest; those with a general interest in gardening; and those seeking a pleasant day out. The categories were designed to be sufficiently discriminatory and thus of use in data analysis.

The most significant relationship is that of safety from crime and visitor description.

This cross-tabulation found that safety from crime is very important to those looking for a pleasant day out. Some 70.7% of those seeking a pleasant day out considered safety from crime to be important, compared with 49.3% of those with a general gardening interest and 40.4% of those with a special horticultural interest. The relationship is significant at the 0.01 level.

The existence of a shop/nursery is more important to those with a special horticultural interest and most probably explained by the desire of those with particular enthusiasm for plants to purchase specimens for their own collections. This relationship is significant at the 0.01 level. Some 70% of those with a special horticultural interest considered a shop/nursery to be important compared with 55% of those with a general gardening interest and 47.5% of those seeking a pleasant day out.

Car parking is very important to those seeking a pleasant day out. Some 82.2% of such visitors stated that a sufficiently sized car-park was important compared with 61.6% of those with a special horticultural interest, and 77.6% of those with a general gardening interest. The association is significant at 0.01 level.

Tidiness of the garden seems to be more important to those seeking a pleasant day out than to other groups. Some 85.1% of this grouping of visitors stated that tidiness was important. However, 74.1% of those with a general interest in gardening stated the same

and the figure for those with a special horticultural interest was lower at 66.7%. The association is significant at the 0.05 level.

The condition of the weather appears to be more important to those seeking a pleasant day out. Plant labels not so important to those seeking pleasant day out (67.6% of these respondents said plant labels were important), but 88.7% of those with a special horticultural interest and 90.5% of those with a general gardening interest stated that plant labels were important in their enjoyment of gardens. In addition, it is worth noting that 62.3% of those with a special horticultural interest stated that labels were very important compared with 46.8% of those with a general gardening interest. The two variables of weather and plant labels show statistical associations at the 0.01 level if the categories of degree of importance are collapsed to 'important', 'not sure' and 'not important'.

In terms of the cross-tabulations which were not statistically significant, the following observations are worthy of mention. The setting of the garden was important to all but a slightly higher importance rating was observed by those with a general gardening interest and those seeking a pleasant day out. Ease of access appears to be more important to those seeking a pleasant day out. Helpful staff are slightly more important to those with a special horticultural interest. Presumably this is explained by the likely interaction between visitor and garden owner/staff. A reasonable entry charge is slightly less important to those with a special horticultural interest. The existence of a tea-room is more important to those looking for a pleasant day out. Providing a range of events is not

particularly important to any of the groups. However, events are slightly more important to those with a special horticultural interest and those seeking a pleasant day out.

6.6.6 Cross-tabulations between Frequency of Visits and the Factors Affecting Enjoyment of a Garden

There were only two statistical associations revealed by cross-tabulating frequency of visit with the importance of elements of the visitor experience. In relation to the importance of a shop/nursery, more respondents than expected who visited a garden at least once a month thought that a shop/nursery was important. More respondents than expected who visit at least once a month thought that a shop/nursery was important (61.9%). However, fewer than expected respondents who visited a few times a year considered a shop/nursery to be important (44.4%). The other significant relationship refers to the importance of plant labels. This cross-tabulation revealed that those who visit gardens less than once a year consider plant labelling to be less important than those who visit more frequently. To illustrate, 84.8% of respondents who make visits at least once a month consider labels to be important whereas 61.5% of respondents who visit less than once a year concur.

6.6.7 Cross-tabulations between Geographic Location of Garden and the Factors Affecting Enjoyment of a Garden

Several significant associations were ascertained from cross-tabulation of geographic location of garden and factors affecting enjoyment of a garden. Significant associations at the 0.01 level were tidiness of the garden and the provision of a tea-room and a shop.

In relation to tidiness, it appears that tidiness of the garden is more important to visitors at the gardens in Scotland than visitors to gardens in other regions. A suspected explanation for this result is that garden visitors in Scotland appear to be less likely to have special horticultural interests and thus may prefer the traditional notion of a garden as an amenity resource that should be kept in pristine condition. Several important gardens of national recognition do not pride themselves on tidiness, which is considered by some gardeners as an out-dated concept or confined to local authority bedding schemes. The idea of managing gardens in a more natural way may not have filtered to those who have less of an interest in gardening.

Garden visitors in the South of England considered the provision of both a tea-room and a shop to be more important than visitors to gardens in Scotland. A retail facility, particularly one selling plants, is important to purposive visitors who may want to purchase plants seen on the garden visit. The importance of a tea-room is less easily explained, but visitors in Scotland may be going to a succession of sites or taking tea in a village cafe, which may not be the case for residents on a day-trip. In addition, the comfort factor for more mature visitors in the South is another significant explanation in why provision of a tea-room may be more important in the South.

Four other associations were found at the 0.05 level, including ease of access, entry charge, foreign leaflets and toilets. Visitors to all areas considered ease of access to be important, although a higher than expected number of respondents thought that ease of access was very important, reflecting the mature market. Paying a reasonable entry

charge was believed to be more important by visitors in the South, possibly explained by more frequent nature of visits by those with gardening interests in this area. Provision of foreign language leaflets was seen by visitors in Scotland as very important, perhaps reflecting the larger tourist population, and interesting as garden owners in the South saw providing leaflets as more important than those in Scotland. Toilets were viewed as more important in the South, again emphasising the visitor need for comfort in gardens in this area.

6.6.8 Overall Experience

As a final summing up of the visitor experience, respondents were asked to indicate which three influencing factors out of a list of thirteen were the most important to them in relation to their enjoyment of a garden visit. The most important factors included the quality of the garden (75.9%), freedom to wander (46.8%) and a peaceful atmosphere (44.5%). The results can be viewed in Table 6.29.

Table 6.29 The Most Important Influencing Factors in Enjoying a Garden Visit.

	Frequency	Percent of visitors
Quality of the garden	404	75.9
Freedom to wander	256	48.7
Peaceful atmosphere	236	44.5
Weather	211	39.7
Plenty of interest	149	28.2
Toilets	93	17.7
Seats	53	10.0
Staff attitude	52	9.9
Value for money	42	8.0
Good café	36	6.8
Good nursery/shop	28	5.3
Welcome on arrival	14	2.6
Information	13	2.5
Other	2	0.4

6.6.9 Multivariate Analysis of Visitor Experience

In tandem with the multivariate approach used to analyse certain aspects of the garden owner/manager survey, factor analysis was selected as the most appropriate method to further explore the visitor data. Three parts of the visitor questionnaire were considered in the multivariate analysis. These three aspects were selected in order to provide a more in-depth analysis of the visitor experience and comprise: the importance of visitor services (question 7 in the visitor questionnaire), factors affecting enjoyment of gardens (question 24) and additional elements of the visitor experience (question 25).

The main results of the multivariate analysis are outlined in the ensuing sections. In each case, the implications of the findings will be further discussed in relation to the planning and management of the visitor experience in Chapter 8.

(i) Importance of Visitor Services

Factor analysis with a varimax rotation suggests three factors, which explain 59.5% of the variation. The three factors are:

- 1) **Facilities.** This grouping includes tea-room, toilets and car-park and accounts for 22% of the variation;
- 2) **Education.** This grouping includes guide book, children's area, guided walks and events and explains 20% of the variation;
- 3) **Sales.** This grouping includes shop and plant sales and accounts for 17% of the variation explained.

Thus, in relation to the range of visitor services provided by gardens, three main groupings are observable (Table 6.30).

Table 6.30 Importance of Visitor Services: Factor Analysis

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component		
	1	2	3
Importance of shop	.185	.196	.758
Importance of plant sales	5.860E-02	-1.17E-02	.816
Importance of tea room	.613	.106	.422
Importance of toilets	.849	9.800E-02	.122
Importance of car park	.824	5.044E-02	-6.44E-03
Importance of guide book	.362	.395	.242
Importance of kids area	.212	.637	-9.59E-02
Importance of guided walks	8.557E-03	.805	8.277E-02
Importance of events	-6.72E-03	.741	.194

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 5 iterations.

The factor analysis identifies three significant element of the importance of visitor services and demonstrates the relative importance of each in explaining the variation in the data.

(ii) Importance of Aspects of the Visitor Experience

The second area which was subjected to factor analysis was the importance of elements of the visitor experience. Factor analysis with a varimax rotation assists in identifying five factors, which explain 56% of the total variation. The full results of the factor

analysis are displayed in Table 6.31. The five factors which the factor analysis suggests are:

- 1) **Welcome.** This grouping includes the importance of friendliness and helpfulness of staff and the influence of a reasonable entry charge. This factor accounted for 13% of the variation;
- 2) **Access.** This grouping includes the range of variables relating to access features of the garden and accounts for 12% of the variation;
- 3) **Promotions.** This grouping includes elements related to enhancing garden visits by providing additional opportunities for visitors, such as events and translated guides, and accounted for 11% of the variation;
- 4) **Ambience.** This grouping relates to features which affect the general experience of the garden and includes environmental elements such as weather and setting. This factor explains 10% of the variation;
- 5) **Facilities.** This grouping relates to additional facilities in the garden, such as tea-room and retail opportunities and explains 10% of the variation.

The factor analysis has assisted in reducing the original set of variables to a more manageable yet meaningful grouping of elements which can be used to explain the nature of the visitor experience in gardens. In terms of what affects enjoyment of the garden, the five factors suggested by factor analysis are indicative of the major influencing aspects.

Table 6.31 Factors Affecting Enjoyment of Gardens: Factor Analysis

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Importance of weather	-6.75E-02	.138	-.259	.704	.165
Importance of tidiness	8.270E-02	7.407E-02	.264	.643	.174
Importance of setting	.247	2.233E-03	.114	.446	-.164
Importance of safety from crime	.249	.294	.390	.462	-.156
Importance of ease of access	.204	.526	.287	.270	-.230
Importance of pleasurability of strolling	.206	.658	-.119	.130	-.145
Importance of friendliness of staff	.876	.222	2.413E-02	7.917E-02	.139
Importance of helpfulness of staff	.888	.245	2.929E-02	2.280E-02	.106
Importance of entry charge	.418	4.020E-02	.148	.244	.147
Importance of tea room	.157	2.490E-02	-2.01E-04	9.909E-02	.760
Importance of shop/nursery	.193	5.080E-02	.354	-6.09E-02	.605
Importance of range of events	4.510E-02	-2.59E-02	.727	.220	.294
Importance of foreign language leaflets	5.606E-02	.203	.760	-2.71E-02	2.255E-02
Importance of car park	6.149E-02	.639	.169	.181	.259
Importance of plant labels	.234	.519	.160	-.214	.122
Importance of toilets	3.346E-03	.582	6.078E-02	.101	.508

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 10 iterations.

(iii) Additional Elements of the Visitor Experience

Thirdly, factor analysis was applied to the set of additional variables constructed to examine the visitor experience. Factor analysis with a varimax rotation suggested four factors, explaining 55% of the total variation. The results of the factor analysis are displayed in Table 6.32. The four factors are:

- 1) **Safety.** This grouping accounts for 16% of the variation and includes access, health and safety concerns, set routes and the importance of welcoming children;
- 2) **Welcome.** This aspect includes the importance of the visitor welcome, provision of information and the happy feeling after visiting a garden and accounts for 14% of the variation;
- 3) **Facilities.** Shop and tea-room facilities are included in this grouping and explain 13% of the variation;
- 4) **Entertainment.** Explaining 12% of the variation, this grouping includes the desire to visit gardens all year round and the provision of something to see at all times.

Again, factor analysis has allowed the original variables to be reduced to a useful set of elements which assist in explaining the nature and scope of the visitor experience from the perspective of garden visitors.

Table 6.32 Additional Elements of the Visitor Experience: Factor Analysis

Rotated Component Matrix^a

	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Like to be made welcome	6.583E-02	.760	.103	-2.81E-02
Important that access for less abled is good	.627	.361	.108	5.021E-02
Visit for shop/nursery as well as garden	4.190E-02	.149	.758	3.548E-02
Visit for tea room as well as garden	.226	-6.15E-02	.806	8.434E-03
Concerned about health and safety	.697	.167	.295	3.198E-02
Important that children made welcome	.792	-8.10E-02	2.463E-02	4.948E-02
Like to have detailed information	.258	.585	-4.15E-02	.126
Gardens should be open all year round	9.909E-02	5.471E-03	-9.55E-03	.832
Important that there is something to see	2.677E-02	.203	6.859E-02	.772
Like to follow set route	.338	.400	-.124	.112
Feel happy after visiting garden	-.151	.461	.267	.188

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
 Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

6.7 Summary

This chapter has outlined the demand perspective in relation to garden visiting and has presented the main results emanating from a survey of garden visitors. Garden visitors, in profile, appear to be more mature, although there is an increasing trend towards younger, family-based visitors. In addition, there is a propensity for visitors to be in the professional and managerial occupational groupings. The majority of visitors have a general interest in gardening rather than a specialised horticultural interest. It appears

from the research that garden visitors are generally satisfied with their experience of garden visiting, although a few improvements are suggested in relation to some gardens.

An appreciation of the factors affecting visitor satisfaction, including visitor likes and dislikes can assist in developing ideas for best practice in garden attractions. The application of best practice guidelines, however, is difficult as garden attractions are diverse and it would appear that visitor expectations differ according to the type of garden visited. The themes generated by the results are now explored in detail in Chapter 7. One of the essential aims of the next chapter is to compare and contrast the findings of both the garden visitor and the garden owner/manager surveys in order to identify gaps in the perception of the garden experience between the two groups.

Chapter 7 Themes and Implications: Towards an Understanding of Garden Visitation in Great Britain

7.0 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 have demonstrated the wide extent of the research and data collected. Having touched on a range of salient issues in these chapters, it is now an appropriate point to identify the most significant emergent themes and to explore the implications of the research findings. In this chapter, relevant themes are discussed, while Chapter 8 evaluates the implications for the future management of gardens as visitor attractions. In addition to the research findings, it is also pertinent to relate to a number of relevant perspectives from the wider tourism, recreation and management literature so that the themes and implications are sufficiently grounded in the academic literature, rather than appearing as an applied piece of research. As a result, this chapter will synthesise some of the key findings from the primary research and discuss the implications with reference to the perceptions and experiences of garden owners/managers and garden visitors.

More specifically, this chapter investigates the implications, interactions and interconnections within the research findings of the five main issues which form the foci of the thesis, namely:

- Garden visiting;
- The visitor experience;
- The garden owner perspective or supply-related issues;
- The garden visitor perspective or demand-related issues;

- The associations between supply and demand issues, including convergent and divergent relationships between producers and consumers.

In this chapter, these issues group into a series of themes that underpin the rationale for the thesis. By examining the implications of the research results in relation to these themes, a more holistic perspective to understanding garden visitation is made possible. Given that the planning and management of the visitor experience is a critical element in satisfying visitor needs and in meeting the goals of garden owners, the concept features as the central thrust of the discussion. Accordingly, how garden owners approach the management of their garden in relation to visitors is an underlying theme in garden visiting. For this reason, it is important to set the discussion in a context, which can be achieved through an understanding of planning and management, and a clear model of how planning, management and garden visitation interconnect.

Figure 7.1 models the relationships that this chapter will examine, with planning and management being the containing context of garden visiting and management.

Subsequent themes inter-related and interconnected through the constructs of supply and demand. As outlined in Chapter 1, the central element connecting supply and demand in relation to garden visiting is the management of the visitor experience.

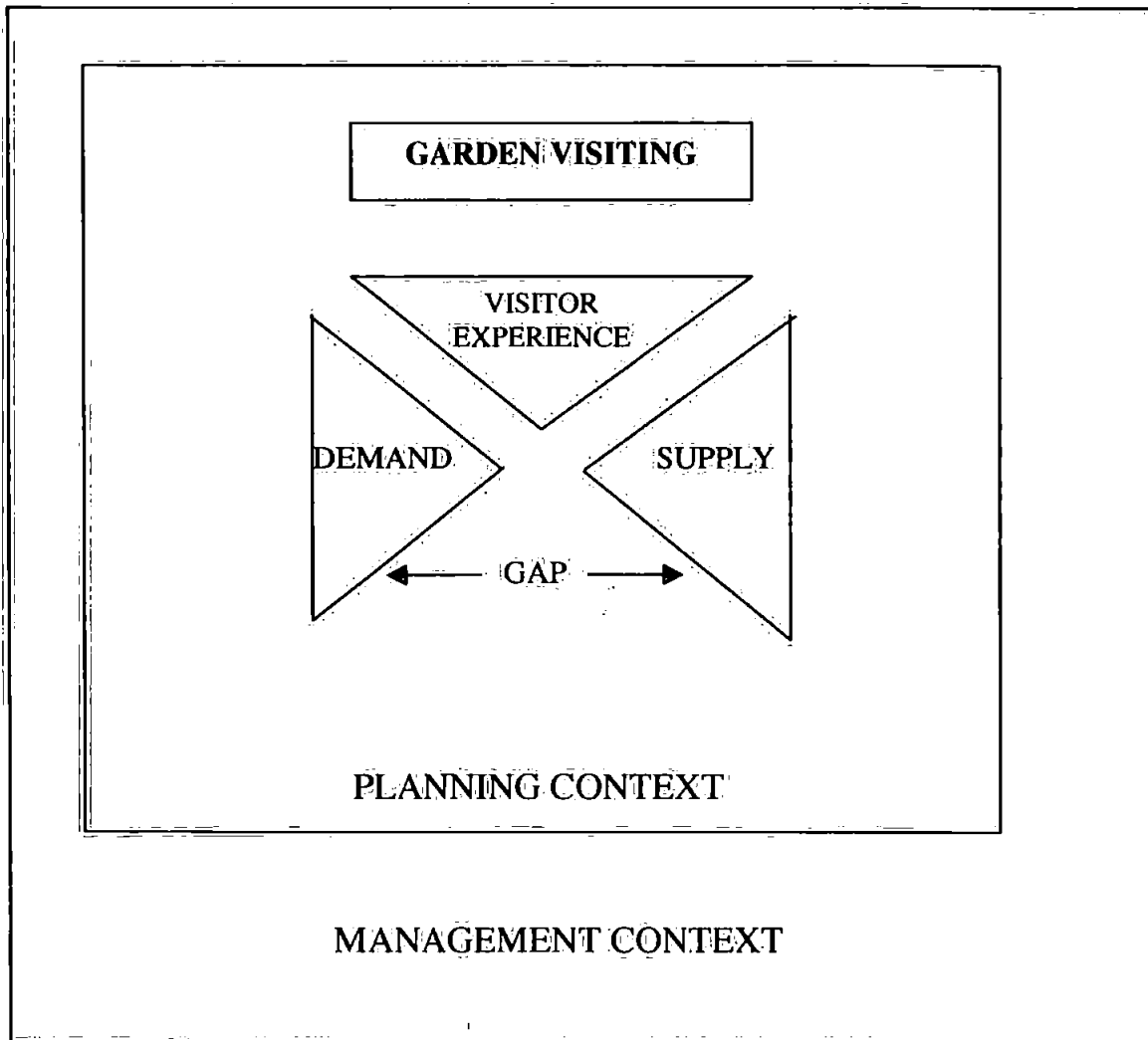


Figure 7.1 Framework of Research Implications – Planning and Management Context.

7.1 The Planning and Management of the Visitor Experience

At a broad level, McLennan *et al.* (1987) define the principal components of management as planning, organising, leading and controlling. Page *et al.* (2001) comment that these four elements are common in most forms of management and have a role to play in the visitor experience. However, in a visitor context, most visitor attractions, of which gardens are deemed to be a category (even though their experiential aspects may not adequately be described in their entirety as attractions), explicitly recognise the strategic functions of management in relation to something as broad and qualitative as the visitor experience. Indeed, the tendency within many visitor attractions (of which gardens are no exception) is that they remain operationally driven. The recent emergence of garden visiting as a strategic tourism and leisure resource in specific areas of Great Britain (such as Cornwall and Scotland) has added value, diversity and depth to the visitor experience of places, localities and regions but to be effective in terms of visitor satisfaction and delivering benefits to gardens and regions, requires considered planning and management.

The research has highlighted that, at a conceptual level, it is possible to identify the components of the 'visitor experience'. However, operationalising the concept in gardens requires *a priori* knowledge of the visitor, their needs, aspirations, expectations and modes of consuming gardens as places for leisure, as well as a clear identification of the role and function of the garden. While gardens with large visitor numbers operate along the lines of more commercial visitor attractions, the norm for many businesses is that the visitor experience is not associated with revenue drivers and profitability as a

prime modus operandi. In many cases, the visitor experience for many owners is associated with the experiential aspects of the *core* product (see Chapter 3), that is, horticulture and some interpretation of collections. Indeed, the starting point for garden owners was not the visitor experience as conceptualised in this thesis, but a more specific dimension, most notably bound up with reasons for opening (such as, charity fundraising). However, for management to be successful in a visitor context, the manager needs to recognise the holistic nature of the visitor experience so that specific actions are embedded in a culture of management that broadly empathises with the visitor's needs and experiential aspects of the visit.

The importance of developing a visit experience might be questioned in the context that those gardens opening only for charity do not warrant greater professionalism. However, a visit to one or two gardens unprepared for visitors can have an effect on the visitor's likelihood to visit another garden if that person is an infrequent or uninitiated visitor to gardens (Price, 2000, personal communication). Even if the garden owner recognises the concept of the visitor experience, the next stage of modelling and reducing the complexity of the garden experience to a series of constructs and elements is a contentious issue, clouded by finance, creativity, engagement with the wider tourism industry and site/location-related aspects. The tendency for gardens to be supply-led in their provision of experiences and the limited understanding, in many cases, of the social psychology and motivational factors associated with garden visiting pose additional difficulties in the application of the visitor experience concept to gardens.

The role of planning and management will be considered through three themes, which have been generated from the empirical research. The three themes are:

- Themes relating to gardens.
- Themes relating to the visitor experience.
- Themes relating to the interconnections between supply (owner) and demand (visitor) perspectives.

7.2 Themes Relating to Gardens

The survey results indicate the existence of two major sets of differences between gardens. The difference in characteristics between private gardens (defined as small, resident operated, non-commercial attractions) and more formalised garden visitor attractions. The second area of interest relates to geographic variations and in particular, the differences between gardens in the north and south of Britain. The issues which arise from an analysis of the differences between these gardens are crucial in the context of planning and management.

7.2.1 Category Differences

The analysis of types of garden in relation to a number of variables was reported in Chapter 5. The results identified significant differences between categories of gardens, most notably between private gardens and other types of more commercial attractions. The characteristics of private gardens, that is those gardens which are not generally classed as visitor attractions, differ from other types of garden in many ways as stated in Chapter 5. These gardens tend to be open for the reason of charity fund-raising. For

those gardens which opened some time ago for charity, the reason for continuing to open have not changed. Resident gardeners, who will tend to be fairly long-term owners, mainly operate private gardens. Entry charges to private gardens are low and opening times are quite limited. In addition, service provision in private gardens is generally quite limited, with only a few such gardens offering catering, retail and other facilities.

Planning and Management Implications for Private Gardens

The survey research found that, in some cases, it was the desire of private garden owners to remain private and, indeed, some were planning to reduce opening times or close altogether. One of the reasons for closure relates to the impacts caused by visitors to gardens, which confirms Garrod, Fyall and Leask's (2002) suggestion that impacts are not confined to larger attractions or those with significant visitor numbers. It appears that gardens attracting only a small number of visitors (less than 2,000, for example) are as prone to physical impacts as those with higher visitor figures. Small private gardens may not always be designed to cope with an excess of trampling and, as a consequence, wear and tear can become a significant problem for owners trying to maintain their garden in its optimum condition. In respect of impacts on the property, some owners were concerned about theft of plant material and artefacts, as well as increasing vulnerability to property crime through exposure of the owner's house to visitors. Overcoming existing and potential impacts requires careful handling, through visitor management. To retain privacy, owners could consider the introduction of various initiatives, such as disallowing or discouraging visitor use of toilets in the house, providing owner guided tours rather than open access or ensuring that visitors are made aware that taking cuttings and seeds is

inappropriate behaviour. Strategies for reducing visitor impacts were reported by some owners, but such owners were in the minority, suggesting that owners/mangers are not concerned about impacts or cannot think of solutions to the site problems.

Those gardens planning to expand visitor numbers may be constrained by difficulties in marketing, relating to cost and distribution. Potentially, the most suitable recommendation is to engage in a collaborative venture with other gardens (see Chapter 8 for further discussion on collaboration as a way forward for gardens). At present, collaborative marketing is mainly achieved through the National Gardens Scheme *Yellow Book* and many gardens report that the NGS is the most effective marketing tool for attracting visitors to their garden. However, some evidence to the contrary from some garden owners (sent in accompanying letters with returned questionnaires) that the details contained in the book are inadequately composed and have an adverse effect on visitor numbers. If gardens wish to expand visitation, the market for gardens reliant on the *Yellow Book* is limited to enthusiasts and more purposive visitors, as opposed to those looking for a pleasant day out or something to do on a sunny day. Planning for expansion is thus required and a consideration of how effective marketing may be achieved, and how a wider market may be reached, is necessary.

Positive levels of social contact typify the private garden due to the small-scale of visitation and the owner involvement in opening the garden. It is clear from the garden visitor survey that social encounters with garden owners and staff are very important. A consideration of the extent and form of social interaction is a crucial aspect of small,

private garden management in relation to the visitor experience. Social contact is an aspect of the visitor experience more easily controlled by private gardens than commercially run ventures employing staff, so private gardens may have some competitive advantage in this respect. However, an individual running a small, private garden can be a negative factor. Gardens run by the owner and /or volunteers and family members are not necessarily sustainable in the long-term as people lose interest and health and availability of goodwill place limitations on opening. In addition, because the costs of opening a garden can exceed the revenue gained from admission, a financial burden is placed on those participating in schemes such as the NGS, which may lead to doubts over the viability of opening for charity.

There is a danger that private gardens could be squeezed out of the marketplace as experience becomes outmoded and visitors abandon for more facility-driven attractions, as suggested by the general literature on attractions (Stevens, 2000). However, the survey results do not suggest that visitors are dissatisfied with their experiences of small private gardens and it is possible that such attractions are exempt from the dynamics of the commercial visitor attraction sector, in which other types of garden may be categorised.

The future for private gardens appears to be more intrinsically bound up with the owner's capability to manage the garden in physical and financial terms. Health, age and financial aspects were viewed as the **most** critical aspects rather than attracting more visitors or maintaining high standards as in the case of other types of garden.

Consequently, questions about the future viability of many sites are raised. Planning for the future has been considered by some owners, as the scoping exercise in Cornwall revealed some garden owners are considering the development of charitable trust status to ensure that the garden remains in perpetuity. For example, Trebah Gardens is now a Trust and another elderly garden owner was about to set up a similar deed for another of the gardens in Cornwall.

7.2.2 Geographic Differences

A range of geographic variations from the survey findings has been discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. One particular area that warrants further discussion is the difference between gardens in Scotland and the South of England (in the generic sense, including the South, South-East and South-West regions). Some of these differences highlight a need for the application of more structural tourism planning principles to ensure future success, others are worthy of note in the context of managing attractions in differing environments.

Table 7.1 identifies the major differences between gardens in Scotland and the South of England. While there are two similarities with the South-West of England, the visitor profile, service provision and management of gardens in the two regions appear to be distinctly different. The issues raise several significant implications for gardens in both regions, which will be discussed in the following section.

**Table 7.1 Geographic Variations in Garden Visitation and Management:
Scotland and the South of England**

SCOTLAND	SOUTH OF ENGLAND
Low provision of teas and toilets	Higher provision of teas and toilets
High provision of children's areas	Low provision of children's areas
Low entry charges	Higher entry charges
Visitors consider facilities less important	Visitors consider facilities important, especially a shop, tea-room and toilets
Visitors consider ease of access to be less important	Visitors consider ease of access to be important
Many visitors on holiday	Many visitors on day-trips
Mostly casual reasons for visiting	Mostly purposive reasons for visiting
Higher numbers of gardens reporting declining visitor numbers	Lower numbers of gardens reporting declining visitor numbers
Younger visitor profile	Older visitor profile
More visitors with children under 16	Fewer visitors with children under 16
Many visitors just looking for a pleasant day out	Many visitors with special horticultural or gardening interest
Visitors more likely to travel long distance to garden	Visitors less likely to travel long distance to garden
Owners consider setting of garden to be very important	Owners in South-West consider setting to be important
Owners consider events to be more important	Owners consider events to be unimportant but foreign language leaflets to be important
Weather is viewed as a negative influence on visits	Weather is viewed less as a negative influence on visits
Tourist Board viewed as important in marketing gardens	Tourist Board only seen as important in the South-West
Management issues identified as attracting visitors and financing gardens	Management issues identified as maintaining standards and managing impacts

Planning and Management Implications for Gardens in Different Geographic Areas

The implications of the findings relating to geographic variations can be explored at a micro level, relating to the operational aspects of gardens, and at a macro level, in terms of the wider issues of regional tourism development. With regard to garden management

at the micro level, gardens in Scotland appear to exhibit a much lower level of service provision than those in the South of England, with the exception of children's areas.

Whether the level of provision reflects the more demanding needs of visitors in the South, or whether Scottish visitor attractions have not grappled with the need to provide such services is debatable. Leask and Goulding (1996) commented that many Scottish visitor attractions have a curatorial rather than commercial outlook. However, it would appear that satisfaction levels are no different between visitors in the two regions and thus it seems that gardens in Scotland are providing a desirable product to visitors.

Visitors seem to consider facilities to be of less importance than visitors to gardens in the South. Whether this situation will endure is uncertain.

The survey data in Chapter 6 indicated that garden visitors in Scotland have more casual reasons for visiting than those in the South and this difference could explain the variation in visitor facilities, where gardens in Scotland appear to exhibit lower levels of service provision. Gardens in the South may need to be geared towards the needs of the visitors in terms of providing a level of comfort required by a more mature market (such as being able to sit with a cup of tea and use toilets). In addition, because many visitors are day-trippers and visiting in many cases to get ideas for their own garden and then to purchase plants, such retail facilities are demanded by the market. However, the potential for further developing the garden product in Scotland is apparent. In the light of recommendations from commentators on the future viability of attractions (see Chapter 8), such as Stevens (2000), it would seem that gardens in Scotland are in danger of

becoming outdated and unable to meet the needs of the visitor. Consequently, recognition of the research findings at a macro level is crucial.

Garrod, Fyall and Leask (2002: 265) comment that Scotland is likely to witness some “testing times over the coming decade” in relation to its visitor attraction market as well as in the wider tourism industry. The strategy of investing in flagship projects, such as Edinburgh’s Our Dynamic Earth, the Scottish Seabird Centre in North Berwick and the underperforming Science Centre in Glasgow, has undermined reinvestment in exiting sites. The well-promoted new sites will undoubtedly compete for the ‘casual’ visitor and may damage the ability of small garden attractions to compete in the marketplace over the long-term. That said, VisitScotland has identified garden tourism as one of its main products and is committed to pursuing the gardens market as part of its tourism portfolio (Scottish Tourist Board, 2000). What VisitScotland will need to acknowledge are the findings from the survey of garden owners. It is clear, and quite distinct from other regions, that garden owners in Scotland view the difficulty of attracting visitors as a key issue for the future management of their operations. The task of attracting visitors does not just refer to attracting visitors to gardens but drawing visitors to Scotland. Thus, it appears that VisitScotland must perform in bringing in visitors as a precursor to the success of garden visitor attractions.

In the South of England, where a substantive resident population can support the existence of a large number of gardens, regardless of Tourist Board efforts, the issue is of less significance. The future of garden visitor attractions in Scotland thus appears to be

subject to the vagaries of tourism planning at a regional level. A positive aspect of the current garden visitor market is the appeal to a wide market, albeit a more tourist-oriented one which can fluctuate, as seen through the Foot and Mouth crisis and the September 11th terrorist attacks in 2001. Indeed, the downturn in visitor numbers to Scotland has been exacerbated by such events and signs for improvement are not encouraging. It is possible that some small gardens may not survive the crisis in visitor numbers. The example of Crarae Gardens on the West Coast of Scotland provides an example of where lack of funds and the demise of operating funds forced closure in July 2001 (RHS, 2002).

For gardens in the South of England, maintaining high standards and coping with the pressure of visits are the significant management issues. These issues reflect the demands of the marketplace and connote that garden visiting in the South is thriving. However, the survey results yield some significant concerns for gardens in this region too. Gardens in Scotland appeal to the younger market, whereas the traditional mature age profile typifies garden visitation in the South. In relation to marketing planning and product development, some garden owners might consider how a wider market may be attracted to visit gardens, although if the current market is yielding sufficient visitor numbers, then expansion might be inappropriate. There is certainly more competition in the South for visitors, between gardens and between gardens and other leisure pursuits. Visitors are less likely than in Scotland to travel a long distance to a garden, unless it has a unique selling proposition (USP). For example, visitors were more willing to travel to Snowhill Manor Garden in the Cotswolds, as it surrounds a Tudor mansion house and

has an association with a famous person. In addition, because it has National Trust status, the garden achieves wider market penetration.

The survey results indicate that the visitor market is more stable in the South as it comprises a greater proportion of residents rather than holidaymakers and is therefore less reliant on a fluctuating tourist base. For tourism planning and development purposes, the concentration of local visitors connotes that more of a captive market exists and less effort has to be made by regional tourism organisations to attract visitors to gardens *per se*. However, it is still important for individual gardens to differentiate themselves in a competitive marketplace. So, planning themes for such gardens need to focus on developing and enhancing USP and ensuring that comfort and quality requirements are met. In addition, because the appeal of gardens in the South appears to be more aligned to those with special horticultural knowledge and gardening enthusiasts, rather than those just looking for a pleasant day out, horticultural quality and standards need to be very high and planning to meet the information needs of such visitors must be paramount.

Overall, the geographic analysis of the data reveals that the broad planning and management issue for Scotland's garden visitor attractions is firmly based on the ability to survive. The major difficulty for Scotland is more structural in nature and relates to attracting sufficient numbers of visitors to the area as well as drawing visitors to gardens. In the South of England, maintaining and enhancing the quality of gardens and facilities to meet the demands of a sophisticated audience and to be able to operate successfully in a competitive market are the priorities.

7.3 Themes Relating to the Visitor Experience

The second set of themes identified from the research relate to the visitor experience. A particular focus of the research objectives was to clarify how the experience might be deconstructed from a rather nebulous concept to a more operational idea, enabling operators to identify components of the experience and to plan and manage product design and delivery. An approach to isolating the facets influencing the visitor experience is presented and explained in this section. As a precursor, some discussion on the philosophy towards the management of the visitor experience, which appears to be embedded in the style of management adopted by garden owners, is included.

7.3.1 Management Styles and the Garden Visitor Experience

Researching the management of the visitor experience in gardens has highlighted the existence of a number of generic styles among garden owners/managers. At a general level, management style is likely to be influenced by several factors, including the personality, experience and the level of confidence of the manager (Swarbrooke, 2002), as well as personality traits such as an aptitude to engage with basic principles of organising, leading, controlling and planning in their garden. The motivation of the manager in opening the garden needs to be taken into account as the survey results indicate that those gardens open as commercial enterprises differ from private gardens open for charity fund-raising.

Swarbrooke (2002) suggests that the link between management styles and visitors is based on two elements: first, the degree of contact between the manager and the visitor;

and second, the system designed to manage the experience. The survey of garden owners shows that contact with visitors is a priority for garden owners, with 97.8 per cent indicating that they make visitors to their garden feel welcome and over 80 per cent of owners considered the friendliness and helpfulness of staff to be important in determining the visitor experience. Thus, the impression given by the survey findings is one of a strong degree of contact between visitors and owners and a strong recognition that contact with visitors is important.

The second element suggested by Swarbrooke (2002) is concerned with the systems developed to manage the experience of visitors (such as how customer complaints are dealt with). While 'system' may be too formal a word to describe the style of many small garden owners, it is clear from the survey findings that even those gardens only open for a limited amount of time care about the visitors to their garden and recognise the importance of elements that affect the visitor experience. As discussed in Chapter 5, while private gardens are less likely to provide purpose-built facilities for visitors, the type of experience on offer at a small private garden is different to that of a more commercial garden operating as a profit-making visitor attraction. In general terms, the type of management referred to in this research is concerned mainly with the daily management of the site. Effective and appropriate management of operations can assist in enhancing the quality of the visitor experience, as Swarbrooke (2002) suggests.

The high degree of satisfaction shown by visitors to the survey gardens indicates that visitors understand the type of garden to which they have made a visit, thus a large range

of services would not be expected at a private garden but might be expected at a commercial garden. Certainly, the open-ended responses gained from visitors confirm that low-key gardens are equally as enjoyable as commercial visitor attractions. The concept suggested by this relationship is that of the principles of hospitality and the degree of reciprocity involved in the encounter between the garden owner and visitor would appear to play a central role in the visitor experience. The garden visitor enjoys the hospitality offered by the garden owner and the opportunity to enter someone's private domain in the case of infrequently opened private gardens. Such aspects are more fundamental to the visitor experience than the professional management of the garden and supporting facilities. In this respect, gardens are unique in the context of visitor attractions and thus warrant special attention in relation to owner and visitor perspectives on management and experiences, as the wider research information on attractions may only be partially relevant.

The research indicates that the visitor experience is a central element of the garden as a leisure resource and attention now turns to ways of modelling the experience in an attempt to synthesise the complexity of the data.

7.4 Modelling the Visitor Experience

If the assumption that managing the visitor experience is intended to give the visitor a satisfying, gratifying and rewarding visit which portrays the garden and its attributes in a favourable manner, then the management of this experience is critical to achieving satisfaction. Managing the visitor experience is a difficult task because there are many

different forces, which combine to influence an individual's experience of place. Due to the complexity of understanding the real world situation of garden visiting, it is beneficial to construct a model of garden visitor experience, simplifying it into a series of inter-related constructs, which can assist in conveying the complexity in an understandable and logical manner. Within geography, as with other social science disciplines (see Johnston 1991), this debate has focused on the role of logical positivism and methods of scientific explanation. In this context, conventional knowledge on the visitor experience of gardens was limited and so prior to any attempt to model the visitor experience as a series of constructs, extensive scoping and qualitative discussions with garden owners and visitors established a range of themes and issues which might help in understanding how the visitor experience was constituted, constructed and mediated between the visitor, garden and place visited.

Based on the data presented in Chapters 5 and 6 and the findings generated by the scoping exercise in Chapter 4, Figure 7.2 broadly illustrates the range of factors which contribute to the consumption of place and, ultimately, to the formation of the visitor experience in gardens within Great Britain. The model has been developed using evidence from the owner/manager survey data and scoping exercise as well as that gleaned from the visitor survey. Using the visitor findings alone would have limited the range of issues by concealing the more covert aspects of which visitors are less aware, akin to Law's (1995) 'line of visibility' notion. Thus, while garden visitors may not be aware of the effect, for example, of external factors on the visit experience, garden

owners are more able to emphasise the impact of such aspects on the overall management of the garden as a visitor attraction.

The model presented in Figure 7.2 has a number of key elements which contribute to the holistic analysis of the visitor experience. To gain a better understanding of the model, the experience has to be viewed as a dynamic phenomenon with a series of inter-related aspects, some of which condition the visitor's experience and others more independent of the visit and the locality visited. Some of these aspects are within the full or partial control of owners/managers but, in other cases, owners/managers are able to exert little or no control (see Table 7.2). The range of aspects which influence the visitor experience include supply, demand, environmental, personal, site-specific and external factors. The role of each of these aspects is now considered.

7.4.1 The Role of Supply Factors

Supply factors relate to the quantity and accessibility of garden attractions available to the visitor. For individual gardens, supply factors relate to opening times, admission charges, marketing and location. While these aspects relate to the micro level, supply factors are also relevant at the macro level, for instance, the number of gardens open and the existence of competing attractions. Supply factors are partially controllable by garden owners as certain elements, such as opening times, price and marketing, are within the direct remit of management control. However, the range of competitors and competing leisure pursuits adds a level of uncertainty to the supply of an individual garden experience.

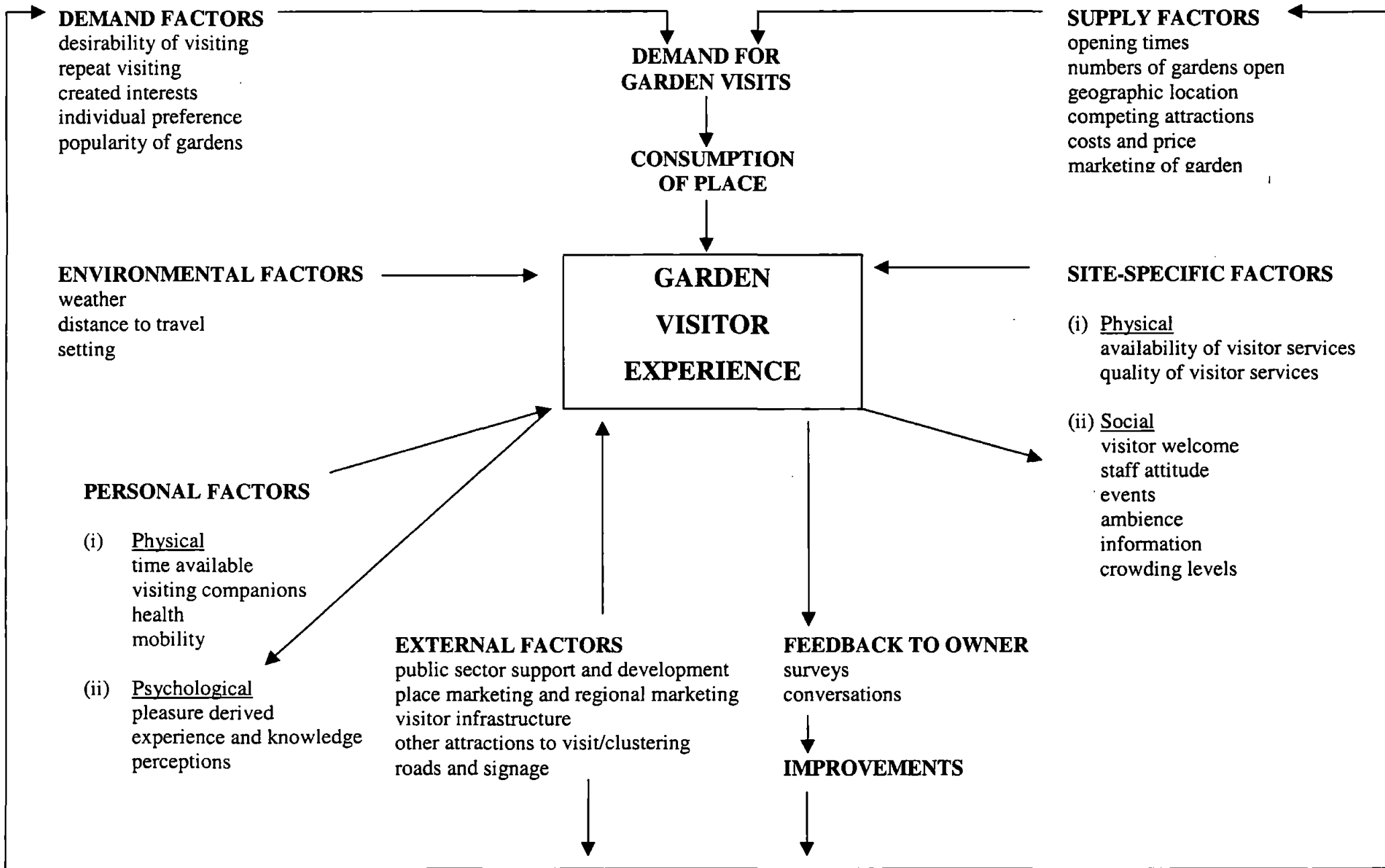


Figure 7.2 Modelling the Factors Influencing the Garden Visitor Experience

7.4.2 The Role of Demand Factors

Demand factors relate to the level of visitor demand for visiting gardens. Such factors, too, operate at two levels: at the macro level, demand may be examined for garden visiting generally; at the micro level, demand also exists for visiting a particular garden. The desirability of visiting a particular garden may be emulated by media coverage and created images may stimulate visits. Levels of repeat visitation, that is the incidence of visitors returning to a garden more than once, indicate the nature of demand for a particular garden. Needs and wants of the visitor may be reflected in the style and ambience that a particular garden offers. Demand is partially controllable by the garden owner, who is able to use marketing tools to create desire for garden visits. The desirability of the garden as a visitor attraction and the ability of the owner to communicate effectively with the media will dictate the extent of demand.

7.4.3 The Role of Environmental Factors

Environmental factors include the ephemeral aspects associated with gardens, for example, the condition of the weather, the time of year and the time of day, all of which will have a greater or lesser impact on the visitor's perception of the garden. For example, autumn colours or spring flowers can change the appearance of a garden dramatically with a subsequent effect on the visitor experience. Similarly, weather is a central component of the visitor experience as illustrated by the survey findings, where most owners and visitors considered the condition of the weather to be a significant aspect in determining enjoyment of visiting a garden. The ETC *et al.* (2001) validate the importance of the weather in managing attraction generally and state that it creates

substantive positive *and* negative influences on visitor numbers. In 2000, 37 per cent of attraction owners stated that the weather had a detrimental effect on visitor numbers, while 24 per cent reported a positive impact.

Other environmental factors include the setting of the garden, that is the physical context in which the garden is placed, and the size of the garden. The key aspect about environmental factors is that garden owners cannot alter them.

7.4.4 The Role of Personal Factors

Personal factors relate to influences that emanate directly from the visitor and are likely to be specific to an individual. In Chapter 3, reference was made to Canter's (1975) delineation of the personal meanings that people bring to a particular environment and it was noted that personal conception was one of three aspects which comprise sense of place. Consequently, personal factors are likely to have a major effect on the visit experience.

At a fundamental level, personal factors include **physical** aspects relating directly to tangible elements of the visit, such as the state of health of the visitor (for example, a visitor may have a minor illness that day); the ability of the visitor to access all parts of the garden (for example, those with pushchairs or those with mobility problems); accompanying children who become bored with the visit; and not leaving sufficient time for a visit to a garden. These examples were just a few that arose in the survey of garden visitors. Such factors are out of the control of garden owners because they are generated

by individual circumstances and would likely be replicated in another environment.

Personal factors also have a **psychological** element, which is less tangible and relates to the state of mind of the individual, how they perceive an environment and as Canter (1975) postulated, the meanings which people bring to a location. Thus, the extent of how pleasurable an individual finds a garden should be accounted for and this is likely to be affected by taste, previous experience, mood and any internalised conditions which affect response to environments (see, for example, Lowenthal and Prince, 1965; Uzzell, 1991). While personal factors directly affect the visitor experience, the process can work in reverse with the visit experience affecting the psychological response of the visitor. Each visit to an attraction adds to the experience and knowledge of garden visiting and colours the perception of the garden environment.

7.4.5 The Role of Site-Specific Factors

Site-specific factors relate to a wide range of aspects that are likely to affect the visitor's enjoyment of the garden. Factors include the range and quality of visitor services and facilities available, the attitude of staff working in the garden, the visitor welcome, ambience and levels of crowding. Site-specific factors are within the direct control of the owner and, as such, can be manipulated to form the most desirable experience for the visitor. A distinction should be made between two forms of site-specific factors. The first form is **social factors**, relating to the social organisation of the visitor experience and including aspects such as the helpfulness of staff/owners, friendliness of staff/owners, the visitor welcome, information and interpretation, plant labelling, a safe environment and a range of events for visitors. The second form relates more to the

garden infrastructure and may be termed **physical factors**. This form includes the built environment such as a tea-room shop, car park, toilets, litter bins, children's play area and other physical attributes such as ease of access. Physical factors also include planting and design-related aspects, such as tidiness, variety, and quality of the garden. It is likely that site-specific factors will account for the most significant volume of aspects affecting the visitor experience. Site-specific factors may be altered by the experience of visitors through feedback mechanisms leading to owner/manager evaluation of site quality and site improvements.

7.4.6 The Role of External Factors

External factors refer to the wider arena in which the garden operates and again, are largely out of the direct control of the garden owner. The affect of policy in relation to tourism marketing, local authority planning policies and practice, regional support and development is likely to impact on garden attractions. In particular, the ability to attract adequate numbers may be partially dependent on the number of visitors in the locality in the first place and it is this function of tourism marketing bodies that can be variable.

External factors also include the quality of the visitor infrastructure in which the garden is located, such as the availability of visitor accommodation and catering, the quality of roads and signage, local information points and the number and quality of other attractions that may appeal to the visitor. It is also important to recognise the growing policy interest in gardens as niche visitor products by tourism organisations but a limited investment potential in the infrastructure to support such development. The exception to this seeming lack of investment is in Cornwall where Objective 1 funding from the

European Commission is directed towards garden infrastructure development in a three-year project (see Chapter 3).

External factors are likely to affect demand and supply of gardens, particularly in relation to the marketing efforts of national and regional tourism organisations and in more structural tourism policy development. External aspects may also be influenced by lobbying from attraction operators, tourism associations, local residents and visitors, for example in the improvement of roads, signage and marketing.

7.4.7 Applying the Model

Visitor feedback will be generated on all of the six factors, although it is clear from the results of the owner survey that only a few gardens conduct formal surveys of visitors. However, informal feedback through conversations with visitors often help to inform owners about what is liked or disliked in their garden. If resources are available, improvements can be made in the light of visitor feedback and/or owner intuition that will enhance site-specific or supply aspects and assist in maintaining or creating demand for garden visits. Feedback may be supplied from garden owners and visitors to those able to influence and direct external factors, as identified in the previous section.

7.4.8 Management Control and the Visitor Experience

As mentioned earlier, while some factors are controllable by managers, others are less so or, in some cases, not at all within the realms of management control (see Table 7.2). Lack of control over the future direction of the garden as an attraction is borne out by the

results of the garden owner survey, where factors affecting the future management of gardens were noted. External factors, such as the efforts of a tourism marketing authority in attracting visitors to a region, were viewed as potential threats to gardens as visitor enterprises. Some garden owners in specific areas believed that their Tourist Board was neglectful in relation to marketing their local area. In another case, the efforts of a Tourist Board in promoting gardens was viewed with disdain by several garden owners as a result of a poorly presented campaign which gave misleading information to visitors. What is indicated here is that there is a lack of engagement between policy and promotional bodies and the industry.

Table 7.2 Level of Management Control over Factors Affecting the Visitor Experience

Level of control over experiential factors

	FULL CONTROL	PARTIAL CONTROL	NO CONTROL
SUPPLY		♦	
DEMAND		♦	
ENVIRONMENTAL			♦
PERSONAL			♦
SITE-SPECIFIC	♦		
EXTERNAL			♦

It is clear that the site-specific factors are the only aspects within full control of garden owners (and then, only within the available resource framework). Environmental factors are most probably the least controllable aspects, although garden owners may provide wet weather alternatives (such as a visitor centre and indoor plant area) to enhance the garden's appeal in spells of inclement weather. Thus, those gardens with renowned tea-rooms, shops and undercover plant sales are more likely to attract visitors in inclement

weather than those without such facilities. However, the garden setting cannot be altered. Demand and supply factors are partially controllable by garden owners as to some extent these factors can be managed. In relation to supply, opening times, pricing and marketing can be predetermined by the owner/manager. With respect to demand factors, the attractiveness and image of a garden are the key aspects to plan out in terms of creating demand for garden visits. Other aspects of supply and demand are not within the realms of owner control, such as number of other gardens open, level of interest in gardens and the scale and nature of competing attractions.

In response to the question of which set of factors is most likely to affect the visitor experience, while it may be inappropriate to generalise about individual's responses to environments, the data collected in the research indicates several important traits about influences on the garden visit experience. It is clear that site-specific factors form the most significant category of influences on the garden visit experience. While an evaluation of the factors most and least liked by visitors reveals that site-specific factors are crucial, environmental, personal, external and supply factors achieve some eminence. In particular, the weather (environmental factor) forms the single most prominent factor as a negative effect on the visitor experience, highlighted by 14 per cent of visitors. Personal factors accounted for 3.1 per cent of negative effects, supply for 0.8 per cent and external (in the guise of road signs requiring improvement) for 1.3 per cent.

The model of the garden visitor experience is sufficiently broad to be applied to most other forms of attraction in identifying the determinants of the experiential visit outcome.

Indeed, the control factors affecting the visitor experience are of relevance to operators of other attractions. The balance of control may be different for types of enterprise as well as specific businesses but the general set of influencing factors are likely to be the same. Having conceptualised the factors affecting the visitor experience, the degree of convergence between owners/managers and visitors in relation to the perception and experience of garden visit management is now explored.

7.5 Themes Relating to Supply and Demand Interconnections

While the key findings have been established in relation to owner and visitor perspectives, the relationship between the two sets of groups in terms of attitudes and perception is now explored. The rationale for conducting a comparative analysis has already been conveyed in Chapter 3. The work of Parasuraman, Zeithmal and Berry (1985) and the concept of gap analysis is a valuable focus in an attempt to understand the implications of the research because, like the approach taken in this thesis, it takes a dyadic perspective and considers the interaction between the producer and consumer. However, in extending Parasuraman *et al.*'s (1985) model, Vogt and Fesenmaier (1995) stipulate that, in a visitor context, it is more important to recognise **experience** rather than **expectations** and whether the experiences of consumer and producer coincides. Accordingly, the focus of the research on garden visitation takes a more experiential dimension rather than an expectation approach.

7.5.1 The Visitor Experience: A Comparison of the Demand and Supply Perspectives

While Chapters 5 and 6 reported the results of the owner and visitor surveys respectively, so far, little attempt has been made to systematically compare the results where possible of the two surveys where similarities and differences may be observed. In order to provide an insight into the perceptions and experiences of owners and visitors, particularly with a view to determining whether there are any significant gaps between the two groups, a comparison of the responses ascertained from questions on the visitor experience is appropriate. While a statistical modelling or structural equation approach to relating the two aspects is not feasible, as techniques do not readily permit analysis of two independent sets of data, some observations can be made by examining the existing analysis of the data.

The survey results suggest that any gaps in service provision are minimal in relation to gardens. Table 7.3 illustrates the mean average scores obtained in relation to the importance of elements of the visitor experience and provides a comparison between the average means scored by owners/managers and visitors for each aspect of the visitor experience. The correlation coefficient was also calculated, the value of which was 0.91, indicating very strong positive relationship between the two sets of data. In other words, there are few statistical differences between the responses of garden owners/managers and garden visitors. To confirm this finding, the Wilcoxon matched-pairs test was used to test the significance between the scores obtained. The Wilcoxon matched-pairs test gave a significance value of 0.14, thus indicating no statistical association.

Further exploration of the data, however, did appear to reveal some differences in response levels between garden owners and visitors. Table 7.4 presents the scores obtained from both owners and visitors in relation to the degree of importance attached to elements of the visitor experience. Table 7.4 does seem to show a **difference in emphasis** in some cases between garden owners and visitors. For example, there are quite large inconsistencies between owner and visitor responses in relation to the 'very important' category of responses. These disparities relate to the importance of weather, friendliness of staff, helpfulness of staff and plant labels. While the overall importance is not vastly dissimilar, the differences in 'very important' responses appeared to be worth further probing. A Wilcoxon matched-pairs test was conducted to test the significance of the data. However, no significant associations were found at acceptable confidence levels between owner and visitor responses, with a significance value of 0.394 calculated in relation to 'very important' scores, and 0.61 in relation to 'very important' and 'important' scores together.

7.5.2 Implications for Managing the Visitor Experience: A Case of Consensus Management

Having found very few differences between owner and visitor responses, it appears that there is a high degree of convergence between the two groups in terms of what constitutes a desirable garden visitor experience. Thus, garden visiting, and managing a garden for visitors, is based on consumption and management around a commonly agreed range of core values, that is, the attributes of the garden. Where there is a degree of

divergence, it is on specific attributes associated with individual gardens. However, in most cases, garden owners were aware of problematic areas in the garden (such as lack of labelling) and their fears were confirmed by the survey results.

The main finding from this work is that, as a visitor attraction, gardens create high satisfaction levels for visitors. Understanding the consensus between owners and visitors in terms of the visitor experience may assist other visitor attractions in recognising how to create visitor satisfaction and success. It might be asked whether consensus occurs as a result of a set of like-minded people visiting. While it is clear that a more mature market dominates the profile of garden visitors, a diversity of visitor types has been identified in the survey. While some visitors possess a specific horticultural interest, others have a more general interest in gardens with some just seeking for a pleasant environment in which to spend some leisure time. It is clear that most of the visitors were interested in gardens, but the sample population was certainly not homogenous. Thus, the lessons for the attraction sector are profound with a narrow gap in experiential perceptions as opposed to major gap in some cases. This degree of convergence is unusual in the tourism and leisure literature (Witter, 1985; Martin, McCool and Lucas, 1989; Saleh and Ryan, 1991; Vogt and Fesenmaier, 1995). With only a small gap to address in some areas, it is a question of adding value to an experience that is highly satisfactory and unlikely to generate dissatisfaction in many aspects of the visitor experience.

Table 7.3 Comparison of Means Obtained from Owner and Visitor Survey in Relation to the Factors Affecting the Visitor Experience¹

	Mean Average Owner/Manager (x)	Mean Average Visitor (y)	Difference (y-x)
Importance of weather	1.53	1.98	+0.45
Importance of tidiness	1.88	2.19	+0.31
Importance of setting	1.87	1.87	0
Importance of safety from crime	3.33	2.66	-0.67
Importance of ease of access	2.29	2.14	-0.15
Importance of pleasurability of strolling	1.43	1.40	-0.03
Importance of friendliness of staff	1.58	1.70	+0.12
Importance of helpfulness of staff	1.61	1.66	+0.05
Importance of a reasonable entry charge	2.11	1.79	-0.32
Importance of tea-room	2.68	2.52	-0.16
Importance of shop/nursery	2.98	2.70	-0.28
Importance of events	3.87	3.93	+0.06
Importance of foreign language leaflets	4.29	4.07	-0.22
Importance of car-park	2.71	2.19	-0.52
Importance of plant labels	2.8	1.80	-1.00
TOTAL MEAN AVERAGE	36.96	34.60	-2.36

¹ The scale used in the table is 1 = very important through to 5 = of no importance

Table 7.4 Comparison of Results from Owner and Visitor Surveys in Relation to the Factors Affecting the Visitor Experience

		<i>Percentage of respondents</i>				
		Very important	Quite important	Don't know	Of little importance	Of no importance
Importance of weather	Owner	60.8	31.0	4.0	2.8	1.4
	Visitor	31.7	52.5	3.5	10.9	1.3
Importance of tidiness	Owner	38.8	42.1	12.6	5.8	0.7
	Visitor	25.0	50.6	7.1	15.2	2.1
Importance of setting	Owner	47.6	32.2	9.4	7.1	3.7
	Visitor	35.8	50.9	5.4	6.7	1.1
Importance of safety from crime	Owner	12.6	18.7	21.6	17.9	29.2
	Visitor	24.5	28.1	18.4	15.3	13.8
Importance of access	Owner	20.5	46.9	19.1	10.1	3.4
	Visitor	31.4	43.4	7.7	15.2	2.3
Importance of pleasurability of strolling	Owner	67.2	26.8	3.5	1.0	1.4
	Visitor	65.0	31.2	3.0	0.6	0.2
Importance of friendliness of staff	Owner	64.2	24.4	5.3	1.3	4.9
	Visitor	42.4	48.4	6.0	2.8	0.4
Importance of helpfulness of staff	Owner	62.4	26.2	4.7	1.6	5.1
	Visitor	44.8	47.0	5.4	2.6	0.2
Importance of reasonable entry charge	Owner	26.8	49.9	11.6	8.2	3.4
	Visitor	40.7	47.3	4.9	6.1	0.9
Importance of tea-room	Owner	23.5	37.6	9.6	5.6	23.6
	Visitor	22.7	42.5	11.5	18.2	5.1
Importance of shop/nursery	Owner	18.3	31.4	13.5	8.0	28.8
	Visitor	11.6	44.1	14.1	22.5	7.6
Importance of events	Owner	5.7	16.2	13.5	14.5	50.0
	Visitor	2.2	7.0	17.4	42.5	30.9
Importance of foreign language leaflets	Owner	2.1	7.1	12.8	15.6	62.4
	Visitor	3.5	11.3	9.6	26.0	49.6
Importance of car-park	Owner	21.6	35.2	13.0	10.6	19.6
	Visitor	21.1	56.4	10.2	7.6	4.7
Importance of plant labels	Owner	15.2	34.6	18.9	17.2	14.1
	Visitor	44.5	41.5	5.9	5.3	2.8

7.6 Summary: Planning and Management of Gardens as Visitor Attractions

This chapter has presented a range of themes and implications emerging from the research. The discussion identified that differences were detectable between categories of garden and that geographic variations existed in the data. As such, different approaches to planning and management of disparate types of garden and gardens in dissimilar areas are required. Planning and management solutions to specific challenges and problems need to be considered at both the macro and micro levels. The visitor experience has been deconstructed to portray its component parts and it has been seen that not all elements of the experience can be controlled directly by site operators. The degree of convergence between garden owners and visitors in respect of the meeting the requirements of the visitor experience is encouraging, but the dynamics of the visitor market must be acknowledged and accordingly garden owners should not remain complacent about visitor satisfaction.

Currently, gardens are in a position of strength in terms of providing a satisfactory visitor experience. However, concepts such as the product life-cycle (Kotler, 1994) indicate that tourist and visitor services, like other products and services, progress through a cyclical pattern of growth, consolidation, maturation and decline (see Chapter 3). Historical data indicates that demand for the garden visit has grown rapidly since the early 1980s, but that growth appeared to slow down towards the end of the 1990s. Whether this pattern is emblematic of the maturation stage of the life-cycle is arguable, but what is clear is that operators of garden attractions cannot be complacent about the future security of their market. Another issue for garden owners to consider is the increase in supply of gardens,

leading to a competitive marketplace in relation to attracting the visitor. Thus, competition (between other gardens and other non-garden attractions) remains a significant issue for managing gardens both now and in the future. A consideration of planning and management issues identifies the need to apply such principles to the future direction of visitor operations. The issues of concern in the future management of gardens as visitor attractions will be examined in the next chapter.

8.0 Introduction

Chapter 7 identified that awareness of trends in the garden and wider visitor market is crucial for operators of attractions but that a high degree of consensus between the two groups in relation to what constitutes the visitor experience was apparent. Recognition of aspects that are likely to affect the future growth and viability of gardens as visitor attractions is essential in developing the potential of the garden as a recreational resource. The survey results provide useful data in constructing a picture of future issues which will need to be addressed by garden attraction owners/managers. This chapter provides extensive coverage of the main issues likely to affect gardens open to the public in the future, with material derived from the survey findings and the literature on attraction management. The chapter is divided into three sections. Future leisure trends are identified and related to changes in society and in the evolution of the attractions sector. Several pertinent management issues for gardens as visitor attractions are highlighted, including competition, impacts, interpretation, managing social encounters, marketing and visitor well-being. How gardens can deal with these issues and provide experiences that will satisfy an increasingly sophisticated audience is a central part of the discussion. The final part of the chapter develops the analysis of future trends and issues by providing some recommendations for gardens wishing expand their visitor base and improve the visitor experience on offer at their garden.

8.1 Future Leisure Trends

A wide range of factors will affect the future shape of the leisure market, leisure production and leisure consumption. The factors of greatest relevance to the garden setting are outlined in the ensuing sections.

8.1.1 Supply Factors

Increasing choice of leisure opportunities (Grainger-Jones, 1999) provides a high level of competition between different types of leisure (that is, broadly what type of activity is chosen – for example, a day at home, a day shopping, or a day at an attraction), and between different types of attraction (for example, whether to go to a theme park, zoo, historic house or garden). Demand for attractions is slowing although the supply of attractions is increasing (partly as a result of lottery and European Union funding) and the indications are that supply is beginning to outstrip demand (English Tourism Council, 2000b). In addition, the number of European visitors was declining (ETC, 2000b) long before the foot and mouth epidemic in Spring 2001 and the implications for travel safety instilled after the September 11th 2001 terrorist attacks. The implications of these events mean that the ferocity of competition in attracting visitors will inevitably increase and those attractions that do not provide consumer satisfaction will be squeezed out of the market. Competition will be examined in more detail later.

8.1.2 Demographic Factors

The demographic shift towards an ageing population in the UK and parts of Europe and the implications for leisure are well documented (see, for example, Page *et al.*, 2001; Hall and Page, 2002). The implications for gardens, with their appeal firmly based in the

more mature markets, could be immense with a potential for an increase in demand for the garden experience. The over 55 age group is expected to increase by 22 per cent in the period 2001-2011 (ONS, 1999). Beioley (2001) identifies the key needs of the over 55s in a tourism context and suggests that in meeting the needs of this consumer group, operators need to provide convenience, value, security, social interaction, comfort, facilities and that there will be an increasing demand for quality. Gardens provide many of these attributes and it has been seen from the survey results that social encounters, security, comfort and good facilities (in some cases) seem to typify the garden visit experience. Thus, gardens would appear to benefit from the rise in older people.

In addition, the noticeable trend highlighted by the surveys towards a more balanced age profile of garden visitors indicates a potential for a rise in garden visitor volumes.

Another aspect which may affect garden visiting is the increase in households, as a result of marriage breakdown and rising levels of house purchase by young people, and therefore an increase in garden owners. As the survey of visitors has identified, one reason for garden visiting is to gain ideas for gardens and further demand could be stimulated in this way.

8.1.3 Economic Factors

Following a period of relative economic stability in Great Britain and substantive personal returns on at risk investments, the early twenty first-century is starting to witness a more unknown future. Personal economic securities have been rocked by doubts about the value of pension schemes, underperformance of endowment policies and concerns in the macro economy over inflation, high house prices, interest rate rises and rising

unemployment. The consequences for leisure and tourism participation are unclear. Economic instability might be beneficial for domestic tourism, especially if people make more day-trips rather than go on holiday. However, increasing competition for a more limited leisure spend is inevitable, placing further stresses on attractions. The impact of a decrease in leisure spending is likely to be more severe on high charging enterprises. Gardens with lower admission charges may be less prone to changes, particularly if there is a high degree of repeat visitation as a result of visitor satisfaction.

8.1.4 Demand Factors

Rising standards of living and increasing familiarity with new technology (English Tourism Council, 2000b) have led to visitors to attractions becoming more “sophisticated and challenging” (Milman, 2001: 141). The English Tourism Council (2000b) states that visitor expectations are rising and that attractions need to improve standards and refresh the presentation of their product in order to retain and increase visitor market share as the demand for high quality tourism-related products continues. Some gardens, like many attractions, are small-scale in nature with a low number of people running daily operations and a small budget, it is often not feasible to keep up-to-date with opportunities, market changes and information on best practice. Therefore, there is a strong potential for service gaps (Parasuraman, Zeithaml and Berry, 1985) to arise. In the case of gardens, it appears that the high level of satisfaction achieved may be related to the intrinsic qualities of the garden environment, which are congruent with both those who tend the garden and those who visit for pleasure. As these qualities are unique to gardens, it may be hard to replicate this positive outcome in other types of attraction. Garden visitors are not necessarily seeking additional facilities on their visit as opposed

to visitors to other types of attraction. Seeing the garden appears to be sufficient for many visitors and if there is an opportunity to have a cup of tea and buy a plant, then that is an added bonus. It may be that a visit to a garden is not viewed as an all day excursion and thus visitors may seek additional facilities before or after their visit, which may contrast with experiences at other attractions, where the visitor may spend a longer amount of time and may subsequently expect and require additional services.

As many gardens are located in rural settings, the potential for countryside tourism growth is worthy of some discussion. Morris (2000) states that rural tourism is likely to grow due to increasing interest in the countryside and the continuing desire to escape from urban areas. However, the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak of 2001 dealt a negative blow to tourism and recreation in the countryside, forming the biggest crisis in the tourism market for 20 years (English Tourism Council, 2002) and 30 per cent of visitors changing holiday plans (Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs/Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2002). In a bid to aid the economic recovery of rural areas, the English Tourism Council launched the "Your Countryside, You're Welcome" campaign for the 2002 season, concentrating primarily on the domestic market. The signs of a revival in visits to the countryside in the latter part of 2001 provide encouragement that the visitor volumes experienced pre-Foot and Mouth Disease will be achieved gradually.

In a dynamic market such as leisure, providers of leisure experiences are charged with maintaining a clear idea of the changes in society, economy and the industry in order to ensure that their business can adapt to market conditions. The emergent issues for garden

operators, in the context of visitor attraction management, are explored in the next section.

8.2 Identifying Management Issues for Garden Owners/Managers

The range of issues affecting the management, and ultimately, the success, of garden attractions can be identified from the research findings and, where relevant, the wider perspective provided by research on the future of managing attractions. Amalgamation of these two sources allows a more all-encompassing coverage of the salient issues and will be the focus of the remainder of this Chapter. However, as a precursor to the consideration of factors affecting the future of garden attractions, some general aspects emanating from the wider literature are first recognised.

In a study of attractions in North America, Milman (2001) explored managers' perceptions of factors influencing future operations. While Milman's study was mainly based on amusement and theme parks, it is still useful to compare the findings with those of the garden owners survey because despite some major structural differences in the types of attractions, there are some similarities in relation to the emergent issues.

Consumers (or customers, or visitors) were perceived to be the most influential force in Milman's study and are a priority issue according to other studies on the future of managing attractions by Peters and Weiermair (2000) and Stevens (2000). For garden owners, customers were cited as an issue for future management, although not the top priority (see Table 5.21). For garden owners, maintaining high standards was the most important issue in the future of managing the garden environment. Although one might

argue that this factor is linked with ensuring quality for the visitor, garden owners are equally concerned with maintaining intrinsic horticultural standards in the garden, as well as in meeting their own gardening aspirations and goals – particularly in the case of private gardens.

Economic forces feature high in both sets of results, as do competitors and employees, although to a lesser extent in the garden owners survey. Pearce (1998) has identified other issues and trends linked to future management of attractions including pricing, entry management, membership developments, roving interpretation, visual souvenirs, integration with festivals/events, supplementary activities, attraction partnerships, market niche developments, web marketing and managing people pressure. All or some of these issues will be relevant to some gardens, particularly those that have a stronger need to generate revenue. The issues that appear to be particularly relevant are explored later in the chapter.

Markwell, Bennett and Ravenscroft's (1997) study of visits to historic houses in England suggested that the traditionally stable market may be subject to a more doubtful future. One of the reasons for this uncertainty is the possible saturation of the visitor attraction market. However, and more significantly for those managing heritage attractions, presentation and interpretation of the product is often inadequate in meeting the demands and expectations of visitors. An examination of visitor profiles suggests that fewer young people and those in lower socio-economic groups are attending heritage attractions and that the majority of visitors tend to be older and more affluent. The heritage angle may

have implications for gardens for two reasons. First, some gardens are attached to historic houses and thus rely to some extent on the house to attract visitors. Second, the market for garden visiting tends to be considered in terms of the more mature visitor (similar to the historic house market) and a somewhat limited market in the overall quest for the day-visitor. The trend recognised by Markwell *et al.* (1997) may need to be taken into consideration by operators of heritage gardens (particularly the National Trust), although is unlikely to affect all types of garden as the heritage connection is often absent.

Having acknowledged some of the wider issues relating to the management of attractions in the future, the discussion now moves on to the future prospects for gardens as visitor attractions and the issues which will need to be addressed by those charged with their management. The major management issues which the survey results have generated are highlighted in conjunction with findings and trends from leisure and tourism literature.

8.3 The Effect of Competition for Garden/Leisure Visitors

In relation to gardens, Corbett (1998: 63) comments that “to sit still in a competitive world means losing out to...rivals”. Competition in terms of garden attractions occurs in three guises: between garden attractions, between gardens and attractions in the local area; and between visiting gardens and other leisure pursuits that the visiting market may pursue (such as gardening). Competitive advantage might occur through focusing on particular market segments rather than trying to appeal to a wide market (Swarbrooke, 2002). It may also occur through the appeal of a garden’s philosophy, ownership and

informality and the sensory experience, which may not be a facet of experiences at other visitor attractions.

Gilbert and Joshi (1992) state that there are five main ways of achieving competitive differentiation in a tourism service context. These are: offering a greater *range of services* than competitors, offering *lower prices*, providing *services which are more easily accessible* to the consumer, providing a *unique service* and providing a *high quality service*. Changing orientation towards competition has increasingly led tourism enterprises to work towards these goals. In relation to gardens, which are not exempt from classification as tourism/visitor attractions, it is clear that many gardens have developed new strategies which take into consideration the increasing number of gardens (that is, an increase in supply) and the increasing range of alternative leisure opportunities. From the survey work, garden owners appeared to be inherently aware of the five factors related to competitive advantage, as the ensuing discussion details.

8.3.1 Range of Services

Chapter 5 demonstrated the wide variation in the range and scope of services provided by gardens. The key finding appears to be related to the type of garden, particularly in the distinction between private and commercial gardens with private gardens offering fewer visitor services. The survey of garden owners illustrated the point about realising the need to extend facilities for visitors to remain competitive and found that 37.2 per cent of gardens had made additions to the range of services offered in order to attract more visitors and some 12.1 per cent had made additions to maintain visitor numbers.

Extending this point, the quite substantial rise in level of service provision from the initial opening of a garden to current times was remarkable (Chapter 5). All types of service have increased, with toilets, teas and car-park remaining the facilities offered by a larger proportion of gardens, and children's areas enduring as the least offered facility for visitors. It would appear that enhancing current provision of facilities and maintaining high standards of service are likely to be critical issues in the management of attractions in the future. Consequently, garden operators must not be complacent and should aim to ensure that a high degree of quality is inherent in the product offered to visitors, regardless of size, type of facilities, visitor numbers and frequency of opening.

8.3.2 Pricing

For gardens, the main tool for attaining a reduction in price is through the charge for admission. In most cases, decreasing admission prices is an unlikely strategy as most gardens are already grappling with achieving a balance between raising sufficient finance to run the garden (not always as a revenue generator but as a means of sustaining a garden) and maintaining desirable visitor numbers. For example, finance was the third most cited issue in relation to the future management of the garden for respondents in the owner/manager survey. In general terms, admission prices to gardens remain at a relatively low level compared with other more commercial and capital-intensive attractions. However, a lower price alone is not sufficient to increase visitor numbers. For gardens, many of which offer a passive and peaceful experience, the attraction for some types of visitor may be minimal and these visitors may be prepared to pay a higher entrance fee for greater activity and excitement. Garden owners might be best advised to

encourage secondary spend in the garden, through provision of services such as a tea-room, shop or plant sales. Visitors who have not paid an excessive charge to gain entry to the garden may be more amenable to spend money on other aspects of their visit. Consequently, the experience of the visitor is not damaged through having to pay a high entry charge but average spend will be increased.

Price is not a straightforward economic issue related to demand and supply, as inferred by much of the yield management literature. Just over 30 per cent of garden owners/managers think that garden visitors are changing, with a wider interest in gardens noted as the main reason and an increasing number of younger people and families showing an interest (32.4 per cent overall). Thus, price may have little effect on the newly emerging market.

8.3.3 Uniqueness

Generally, garden owners are fiercely proud of their garden and are eager to express what is different about it in terms of historic links, design, style, planting, setting and features. The owner survey asked respondents to indicate any noteworthy features and by and large each respondent wrote something quite different. Thus, the uniqueness of many gardens is a feature which appears to add to the attraction and creates a unique selling proposition (see later in the Chapter). However, uniqueness may be a concept related to increasing interest in gardens in relation to garden visitors. For those with good knowledge of gardens, who like to discern different styles or planting, there may be a huge range of gardens to visit which offer different experiences. Conversely, for those

with little horticultural knowledge, visiting more than one garden may offer no distinct difference in experience. Uniqueness, then, may be more of a subjective concept in relation to garden visitors and not a simple variable which can be easily modelled.

8.3.4 Ease of Access

As with all tourism products, visitors have to travel to the garden to experience it. Thus, access issues are limited to accessibility of the garden for all users. Some 67.4 per cent of garden owners, whereas 74.8 per cent of garden visitors, consider ease of access to be either very important or quite important. Related to ease of access, it appears that few visitors like to follow a set route around the garden and, correspondingly, garden owners/mangers prefer visitors to have the freedom to wander around the garden. Garden visitors value the freedom to wander at their own pace and not to follow a set route, indicated by the 48.7 per cent of visitors who stated this was an important factor in enjoying a garden visit.

8.3.5 High quality

In relation to the issue of quality, maintaining high standards in the garden was the most cited factor in relation to the future management of the garden as a visitor attraction. The respondents interviewed as part of the scoping exercise (Chapter 4) exemplified the importance of high standards in all aspects of the garden. In addition, some 75.9 per cent of respondents in the garden visitor survey cited quality of the garden as an important factor in enjoying a visit to a garden, the most important factor by far. Garden owners tend to perceive the visiting public as increasingly sophisticated and desirous of high

quality and one problem for garden owners is making the garden look interesting at all times throughout the opening season, as a first-time visitor arriving at a slightly out of season time may be disappointed by, for instance, the lack of colour. Thus, thought must be given to the appearance of the garden through a period of time if the garden is to be open for more than just a few select days during its season. The garden visitor survey highlighted that visitors do not necessarily think that gardens should be open all year round. Additionally, visitors stated that it was important that there was something to see in gardens during their opening season.

Garden owners appear to be particularly attuned to the needs of their visitors mainly because owners know instinctively when their garden is in top condition and thus worthy of presentation to the public. Bearing the involvement of the owner/manager in mind, perhaps the key issue here is that the owner/manager is intrinsically bound up with the garden because it is their main interest, or vocation, or because they see it from the windows of their house, or that it would not be permissible for the garden to be opened in a poor state. The variety of explanations may not be applicable to operators of other attractions, which are less experiential and less closely tied with the domestic setting.

In relation to the experience of service delivery, Gronroos (1982) identified two types of quality and these appear to be relevant to gardens. First, **technical quality**, that is, what the visitor receives in terms of product or service; and second, **functional quality**, that is, how the technical elements are purveyed to the visitor. For gardens, technical quality may be used as a term to refer to the quality of the garden presented and may link to such

factors as accuracy of an historic garden restoration, tidiness of a garden or standards of horticultural practice displayed in a garden. The technical quality of gardens may differ according to the garden style or its stated management aim. Functional quality refers to elements such as friendliness and helpfulness of staff, extent of visitor welcome, usefulness of a guide-book, and perhaps extended to standards of ancillary features, such as a tea-room. An examination of the visitor survey results in relation to what was liked and disliked about survey gardens, shows that the aspects most liked tend to be related to technical quality. Essentially, technical aspects account for 76.4 per cent of the aspects most liked. To the contrary, it is the functional aspects which visitors highlighted as aspects least liked about their visit and which needed improving, such as lack of labelling and information. Thus, the core feature of visiting a garden is clearly indicated, that is, the quality of the garden *per se* as opposed to the ancillary services provided. Also signalled is, arguably, the ability of garden owners/managers to create beautiful gardens but not to be quite so proficient in visitor management aspects.

The Quality of the Garden Product – Essential Elements

Essentially, quality issues in relation to garden visiting focus on three distinct areas:

- 1) The **quality of the core product**, that is the garden and the standards of horticultural practice and maintenance regime – the **primary element**;
- 2) The **quality of the interaction** between the garden owner and/or staff and the visitor, including the visitor welcome and appropriate interplay between visitor and personnel throughout the visit – the **social element**;

- 3) The **quality of the visitor services**, that is the supporting facilities, such as car-park, tea-room, plant sales, toilets, information and shop – the **secondary element**.

These three areas are central to the model of the garden as a leisure product based on Jansen-Verbeke's work (1986) in Chapter 3, where the primary, secondary and additional elements were identified. In addition, the adaptation of Kotler's product levels in Chapter 3 reflects the existence of the core and augmented product. The importance of acknowledging the role of the physical product as well as the personnel and facility related aspects has been emphasised by the survey work presented in this thesis. There is a general consensus between garden visitors and owners in respect of these three elements. Garden visitors identified the quality of the garden to be the most important influencing factor in their enjoyment of a garden and this far outweighed the other two categories. Garden owners, too, identified the quality and standards of the garden to be important, although were more likely to cite the weather as the more important factor influencing visitor enjoyment. Thus, the interplay of the three areas identified is the key element in ensuring that the visitor experience is positive. With these issues in mind, it is appropriate to focus on the significance of these themes in relation to the future development and management of garden visiting.

8.4 Managing Impacts

Managing people pressure in gardens was identified as an issue by garden owners with regard to general wear and tear on the physical garden environment. However, few

owners were putting initiatives in place to curb such pressures, indicating that the problem was minimal. Certainly, in-depth interviewing during the preliminary research (see Chapter 4) revealed that garden owners considered wear and tear as a necessary evil and putting things right was just part of the maintenance regime. For example, at the Lost Gardens of Heligan, coping with the wear and tear on lawns was viewed as part of the maintenance routine, where turf was replaced when starting to wear out (Howlett, 2000, personal communication).

This finding contrasts with evidence from some of the larger tourist-oriented gardens such as Sissinghurst (see Benfield, 2001) and Monet's Giverny, in France, where excessive numbers of visitors place a strain on the garden and pose physical and perceptual carrying capacity problems (Mackellar Gouly, 1993). Benfield (2001) outlines the need to limit numbers of visitors at Sissinghurst through a timed entry system, although there is some concern about the overall effect on the visitor experience. Corbett (1998) reports on how garden owners have designed their gardens to ease the pressure of numbers by introducing a variety of features. As already acknowledged, garden visitors generally appear not to like to follow a set route around the garden, which again indicates the informal, free-form nature of the garden visit and highlights a potential complexity in seeking to manage visitor flows at peak times, gardens which experience large volumes of visitors and those which are more vulnerable to wear and tear. Gunn (1988) recommends that capacities are evaluated in relation to visitor attractions but Garrod, Fyall and Leask (2002) state that attractions need to think beyond capacities and consider how to minimise the effect of each individual visitor. An

additional point is raised by the number of gardens with low visitor numbers that report capacity and wear and tear problems, raised both by the research and findings by Garrod *et al.* (2002). Accordingly, it is often the smaller, less visitor-oriented gardens that suffer more noticeable impacts. Impacts may occur because such gardens are not so well-designed to contain a larger number of people than a normal domestic setting would generate as the managed garden attractions. Conversely, the impacts may not be excessive but more noticeable to resident garden owners, who are sensitive to slight changes in the presentation of the garden following an inflow of visitors.

Adopting a more critical view, Corbett (1998: 65) states that “not all garden visitors have become more sophisticated during the past 25 years”, noting the need in some gardens to install theft detection systems and in some cases closed-circuit television due to the theft of antique garden statuary, garden furniture as well as trees and plants. The theme of mistreatment of gardens by visitors is a common one (Buchan, 1995; Lane Fox, 2000). Gardenvisit.com (2000) advocates that visitors should recognise “garden good manners” and illustrate the type of problem that garden owners can face as a result of opening to the public; plants, seeds and cuttings may be taken, litter may be left in gardens and owners' privacy may be compromised by inappropriate visitor behaviour. Conversely, Nicolson (1996: 6) comments that garden visitors are “an appreciative and careful lot because they have gardens of their own, or wish they had”. While a minority of garden owners reported problems with vandalism and theft, the survey showed that, for most gardens, there were few significant negative effects from visitors.

It appears that one of the most common problems in relation to impacts in the garden is that of perceptual carrying capacity, where the visitor experience is adversely affected by other visitors in the garden. Garden owners/managers need to consider the nature of interaction between visitors and identify pressure points in order to negate the most obvious aspects of visitor conflict. Allowing visitors to wander freely is a positive policy, although can make physical management of the site more problematic. At the Lost Gardens of Heligan, a boardwalk was created through the potentially dangerous, slippery and steep Jungle garden, which confined visitors to a circuit of the area. Some visitors found the boardwalk spoiled their experience because on a busy day, bottlenecks would occur, as the path was too narrow to let people pass easily and, in addition, it was noisy under foot.

Larger gardens may consider providing alternative visitor services to spread visitor volumes. For example, again at the Lost Gardens of Heligan, a new tea-room has been opened further into the garden (in the core product, rather than the zone of closure, to refute Gunn's model!), which allows visitors seeking refreshments to stay within the garden rather than return to the reception area, which is often crowded on busy days.

8.5 Interpretation

The garden environment does not easily lend itself to interpretation, mainly because it is experiential. The sensory encounter to which the visitor is exposed during a garden visit is beyond interpretation as each visitor experiences the elements of the environment - colour, aroma, design, and sounds – in a personal way. To some extent, an attempt to

interpret this experience is inappropriate. However, it is clear that visitors do want information in the garden, mainly in the form of a good labelling system of the plants and trees in the garden. The need for this is inherent in one of the reasons for garden visiting – that is, for visitors to collect ideas on design and plants to implement in their own gardens. The data in Table 7.3 in relation to plant labelling indicates that garden owners have somewhat undervalued the use of plant labels to visitors and thus, more attention might be paid by garden owners in this respect.

Access to information and interpretation appears to be quite well supplied by garden owners, although garden visitors do not indicate that detailed information is an essential component of the visitor experience. However, what is viewed as a central part of the experience is labelling. Hence identification rather than interpretation is what the visitor requires. Thus, plant labels are a key aspect of the visitor experience as identified by the garden visitor survey, with 86 per cent of visitors stating that labels were very important or quite important. Open questioning revealed 0.8 per cent of respondents who liked labelling more than anything else on their visit to a survey garden. Labelling also appeared as an aspect least liked – however, lack of labelling was the issue in this instance, with 3.3 per cent of visitors stating this was the main aspect of their visit which they disliked. In terms of improvements suggested by visitors, labelling was the most frequently cited aspect, with 11.4 per cent stating that labelling ought to be improved.

8.6 Managing Social Encounters

Baum (1997) indicates that the interaction between the visitor and the service provider is of paramount importance in determining the visitor experience. The concept of 'social distance', where there is a total detachment between the visitor and the provider, typifies some tourism and recreation services and experiences. Carlzon (1987) defined the point of contact between a customer and a front-line employee as the 'moment of truth', resulting in satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service or experience. It is the management of these 'moments of truth' that provides a challenge to any service provider in tourism and recreation services. In the garden context, the moments of truth are on arrival, on making purchases in a tea-room or shop, on interaction with garden staff during the visit and on departure. Tim Smit's policy of always thanking people for visiting on their departure from the Lost Gardens of Heligan shows appreciation to the visitor and re-emphasises the 'feel good factor' that defines the management approach in this garden. It is clear from the survey results that the visitor welcome is important, along with the helpfulness and friendliness of staff in gardens. In addition, employing good staff was an issue raised by a small number of owners in relation to the most important future issue in managing their garden. Garden owners and managers appear to be generally quite proficient in providing an hospitable environment for visitors. In the example of private gardens open for a limited number of days, owners often appear to be delighted that people should want to look at their garden and treat visitors with respect and care. In larger, more commercial gardens, the same premise applies, especially where there is a resident garden owner. Perhaps this is pride or a natural inclination towards sociability; this is confirmed by Ryan and Bates's (1995) study, which indicated

that garden owners who volunteered to open their garden for a festival in Palmerston North, New Zealand, could be classified as positive, social, proud or community-minded gardeners.

8.6.1 The Significance of the 'High Touch' Approach

The importance of welcoming visitors to a garden was emphasised by garden owners in the scoping exercise. What constitutes the visitor welcome is, of course, variable. In some gardens, particularly the small ones, the welcome will be a friendly face and a greeting at the garden gate. As the surveys indicated, many gardens display high levels of owner-visitor interaction. Figure 8.1 illustrates a page from the guide-book for East Ruston (and the image is duplicated on the garden website), showing the smiling faces of the owners and providing a welcome to the gardens. In larger gardens, while the latter will still be in evidence, there is likely to be a wider range of elements. It is clear that the type of visitor welcome is not affected by the size of the garden but is more closely linked to the personality of the owner (particularly in the case of the small gardens) and the management style adopted (particularly in the larger gardens). As the surveys indicated, many gardens display high levels of owner-visitor interaction. Figure 8.1 illustrates a page from the guide book for East Ruston (and the image is duplicated on the garden website), showing the smiling faces of the owners and providing a welcome to the gardens. The Lost Gardens of Heligan, with over 200,000 visitors per annum, are a case in

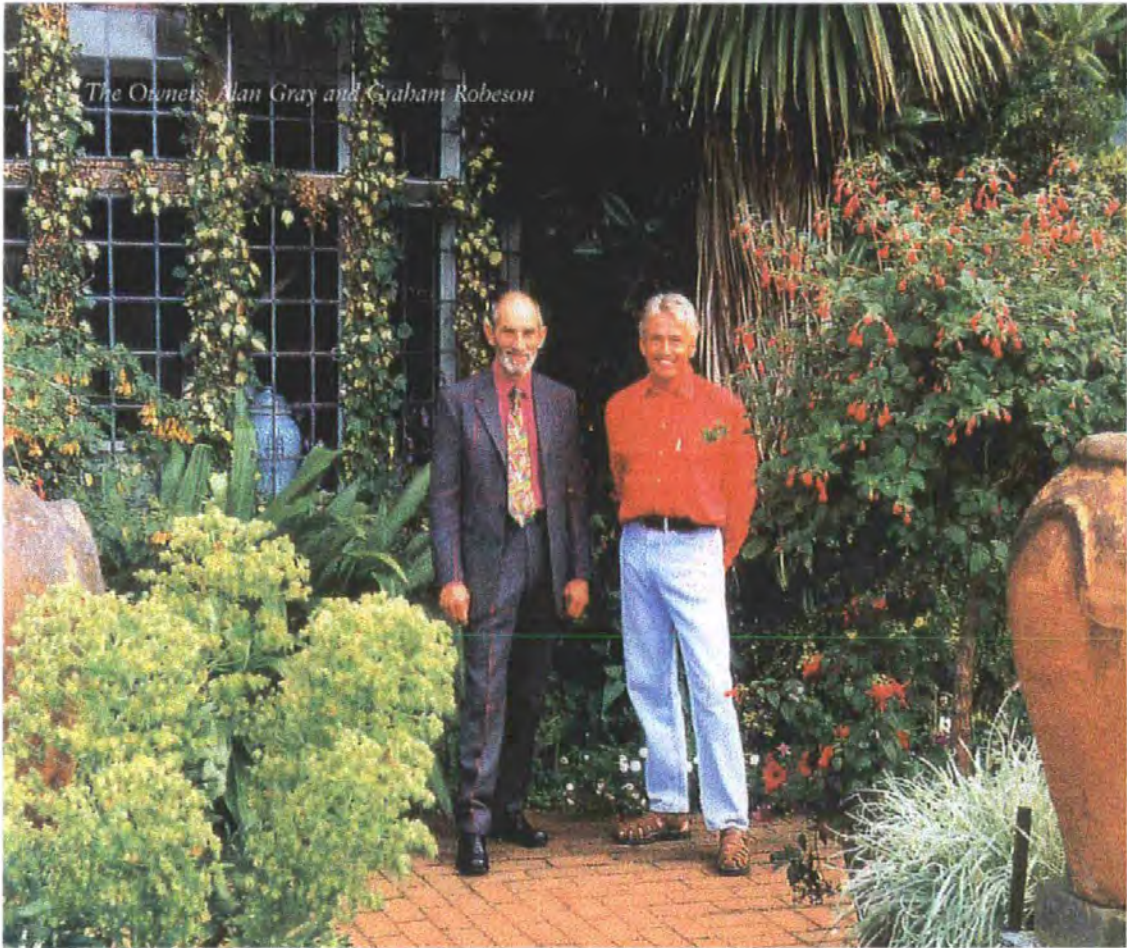


Figure 8.1 Visitor Welcome at East Ruston Old Vicarage Garden

The above photograph shows the owners of the garden and illustrates the welcoming approach to visitors

point, where all visitors arriving in the car park are welcomed personally and directed to a space. All coach drivers (whether they have booked or not) are welcomed by ushers working in the car park, coaches are directed to a parking space and drivers are invited to collect tickets from the ticket office. Thus, a coach party does not have to wait at the ticket office creating a large queue for other visitors. Visitors are given the flexibility of being able to go in and out of the garden all day if they so wish, as long as they display an entry sticker. These simple approaches help to make the visitor feel welcome and important for other reasons than the entry fee they will pay. Certainly, visitors indicated the importance of the visitor welcome, with 90.6 per cent of respondents stating that they liked to be made welcome when they visited a garden. The survey of garden owners showed that the visitor welcome was important. This mirrors developments within the management of visitors in destinations, where the visitor welcome in small historic towns is now a fundamental element in the welcome, ushering and directing of visitors to designated sites (see English Tourist Board and Employment Department Group, 1991).

Related to the visitor welcome idea is the attitude of staff or, in gardens which are just operated by owners, the person who comes into front-line contact with visitors. Both friendliness and helpfulness of staff are rated highly by the respondents in the survey, with over 90 per cent in both cases considering staff to be an important element in enjoying the garden experience. Much effort has been expended on assisting tourism businesses to improve their visitor welcome. The Welcome Host scheme operated by the English Tourism Council and the Visitor Welcome Initiative established by the Countryside Commission in England are examples of training programmes for those

charged with dealing with visitors in a range of environments. Such generic skills are important even within a garden attraction context since it is the social interaction with visitors is a dynamic ever-changing element in the visitor experience that needs to be managed and nurtured as part of the wider visitation to the garden. Awareness of staff training schemes is moderate among garden attraction operators, with 68 per cent aware of Welcome Host and associated schemes compared with 72 per cent on average for all attractions. Awareness tends to be higher in paid attractions and in those receiving higher visitor numbers (ETC, *et al.*, 2001). One of the lowest rates of awareness of the Investors in People scheme, which sets standards of good practice for training and development in achieving business goals, is displayed by garden attractions.

8.7 Managing Visitor Numbers

The survey of garden owners showed that some gardens saw attracting more visitors as the most important issue in the future management of the garden. Darnell and Johnson (2001) identified from econometric modelling of visits to tourist attractions that rapid early growth in visits might not be sustained. Thus, those gardens which have reported increasing visitor numbers since opening may see a natural decline in those figures.

Some small gardens noted declining visitor figures for the reason that “all the local people had visited” (quoted from questionnaire). This potential decline is something that garden owners, particularly those with small private gardens, should recognise.

Recognising the slowdown in visits to attractions (as reported in Chapter 1), coupled with Worcester’s (1996) observation that the number of people visiting National Trust houses and gardens fell from 39 per cent of the population in 1991 to 31 per cent in 1995 in a

survey of 2,008 British adults, indicates that there is no assurance that garden visitor numbers will be maintained or increase. Attracting a wider market to gardens may be an issue which owners could grapple with. Many gardens have already started to consider the appeal of gardens to families with children, illustrated by Figure 8.2.

However, Mintel forecasts (2002) suggest that the market for visitor attractions is set to grow from 2002-2006 by 4 per cent in terms of visitor volume. The poor performance of the visitor attraction market in 2001 was primarily explained by Foot and Mouth but the future appears more promising, particularly in respect of domestic tourism, which might undergo a boost in 2002 due to fears over the safety of international travel (Aspinall, 2002). With conflicting reports from the literature, it is unclear as to whether garden attractions can expect to see increases in visitor numbers. What is more clear is that high standards need to be maintained in all aspects in order to satisfy the market.

Repeat visitation, of which there was some evidence of in the garden visitor survey, is of significance for attractions and it may have an effect on the likelihood of other people visiting, either to make a repeat visit or a first-time visit due to word-of-mouth recommendation. Word of mouth was shown to be a key influence in how visitors find out about gardens and so visitors need to be nurtured in order to build and retain confidence as a worthwhile garden to visit. Repeat visits can be prompted by new features at an attraction and it appears from the survey of owners that many have recognised the importance of continually developing and improving their garden, or adding a new feature. Indeed, some visitors in the survey stated that they had returned to

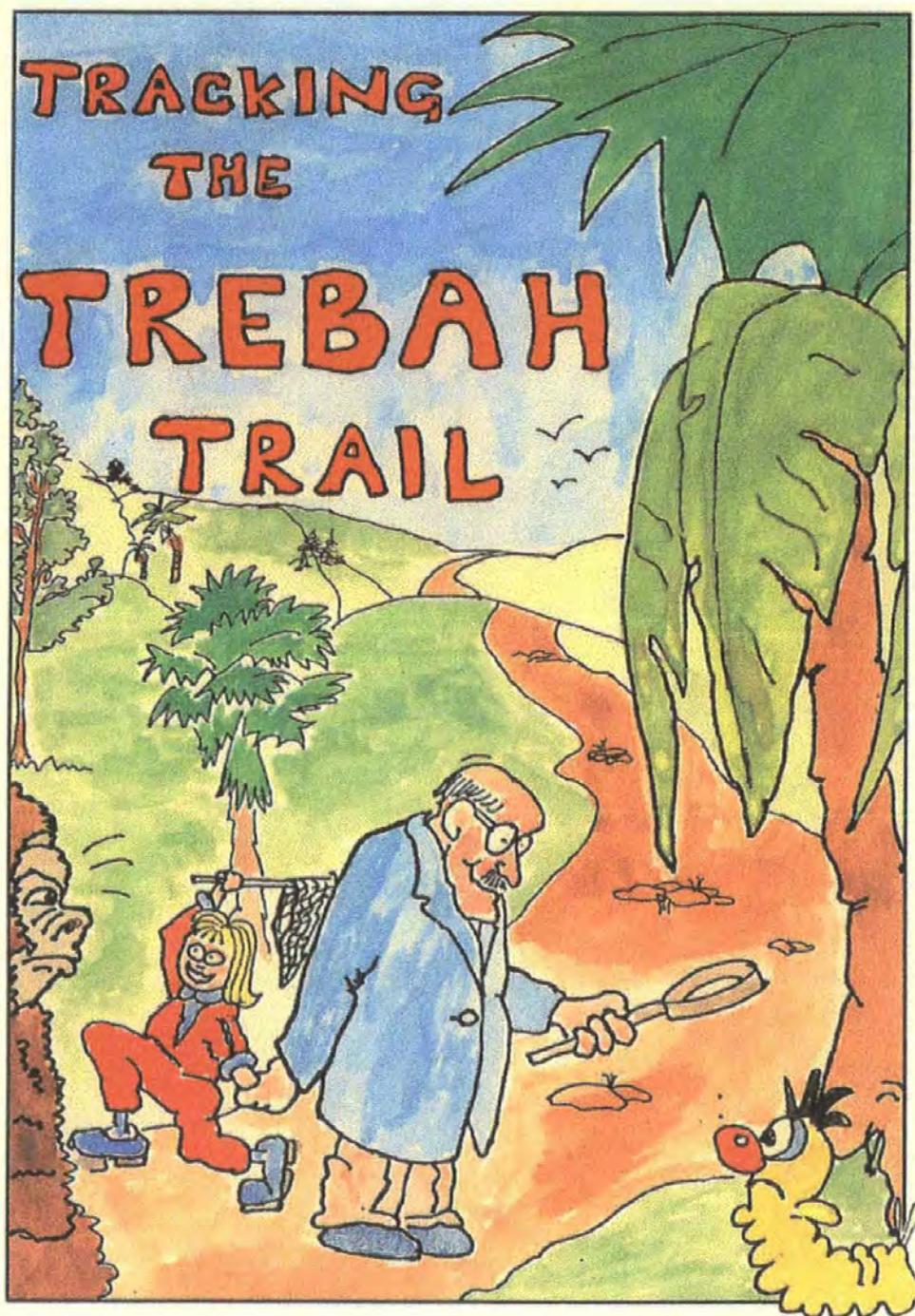


Figure 8.2 Gardens and the Family Market: Examples of Activity

- (a) Trebah Garden, in Cornwall, has established a children's trail, which incorporates some of the more fun and interesting elements of the garden. The garden also offers a children's adventure play area.



THE NATIONAL TRUST

Great days out in
**Devon and
Cornwall** 1998



(b) The National Trust leaflet for Devon and Cornwall (1998) is overt in its illustration of children enjoying the garden.

a garden to see what progress had been made in its development. Another way of attracting repeat visits is to ensure that a high quality product is offered to the visitor and that the ensuing experience is one that visitors will want to repeat at another time. The evidence provided by gardens such as the Lost Gardens of Heligan is that people do like to revisit gardens throughout the season. Heligan operates a Friend's scheme for local residents whereby a season ticket is purchased, allowing free entry to the gardens as many times as the visitor desires. The uptake of this scheme has been high. Festivals and events form another strategy that may assist in raising the profile of gardens and lead to an increase in visitor numbers during a specified period. It is beneficial to understand what garden visitors view as important about gardens since this has significant consequences for management and for those engaged in marketing gardens.

8.8 Integrating Festivals and Events

It is interesting to note that garden owners and visitors do not consider events to be of particular consequence in relation to the visitor experience because it seems to conflict with some anecdotal information (Corbett, 1998) and research (Ryan and Bates, 1995). The study by Ryan and Bates (1995) on the outcomes of the Manawatu Rose and Garden Festival in Palmerston North, New Zealand identified that the festival tended to attract regional visitors and low levels of expenditure, similar to findings on the Dunedin Rhododendron Festival by Kearsley (1994). Corbett (1998) quotes the organiser of a festival at a historic house in Cumbria who stated that a great deal of capital expenditure was required to establish the festival and that return on investment was slow. Another garden reported a rise in visitors due to an increase in garden events (Corbett, 1998). The

Cornwall Spring Gardens Festival led to a small increase of 9 per cent in visitors to gardens in the early part of 2000 (January to April). The significance of events and festivals in the garden sub-sector requires further research as it is unclear to what extent such events have a favourable effect.

As many garden owners, like other attraction operators, are eager to provide a stimulus to visitors by arranging events in their gardens, it is prudent to note that garden visitors do not perceive events to be of much importance in their overall enjoyment of the garden environment. This finding would appear to indicate that the nature of garden visiting is, indeed, based on the experiential elements rather than on more organised or formalised experiences which the owner may try to formulate for visitor enjoyment. In other words, enjoyment of a garden visit is based on the garden itself rather than 'add-ons', which aim to provide a more diverse attraction to visitors. As an emergent theme, the disinterest in events is somewhat contrary to the prevailing literature on visitor market development where events are seen as a vital element in the strategy to raise visitor interest and awareness of attractions, destinations and regions (Bowdin, McDonnell, Allen and O'Toole, 2001). The finding, however, might be treated with some caution as the audience forming the survey population may not form the audience for garden events.

8.9 Marketing and Management of Attractions

Pearce, Benckendorff and Johnstone (2000) comment that four areas of potential influence can be identified in relation to the future tourist attractions. These are management, marketing, product development and interpretation and communication. In

addition, two broad themes have a further effect; the role of technology (high-tech) and the role of personal interactions (high-touch). Technological approaches to the garden as a visitor attraction are not much in evidence but the personal interaction and services element is vital. In this respect, new approaches to staff, marketing and information are advocated.

Swarbrooke (2001) presents several key challenges which face managers of visitor attractions (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1 Key Challenges for Visitor Attraction Managers

Coping with the scale and complexity of competition provided by a range of other pursuits.
Recruiting, retaining and rewarding good staff.
Keeping up with developments in marketing.
Marketing consortia.
Satisfying customers.
Design attractions to meet corporate objectives.
Meeting requirements of special needs visitors.
Exploiting growth markets.
Increasing the role of training and education.
Greater use of cost-effective marketing research.
Offering 'USP's and the 'Wow' factor.

Source: Adapted from Swarbrooke (2001)

It is evident from the survey of garden owners that most of the key challenges presented by Swarbrooke (2001) are of relevance in the garden context. The areas of concern in the managing a garden for visitors in the future identified by garden owners/managers (Table 5.27) suggest that there is a greater emphasis on the maintenance and improvement of quality and standards (overall 36.7 per cent of owners highlighted this as the most

important future issue) than that reflected in Swarbrooke's listing, although the category of 'satisfying customers' is a good umbrella term that encapsulates the quality of the product. Marketing-related aspects accounted for 17.2 per cent of respondents in relation to the most important future issue in managing a garden for visitors. Competition was the most significant concern for 4.2 per cent of respondents. Staff recruitment and retention was raised as the most important future issue by 3.3 per cent of owners. Few gardens engage in market research, possibly because they feel with small visitor numbers that formal research is unnecessary and that feedback is stimulated through face-to-face contact with visitors.

8.9.1 USPs and the 'Wow' Factor

Gardens have great scope to offer unique selling propositions (USPs) and the 'Wow' factor due to the frequency of unique or unusual attributes or combinations which such sites often display. The 'Wow' factor can be developed through intelligent planning and management of the visitor experience. The 'Wow' factor is achieved at the Eden Project in Cornwall due to splendid construction of biomes containing climatic zones and associated plantings, replication of habitats, the enormity of the site and the landscape setting. As there is nowhere else quite like the Eden Project, it has the potential to become a world-class tourist attraction. However, smaller garden operators are just as capable as creating a 'wow' factor, albeit of a different kind, through innovative planting and design.

8.9.2 Branding

Thompson (2001: 79) suggests that attractions should master “the art of brand building and its effective management”. Thompson believes that branding is essential in a complex world where consumers have little time or desire to go through lengthy thought processes when choosing leisure destinations. For gardens, branding might initially appear to be a somewhat incongruous strategy. However, branding is a well-established approach for many gardens. Small private gardens enjoy the ‘branding’ of the National Gardens Scheme. Gardens run by organisations such as the Royal Horticultural Society and the National Trust are branded and share the values and image of the organisation. Some larger gardens, most notably the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall, have attempted to establish their own brand. Heligan, for example, has a double-page spread in its guide-book espousing its own brand of retail products, which are also offered by mail order. Whether branding is a concept which will gain momentum is unknown. However, the extension of branding into collaborative marketing initiatives appears to have a bright future. For example, the collective marketing group the Perthshire Gardens Collection, has the potential to become a brand.

8.9.3 Marketing Information

Gardensvisit.com (2000) suggests that visitors often encounter problems when trying to visit gardens, which have a marketing focus. An excerpt from the website is included in the text (Table 8.2), which identifies inherent problems in garden visiting and states how the Gardensvisit.com website aims to overcome these problems.

Table 8.2 Identification of Garden Visit Marketing Problems

1. Visitors having “driven 70 miles to visit a garden which is open 'daily', to find it closed because small print says 'except Wednesdays' [Gardenvisit.com provides a page for each garden - if published on paper this would be larger than a telephone directory]”;
2. Visitors having “driven 100 miles to visit a garden, which the owners described as 'a beautiful cottage garden filled with unusual plants' and found it so dull that it would scarcely have been worth crossing a road to visit. [Gardenvisit.com aims to include a photograph of every garden]”;
3. Visitors having “returned from a long trip to find that a garden we had been wanting to see for years was only 2 miles away - but was not included in the magazine guide because the owners did not advertise their generosity in opening the garden [Gardenvisit.com provides maps showing garden locations]”;
4. Visitors having “bought copies of five published guides (total cost approx £50) and made little use of them because it was a wet summer. Buying another five guides next year is not an attractive prospect. [Gardenvisit.com information is free to the garden visitor]”.

Source: Gardenvisit.com (2000)

What Gardenvisit.com (2000) illustrates is the need for garden owners seeking recognition of their garden as a visitor attraction to develop a greater professionalism, highlighting the role of gardens as a potentially more significant visitor attraction sub-sector. Essential to this is well-conceived marketing information which represents the garden product on offer in an honest style to ensure visitor expectations are not built up beyond the level at which the garden can deliver.

8.9.4 Internet Marketing

Swarbrooke (2001) comments that there is a need for small attraction owners to engage in internet marketing in order to compete with organisations with more resources for marketing. Briggs (2000) states that internet marketing is still in its early stages.

Research conducted in June 2000 (e-MORI) revealed that the internet is less well used by more mature age groups, with only 12 per cent of the 55+ age group and 16 per cent in the 45-54 years group using the internet, although these figures are expected to rise. However, AB occupational groupings have the highest rate of internet usage at 38 per cent. There is a need for garden owners to recognise the increasing importance of the internet as a marketing tool. While it seems that only a minority of garden visitors look for information on gardens through websites, perhaps reflected by the more mature age profile and the lower propensity to use the internet as an information source, there are two reasons why the internet should not be sidelined. First, there could be new markets to be exploited, containing those who currently use the internet for information on places to visit. Second, internet use is relatively high and increasing in the main occupational group market for gardens, that of the ABs. Thus, the potential to attract visitors through internet marketing does exist but appears to be untapped.

8.9.5 Collaboration and Co-operation

Recognition of gardens as a significant attraction in terms of both the supply and demand sides has arguably been lacking. As recognised in Chapter 1, tourism statistics do not take into account the large variety of gardens available to visit and therefore the estimation of garden visiting at a national level is underrated. Gardens are not unique in this underestimation of value, as Davies's (1995) study of museums and galleries testifies. The survey of garden owners highlights that a large percentage of gardens open to the public are small, private gardens. While it might be argued that such gardens are not visitor attractions in the industry sense, the application of this term is nonetheless

plausible. Development of industry co-ordination mechanisms is a useful tool in boosting the profile of gardens as a key segment of the visitor attraction arena. Gunn (1988) states that attractions function the best when they are clustered and that clustering has become more important in contemporary tourism because of transportation modes, marketing mechanisms and higher investment in development.

A recommended strategy for the future management of gardens is to expand co-operation between gardens in an attempt to pool resources and create a more widely felt marketing effort, which is particularly important in peripheral regions (see, for example, Morrison's (1998) commentary on co-operation in the small hotel sector in Scotland). Fyall, Leask and Garrod (2001) advocate a collaborative future for visitor attractions in Scotland in an attempt to be more receptive to changes in the marketplace and in the context of acting in a more proactive way in the formation of strong regional identities in marketing destination areas, rather than concentrating on specific attractions.

There are many good examples of co-operative initiatives involving gardens in Great Britain, such as the Great Gardens of Cornwall scheme discussed in Chapter 4. The garden sector is renowned for co-operative marketing, perhaps to a greater extent than any other form of attraction, through the National Gardens Scheme. With its famous Yellow Book, the Scheme is a fine example of collective promotion of a wide range of gardens and it may be that involvement in this initiative opens up the garden owner perspective on separate enterprises working together to stimulate visits.

Mandell (1999) conceptualised the nature of networks and linkages and produced a continuum identifying the range and scale of collaborative efforts, illustrated in Figure 8.3. If the type of collaboration entered into by gardens is applied to this continuum, activity is spread across the categories, as provided by the illustration of gardens in Cornwall in Figure 8.3. It appears that marketing activity such as the Great Gardens of Cornwall is most effectively described as a collective or network structure with a broad mission (that is, to increase visitor numbers and promote each garden) and strategic interdependent action (that is, selecting appropriate gardens of high quality, agreeing marketing strategy, producing promotional material, bringing in tour organisers and transport operators), and taking on tasks that go beyond the ability of each separate garden. This type of structural relationship is an example of good practice in the gardens sub-sector and is a proven way of raising the profile of individual gardens under one banner, pooling marketing budgets and creating a much wider impact collectively than would be achievable on an independent basis. Links and interactive contacts were evident in the development of the Eden Project in relation to the Lost Gardens of Heligan, as the two projects shared the same director and promotion of Eden was initiated at Heligan. There are no evident examples of intermittent co-ordination. The Cornwall Gardens Development Project is a temporary initiative funded on a three-year basis and sets out as a task force with a specific remit. Permanent and regular co-ordination occurs through the Tourist Board distribution of the annual 'Gardens of Cornwall' leaflet and promotion through other tourist literature. The National Gardens Scheme can be viewed as a coalition but where apart from the annual entry in the Yellow Book, all actions are made independently. Finally, the Great Gardens of Cornwall forms a network structure

where there is a joint mission and structural arrangements are in place to undertake tasks on behalf of the coalition, demonstrating the highest level of collaboration between gardens in Cornwall.

The example of Cornwall provides a good example of where partnerships and collaborative efforts can assist in development of a more visible product. However, there are many other examples of organisations and collectives in the garden sector where the scope and validity of co-operation has been realised.

8.9.6 Specialisation

Swarbrooke (2001) conjectures that small attraction owners are more likely to find the future difficult as they lack resources required to compete with more well-funded and staffed operations. To remain viable, small attractions will need to specialise, differentiate and put an emphasis on personal service. In a gardens context, the emphasis on personal service is apparent. In addition, gardens more than many other types of attraction naturally tend towards differentiated environments because so many have unusual characteristics or connections, which appeal to a wide range of visitors, both specialist and non-specialist. Consequently, with appropriate marketing and presentation, gardens have the potential to remain competitive from the point of view of providing a special interest.

Link	Intermittent co-ordination	Ad hoc task force	Permanent/regular co-ordination	Strategic coalition	Network structure
Heligan and Eden Project (same Director)	n/a	Cornwall Gardens Development Project	Tourist Board annual leaflet	National Gardens Scheme	Great Gardens of Cornwall

Figure 8.3 Continuum of Collaboration (after Mandell, 1999) applied to Gardens in Cornwall

8.10 Visitor Well-Being

While crime has become an increasing problem for visitor safety in tourist destinations and at events (see Barker, Page and Meyer, 2002), safety from crime was not viewed as an important issue by most garden visitors. However, further qualification of the perception of safety is needed since concern with safety and crime in gardens is directly dependent upon visitor type and the age profile of visitors and type of garden. The general lack of concern is not only contentious but also contrary to prevailing generalisations on the tourism and safety literature that posits that visitors are affected directly by safety concerns. In addition, concern about health and safety issues in gardens are not viewed as a priority. It would appear that gardens are considered to be relatively safe environments in contrast to their nearest equivalent which is the urban park or garden. The literature on fear in relation to urban parks (see, for example, Madge, 1997) demonstrates a high perceived risk, but in the case of gardens open to the public that the perception of both social and physical danger is almost minimal. This finding is extremely important in a society where fear of crime and safety exhibited in national studies such as the British Crime Survey report continued problems with public safety. In other words, gardens have positive attributes where visitors may escape from the concerns with safety and crime, as well as the concern with monitoring and surveillance using closed circuit television cameras in private spaces.

The research revealed through anecdotal evidence rather than survey data that parents found gardens to be safe places to take children: for example, on one of the survey days at Malleny Gardens, Edinburgh, a mother and toddler group were visiting because they

perceived it to be a safe environment. If the family market is to become a more important sector in the future, garden owners may have to consider the well-being of children in gardens, for example ensuring that poisonous plants are well-labelled or not cultivated. Gardens may in fact have a competitive edge in marketing and promotional terms if their positive safety features are used in a constructive manner to create attractive visitor places. Some gardens have already made progress in attracting families with children to gardens and positive marketing of gardens to this grouping is apparent (Figure 8.3).

8.11 Recommended Strategies for the Future Management of Gardens

While the thesis did not set out to establish policy-style recommendation to gardens, the factors discussed in this chapter provide evidence of a plethora of operational aspects that should be observed in relation to the future management of gardens. Consequently, a number of broad points that form general principles guiding the future development of garden attractions are outlined in Table 8.3. The recommendations are kept brief, in the recognition that the degree of implementation will vary according to garden type and commercial orientation. The rationale for these recommendations has already been developed earlier in the chapter and thus is not reiterated here.

The points in Table 8.3 confirm and extend the action points and recommendations of tourism agencies, attempting to advance tourism in their region. A good example is the business guide for tourism businesses devised by Scottish Enterprise (SE) and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) (2002), which advocates a focus on customers, development

Table 8.3 Recommendations for Managing Gardens as Visitor Attractions

	Recommendation
Managing the Quality of the Garden	Ensure the quality of the garden is high and maintenance is of a good standard
Provision of Visitor Services	Provide well-maintained and high quality facilities to visitors that suit the scale of the garden attraction Ensure that the range of services meets the needs of visitors Give opportunities for secondary spend
Managing Impacts	Allow visitors to wander freely if possible
Interpretation	Provide adequate interpretation but, in particular, focus on plant labelling and ensure that it is comprehensive and consistent
Managing Social Encounters	Ensure that visitors are welcomed to the garden on arrival; Ensure the personal touch is maintained (or developed) and an appropriate level of social interaction is upheld
Increasing Visitor Numbers	Undertake survey/visitor feedback work to understand visitor needs and act on findings; Consider implementing a Friends scheme to encourage repeat visits
Marketing and Management	Develop creative marketing ideas to attract visitors but ensure that the garden is not misrepresented; Contemplate the USP of the garden and consider whether it can be developed or extended to a 'Wow' factor; Reflect on the use of the internet as a marketing tool for the garden; Consider a collaboration with other garden owners (and the public sector if appropriate) in the region to achieve stronger marketing effect
Pricing	Maintain reasonable admission prices but aim to increase visitor spending through secondary spend
Visitor Well-Being	Ensure that the garden is safe for visitors; Make garden accessible for all users but if not possible, make the degree of accessibility clear to visitors in literature; Consider the safety of children

of new customer experiences, effective marketing and working with other enterprises.

Although the SE and HIE strategy is just one example, such points are commonly found in tourism plans.

8.12 Concluding Remarks

Evans (2001: 158) suggests that the future for gardens is “certainly rosy” with a worldwide shift towards green lifestyles ensuring that gardening remains a popular pastime. A more competitive future for the attractions market means that gardens charging high admission prices will be more likely to find the future difficult as they will be competing against other forms of leisure spending. However, small attractions are likely to suffer in the race to attract a static pool of visitors to an increasing number of attractions. New attractions such as the Eden Project, National Botanic Garden of Wales will contribute to the visitor statistics for gardens and the increasing preponderance of professionally packaged holidays for gardening enthusiasts may assist in swelling attendance at gardens. Symptomatic of post-industrialised society, leisure markets are likely to become increasingly stratified and differentiated, which will support the supply of a wide diversity of garden types.

It is clear that to satisfy the demands of the target market, gardens need to maintain their product to a high standard and to ensure its presentation and interpretation provides positive visitor experiences. As Mintel (2002) state, good quality facilities at competitive prices are needed to entice new visitors to attractions. In addition, a greater emphasis is

likely to be placed on marketing in an attempt to capture the imagination of potential visitors in a strongly competitive environment.

9.0 Introduction

Garden visiting has assumed a growing significance in the post-war evolution of day-trip and tourist visitation in Great Britain and, to a lesser degree, in other European and overseas destinations based on the published literature. The empirical work presented in this thesis has established the importance of the garden as a sub-sector of the visitor attraction market. In addition, the perspectives of garden owners/managers and garden visitors have been identified and compared to reveal any pertinent findings, similarities and differences in relation to the management and experience of garden visiting. Themes and implications, with a particular emphasis on future planning and management, emerging from the data and from the wider literature on attractions have been discussed. This chapter will synthesise the range of issues on which the thesis has touched and provide some direction on future research themes.

9.1 Historical Issues

As identified in Chapter 2, the British garden is an interesting example of historical evolution of a resource that has displayed distinct patterns of continuity and change through time and space. In some cases, historic houses created gardens for the consumption of the house owner, which in the fullness of time, has been extended to a small number of initial visitors and, later, the visiting public *en masse* (see Chapter 2). An historical perspective is important, as this thesis has shown, in understanding how a landscape-based resource, namely the garden, has been created, adopted as an element for

personal consumption in the private sphere and then widened to include public consumption, reflecting wider changes in society. What should be stressed from this thesis is that the garden visiting and consumption is not a new post-modern phenomenon as so many researchers suggest. Moreover it is a form of consumption that has evolved through time, most notably in the late nineteenth and twentieth century, as the attraction and appeal of garden environments developed as fashionable resources to visit and enjoy in the growing leisure time among the social classes. The rediscovery of the garden environment by researchers in the 1980s and 1990s and post-modern interpretation of their significance may be a new contribution to the literature on gardens as visitor attractions, but fundamentally the resource displays a continuity with regard to its use and consumption.

Therefore, whilst Chapter 2 could only be a broad overview of the historical evolution of the garden as a visitor resource, it has nonetheless highlighted the processes in a society where economic, social and political shifts have led to the re-use of private and to a lesser degree public garden settings, being developed as an integral aspect of the 'visitor industry' from the Victorian period. Major changes certainly occurred in the post-war years and the expansion in reuse of such gardens in the 1970s and 1980s was a key feature that added to the growing diversification of attractions seeking to appeal to day-trippers and visitors alike. Subsequent changes in the late 1990s are less clear and time will have to elapse before the extent to which patterns of opening, development and usage are following previous trends or setting new ones can be examined.

9.2 Theorising the Garden Visit Experience

There is a role for theorising the experience of garden visiting in an attempt to explain visitor consumption in an attraction context. In Chapter 6, it was shown that here is a place for interpretations such as the tourist gaze (Urry, 1990) as a way to understand how people understand, engage in and consume the garden as a resource. In addition, the conceptualisation of the garden as space was facilitated by Carr, Rivlin and Stone (1992) and Canter (1975); and as a visitor product by Jansen-Verbeke (1986), Pearce (1991), Gunn (1972) and Kotler (1994) (see Chapter 3).

Figure 9.1 outlines the major directions which have been taken in the approach to understanding garden visiting. In terms of abstract theory, garden visiting was considered in terms of the tourist gaze and the other frameworks mentioned above. In relation to visitation, the notion of the experience of place underpins a more fundamental exploration of motivations, behaviour and perceptions. Operational aspects relating to the supply of gardens and garden experiences form a third angle of the research providing perspectives on management planning and the garden as a product. What links the three areas together is an understanding of how the garden is perceived, managed and used by owners and visitors.

The research undertaken indicates how resource-based attractions can be more complex than simple uni-dimensional surveys would suggest. The inter-relationship between emotional response and the everyday (a fundamental premise of the tourist gaze) which appears to be so strong in the context of gardens is a feature that needs to be firmly

acknowledged by managers of attractions in identifying why gardens are so successful in attracting and satisfying visitors.

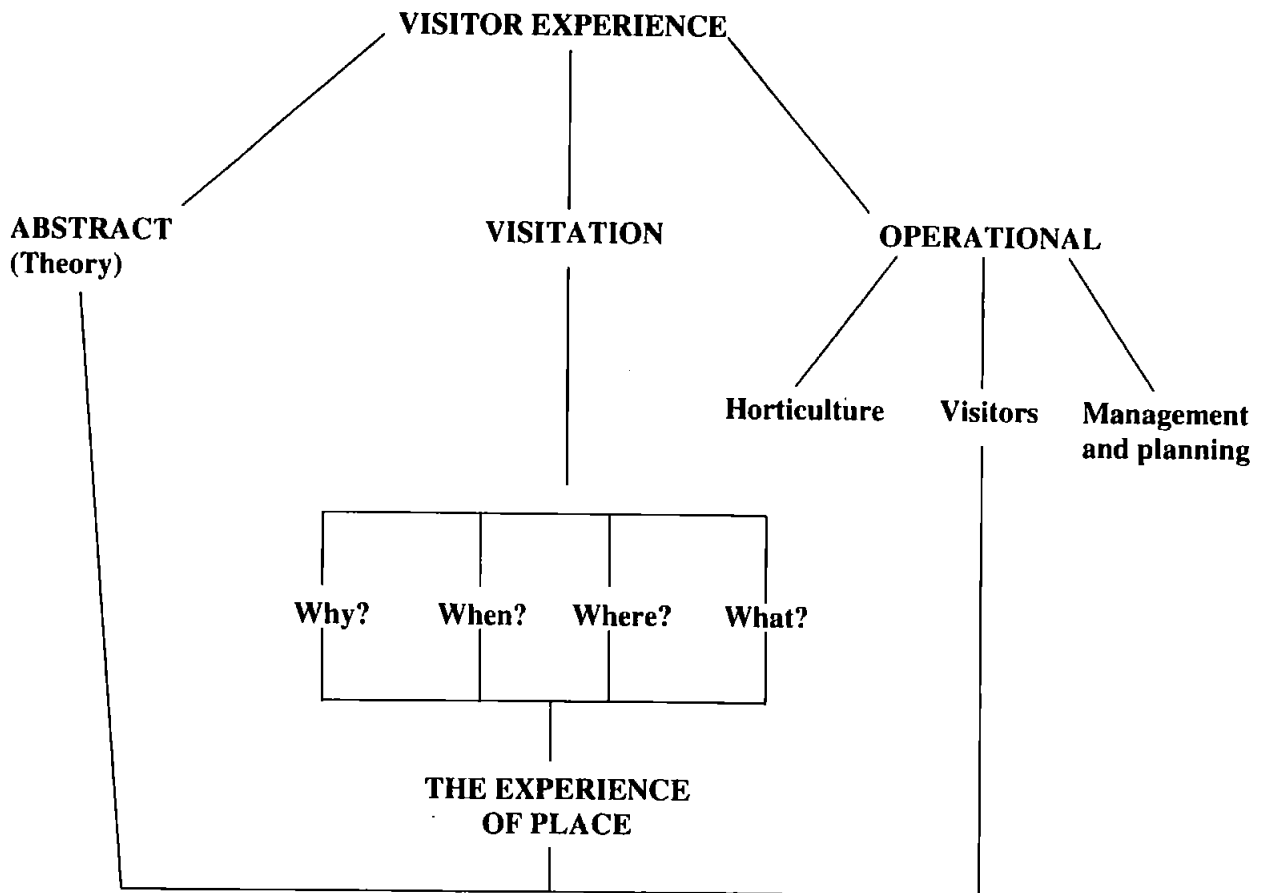


Figure 9.1 Conceptualising the Research

9.3 Research Findings in Relation to the Operation of the Garden Visit Market

The general characteristics of the garden visit market are that garden visitors are garden owners, tend towards an older age profile and high socio-economic grouping. Despite this generalisation, there is evidence that a younger market is finding appeal in the gardens sector. There are some geographical differences to be found in the data, that particularly differentiates Scotland from the South of England in relation to the profile of garden visitors (see Chapter 7).

The factor analysis undertaken using the visitor survey data (Chapter 6) identified groupings of factors that are significant in shaping the visitor experience.

To summarise, the results of that analysis showed that visitors seek three broad aspects when visiting gardens:

- (i) Social aspects (to be with others, to visit in a group).
- (ii) Horticultural aspects (to enjoy the garden and to get ideas for own garden).
- (iii) Setting aspects (for tranquility, to enjoy a pleasant environment).

In terms of the visitor perception of the importance of visitor services, three groupings were identified:

- (i) Facilities (tea-room, toilets, car-park).
- (ii) Education (guide book, childrens area, guided walks and events).
- (iii) Sales (shop and plant sales).

Finally, the factors affecting enjoyment of garden visits are grouped into five areas:

- (i) Welcome (friendliness and helpfulness of staff, reasonable entry charge).
- (ii) Access (ease of access, pleasurability of strolling, car-park).
- (iii) Promotions (events, foreign language leaflets).
- (iv) Ambience (weather, tidiness, safety, setting).
- (v) Facilities (tea-room, shop, toilets).

Garden owners/managers should bear in mind the emphasis that visitors place on aspects of their garden visit and need to prepare their gardens to meet the needs of visitors.

Further profitability of the garden attraction sector is undoubtedly subject to the wider operation of the attractions market, as noted in Chapter 8. The research showed that garden operators were not out of step with garden visitors in terms of the perceptions of the visitor experience. However, at a micro level, garden operators need to continue to raise standards of both the garden and the ancillary services provided, as well as increasing secondary spend opportunities, in order to maintain this level of consensus.

The broad recommendations cited in Chapter 8 outline the major areas for future attention, which were highlighted by the research, and the literature on attraction management.

In relation to expansion of the market, there is already much work towards making garden visiting a tourism product, although the market is still fairly low-key. There are now many well-established garden tourism operators in Great Britain. Bed and Breakfast for Garden Lovers, for example, is a network established in 1994, offering good quality

bed and breakfast accommodation in the UK by gardeners for gardeners (BBGL, 2002). A perfunctory glance at the February 2002 edition of the Royal Horticultural Society journal *The Garden* illustrates a range of garden tourism promotions. A list of tour advertisers includes: RHS Garden Holidays (run through Saga); Victoria Garden Tours, specialising in garden-themed tours all over the world; Brightwater Holidays offering a garden tour of Japan; Cricketer Holidays; Naturetrek; Barfield Travel and Tours; several hotels with individual colour adverts, such as the Nare Head Hotel, Meudon Country House Hotel and Nansloe Manor Hotel, Budock Vean (offering free entry to the Great Gardens of Cornwall) in Cornwall, the Island Hotel, Tresco on the Isles of Scilly; plus a plethora of classified advertisements for hotels and self-catering accommodation located close to gardens. Further research work is required to ascertain the, at present unknown, volume and value of garden tourism.

9.4 Methodological Issues and Garden Visiting

The methodological contribution this study has made to knowledge in the tourism and leisure domain is also significant in terms of the growing sophistication being called for by critics of the logical positivist paradigms that dominate many forms of research (Botterill, 2000). A mix of approaches such as those employed in this research, where a qualitative method, scoping the extent and nature of the topic, followed by an empirical study to establish baseline data and detailed insights into the management and nature of the visitor experience, is important. Indeed, one notable contribution that the thesis makes to the literature is that it shows that many existing studies of tourism and recreation are unsophisticated through their analysis of single elements of the wider experiential aspects

of tourism and leisure, namely supply or demand. This study has argued that to understand the managerial implications of garden visiting, a more complex analysis of both supply and demand issues as well as some of the more qualitative issues addressed in the Cornwall context is needed if research is to understand more fully the synergies, relationships and issues which interact in the complex area known as the visitor experience. It is also important to stress that this study was exploratory in nature due to the absence of baseline data and research upon which the thesis could build.

9.5 Gardens and Attraction Research

By adopting the focus on the visitor experience, a commonality exists between the demand for and delivery of gardens as products and elements which visitors value in their leisure time. To date, most of the tourism and leisure research on attractions has focused on the commercialised and capital-intensive nature of development to fulfil visitors needs particularly the role of technology. However, this thesis has shown that there is still a significant market for attractions and places to visit which are natural, offer opportunities for tranquillity, reflection, informal socialising and above all an opportunity to enjoy the environmental attributes of a human-influenced environment that has subtle and explicit variety and memorable elements in the experience of place (Canter, 1975). While gardens are certainly not for the thrill seeker, they seemingly appeal to a wide audience in terms of their incorporation in tourist trips, day trips and visits by local residents. The diversity of garden types also highlights hidden ranges of garden experiences which visitors acknowledge are important depending on the motivation for, and nature of their visit.

In relation to baseline data sources, the English Tourism Council (2000b) states that current statistics on visitor supply and demand in relation to visitor attractions is inadequate. Thus, a greater emphasis on the collection and dissemination of research information and industry best practice is required, particularly in relation to the analysis of sub-sectors, such as gardens. Applied research and consultancy might be better matched between industry and academic interests and thus links with academic institutions could be improved. Agencies with a strategic role to play in tourism development can assist in this process, as exemplified by the Scottish Enterprise initiative to set up a knowledge transfer network, linking academic researchers and research material with practitioners, as part of the Scottish Tourism Strategy (Scottish Executive, 2002).

9.6 Future Research Themes

Having set the broad context of garden visitation in this thesis, the subject deserves further research attention as it highlights an area of tourism and recreation research which is only just emerging as a more widely accepted sub-sector of visitor attractions. Themes for further research are abundant when the scope and importance of gardens as a recreational activity are acknowledged. Suggested areas of focus relate to the specifics of this research as well as to more loosely based connections, which have emerged through the process of researching garden visiting from both recreational and British perspectives.

(1) Qualitative Research: Psychology of Garden Visiting

In-depth work utilising qualitative techniques would be a useful extension to the work undertaken here, in relation to both garden owners and garden visitors. More qualitative work would assist in the extended exploration of perceptions and experiences to gain a more detailed understanding of the findings of this thesis and would be particularly relevant to the psychological perspective on garden visitation. As Williams (1995: 75) comments, “gardens possess a meaning and value more than is manifest in usage patterns alone”, and valuable research on the meanings and values which visitors place on gardens is recommended as a fruitful area of study. Such research would reinforce comparable work on parks and domestic gardens, as well as the more general literature on the value of gardens in society.

(2) Longitudinal Research

This thesis has shown that gardens are very different from their nearest equivalent in the research literature – urban parks. However, unlike urban parks, it is unclear from this study as to whether the current enthusiasm and development of garden visiting is a trend that will not be sustained. In other words, longitudinal research utilising the research framework presented in this thesis would assist in determining whether gardens are subject to life-cycle patterns exhibited by many tourism and leisure products. Thus, replication of the survey through time would help in defining the extent to which gardens are a timeless resource which develop and modify their resource base to meet existing needs or a static resource that have been rediscovered albeit for a short period of time. These issues also assume a much greater

significance when policy making is considered by local, regional and national bodies associated with the development, promotion and management of gardens as visitor resources.

(3) International Research

As mentioned earlier, wider geographic application of the garden research theme appears to be warranted. Garden visitation is a common recreation theme across the industrialised world and, in many countries, it has been identified as a means to generate tourist interest in specific regions. Clearly, visiting gardens is not an activity peculiar to Great Britain, although what is evident is that Great Britain appears to have a longer history of opening gardens to the public and that activity is more popular and widespread than in other countries. However, taking an international perspective, it appears that the garden theme is emerging as a strong contender in the global leisure and tourism industries. Data on garden visitation in other countries is not readily accessible but research to uncover the significance and scope of the activity on a global scale would benefit those attempting to use the garden theme as a means of generating income on a micro or macro scale.

(4) Economic Development and Impact Research

The effect of garden visiting in an economic sense is a further research theme which would be useful for agencies charged with promoting local and regional tourism development. This type of work might be more broadly conceptualised within a study of social, environmental and economic impacts, which would incorporate

aspects such as employment, revenue generation, capital investment, environmental and social responsibility. The results of such research might be used as a platform from which to justify the expansion of garden networks as means to develop tourism potential while benefiting the local area.

(5) The Operation of the National Gardens Scheme

The effectiveness of the National Gardens Scheme (NGS) would be a fruitful area of research. The operation of a supply-related garden organisation involved in the promotion of small, non-commercial gardens open for charity. Useful research themes would include visitation levels and value to the economy of local areas in relation to clustering. Anecdotal evidence gained from several garden owners indicates that NGS marketing could be improved and it is apparent that those participating in the scheme would like to know more about how garden visitors use the *Yellow Book*.

(6) The Extent and Value of Garden Tourism

The scope, extent and value of the garden theme as a niche tourism market would be a fertile area of research. While Evans (2001) has made some observations on current activity in the market sector, there is insufficient evidence of the importance of garden tourism as a new niche phenomenon. A perfunctory examination of the RHS magazine *The Garden* reveals a number of tour operators offering garden-based holidays and it would be intriguing to establish the extent and value of the garden tourism market. In addition, many hospitality providers advertise to garden travellers,

and it would be fascinating to find out the importance of garden tourists to enterprises in certain areas, such as Cornwall.

(7) Gardens Events

The survey data revealed the relative unimportance of special events to garden visitors. Further research is needed on the effectiveness of events in attracting a wider audience, as it is unclear whether infrequent garden visitors find events appealing and thus that there is a different market for events beyond the regular garden visitor.

It is clear that a wide range of research themes present themselves and it is anticipated that academic work on gardens will not rest with the completion of this thesis.

9.7 Concluding Remarks

This thesis has contributed an evaluation of how gardens in Great Britain are operating in one point in time, further extending earlier studies (such as Gallagher, 1983) and illustrating how gardens have diversified the activities and role of their gardens in relation to visitors. While the thesis may seem a somewhat descriptive contribution to knowledge, the apparent neglect of garden visiting in both a historical and contemporary context means that fundamental knowledge has to be established before more detailed and evaluative research can be conducted. It is also argued, however, that this thesis contributes more than a simple fact gathering exercise, whereby a series of empirical observations are made. The thesis has highlighted both the role of the garden as a

recreational resource and the significance of the garden visiting experience in a British context. There is further scope to extend this study at a European and a global level as the level of activity of garden visiting appears to justify greater research attention.

It is hoped that the dissemination of the results of this research will have a beneficial effect on agencies such as the RHS, VisitScotland and local authorities in making the interconnections between garden visiting, tourism, the local economy and regional development. The case study of Cornwall, combined with the visitor and owner/manager survey certainly identify these interconnections as well as the most important organisational frameworks needed to maximise the real potential of garden visiting in the twenty-first century.

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APPENDIX 1

THE NATIONAL GARDENS SCHEME

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The National Gardens Scheme, operating in England and Wales, is a highly significant driving force in encouraging gardens, both private and more public-oriented, to open to visitors. The Scheme was started in 1927 by Miss Elsie Wagg to support the Queen's Nursing Institute charity. In the following year, 609 gardens opened, raising £8,191. The gardens open were listed by *Country Life* in a handbook called *The Gardens of England and Wales*, which later became known as "The Yellow Book" after its bright cover.

Garden owners were persuaded to open their private gardens to the public for 'a shilling a head'. In addition, the scheme attracted Royal patronage, with King George V opening Sandringham in 1927 and a succession of other Royals opening their gardens in ensuing years. By 1931, about 1,000 gardens were enlisted as part of the scheme. From modest beginnings, with only a few mostly large-scale gardens opening for the benefit of a single charity, it has grown into a national institution, with 3, 500 gardens, ranging in size and style, raising over £1 million a year for charities. In 1980, the scheme became a charity - the National Gardens Scheme Charitable Trust – with the Queen Mother as Patron and Princess Alice as President.

In 2002, over £1.2 million will be given to the following charities from garden visits in 2001:

Macmillan Cancer Relief £450,000

Marie Curie Cancer Care £180,000

NGS Garden Bursaries (The National Trust) £168,000

The Queens' Nursing Institute Benevolent Fund £50,000

Innovation Awards £23,000

Nurses' Welfare Service £60,000

Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society £38,000

Royal Gardeners' Orphan Fund £38,000

Crossroads Caring for Carers £37,000

Help the Hospices £37,000

County Nursing Associations £29,000

Additional Charities Nominated by Owners £103,452

Many of the gardens open under the scheme are private gardens and are opened for one or more days as opposed to offering wide access. However, some larger gardens open on a commercial basis open for the National Gardens Scheme for one or more days in order to raise funds for charity. Garden openings are organised on a county by county basis and administered by volunteer County Organisers. Garden owners wishing to participate in the scheme have to meet certain criteria and only gardens of quality and interest are selected. Gardens of all sizes and styles are included in the scheme but the emphasis is on excellence. The main criteria are that the garden should:

- offer 45 minutes of interest, as visitors often travel some distance to visit gardens;
- be a good example of its type (cottage, alpine, herb), if it is a type;
- present something of special interest – such as, the view, a national collection or water feature.

If the garden is acceptable but lacking 45 minutes of interest the County Organiser will sometimes attempt to pair it with a nearby garden or gardens and arrange for them to open on the same day. The County Organiser must also consider the health and safety aspects of opening a garden (slippery steps, cliffs, etc.) and whether there is sufficient parking if there is no public transportation available.

Scotland

A similar scheme, founded in 1931 to support the Queen's Nursing Institute Scotland, operates in Scotland with a separate *Yellow Book*, containing over 350 gardens open to the public on one or more days every year.

Other schemes

In addition, other charities, such as the Red Cross and the Royal National Lifeboat Institution run garden opening schemes.

Around the World

In some countries, similar ventures to the National Gardens Scheme operate, with proceeds going to charity and an annual publication outlining garden opening times

and details. Examples of garden charity initiatives overseas include: in the USA, the Garden Conservancy (formed 1989); in Belgium, Jardins Ouverts-Open Tuinen (formed 1990); in the Netherlands, De Tuinspiegel (formed 1981); and Australia's Open Gardens Scheme established in 1987.

APPENDIX 2

QUALITATIVE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Questions

The following generic questions were designed prior to in-depth interviews with garden owners in order to generate sufficient data on specific topics (see Chapter 4):

- When and why did you first open your garden?
- What makes for a successful garden?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses of:
 - (a) Cornwall as a garden tourism destination;
 - (b) Your garden?
- What are the significant issues relating to managing visitors in your garden?
- Do you have any concerns about the future of your garden?

Generic areas covered by interviews:

The garden as an attraction

Development of the garden (historic and ongoing)

Visitor management

Marketing

Service quality

Customer care

Customer feedback

Horticultural aspects

Employment of staff and staff morale

Future opportunities and threats for the garden as a visitor attraction

Personal background and influences

Garden visiting market

Shaping the visitor experience

APPENDIX 3

GARDEN OWNER/MANAGER

QUESTIONNAIRE

Direct line: 01786 466452
Email: j.j.connell@stir.ac.uk
Date: 26th February 2001

Dear

MANAGING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE IN GARDENS – RESEARCH PROJECT

Gardening is as a national passion in Great Britain and, in recent years, garden visiting has increased in significance as a major pastime. Very little is known about how important garden visiting is and this is one of the reasons why I am undertaking research into the subject as part of a PhD at the University of Plymouth. I am contacting you in the hope that you will complete the enclosed questionnaire to assist the research project.

The reason for conducting the research is to establish how the visitor experience in gardens is managed and what makes a successful garden attraction. The findings of the research will be of practical value to garden owners in providing a basis for communicating the most effective ways of encouraging visits and maximising visitor enjoyment. It will also add to the knowledge about tourism and recreation management in Great Britain. The questionnaire is being distributed widely across England, Scotland and Wales and it is hoped to discover best practices in managing the visitor experience. In addition, garden visitors will be included in a future survey to take place in the summer of 2001.

If you are willing to participate in the enclosed survey, please follow the instructions below.....

- ◆ Please answer the questions in the enclosed questionnaire. For those questions that require a tick box answer, please indicate your response in the appropriate box. For those that ask for a more detailed response, please write your views in the given space. The completion of the questionnaire should be a relatively swift task.
- ◆ When you have completed the questionnaire, please return it in the pre-paid envelope provided to the above address.

If you have any queries about the research, please feel free to contact me at the above address. Your co-operation in this survey is most gratefully acknowledged.

Yours sincerely,

Miss Jo Connell BSc(Hons), MA, AMTS
Lecturer in Tourism

11. Do visitors have to purchase a ticket for the garden to use the shop and/or any other facility, such as a tea room?
 Yes No No shop/tea room
12. Which of the following forms of interpretation and information do you provide for visitors? (Tick all that apply)
- | | | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Guide book | <input type="checkbox"/> | Guided tour | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Informal conversation | <input type="checkbox"/> | Display boards | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Plant identification tags | <input type="checkbox"/> | Maps | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Audio-visual displays | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please state) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-

Section 3 Marketing

13. Which method has been MOST effective in attracting visitors to your garden? (Tick one only)
- | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------|--------------------------|
| Editorial | <input type="checkbox"/> | Advertising | <input type="checkbox"/> | Books | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Co-operative marketing scheme | <input type="checkbox"/> | Tourist Board | <input type="checkbox"/> | Garden leaflet | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| National Gardens Scheme | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please state)..... | | | |
14. Do you produce a promotional leaflet for your garden?
 Yes
 No
15. Do you undertake annual visitor surveys or market research in your garden?
 Yes No
- If **Yes**, how have you used the results of market research surveys?
- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| To inform marketing and promotion | <input type="checkbox"/> | To develop new facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| To improve existing facilities | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other..... | |

Section 4 Visitors to your Garden

16. What were your visitor numbers in 2000?
- | | | | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| 2000 or less | <input type="checkbox"/> | 2,001-10,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 10,001-25,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 25,001-50,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 50,001--100,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 100,001-150,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 150,001-200,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 200,001-250,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | 250,001-300,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| More than 300,000 | <input type="checkbox"/> | | | | |
17. Over the length of time your garden has been open to the public, have your visitor numbers been....
- | | | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| Increasing | <input type="checkbox"/> | go to Q18 | Decreasing | <input type="checkbox"/> | go to Q19 |
| Staying about the same | <input type="checkbox"/> | go to Q20 | Don't know | <input type="checkbox"/> | go to Q20 |
18. If **increasing**, which ONE of the following factors do you think has been most important in producing this increase? (Tick one only)
- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| Improved marketing of the garden | <input type="checkbox"/> | More visitors to the area | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Better marketing through a co-operative | <input type="checkbox"/> | New attraction in garden | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| More public interest in gardens | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other (please state) | <input type="checkbox"/> |
-
19. If **decreasing**, please state why you think visitor numbers have decreased.

20. In general, which ONE of the following best describes the majority of visitors to your garden? (Tick one only)
- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| Visitors with a specialist horticultural interest | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visitors with a general interest in gardening | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Visitors looking for a pleasant day out | <input type="checkbox"/> |

21. Please give an indication of the age groups and types of visitors to your garden, indicating an approximate percentage of total visitors. Please indicate if you are unsure about your visitor profile.

	%		%	
Retired, 60+	.....	School groups	....	Don't know about visitor profile
Mature, 40-60	.....	Families	....	.....
Younger, 18-39	.....	Coach tour groups	....

22. How important is the travel trade, such as tour operators and coach companies, to your business?

Very important	<input type="checkbox"/>	Important	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not very important	<input type="checkbox"/>	Do not deal with the travel trade	<input type="checkbox"/>

23. In your view, are the types of people who visit gardens changing?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>
-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------

If **Yes**, please state why you think this.....

24. Which ONE of the following best describes your garden?

Tourist attraction	<input type="checkbox"/>	Private garden	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other.....
--------------------	--------------------------	----------------	--------------------------	------------

Section 5 Managing the Visitor Experience in the Garden

25. Is the garden damaged by visitors in any of the following ways? (Tick all that apply)

Litter	<input type="checkbox"/>	Theft of plants, cuttings, statuary	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wear and tear on paths and lawns	<input type="checkbox"/>	Damage to plants	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	No damage caused by visitors	<input type="checkbox"/>

26. What kinds of garden maintenance tasks are required to reduce the effects of visitor use? (Tick all that apply)

Replacing turf/reseeding of grass	<input type="checkbox"/>	Litter collection	<input type="checkbox"/>
Path/gravel raking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cordoning off areas	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please state)	<input type="checkbox"/>	No tasks required	<input type="checkbox"/>
.....			

27. In the following section, please circle the number that most closely describes your views in each question using the following scale:

1 = Very important 2 = Quite important 3 = Not sure 4 = Of little importance
5 = Of no importance. If you do not provide a specific service, e.g. a tea room, please ring 5.

To what extent are the following elements important in determining the visitor experience in your garden?

Condition of the weather	1	2	3	4	5
Tidiness of the garden	1	2	3	4	5
The garden's setting in the landscape	1	2	3	4	5
Safety from crime	1	2	3	4	5
Ease of access to all parts of the garden	1	2	3	4	5
Pleasurability of strolling around the garden	1	2	3	4	5
Friendliness of staff	1	2	3	4	5
Helpfulness of staff	1	2	3	4	5
Reasonable entry charge	1	2	3	4	5
Tea-room	1	2	3	4	5
Shop/Nursery	1	2	3	4	5
A range of events	1	2	3	4	5
Foreign language leaflets	1	2	3	4	5
Sufficiently sized car park	1	2	3	4	5
Plant tags/labels	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX 4

GARDEN VISITOR QUESTIONNAIRE

June 2001

Dear Garden Visitor

STIRLING UNIVERSITY - SURVEY OF GARDEN VISITORS

As one of the thousands of visitors to gardens every year in Great Britain, I am seeking your help in compiling some research. You have been randomly selected as a visitor to this garden to give your views on what affects your enjoyment of visiting gardens in general as well as the general profile of garden visitors. Questionnaires are being distributed at a number of gardens and the assistance of the garden owners is gratefully acknowledged.

WHAT TO DO...

- Attached, you will find a 4-page survey form.
- The questions require mostly tick-box answers and it should only take a few minutes to complete.
- Please complete the questionnaire while in the garden you are visiting and return it to the member of staff who supplied it to you.
- If you would rather take it home to complete, you can return it to me at the above address
- If you would rather not fill in the survey, please return it to the member of staff who gave the questionnaire to you as this will help to reduce costs.

****If you take part in the survey, your name will be entered in a prize draw to win either a box of chocolates or a bottle of sparkling wine - your choice! **** Please write your name and tel. no on the questionnaire.

Your assistance in this research project will be greatly appreciated. In addition, your answers will help to inform garden owners about the facilities and services that visitors treasure most of all while visiting gardens.

To reassure you, this research forms part of an academic study and is not sponsored by any commercial organisations. As such, it will not be used for any other purposes than for academic research. The section on your perceptions of the garden you are visiting today, however, will be made available to the garden owner to assist them in obtaining feedback on their garden.

I very much hope that you will complete the survey form for me and I look forward to receiving your responses in due course. If you have any queries about the research, please feel free to contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely
Jo Connell
Lecturer in Tourism

Unless otherwise indicated, please tick only one answer for each question.

1. How often do you visit gardens?
 At least once a month Once or twice a year Less than once a year
2. Do you visit gardens mostly:
 At weekends only During the week only Both weekdays and weekends
 Only when on holiday
3. On average, how much time do you spend on each visit to a garden?
 Up to 1 hour Between 1 – 2 hours A morning or afternoon
 All day
4. Do you ever buy guidebooks when visiting a garden?
 Yes Sometimes No
5. Do you own a garden?
 Yes No
6. How would you describe your own interest in gardening?
 'Avid' gardener 'Occasional' gardener 'Armchair' gardener
 Have no real interest in gardening
7. What other attractions do you visit?
 Historic houses Wildlife sites Theme parks
 Museums/galleries Natural attractions Others (please state)
8. What are your other leisure pastimes?
 Gardening Reading Television
 Walking Sports Eating out
 Others (please state).....
9. Have you always been interested in garden visiting?
 Yes No
 If no, roughly what age were you when you became interested in garden visiting?.....
11. Which ONE of the following best describes you?
 Visitor with a specialist horticultural interest
 Visitor with a general interest in gardening
 Visitor looking for a pleasant day out

Q12-15 ask for some more personal information. Please be assured that this will only be used for the purposes of this research project. Your responses are greatly appreciated.

12. Please give an indication of your age group:
 60+ 50-59 40-49
 30-39 18-29
13. Are you:
 Male Female
14. What is your occupation of the chief income earner in your household? If retired, please state 'retired' and include your occupation before retirement.....
15. Are there any children under the age of 16 living in your household?
 Yes No

Please turn over...

Section 2 Facilities in Gardens

16. How important to you are the following aspects when you visit a garden? **Please tick a box for each aspect.**

	Very important	Important	Not important
Shop			
Plant sales			
Tea room			
Toilets			
Car park			
Guide book			
Children's area			
Guided walks			
Events			
Other			

17. Have you ever visited a garden to use just the shop or tea-room?
 Yes No

18. Which of the following activities do you like to undertake when visiting a garden? (Tick all that apply)
 Photography Nature study Painting
 Picnicking Sitting quietly Chatting
 Taking notes about plants Other (please list).....

19. What is your MAIN reason for visiting gardens? (Please tick ONE only)
 Tranquility Enjoy horticulture Somewhere to go
 Nice environment Other people like me visit gardens
 Organised trips Other (please state).....

20. What other reasons do you have for visiting gardens? (Tick all that apply)
 Tranquility Enjoy horticulture Somewhere to go
 Nice environment Other people like me visit gardens
 Organised trips Other (please list).....

21. Have you ever been motivated to visit a garden after looking at or hearing any of the following? (Tick all that apply)
 Magazine features Newspaper articles
 Word of mouth Commercial advertising
 Leaflet Web site
 Exhibitions/shows Discount schemes
 Television programme National Garden Scheme
 Books Other (please state below)

Section 3 Your visit today

22. Have you been to this garden before?
 Yes No

23. How did you first hear about this garden?.....

24. How did you travel to the garden you are visiting today? If you used a combination of modes, please tick more than one box.
 Car Coach Bus
 Train Cycle Walked
 Motorcycle Taxi Other

Please turn over...

25. Where have you travelled from today?.....

26. Is that your home or are you on holiday?
 Home Holiday

27. Who are you with today?
 Partner Family group (with children<16) Family group (without children)
 Coach party Other group Other.....

28. What have you liked **MOST** about visiting this garden today?

29. What have you liked **LEAST** about visiting this garden today?

Section 4 What affects your enjoyment of gardens?

In the following section, please circle the number that most closely describes your views in each question using the following scale:

1 = Very important 2 = Quite important 3 = Don't know 4 = Of little importance
 5 = Of no importance

30. To what extent are the following elements important in your enjoyment of visiting a garden?

Condition of the weather		1	2	3	4	5
Tidiness of the garden	1	2	3	4	5	
The garden's setting in the landscape	1	2	3	4	5	
Safety from crime	1	2	3	4	5	
Ease of access to all parts of the garden	1	2	3	4	5	
Pleasurability of strolling around the garden	1	2	3	4	5	
Friendliness of staff	1	2	3	4	5	
Helpfulness of staff	1	2	3	4	5	
Reasonable entry charge	1	2	3	4	5	
Tea-room	1	2	3	4	5	
Shop/Nursery	1	2	3	4	5	
A range of events	1	2	3	4	5	
Foreign language leaflets	1	2	3	4	5	
Sufficiently sized car park	1	2	3	4	5	
Plant tags/labels	1	2	3	4	5	

Toilets 1 2 3 4 5

Please turn over...

In the following section, please circle the number that most closely describes your views in each question using the following scale:

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Agree 3 = Not sure 4 = Disagree 5 = Strongly disagree

31. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about visiting gardens?

I like to be made to feel welcome when I visit a garden	1	2	3	4	5
It is important to me that access for less able visitors is good	1	2	3	4	5
I sometimes visit gardens for the shop/nursery as well as the garden	1	2	3	4	5
I sometimes visit gardens for the tea-room as well as the garden	1	2	3	4	5
I am concerned about health and safety issues in the gardens I visit	1	2	3	4	5
It is important to me that children are welcome to a garden	1	2	3	4	5
I like to have detailed information about gardens I visit	1	2	3	4	5
Gardens should be open at all times of the year	1	2	3	4	5
It is important that there is something to see in a garden open to the public all year round	1	2	3	4	5
I like to follow a set route around the garden	1	2	3	4	5
I generally feel happy when I have visited a garden	1	2	3	4	5

32. From the list below, please circle what you feel are the **THREE** most important factors influencing your enjoyment of visiting gardens.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| WEATHER | WELCOME ON ARRIVAL | QUALITY OF THE GARDEN |
| PEACEFUL ATMOSPHERE | STAFF ATTITUDE | GOOD CAFÉ |
| GOOD NURSERY/SHOP | INTEREST THROUGHOUT THE SEASONS | |
| TOILETS | OTHER..... | |

THANK-YOU VERY MUCH INDEED FOR COMPLETING THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

How to return this questionnaire.

Please return to a member of the garden staff or in the pre-paid envelope to: Miss Jo Connell, Department of Marketing, University of Stirling, STIRLING, Scotland, FK9 4LA.

APPENDIX 5

DESCRIPTION OF SURVEY GARDENS

Thirteen gardens participated in the survey of garden visitors, as specified in Chapter 6. The information contained in this Appendix gives an outline description of each of the gardens, in addition to that provided in Chapter 6.

Ardmaddy Castle Garden

Location: 8 miles south of Oban, Argyll.

Owner: Minette Struthers

Description: Ardmaddy rises above its formal walled garden on one side with outstanding views of the Islands on the other. Visitors approach the garden by an old arched footbridge over a burn finding its final path to the sea. A fine collection of species and hybrid rhododendrons, azaleas and climbing plants line the walls with continually increasing variety of shrubs and herbaceous perennials. Between dwarf box hedges flourish a wide range of interesting vegetables and cane fruits, which are grown using labour-saving methods. Walks through mixed shrubs, trees and spring flowering bulbs lead on to the water gardens and up into the bluebell woods among which are some fine rhododendrons more than half a century old. Recent stone and water features add a further dimension to the interest in this garden, evolving in its unique setting. A wide variety of plants and vegetables in season for sale.

Open: All year round, dawn to dusk.

Website: <http://www.gardens-of-argyll.co.uk/html/gardens/ardmaddy.htm>

Eggleston Hall Gardens (see illustration)

Location: Eggleston, near Barnard Castle, County Durham.

Owner: Malcolm Hockham.

Description: There are four acres of garden within a high wall which formed the original kitchen gardens of Eggleston Hall. There has been a house on the site for almost 400 years. Old diaries record crops of apples, cherries, pears, strawberries, plums, apricots, gooseberries, walnuts, artichokes and other vegetables. Many of these are still cultivated here today using the traditional organic methods and may be bought from our Gardens when in season. The ornamental gardens are laid out informally and provide many delights and surprises for enthusiasts and specialists as well as family days out. A moorland stream runs through the Gardens and there are many herbaceous plants and shrubs to be seen. Eggleston Hall Gardens specialise in hardy herbaceous stock which will survive the cold climate of the Upper Dales of



EGGLESTON
HALL
GARDENS

*The secret garden
of the North*



This timeless place...

Tel: 01833 650115

Northern England. Set in 5 acres and overlooking the stunning scenery of Teesdale Eggleston Hall Gardens boasts a fine walled organic vegetable garden, 400 year old chapel ruins (the original Eggleston Church) delightfully planted inside and out with a variety of interesting trees, shrubs and perennials, winding paths throughout the informal gardens, and a host of plants that will keep the serious plantsman or woman amused for hours!

Open: All year round.

Website: <http://www.celmisia.20m.com>

Fast Rabbit Farm (see illustration)

Location: Ash Cross, near Dittisham, Dartmouth, Devon.

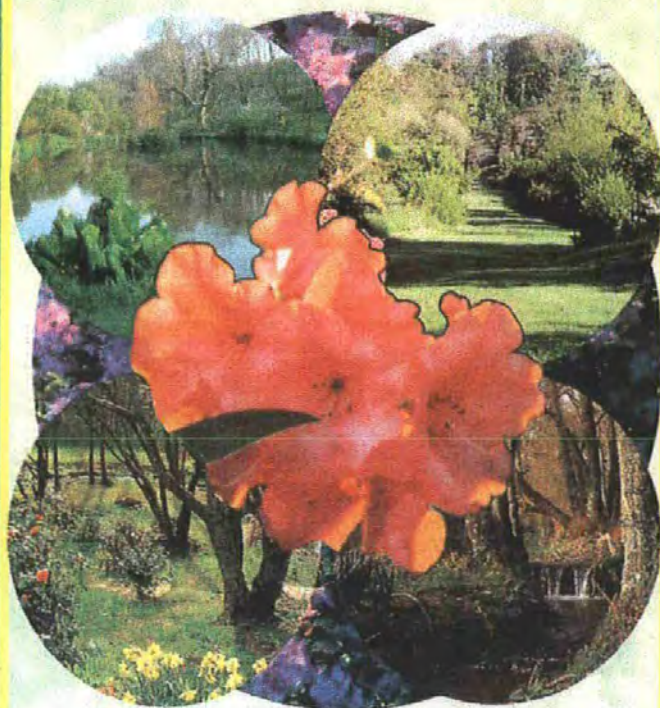
Owner: Alan Mort.

Description: Garden created in sheltered valley with natural stream. Garden contains several ponds and a lake, a rockery, extensive planting, plus new woodland planting and walks created through woodland at the head of the valley. Garden is partially wooded and the planted area extends to 12 acres. The garden is at its best in the spring. Each year we open at least once in February for visitors to enjoy the drifts of daffodils and the early flowering camellias. Early May is when the garden is at its peak with the rhododendrons in full flower and everything set off by the wonderful backdrop of the carpet of bluebells through the woods. Due to the mild climate in this part of the country the garden is able to exhibit many Mediterranean and Southern Hemisphere plants not normally hardy in the rest of the country.

Open: Each Sunday through April, May, June & July, Sept 22nd. Mondays April 1st, May 6th & 27th, 11-5, £2.50.

Website: <http://www.fastrabbitfarm.co.uk>

**BEAUTIFUL
WOODLAND
GARDEN
Fast Rabbit Farm**



**ONLY 3 MILES FROM DARTMOUTH IN
THE SOUTH DEVON COUNTRYSIDE**

Ash Cross : Dartmouth

Devon : TQ6 0LR

Tel : 01803 712437



Greys Court

Location: Rotherfield Greys, Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire.

Owner: National Trust

Description: Beautiful walled gardens, full of old-fashioned roses, wisteria and an ornamental vegetable garden. A picturesque and intriguing house, originally 14th-century but much added to later, with a beautiful courtyard and one surviving tower dating from 1347. The house has an interesting history and was involved in Jacobean court intrigue. Inside, the intimate rooms contain some outstanding 18th-century plasterwork. The outbuildings include a Tudor wheelhouse.

Open: 22nd March-27th September, 2-6, £3.20 (garden only).

Website: <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/>

Inveresk Lodge Garden

Location: near Musselburgh, 6 miles east of Edinburgh, East Lothian.

Owner: National Trust for Scotland

Description: This inviting terraced garden in the historic village of Inveresk entices visitors with its colourful herbaceous beds, a variety of attractive shrubs and a collection of old roses selected by Graham Stuart Thomas. Plants and methods are demonstrated here that can be used in your own home garden. The fine Edwardian conservatory has an aviary, tree ferns and hardy exotics. In the informal area, many of the plants hold the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden Merit. The sunny hillside garden provides the setting for the 17th-century Inveresk Lodge (not open to the public) and offers distant views of the Pentland Hills.

Open: All year round, 10-4.30/6, £2.

Website: <http://www.nts.org.uk>

Kingston Maurward Gardens

Location: Dorchester, Dorset.

Owner: Kingston Maurward College of the Countryside

Description: Kingston Maurward Gardens are set deep in Hardy's Dorset and are listed on the English Heritage register of Gardens. The 35 acres of classical 18th century parkland and lawns sweep majestically down to the lake from the Georgian House. The Edwardian Gardens include a croquet lawn, rose garden, herbaceous borders and a large display of tender perennials including the National Collection of

Penstemons and Salvias. Stone terraces, balustrading and yew hedges have been used to create many intimate gardens and carefully planned vistas. The walled demonstration garden is planted with a superb collection of hedges and plants suitable for growing in Dorset. **The Animal Park** has an interesting collection of unusual breeds of animals and always provides interest to all age groups. Children can help feed some of the animals or perhaps see chicks hatching. The Nature Trail follows the edge of the lake for approximately one mile providing the opportunity to see a wide variety of fauna and flora in stunning surroundings. Sixty-five different variety of trees are described in the Tree Trail Guide.

Open: All year round, 10-5.30/dusk if earlier, £4.

Website: <http://www.kmc.ac.uk>

Malleny Gardens

Location: Balerno, south of Edinburgh.

Owner: National Trust for Scotland

Description: This three-acre walled garden has a delightful collection of old-fashioned roses and fine herbaceous borders, and also houses the National Bonsai Collection for Scotland. A particular feature of the garden is the four 400-year old clipped yew trees, but there is also extensive woodland for a peaceful stroll. The 17th-century house situated in the garden was built for Sir James Murray of Kilbaberton around 1635. Its two Georgian reception rooms added in 1823 are opened by the Friends of Malleny on occasion during the summer.

Open: All year round, 10 'til dusk, £2.

Website: <http://www.nts.org.uk>

Mrs. Mitchell's Kitchen and Garden

Location: West Tytherley, near Salisbury, Wiltshire

Owner: Louise McAllister Mitchell

Description: A classic cottage garden, packed with unusual ideas, Hardy geraniums, pulmonarias, poppies, salvias, Michelmas daisies, pond, lounging cats, vegetables interplanted and in pots, late season interest. SW Regional Finalist BBC Gardener of the Year 1999.

Open: Open regularly for the National Gardens Scheme or year round by appointment, 10-6, £1.

Website: <http://www.ngs.org.uk>

Pitmedden Garden

Location: 1 mile west of Pitmedden, 14 miles north of Aberdeen.

Owner: National Trust for Scotland

Description: The centrepiece of this property is the Great Garden, originally laid out in 1675 by Sir Alexander Seton, 1st Baronet of Pitmedden. In the 1950s re-creation of the elaborate floral designs under the guidance of the late Dr James Richardson, three of the formal parterres were taken from designs possibly used in the gardens at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh in 1647. The fourth parterre is a heraldic design based on Sir Alexander's coat-of-arms. On the 40 ha (100 a) estate is the Museum of Farming Life, Visitor Centre, herb and wildlife gardens.

Open: 1st May-30th September 10-5, £5.

Website: <http://www.nts.org.uk>

Snowhill Manor Garden

Location: Snowhill, near Broadway, Gloucestershire.

Owner: The National Trust.

Description: A delightful organic garden surrounding a Cotswold manor house containing Charles Paget Wade's extraordinary collection of craftsmanship and design, including musical instruments, clocks, toys, bicycles, weavers' and spinners' tools and Japanese armour. Mr Wade's cottage can also be visited.

Open: 29th March-3rd November, 11-5.30, £3.50 (garden only).

Website: <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/>

Winllan

Location: Talsarn, 8 miles north of Lampeter, Ceredigion.

Owner: Mr. and Mrs. Ian Callan.

Description: The six-acre garden has been created by the owners mainly as a haven for wildlife. After 20 years of development, the garden is home to 200 species of wild flowers, including seven wild orchids and these in turn attract butterflies. Dragonflies enliven the pond area. A small area was planted up as woodland with some 35

species of mainly native trees in 1982. Beyond the wood is a hay meadow and a river runs along the length of the garden. There is a small area of conventional garden but the emphasis is on native wild plants (from *The Good Gardens Guide 2000*).

Open: daily in May and June, by appointment in July and August, 2-6, £1.50.

Pine Lodge Gardens (see illustration)

Location: Cuddra, Holmbush, 1 miles east of St. Austell, Cornwall.

Owner: Ray and Shirley Clemo.

Description: The 30-acre estate, in its mild climate of mid-Cornwall, comprises several linked gardens. There are over 6000 labelled plants, many of which are rare or unusual. In addition to rhododendrons, magnolias and camellias, so familiar in Cornish gardens, there are Mediterranean and southern-hemisphere plants grown for all-year-round interest. Shirley's planting schemes, renowned for their imaginative use of colour, ensure that you will enjoy the herbaceous borders, fernery, formal garden, woodland walk and shrubberies. Pine Lodge's water features include; a large wild life pond, an ornamental pond with cascades (stocked with koi carp), a lake with an island (home to black swans and many waterfowl), a newt pond and marsh gardens. Trees are also a speciality with an acer glade, a collection of 80 different conifers in a four-acre pinetum, and an arboretum. The creation of a Japanese garden has been taking place over the last two years. Many rare & unusual plants, all propagated at Pine Lodge, are sold in the Nursery. Holder of the National Collection of Grevilleas.

Open: 24th March-end of October, 10-6, £4

Website: <http://www.pine-lodge.co.uk>

East Ruston Old Vicarage Gardens (see illustration)

Location: East Ruston, 1 1/2 miles from the north east coast of Norfolk at Happisburgh.

Owner: Alan Gray and Graham Robeson.

Description: The garden is an oasis of beauty and natural order set in a prairie landscape. The influence of sea and soil, low rainfall and milder winters encourage exotic growth. The garden contains a diversity of areas: autumn borders and a holm oak walk, a sunken garden, a new exotic garden, Dutch garden, a cottage border, Mediterranean garden, Californian border and desert wash, a long border, a walled

Pine Lodge Gardens

CUDDRA ~ ST AUSTELL



garden and meadow, and a pond. The garden has a remarkably luxuriant and exotic atmosphere as a result of the climatic influences and the innovation in design and planting.

Open: Wednesdays, Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, 2- 5.30, 31st March to 25th October, £3.80.

Website: <http://www.e-ruston-oldvicaragegardens.co.uk>

EAST RUSTON OLD VICARAGE



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- Desert Wash
- Wild Flower Meadows
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