Customer Value for Places
A Case Study of Singapore Botanic Gardens

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SUMMARY

The objective of this research thesis was to enrich customer value theories with a place-related concept, using a case study of the Singapore Botanic Gardens. In conjunction with this, 2 research questions were created, namely, (i) In what ways do park visitors ascribe meaning of place?, and (ii) how can meaning of place contribute to the customer value conceptualization?

Theories for review were mainly customer value and meaning of place concepts. In particular, there was heavy reliance on Gustafson’s (2001) 3-pole model on how customers ascribe meanings to places for the research and analysis. It was argued that the more meanings customers ascribed to a place, the stronger their connection with the place.

A mix of qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. Field observations and survey questionnaires consisting of both close and open-ended questions provided the data to answer research question (i). Subsequently, research question (ii) was answered through argumentation, literature research and empirical analysis.

The answer to research question (ii) was the final outcome of the thesis: a customer value framework for places, merging the 2 concepts of meaning of place and customer value. The main conclusions were that emotional, cognitive, experiential (activity) and environmental values helped customers to ascribe meanings to places, leading to a higher commitment / loyalty / attachment to places.

The necessity to infuse place-related concepts into customer value lies in a better understanding of the customer values that would encourage place attachment, and henceforth, enables place managers to build amenities and design the place / service in a way that create value for visitors.

KEYWORDS: Customer Value, Meaning of Place, Place, Urban Park, Emotional Value, Cognitive Value, Experiential Value, Environmental Value
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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Intro

Value creation is an important strategic business activity that requires knowing customers’ needs, desires and values. The importance of studying customer value has been broadly acknowledged and received a number of theoretical conceptualizations by different authors (Zeithaml, 1988; Holbrook, 1999 among others). Yet no sufficient empirical research has been conducted in order to study the nature of customer value (Holbrook, 1994 and Sinha & DeSarboin, 1998 in Williams, 2000). Moreover, the perception of value may differ depending on whether the context of study is product-based or service-based (Williams, 2000). Since the majority of studies about customer value tend to be product-oriented we saw a big potential in contributing to a research regarding service-oriented context, and precisely leisure-related.

Given that in service sector sociological and psychological aspects are more important than functional attributes (Williams, 2000) our primary interest was to look at consumer value in terms of some intangible and cognitive categories. Lately researchers did unite functional and socio-psychological components in their frameworks and focused on experiential consumption (e.g., Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook and Olney, 1995; O’Guinn and Belk, 1989; Arnould and Price, 1993 in Williams, 2000). The frameworks mostly regarded hedonism and experience as an end value in itself (Williams, 2000). As for customer value in the personal aspect, researchers outlined the importance of emotions (e.g. Sheth, Newman and Gross, 1991 in Williams, 2000). Simultaneously there is a growing number of studies about meaning of place in the leisure-related areas of research (e.g. Kaltenborn & Williams, 2002; Snepenger et al, 2004). Since place is a crucial constructed concept in leisure, we aimed to find out if meaning of place can contribute to consumer value.

We were interested in parks, hence a park was chosen as an object of study which served as an exemplifier of recreation/leisure places. It was only in the last decade when the studies of meaning of parks to its visitors began to flourish, particularly national parks in different countries (Smaldone et al, 2005; Gunderson & Watson, 2007; Wynveen et al, 2010). The body of research on meaning of urban parks for people is relatively smaller and tends to take more practical form with a big value for park managers (e.g. Ellis & Rossman, 2008; Kil et al, 2010;). Such works dealt with parks’ excellence and were dominated by a supplier side focus. On the
contrary, we aimed to turn to the customer side and focused mainly only residents’ perceptions on meaning of park.

Structurally, after presenting our research intention and objective, the thesis would put forward and discuss the various definitions, background and limitations of the theories of consumer value and meaning of place, arguing for the need to partly merge these concepts. Using the methods laid out in Chapter 3, the empirical data would be analyzed using an existing meaning of place model and the final objective of this research would be realized with the presentation and discussion of the results, in the form of a new framework combining both customer value and meaning of place concepts.

1.2 Purpose of Study and Research Questions

This thesis endeavoured to provide a better understanding in the field of customer research, applied to the leisure industry that would be enriched with conceptualizations of place meaning. It is believed that the more meaningful a place is to a person, the less likely the possibility of the person substituting the place with another (Walsh, 2000). It was with this premise that the authors of this thesis aimed to look at customer value with fresh eyes, to find the factors that might have longer term effect.

Consequently, the two research questions were:

1) In what ways do park visitors ascribe meaning of place?
2) How can meaning of place contribute to the customer value conceptualization?

The former question would demonstrate how the concept of meaning of place was operationalized with the empirical results. Henceforth, through deeper analysis of the answers to this first question, we aimed to enrich the current customer value thought, making it more specifically applicable to places. The latter question would thus be the main and final objective of this thesis.

Methodologically, we intended to reach the purpose of getting the notion of how place meanings are created through a case study, i.e. of the Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG). Gustafson (2001) proposed that meanings are planted in the relationship between self, others and environment. Through surveys, we could gain insights on the self-others and self-environment relations; and through onsite observations, we could grasp the others-environment relation of how park visitors
experience meaning of place. With these empirical results, elements of this notion of meaning of place could be merged into the customer value scientific thought.
2 THEORIES

2.1 Customer Value

The simple definition of customer value in marketing is the customer’s trade-off between benefits and sacrifice (Kotler & Armstrong, 2009). As this definition is from a customer perspective, it is crucial to add that value is according to the customer’s perception. This concept of perceived customer value has been widely accepted (Ziethaml, 1988; Holbrook, 1999; Sánchez et al, 2006; Sánchez-Fernández & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2007; Smith & Colgate, 2007). Putting it more concisely, perceived value is a “cognitive evaluation” of whether the money and/or time that were given up for a trip has been worthwhile, in terms of the experiences received in return (Murphy et al, 2000:46). Holbrook (1996:138) described the characteristics of this cognitive evaluation of perceived customer value as “an interactive relativistic preference experience”.

The term “value” with which we will operate further in Chapter 6, needs a clarification. As Khalifa (2004:41 in Sanchez-Fernandez & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2006) argued, the term “value” is the most “overused and misused” concepts not only in social science, but also in other disciplines such as psychology, marketing, economics (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996 in Sanchez-Fernandez & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2006). They argued that customer value and personal values (plural) are not the same concepts. If value (as singular) is something that is an “outcome of an evaluative judgement” (Sanchez-Fernandez & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2006:41), values are more of a norms, rules and criteria which “serve as the basis for those evaluative judgements”.

The following sections summarized the current customer value models / frameworks and approaches as well as their limitations, which asserted for the need for some place-related concepts to be infused into a customer value framework for places.

2.1.1 Customer Value Approaches in Leisure

In recent leisure researches, service quality has been widely used for the deliverance of excellent customer value (Ziethaml et al, 1996; Komppula, 2006; Obenour et al, 2006; Slåtten et al, 2010; Quintal & Polczynski, 2010). Closely related to service quality, customer satisfaction is another concept that is also used in recent leisure marketing to measure and deliver higher customer value (Ho et al, 2006; Murray et al, 2007). Satisfaction in leisure research can be succinctly defined as a tourist’s emotional judgment of his/her experience at the destination after the trip
Murray et al (2007) looked at how visitation to the Australian Botanic Gardens is affected by service quality and/or benefit attainment (i.e. satisfaction). However, the results of their study showed that “frequency of visitation was not predicted by either service quality performance or benefit attainment” (83). In this sense, it suggested that it was not enough for park practitioners to focus only on service quality and satisfaction to create customer value.

Additionally, researchers are also recognizing the significance of customer emotions in creating customer value. This is also where Pine & Gilmore’s (1999) experience economy and the concept of co-creation are often employed (Oh, Fiore & Jeoung, 2007; Binkhorst & Dekker, 2009; Morgan et al, 2009; Scott et al, 2009) to garner visitors’ positive emotion as a way of creating value for customers and staying competitive in the business. Slåtten et al, 2010 argued for how eliciting “positive emotions” in customers’ experiences in the leisure section could increase the likelihood of repurchases by customers.

The above paragraphs have summed up the current popular approaches towards creating values for customers in the leisure sector. While there are general recognition on the significance of customer emotions in more recent recreation & leisure marketing research, this emotional aspect is often studied in the form of satisfaction levels and choice behaviours (Walsh, 2000). Also, service quality, customer satisfaction and emotions, while important for customer value creation for on-site experiences, an understanding of how customers can have long-lasting attachment to a place would be valuable. Ho et al (2006) emphasized the importance of investing in creating “lifetime value”. As per the literature on experience economy and co-creation on capturing the emotions of visitors, would emotions alone suffice in the longer term? Some leisure/tourist destinations sell the emotions of thrills and excitement, such as, Queenstown in New Zealand, which is famous for bungee jumping, sky-diving, river rafting and jet boating activities (Queenstown Adventure Website, 2011). Strong adrenalin rushing emotions are often felt when engaging in such adventures, but as anyone who has experienced these before would know that such emotions of excitement and thrills do not last in the long run. In this sense, the authors of this thesis saw a gap in the knowledge on how customers’ emotional affectation for a place could last over a longer period of time.

Contemplating on customer value in leisure thus far, it is clear that value is a cognitive judgement on the part of the customers, where customers’ emotion is a crucial element in their experiences and as common marketing logic goes, customer experiences should have long lasting effects for loyalty and repeat purchases in the long run. As such, the authors of this thesis
were inspired by these 3 key points: (i) customer’s cognitive affectation and (ii) customers’ emotions that make (iii) customers’ bonding with a place last over a longer period. It is believed that the more meaningful a place is to a person, the less likely the possibility of the person substituting the place with another (Walsh, 2000; Williams et al, 1992). In other words, the focus of this research was to understand customer’s attachment to a place (park), and incorporating this place-related concept into a customer value framework for places.

2.1.2 Absence of Customer Value Frameworks for Places

For leisure management, a customer value framework / model offers a convenient and quick guide on the different areas to focus on in their marketing endeavours. However, there exist not one customer value model / framework that is specific for places.

The following section 2.1.3 looked at a few general customer value frameworks / models out there (Holbrook, 1999; Snoj et al, 2004; Smith & Colgate, 2007; Khan et al, 2010) that were not specifically tailored for places and discussed their limitations for use on places, which thus, argued for the need of a customer value framework that is specific for places, instead of using these general ones.

2.1.3 Review of Existing Customer Value Frameworks & Their Limitations

Due to the highly abstract, subjective and complex nature of customer value, Snoj et al (2004) has concluded that perceived value is multi-dimensional. By putting together different author’s definitions, the below are Snoj et al’s (2004:158) conclusion:

- value for a consumer is related to his expertise or knowledge, of buying and using of a product;
- value for a consumer is related to the perception of a consumer and cannot be objectively defined by an organization;
- the customer perceived value is a multidimensional concept; and
- it presents a trade-off between benefits and sacrifices perceived by customers in a supplier's offering.

Smith & Colgate (2007:10) also conceded with the multi-dimensional aspect of perceived value with their framework consisting of 4 different categories of customer value, namely, “functional / instrumental value, experiential/hedonic value, symbolic/expressive value, and cost/sacrifice
More recently, there is Khan et al (2010:21) who looked at the multi-dimensionality of customer value in terms of “functional value” and “relational value”. They proposed that value exists also in the relationship between buyer and seller. While the subject of study for the paper was on financial services, this framework echoed the findings of Högström et al (2010:399) on how to create unique customer experiences in snow parks using Kano’s theory of attractive quality. That is, the interaction between the service provider and customer “would serve to create a unique offering and place attachment among users.”

The problem with all these customer value frameworks is that they are not specifically designed for places. While they can still be applicable to places, no doubt, there are undeniably some limitations.

For example, in Smith & Colgate’s (2007) framework, it has neglected the value of relationship, interaction and co-creation of experiences between service provider and customer, as well as between customers. While the experiential / hedonic types of value would generally fit experiences in a destination, it is very much about the one way interaction from service provider to customers, rather than a co-creation. “Experiential/hedonic value is concerned with the extent to which a product creates appropriate experiences, feelings, and emotions for the customer” (Smith & Colgate, 2007:10). The phrasing of the sentence itself is evidence of how one-sided Smith & Colgate (2007) sees experiential / hedonic value: “a product creates ...... for the customer”. As revolutionized by Vargo & Lusch (2004), the concept of value is co-produced with the customer, rather than provided by the seller alone, but by 2008, Vargo & Lusch (2008:8) appropriately updated that “the customer is always a co-creator of value.” The reason is because in the consumption of a value, it “always involves a unique combination of resources and an idiosyncratic determination of value”, where this “value is always uniquely and phenomenologically determined by the beneficiary” (Vargo & Lusch, 2008:9).

While Khan et al (2010:21) saw the value in the interaction between the seller and the customers, they have not explored the value in the interaction between customers. As with the nature of travelling and visiting certain destinations, it is very much a social activity where value in the interactions between visitors should not be ignored. Just to name a couple of examples, some people travel to visit or spend time with friends / relatives, fulfilling the “need for affiliation”,


while some travel to understand other cultures, fulfilling the “need for intraception” (Plog, 1994:215).

A point of note here is that the above critique of Smith & Colgate’s (2007) and Khan et al (2010) were given with good knowledge that these frameworks were written mainly for goods and services, instead of experiences or for places of attractions. The argument is that there are only such general customer value frameworks out there, with none specifically for places, and how there are limitations when applying these general frameworks to places. As such, the purpose for this research arose, i.e. to enrich current customer value frameworks with place-related concepts.

Holbrook’s Typology of Consumer Value (Holbrook, 1999) is multi-dimensional, experience focused (rather than products / service focused) and comprehensive. Holbrook (1999:5) considered customer value to be “an interactive relativistic preference experience” that “resides not in the product purchased, not in the brand chosen, not in the object possessed, but rather in the consumption experience(s) derived there from” (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982 in Holbrook 1999:8). In the last 2 quotations alone, Holbrook’s concept on customer value has covered all the important aspects of the other authors’ different frameworks. He has acknowledged the “interactive” aspect between the buyer and seller. He considered value to be very subjective to individual’s preferences and situational context, based on personal judgement and experience. Picture 1 depicts the different types of value that falls under each of the 3 dimensions. (Holbrook, 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extrinsic</th>
<th>Intrinsic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-oriented</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Excellence (quality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other-oriented</td>
<td>Active</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reactive</td>
<td>Esteem (reputation, materialism, possessions)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Picture 1: Holbrook’s Typology of Consumer Value

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1 Intraception is a psychological concept by Henry Murray, describing people who understand the world via their emotions. In this instance, Plog (1994) used it to describe people who yearn to understand & connect with others.
2.1.4 Customer Value Framework with Place-Related Concepts

Indeed, the multi-dimensionality of perceived value cannot be denied due to its abstract, subjective and complex nature. Yet it is also because of this that opens the opportunity for further research and insights on it by focusing on different angles, as the multiple authors have done before. For us, our interest lay not in physical products nor services which were the main attention of the many authors cited so far. We were looking at a place (or place of attraction) specifically and thus the emphasis of our study would be on experiences instead.

In other words, we would like to explore a suitable perceived customer value framework that is more specifically tailored for places, where our twin focus will be experiences and meaning of place concepts. Holbrook’s typology covers a broad aspect of a consumer purchasing experience, but lacks place-related concepts that is relevant for a place-related customer value framework. It only makes sense that customer value specifically for places, should have place-related concepts incorporated into it.

2.2 Meaning of Place

This section provides a reader with an overview of meaning of place concept and how it developed from the middle of 20th century until today. Special attention is given to Gustafson’s model (2001) of meaning of place since this is the main theory that has been adopted for carrying out this research. The overview is narrowed down further by introducing a discussion on place and meaning of place in leisure studies, in particular. Finally, some contemporary research reviews are presented that deal specifically with the meaning of parks and parks as a place.

When talking about meaning of place we are not talking about some concept with a fixed definition. To grasp the essence of this phenomenon it is reasonable to trace back to the discourses on place and its’ characteristics. The positivist tradition that dominated in social science in the 1950-s and 1960-s led to the understanding of place only as a physical location in space (Kaltenborn & Williams, 2002). The positivist tradition tended to employ the idea of learning phenomena in a closed-system method like in naturalistic science (Smith, 1998). Positivism was as well characterized with the approach that it is only what we can observe with our senses is true, whereas everything beyond is not considered to be scientific. Therefore place
was perceived as a location (closed system) with a number of visual characteristics that own functional purposes.

Then in the 1970-s and 1980-s, humanistic view came to light together with the focus on the “experience of insidedness” that was first introduced by Relph (1976 in Kaltenborn & Williams, 2002). Experience of insidedness meant “a sense of belongingness and deep and complete identity with a place” (Kaltenborn & Williams, 2002: 190). Relph (1976 in Gustafson, 2001) identified three components of place: physical setting, activities and meanings. Relph belonged to the phenomenological stream and was the one to create the notion of “placelessness of place” (Gieryn, 2000). Such an attitude to the phenomenon was justified by analyzing negative consequences of decline in neighbourhoods and communities and high mobility of people (Kaltenborn & Williams, 2002). Tuan (1977 in Wynveen et al, 2010) who also advocated the same views argued that a space becomes a place only when it is endowed with the meanings through life-time experiences. Canter (1977a in Gustafson, 2001) suggested that place is a result of relationships between actions, conceptions and physical attributes. These scientists have received a portion of critique for being too romantic (Canter, 1988 in Gustafson, 2001), for having anti-modern and “exclusionary” view of place (Massey 1993, Shurmer-Smith & Hannam 1994, Harvey 1996 in Kaltenborn & Williams, 2002: 190). Place was viewed as something comprised of authentic social bonds and thus isolated from the outside world. But globalization has already spread its influence over the geographical and economical borders and especially in terms of migration, which was the vital condition for geographers. It was no longer reasonable to reject this process and to see a place as something fixed and static.

The constructivist turn in the 1990-s adapted globalization and stood against the view that places have essential identities. Massey (1993 in Kaltenborn & Williams, 2002) saw place as a combination of local and global processes. Kaltenborn & Williams (2002: 191) elaborated on it: “Places, in other words, can be seen as socially constructed entities to which various people experience different degrees of attachment and identification”. Thus, new traits of place have been studied: places are not isolated, they are linked to the outside world; they can be produced and reproduced over time and get new meanings (cf. Pries, 1996, 1999; Eade, 1997 in Gustafson, 2001). Massey (1994 in Gustafson, 2001) argued that places are processes. Somewhat the same approach we can notice in Giuliani & Feldman (1993: 268 in Kaltenborn & Williams, 2002) where place bonds are seen “as an enduring and changeable process related to the construction and maintenance of identity in a changing social and physical environment”. Places in a
Thus, the concept of meaning of place was introduced ever since Relph’s bodies of work. Since then meaning of place embraced a number of diverse notions such as “place identity”, “sense of place” (Shamai, 1991; Hay, 1998 in Gustafson, 2001) and “place attachment” (Low & Altman, 1992). However, the authors of this thesis find that meanings that people ascribe to places differ from notions of “place identity” and “attachment to place”, although of course they are interrelated. Sense of place is the ability to put things on a “cognitive map” and to attribute meanings to places (Rotenberg and Mgdonagh, 1993; Walter, 1988 in Gieryn, 2000). As to place attachment, it usually depended on the length of residence and the intensity of relationship with place. As to place meanings, they are described differently and may refer to, indeed, everything (Guderson & Watson, 2007).

This was how Wynveen et al (2010:285) explained what meaning of place is: “… the implication is that the general characteristics of the environment focus the individual’s attention on specific attributes. The importance of specific attributes is reflected in the meanings the individual ascribes to the place…Meanings may emerge with any kind of interaction, but with repeated interaction it is likely that meanings will bear greater significance to the individual”.

Among contemporary researchers who explicitly focus on meaning of place in sociology with theoretical conceptualizations we have taken into account ideas of Gustafson (2001), Manzo (2005) and Smaldone et al (2008) for the study. More extensive review of Gustafson’s work is presented below.

### 2.2.1 Gustafson’s Model: Meaning of Place

Even though meanings ascribed to the places are highly personal and different for every individual there was no attempt to group them into categories until Gustafson (2001) outlined that meanings are situated in the 3 poles: self, others and environment (Picture 2). He also found that these poles do not stand independently from each other, but interrelate and form relations. Meanings that fall into the category of self are highly personal, reflect certain period of life (childhood, youth…) and expressed in terms of a) memories and experiences b) emotions (like sense of home or security) c) activities d) self-identification with, for example, city or region. Self-others relation reflects peoples’ perceptions of a) bonding with friends and relatives, relations with a community b) recognition c) meeting of “others”. To speak about the category
of others, Gustafson (2001) pointed out that sometimes people associate a place with the traits of people who inhabit a place or institutions which belong to a place and ascribe these “other” associations to a place. The others-environment pair reflects the so-called “climate” of a place that is affected by people’s perception of the surrounding environment to the place. The environment-pole involves natural or built environment, symbolic or historical; political and in terms of proximity. The environment-self pair represents knowledge about place, the opportunity that it gives, and citizenship. Self-others-environment implies traditions, anonymity and citizenship. Gustafson (2001) confessed that the definitions of the categories are vague and sometimes one meaning can fall into several categories (e.g. citizenship) due to the abstract nature of the meanings.

However, not all the dimensions of meaning can easily fall into one of three poles or poles-interrelations. Gustafson (2001:12) acknowledged the existence of “underlying dimensions” which are significant for the concept but do not fit into the frame of the model. They are: distinction, valuation, continuity and change. Distinction is a dimension that reflects people’s natural cognitive ability to differentiate places from each other, compare them or create categories. It is what people find unique and special about the place. Valuation is a second dimension as a result of the first one, that is people’s desire to give assessment to places and/or its inhabitants, be it positive or negative. Gustafson (2001) mentioned that valuation is a very important aspect in the process of ascribing meaning and it influences people’s attitude. For example, a person might not necessarily relate to a place through self-dimension but strong positive valuation of place will definitely strengthen relations of the person with place. Continuity implies people’s “life paths” that stretch far beyond the three poles and relations of the model. Change is also considered to be a temporarily-related dimension and identifies the meanings that change over time. Gustafson (2001:13) claimed: “This interplay of continuity and change clearly shows that meanings of place are not given once and for all”.

The authors of this thesis decided to extensively use this model in the analysis of the empirical results since it is the most structured and comprehensive model of meaning of place in contemporary research as of now (Manzo, 2005).

2.2.2 Places and Meaning of Place in Leisure Studies

A quote from Baerenholdt et al (2004:1) is a vivid example of how crucial a concept of place is in tourism and leisure studies: “If places did not exist the tourism industry would have had to invent them. Or if places did not exist the tourists would have had to invent them. Places are intrinsic for any kind of tourism. Without places to which to go tourism would seem meaningless”.

The following discussion clarifies the current stance of the place concept in leisure studies and elaborates why it is eligible to carry out this research using the case study of an urban park.

Judging from the discussion above it is clear that place is a vague and complex concept that went through significant changes over decades and as it was studied by various scholars, dominantly which belonged to sociology and (human) geography. In leisure studies the term is one of the
most frequently used and from a first glance seems extremely regular. By leisure places in every-day life we mean almost everything: from continents and countries to a small family owned tavern somewhere in the Greek Islands; no wonder researchers took their time trying to scientifically identify what a place concept implies in leisure, how it is structured and in what ways it is appropriate to use the term in the discipline.

Saraniemi & Kylanen (2010:133) proclaimed: “Tourism is about places and spaces that are embedded in cultures, economies, and social lives of communities”. Places can appear as destinations. Nevertheless approach to destinations also changed with the application of different traditions in leisure studies. First, places were regarded in the limits of economic-geography and political approach where touristic place is a physical location that needs careful planning in order to gain benefits (Pearce, 1989; Hall, 1994 in Baerenholdt et al, 2004). That period of tourism and leisure research thought did not include discussions on time or spatiality.

The studies of the last decade were characterised by viewing leisure-related places not predominantly as physical places of interest but as the element of constructing identity, obtaining the meaning and being highly embodied (Wearing et al, 2009). This can be called a social / cultural value turn, when place in leisure studies is viewed in a complex psychological way. In an overview, Saraniemi (2010: 138) outlined an “alternative view” at destinations that withholds a socio-cultural construction: “destinations have become understood as socio-culturally constructed spaces that actively shape their own future”.

An earlier work of Crouch (2000) was devoted to a “non-representational” approach (concept introduced by Thrift, 1997 in Crouch, 2000) when the emphasis in a place shifted from environmental traits towards the subject. Crouch (2000: 63) put it like this: “There is a revived comprehension of embodiment that is concerned with the body as the subject of practise rather than only as the object of practise or of policy”. Place can be regarded as a context, image or even a text that is read by a visitor according to intentions of the supplier (Crouch, 2000).

Some places in communities involved in leisure serve predominantly tourists; others focus both on tourists and residents, while some of the places focus mainly on local residents (Snepenger et al, 2004). Snepenger et al (2004: 108) called this “a spectrum of tourism places”, where “at one end of the spectrum, consumer demand is dominated by tourists, and at the other end, local residents are the primary users”. According to this line of defining tourist places, an urban park which holds cultural and historical value (like SBG) is a place that serves both local residents and tourists. Even though the current research is focused only on residents’ perceptions and do
not take into account tourists in the park, the authors of the thesis are convinced that there is a potential of extending findings of the research over: similar places that are targeted at tourists, similar places that are targeted at locals. Baerenholdt et al (2004) argued that places in tourism/leisure research are not necessarily remote places, distinct environment or place image, but “tangible yet fragile constructions, hybrids of mind and matter, imagination and presence (:2). They assume that places become meaningful only through engagement by human beings. We will use the definition of a tourist/leisure place suggested by Baerenholdt et al (2004:32) which include “physical environment, embodiment, sociality, memory and image”.

Importantly, while “destinations” might seem a plausible substitution for the term “places” they are not entirely interchangeable. For Baerenholdt et al (2004) places are roughly divided into construction of places and consumption of places. Places are treated as destinations in leisure management and place marketing research and practice. Destinations are characterized by imaginary boundaries and being a complex system which consists of dynamic networks and agents. Destinations are “geographical images, which work at a distance, collapsing in proximity, where place-specific encounters matter” (:29). Hence persecuting the purpose of the study the authors avoid marketing-attractive term “destination” and utilize a notion of “place” instead, which is more appropriate when focusing on the customer-side of place.

Apparently, development of place concept in leisure research does not dramatically differ from the direction of a place thought in sociology and human geography. The reason for that may be due to leisure studies’ highly interdisciplinary nature (Butler, 2004; Mair, 2006) that adopts the discourses of other sciences. Nevertheless it is evident the concept of place as tailored for peculiar properties of the discipline has evolved over time. As for the eligibility of using urban park as a setting for case study in this particular research it is proved to be a place as considered in the contemporary leisure discourse.

From the literature overview on what is a leisure-related place, it is reasonable to move and see how the meaning of place has been considered in the context of leisure studies. There are researches conducted by e.g. Lee, 1972; Williams&Patterson, 1996; Kyle&Chick, 2007 (all in Wynveen et al, 2010). Meanings in the outdoor settings are derived from shared culture and history, objective and tangible characteristics of place (Williams & Patterson, 1996 in Wynveen et al, 2010). The bonding with a place is developed and reinforced by “(a) being at and engaging with a place and one’s companions, (b) extended stays, (c) ritualized behaviours, (d) family history in the outdoors, (e) childhood socialization, and (f) informal training and social learning” (Brooks, Wallace, and Williams 2006:339 in Wynveen et al, 2010). Now there are different
typologies and categorization of place meaning. Meanings are usually understood as features that are “important, memorable, or special to individuals” (Schroeder, 1996; Bricker & Kerstetter, 2002 in Wynveen et al., 2010: 273). Different from working environment, room for exploration and self-reflection, privacy – these are the meaning ascribed to natural settings found by Manzo (2005 in Wynveen et al., 2010). “To understand recreational visitors’ thoughts and feelings toward a resource recreation area, identifying the range of place meanings they ascribe to the setting and understanding how these meanings are socially constructed through interactions between the setting, the individual, and the individual’s social worlds is important” (Wynveen et al., 2010:273).

The next chapter introduces more narrow review on how the parks have been studied so far. It includes studying park from a place-perspective and studies which focused on meanings that the visitors ascribe to parks.

2.2.3 Parks as a Place and Meaning of Parks: Previous Research

Parks can be seen in conventional ways from providing greenery and an oasis of nature in the cities, to serving as a tourism and leisure stimulator. Parks are proven to improve quality of life, which is why research on parks provides an opportunity to secure better future for parks, cities and communities; a park is not merely a place for relaxation and bonding but it can create and redefine the image of a city. Harnik (2000: xiv) outlined that it is possible to “turn a park from “green lung” into a “smart park” which is “a more intensive and less pastoral park, an entertainment venue, and a magnet for activity that still abides by ecological ideals”.

With the increased tendency in the social phenomena research from sustainable and long-term perspective, a significant amount of scientific articles investigating into the role of urban parks in a contemporary society can be found (e.g. Thompson, 2002; Chiesura, 2004); service and park management perspective (Harnik, 2003; Williams & Thwaites, 2007; Talen, 2010); physical and social activities in parks (Freestone & Nichols, 2004; McCormak et al, 2010; Peters et al, 2010; Shores & West, 2010). So far parks are being studied from the perspective of urban planning, safety, greenery and landscape, but there have not been enough emphasis on its meaning and how meanings influence visitorship. Only recently parks and leisure professionals admitted that not only should parks maintain a high level service but should also work with psychological aspect: “City dwellers want interpretation; they have chosen a hometown in part for its history, and they want to see it come alive” (Harnik, 2000: xv). It is important to endow a park with
meaning: “Most of us have memories about a city park – a romantic stroll, an athletic triumph, a family gathering, a clamber in a playground, a bike ride, a hike through the snow, an autumnal drive – yet the literature on these evocative places is slim” (:1).

For the purpose of this thesis, we considered two updated explicit work about meaning of parks carried out by American authors (Jordan et al, 2009 and Davenport et al, 2010). Let’s take a look at what conclusions they came up with and how they conducted their research.

First of all, there has been a decline in visitorship of parks, particularly by the younger generations because leisure activities such as video games, shopping malls etc superseded the attraction of parks (Louv, 2005 in Jordan et al, 2009). Although, it is not a new topic, mainly parks are studied in terms of management perspective (Jordan et al, 2009:19): “Meanings have been applied broadly defined relative to a variety of leisure experiences, and are often associated with values and satisfactions.” In their research they collected and interpreted the essays of the Oklahoma Urban Park that was called “What does this park mean to me?” As for the findings, two main categories arose: personal and social. In the category of personal meaning, they found the following categories: personal meaning: beauty, escape, antithesis to daily life, freedom, relaxation, learning, life lessons, cultural/historical significance, pride and respect. As for social meaning: social togetherness (friends, family), antecedents to social togetherness (food, activities etc). All these were found to lead to memory-making.

Davenport et al (2010) carried out their research through a self-completion survey in Illinois State Park. The authors came to the following conclusions: visitors ascribe various meanings to the park which are associated with on-site experiences and self-identity. They found that nature and conservation of natural resources held great meanings for park visitors which haven’t be identified in previous works. Their findings were in line with that of Kyle et al. (2004) (in Davenport et al, 2010:63): “...these affective relationships are developed in people who have long-standing relationships with a setting”. Their findings also proved that there is a difference in the intensity of feelings towards the park depending on whether a respondent is local or non-local. Local people ascribed greater meaning to the park.

To sum up, a research on meaning in the urban parks was carried in different ways (applying qualitative/quantitative methods) and received various results depending on the method. The authors who employed essay as a method of receiving data came up with numerous categories of meaning that they ultimately defined as personal and social meanings (Jordan et al, 2009). Davenport et al (2010) concluded their findings on the differences of perceiving place meaning
by locals and non-locals and importance of maintaining natural resources. Both researchers addressed managerial applications as they were published in the accordant source.

Finally, research on urban/cities, natural areas and national parks have been done but parks have somewhat been neglected although parks are places where residents and tourists live their ‘everyday experiences’. Hence, we were aiming to add to the research into social construction of symbolic meaning of the parks and its relation to value creation.

2.3 Concluding Remarks

So how does the literature review of the theories prepare us to answer the research questions? First, we got an essence of the customer value concept in marketing research and how it was developed within the period of last decades. By looking into recent leisure research relating to customer value it became obvious that theoretical works were abound with such customer value related concepts as service quality, customer satisfaction, customer emotions. At the same time no profound discussion was found regarding customer value in leisure studies. It was only researchers who acknowledged an importance of experience came closest to studying emotional and cognitive values in the discipline. Yet we found that some of the researchers addressed the problem of finding some ways to create long term (if not life-time) value for a customer. On the other hand, researchers who focused on meaning of place, rarely turned explicitly to customer value since many of them build upon phenomenological theories (Manzo, 2005). After careful consideration of relevant literature, no relevant customer value framework was found to be specifically for places. Indeed, place is a crucial concept in leisure studies, however existing customer value frameworks (conventionally from marketing discipline) have limitations when it is being operated in our field of study. The results of literature review only reinforced our desire to find out how meaning of place can contribute to customer value.

A review on the meaning of place concept provided broad knowledge on the development of the concept in sociology as well as in the field of leisure. In the context of this thesis’ literature overview, it helped in understanding how the first research question can be answered (ie: In what ways do park visitors ascribe meaning of place?) By looking into contemporary research in the recreational field it appeared that meaning of place is understood in a variety of ways and almost every body of work suggested something new. Literature review provided us with the fact that so far only Gustafson’s (2001) 3-pole model is the only comprehensive model of the concept of meaning of place. As for the studying of parks it is only last decade that meaning of
place has been researched, since traditionally, most researches were focused on e.g. urban planning and sociological aspects, somehow overlooking park visitors' perspectives. The literature review assured us that there is potential in incorporating meaning of place concept into customer value in the place-related context.
3 METHODOLOGY

The chapter includes an elaboration on why surveys and observation are eligible methods to answer the research questions. That is followed by a detailed description of each method and how data was collected.

Once again, we list our research questions to make it more vivid for the chapter:

1. In what ways do park visitors ascribe meaning of place?
2. How can meaning of place contribute to the consumer value conceptualization?

As the first question (1) required getting inside people’s minds and hearts we needed a method that allowed us to ask the questions. Moreover, through answering the first research question we expected to see some consistent patterns and regularities in people’s responses. That was why the choice was made in favour of surveys or, as they can also be called, self-completion questionnaires (Bryman, 2001). As a survey is a tool of a quantitative method it meant we could collect significant amount of responses. Of course, there are some general advantages of the method, such as: surveys are easy to administer, convenient for the respondents, there are no negative interview effects and interview variability (asking questions in a different order or way) (Bryman, 2001). One of the features of the method that is appealing is that the responses are easy to structure, appear direct and instantly illustrative. There are, however, a few limitations to the method, where the closed nature of the method is most intimidating. In order to mitigate this effect we complemented the survey questions with open-ended ones, as well as using an additional method for data collection.

The research was conducted in the form of a case study and the idea to go “out” to the field seemed very natural. Nevertheless there were more reasons for the decision to employ observations to answer the first research question. Observation was used to get familiar with visitors’ behaviours in the park, to observe interaction between people, between people and environment. Observations when conducted and analyzed, adopted Gustafson’s (2001) model. Massey (2003) suggested that fieldwork is about engaging and interacting with other human beings. Indeed, the method allowed us to make conclusions on what people do in the park and how they do it. That would be impossible if we used only questionnaires. With observation, we aimed to collect more in-depth empirical data that provided careful insight into the park’s complex system. Further interpretation gave us certain categories that may be useful for the meaning of place concept. Last but not the least, as Silverman (2007:146) put it “Talk and
interaction can provide with revealing data”. Observations allowed carrying out spontaneous casual conversations with random visitors. These conversations were valuable for the research because they reflected the random visitors’ perceptions (whereas sample for the survey was somewhat limited, more about that below).

Turning to the second research question, it is more conceptual than the first one. Booth et al (2008) argued that a conceptual problem requires better understanding, than a practical one. Research question (2) cannot be answered by merely applying some empirical techniques, since it is more of a theoretical matter. Even though surveys and observation did contain questions and findings about the consumer value aspect, answering the second research question will rest on the findings derived from the first research question, theory and our own reasoning. Initially the idea of a research studying the possible contribution of meaning of place to a consumer value concept emerged as a kind of a “mental itch” (term used by Booth et al, 2008) that pointed to an interesting issue in a service management study area.

The research aim was to study the customer’s perspective of place meaning. Therefore both questionnaires and observations were consumer-focused. Another important note is that by consumers and park visitors we meant residents (or temporal residents) only. This was done in order to carefully examine perceptions and experiences of the people who established more or less long term relationships with the park. It would be impossible to do with tourists who mainly visit SBG in the short frame of a general tourist visit to Singapore, which is usually about 3 days or so.

3.1 Mixed Methods Research

Before moving on with technicalities of collecting data we would like to discuss if it is appropriate to use surveys and observations within the bounds of one research project. These methods belong to different ways of doing a research: quantitative and qualitative respectively. There is a big discussion going on about whether it is appropriate to combine qualitative and quantitative research methods in one research. The main areas of critique are epistemological and paradigm-oriented. There is an opinion that by applying certain research method, one does not just use it for collecting data but becomes committed to the scientific tradition that stands behind the method (Hughes, 1990 in Bryman, 2001). However the confusion may be solved by looking at the combination strategy from a technical point of view, instead of epistemological: “The technical version about the nature of quantitative and qualitative research essentially views
the two research strategies as compatible. As a result, mixed methods research becomes both feasible and desirable” (Bryman, 2001:605). There are different categories of mixed methods research outlined (Hammersley, 1996; Morgan 1998b and Bryman 2006a in Bryman, 2001). In this case, completeness is an aspect when trying to overcome the disadvantages and gaps in the chosen methods. To conclude, we employ mixed method research to make it more comprehensive and valid: “Enough data enables to provide a plausible answer to a research question” (Booth et al, 2008:32).

3.2 Design of the Questionnaire

It consisted of 12 questions where the choice was given in a vertical format and was created on a website, at http://www.zoomerang.com, for the convenience of respondents. Bryman (2001: 653) outlined that on-line social survey has a number of advantages over the paper or documental survey such as low cost, faster response, fewer unanswered questions. There were 9 close and 3 open-ended questions. Open questions on one hand allowed respondents to answer in their own terms and on the other hand, permitted a researcher to broaden the issue and see some aspects that were not noticed before. But they required greater effort from respondents and were time-consuming for coding. As for the closed questions, they were easy to process, compare results and convenient for the respondents. Due to the main disadvantage of close-ended questions (Bryman, 2001) the category “Others” was added so that a person could clarify her or himself.

Here is a table of the questions. (To see the full survey questions with choices, please turn to Appendix 1. For the survey results of close-ended questions, turn to Appendix 3.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>№</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Type of question</th>
<th>Measures...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>My age is…</td>
<td>close</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How often do you go to SBG?</td>
<td>close</td>
<td>Attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What is your usual purpose of visiting the park? (You may tick more than 1 box)</td>
<td>close+other-choice</td>
<td>Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Do you mostly come to the park: (You may tick more than 1 box)</td>
<td>close+other-choice</td>
<td>emotional relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Do you visit other parks, too?</td>
<td>close</td>
<td>attachment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What is it about this park that makes you choose to come</td>
<td>close+other-choice</td>
<td>values</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In terms of the content of the questions they can be grouped in the following way: regarding attachment to the park (A), regarding values (B) and regarding emotional relationship with the park (C). Question 1 was a personal question and showed the age range of the respondents and did not belong to any of the groups. (A) The questions intended to indicate attachment to a park (questions 2 and 5, where 2 dealt with the frequency of the visits to the park and 5 measured the preference of visiting SBG over other parks in the city). (B) The questions to measure values (choice and preferences) that stand behind visiting SBG (questions 3, 6 and 7. Where 3 dealt with the purpose of the visit, with verbs and activities ranging from “walk the dog” to “reminisce”; 6 revealed what made visitors come to the park in terms of attributes the park own, from “open space” to “culture”; 7 was preference “what do you like the most”). This group was mainly to answer a bigger question: what values do people look for when visiting a park. (C) The biggest group that in various forms aimed to look into people’s emotional relationship with the park (questions 4, 9, 10, where 4 measured relations between self and other in connecting with a place; 9 showed the emotional relationship with the park; 10 measured the prevailing emotions and psychological state of visitors when they were in the park). Open questions focused on impressions and experiences (question 8 concerned first minute associations/impressions with the park; 11 dealt with the strongest impressions one gets from the park; 12 asked for a description of the most memorable experiences).
Sample is “the segment of the population that is selected for investigation” (Bryman, 2001: 168). For the thesis we have chosen a “non-probability sample”, that is “a sample that has not been selected using a random selection method” (Bryman, 2001: 168). That means that we have chosen some preferred type of population, to be exact friends and acquaintances that reside in Singapore and have experienced SBG. We also employed a “snowball effect” of recruiting the respondents where friends spread the survey to their friends and so on to get maximum possible respondents. A convenient sampling was used for the reason of accessibility of the respondents. The majority of the known first-round respondents were people with higher education and executive jobs, thus we were aware of the limitation “in terms of generalibility” that is outlined by Bryman (2001: 189). As to the sample size, there was no straightforward answer to how big a sample should be and it depended on many factors (Bryman, 2001). We have sent out a questionnaire file to certain number of people that were close friends. They, in turn, forwarded the link for the on-line survey to their friends, family members and acquaintances (“snowball effect”). As a result a total of 146 responses were received. As expected not every respondent answered open-ended questions. There were 130 responses to question 8 on “associations”; 126 responses to question 11 on “biggest impression”; and 88 responses to question 12 on “memorable experience”.

3.3 Observations

Observations were employed in order to answer the first research question from an external angle. Through being in the field and observing the park, its facilities, visitors, their interaction between each other or between them and the environment, the aim was to capture it and further interpret it. As Veal (2006) pointed out, observation is an efficient method when a researcher wants to gather information about people’s behaviour without their own knowledge. It has an advantage that people’s behaviour is not modified. It is important for this research because although respondents may reveal their opinions in questionnaires’ open questions, it is also relevant to observe people’s actions and emotions inside the park to establish more complete structure of the phenomena. One may argue, that meaning of place is something that is located inside the person’s mind, but doing observation and having opportunity to talk to people and freely observe their interactions can only enrich our empirical data. Observations give the opportunity to observe people’s behaviour outside the scope of questionnaire sample and include more narratives through casual conversations with people of various ages and ethnicities.
Observations include being in a setting, listening to conversations, asking questions, observing people and setting (Bryman, 2001). Silverman (2007) argued that taking-for-granted approach to an everyday life can make a researcher “blind” and to get something out of ethnography one needs to be very attentive to mundane details of everyday life (as encountering them for the first time in life) that is why the researcher attempted to seize all the familiar moments of every day park’s life as it was new to her.

Entering the field began on 5th January 2011 and 12 days of observations were conducted which then materialized into some 50 pages of structured written field notes, completed with 19 photographs (an excerpt of the field notes is in Appendix 5). Sometimes the researcher acted just as an observer and sometimes revealed herself as a participant. It was easy to access the field, find a few informants and to connect with them through small casual chats. Sometimes park visitors were not eager to keep the conversations. In that case the researcher delicately made her way forward and tried to figure out who else was more open for a small conversation.

Photo 1. A process of observations at SBG. Casa Verde café.

Here it is important to note that since the observations were solely carried out by only one of the authors of the thesis some methodological limitations might apply. As the observer is Singaporean, the observations could be conducted with the bias of ethnic and cultural belonging to the place. In turn, coding of the field notes was conducted by the other author who is of a different cultural and ethnic origin that is why an interpretation could also be affected by these embedded socio-cultural factors.
3.4 Coding

There were two steps of coding the unstructured data 1) categorizing and 2) assign numbers to the created categories. However this applied only for the open questions, whereas closed questions were already pre-coded (Bryman, 2001). Coding required transcripts of the responses and developing a coding frame (lists of codes and the rules for their application). This is the procedure that was done with open questions and participant observation field notes. The work with the field notes was conducted via a line-by-line coding and naming each line of data (Glaser, 1978 in Charmaz, 2001). The recommendation was to keep the codes in very specific terms. Another way of coding was to use a focused coding that would create more conceptual categories that could be applied to larger amount of data (Charmaz, 2001). A code is a descriptive tool that may stay active in order to form a category later on.

The procedure of coding was applied to the field notes, and open questions in the survey. The results of coding survey questions 9, 11, 12 and field observation are in Appendix 2.

3.5 Case Study

The thesis was designed in the form of a case study. Case study research is defined as a “detailed and intensive analysis of a single case” (Bryman, 2001: 52). Case study takes place on a certain location and the intensive, in-depth analysis of setting is going on. The reason to choose this form of research was justified by the research question. Meaning of place and customer value are highly individual and relative concepts and it makes more sense to look into the setting carefully because many factors from the inside and outside form the perceptions of visitors. Although, traditionally, case studies were referred to as a qualitative research, Bryman (2001) argued that it can be employed to both qualitative and quantitative research.

Although a case study strategy is never meant to generalize Bryman (2001: 56) made a point regarding case studies that are meant to be “exemplifying”: “…a case may be chosen because it exemplifies a broader category of which it is a member”. In our thesis, SBG is a member of a park category and some findings can be used for the future research on the role of meaning of place in customer value specific to parks. Parks are inseparable parts of cities and sometimes, also serve as flagship attractions of a country. In the age of globalization, a park is viewed as a marketplace and more and more sources are claiming the strategic importance of keeping a park highly attractive to a visitor (e.g. Harnik, 2000).
Conducting the research in the context of Singapore meant that methodologically by choosing this setting, we made the research more exemplifying. First of all, SBG is located in a highly populated, tropical and urban area thus the importance of the park for visitors is naturally very high. Secondly, it is managed as a service provider, in line with the unique characteristic of the Singapore civil service that is highly economically oriented. Last but not least SBG is filled with experience offerings which was what we wanted to research into.

To have a more thorough understanding of our case, we made use of another source of data which was a questionnaire-interview with SBG’s representative (Appendix 4). The interview was carried out via email with SBG’s Deputy Director of the Living Collections & Development department.
4 CASE STUDY

This chapter provides general background information on our case study of SBG. In order to have a better understanding of the park, it is necessary to know the context in which SBG is placed, before zooming in on the park itself.

4.1 The City-State, Singapore

Destination Singapore:

An experience to call your own.

Singapore has been described as a thriving cosmopolitan city that’s brimming with diversity, as well as a multiplicity of culture, language, arts and architecture.

The above are the first few sentences describing the brand, Singapore, by the Singapore Tourism Board (STB Official Website, 2011). In modern globalization where transnational mobility is high and common (Cheah, 2006) branding and marketing Singapore is no longer merely to attract short staying tourists, but also longer staying migrant labour (Yeoh, 2006) in particular professional ones, as well as to build an identity for locals to have a sense of belonging. This is because, in an urban city like Singapore, tourism “is complex and heterogeneous” (Blank, 1994:182). This is also the reason why, besides the official tourist website “Your Singapore” (Singapore’s Official Travel Website, 2011) offered by the Singapore Tourism Board, there is also “Your Official Gateway to Singapore” website that is put up by the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts. The latter website aims “to guide you to the information that you need on how you can live, work, do business, learn and play in Singapore” (Official Gateway to Singapore Website, 2011).

Considering the city state’s total population of 5 million, slightly more than half of these are residents (as opposed to citizens, indicating the presence of many foreigners) as at 2010. International visitor arrivals to Singapore was a record of 1,055,000 people in just one month, for the month of January 2011. Hence, leisure and tourism are important sectors for the country. (Department of Statistics Singapore Website, 2011).

Singapore is a bona fide urban tourism destination that emphasizes on one’s personal experience in the city and diversity in a wide range of choices on activities. Montgomery (1998:96) argued that “successful urban places must combine quality in three essential elements: physical space, sensory experience and activity” using the place theories of Relph (1976), Canter (1977) and
Punter (1991) in his paper. The new marketing campaign for brand Singapore is aptly termed “Your Singapore” where the “focus is visitor-centricity, meaning the experiences are made wholesome and personal, drawing their allure from the breadth and richness of attractions many have grown to love here in Singapore” (Singapore’s Official Travel Website, 2011).

In view of the complexity and heterogeneity of leisure in urban settings, this research was focused on a single attraction, i.e. urban park, and specifically, the SBG. As Blank (1994:182) conceded, tourist attractions and offerings are not just for tourists but also residents as “tourists’ purchases of these services often make possible facilities and programs of a quality that the resident population could not otherwise afford.”

Why the choice of urban park among the wide ranging attractions of a major city? Despite how a city could market itself with tempting verbs such as “vibrant” or “exciting” and so on, the fact is that most attractions are located in a concrete jungle. An urban park thus easily sets itself apart from the “hardness” of a city, contrasting the high density, congestion, air & noise pollution and concrete with greenery, open-space, peace, clean air and nature. While every city has its own “unique set of amenity attractions, hospitality services, geographic market appeals, and travel systems” (Blank, 1994:182), it is in our opinion, vital for every major city to have a good urban park, like how the paradigmatic globalized cities of New York has its Central Park and London, its Hyde Park. On top of providing open space, greenery, recreation and beautifying the urban landscape of a city (Harnik, 2003; McCormack et al, 2010), urban parks are also considered to improve the quality of life (Chiesura, 2004).

SBG is currently Singapore’s prime park, covering 74 hectares of land right in the city centre. However, in a new ambitious vision, there is an intention of transforming Singapore from the current world renown brand image of “Garden City” into “A City In A Garden”. The “Gardens by the Bay” is now under development, that will be made up of “three distinctive waterfront gardens in the heart of Marina Bay” with a total area of 101 hectares, where Phase I of the development will be open in 2011. “The Gardens will put in place a pervasive garden ambience and quality living environment from which Singapore's downtown will rise, and steer Singapore to the forefront of the world's leading global cities” (Gardens by the Bay Website, 2011). The importance of urban parks for a city cannot be undermined.

Unlike Sweden, Singapore’s lack of space with only a total land area of 710.3 km² for a population of 5 million ” (Official Gateway to Singapore Website, 2011) makes having space and enjoying nature difficult, and therefore, all the more important for the people. Additionally,
as a city with “corporate and financial centers for capital accumulation within a hierarchical articulation of global space” (Yeoh, 2006:150), life in the city-state is a rat race.

With a dearth of natural resources, where even the main source of life, water, as well as food have to be purchased from overseas, Singapore can hardly be self-sufficient. Due to this nagging insecurity, the country is unrelentingly determined to thrive economically since money can buy water, food, energy, sand, wood, metal and “everything” for the people’s survival and a good life if they do well. For example, to further push for economic growth in the saturated economy, the country removed “a 45-year ban on gambling in a drive to double tourism revenue by 2015” (Adam, 2010:15). Many of its policies are focused on economic growth such as its bank secrecy laws that are still fully intact unlike Switzerland, in its drive to become the financial centre for the world’s new millionaires from China, India and Middle East and so on. *(ibid)*. And with the Singapore Stock Exchange’s ambition to buy the Australian Stock Exchange in October 2010, Ellis (2010) called the city “The money-making machine of Singapore Inc”. Singapore Inc is well-known in the world since the entire country is being run like a corporate business. Even in its explanation on the development of Gardens by the Bay, the end objective of economic growth is not forgotten: “Ultimately, Gardens by the Bay will help enrich the lifestyles and recreational activities of Singaporeans and tourists alike through high-end edutainment opportunities and a sustainable green infrastructure. This will have a major impact on Singapore's future economic development and growth” (Gardens by the Bay Website, 2011).

As such, stress and being competitive are very much part and parcel or a way of life in the tiny but economically obsessed city-state, which make urban parks all the more valuable in Singapore. Since Gardens by the Bay would not be fully ready until a few years later, SBG has been chosen for the purpose of our research.

**4.2 Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG)**

SBG is located in the south of Singapore, where the downtown Central Business District (CBD) is. Map 1 shows the location of SBG (small red circle) and the downtown area (big blue circle) in perspective to the entire island of Singapore. Map 2 zooms in on the small red circle area in Map 1, where the premises of SBG are the vertically elongated green patch on the map. The bottom right of Map 2 shows the famed shopping street in the city-state, Orchard Road, with its Mass Rapid Transit (MRT, i.e. underground train system) station (NS22), which currently is the nearest MRT station to SBG before a new SBG station becomes operational in the later part of 2011.
SBG opens between 5am to 12 midnight daily and remains free for visitors on all attractions and events except one, in the 74 hectares park. The only chargeable entry at SBG is the National Orchid Garden, a major tourist attraction in the city state, charges only a nominal fee of SGD 5 (approximately SEK 25) for adults, SGD 1 (approximately SEK 5) for senior citizens and students and free for children (SBG Official Website, 2011).

The modern day SBG is state-owned and falls under the umbrella of the National Parks Board (NParks). NParks owns, develops and takes care of all parks, nature reserves and park connectors, as well as every single tree / plant and grass growing in all public space (e.g. plants...
by the sides of all roads etc) in Singapore. Map 3 shows all parks and park connectors in the Garden City, excluding the nature reserves, as of April 2011.

SBG is not the largest park in Singapore, but it certainly is the most internationally well-known park of the country. SBG is also a part of the Singapore heritage and history. It has its roots in Singapore’s colonial past, which was open by the British 150 years ago. Its zealous first director, Nicholas Ridley, was responsible for making the “plants at the Botanic Gardens became the basis for Southeast Asia’s rubber industry, an industry that generated fortunes” (SBG Official Website, 2011). Also thanks to Ridley, Singapore’s national flower, an orchid called Vanda Miss Joaquim, was found. Subsequently, SBG, under the stewardship of another British director, Professor Eric Holttum, started orchid breeding and hybridization that continued till today where orchid hybrids by SBG “received recognition worldwide” as well as “laid the foundation for the multi-million dollar cut flower industry” (ibid) since these orchids were hardy in the tropical weather.

Since the country’s independence in the 1960s, SBG took the responsibility of greening Singapore. By 1988, under the leadership of its local director (who later became SBG’s CEO), Dr Tan Wee Kiat, SBG “remained committed to its role in making Singapore a Garden City and meeting recreational needs” but “renewed focus on being a leading international institution for
tropical botany was established. Excellence in botanical research, education programmes and preservation of the cultural heritage of the Gardens were emphasized” (*ibid*).

As mentioned in the previous section, the country is run like a corporate business and so, all government services are also run like a corporation, where SBG is no exception. With Dr Chin See Chung at its helm today, SBG “is geared towards entrenching itself as a tropical botanical institution of international renown, a key tourist destination and a flagship park” (*ibid*). Like a corporation, SBG is competitive in striving for excellence through branding, marketing, continuous improvement / innovation in services and amenities etc, in order to justify the cost of its existence. Over the years, SBG “has continually re-invented itself to remain relevant to the needs of our visitors. We seek to continuously enhance memorable experiences by creating new horticultural attractions” (SBG Interview, Appendix 4). SBG sees itself as serving 3 major roles today, namely, as a botanical institution, tourist destination and regional park. It also has a clearly stated mission of “connecting people and plants through publications, horticultural and botanical displays, educational outreach, and events, provision of a key civic and recreational space, and playing a role as an international Gardens and a regional centre for botanical and horticultural research and training” (SBG Official Website, 2011).

The park welcomes an average of about 3 million visitors annually and has won international accolades such as Time Magazine’s “Asia’s Best Urban Jungle” and rated three stars by the Michelin Green Guide in 2008. (SBG Interview, Appendix 4).

As seen from Map 2, SBG is situated a stone’s throw away from the Singapore popular downtown shopping street, Orchard Road. Thus, besides hotels and service apartments at its proximity, there are also several exclusive and premium residential areas lacing the peripheral of SBG. Accordingly, SBG’s “verdant landscape and primeval forest” (SBG Interview, Appendix 4) provided an outstanding green space within the city centre.
5 ANALYSIS OF EMPIRICAL DATA

5.1 The Approach of Analysis

The mixed methods of observation and survey have generated a substantial amount of information. In order to organize and present usable empirical data in a clear and concise manner for analysis, an appropriate approach for the analysis has to be adopted. The chosen approach is to analyze the empirical data using Gustafson’s (2001) place meaning model as the backbone structure.

5.2 Self

According to Gustafson’s (2001) model on meaning of place, the self pole represents the individual’s personal attribution of meaning to a place.

Based on the survey, 26% of respondents indicated going to SBG alone as one of their top 3 choices for the question on park companions (Graph 1). While personal meanings can be ascribed to a place even when one visited the park with someone else, but for people to go to SBG alone, i.e. for non social reasons, based on their individual purposes for visiting, the meanings they ascribed to the place may be more apparent. Almost all of those who went alone selected exercising, taking a walk, walking the dog, to reflect or to reminisce as at least one of their purposes of visiting the park (Graph3). This is in line with Gustafson’s (2001) self pole where meaning is linked to one’s activities at a place.

Graph 1: Visiting Companion
Place meaning is also a strong emotive process, leading to place attachment, in the form of self identity and dependence (Walsh, 2000). Such personal emotions can be linked to all dimensions containing *self*, i.e., either in *self* alone, *self-others*, *environment-self* or even *self-others-environment*.

Among all respondents, 36.3% indicated that they were “proud of SBG” which pointed to Gustafson’s (2001:9) idea that meaning of place is used to represent one’s identity and “sometimes also feeling that they ‘represent’ their town, region or country” since SBG is a part of the Singapore heritage and history. Among other intense emotions, there were also strong indications of “need” and “dependence” on SBG by the respondents (Graph 2). These are described in more details in chapter 5.12.

![Graph 2: Attitude Towards SBG](image)

In their answers to open-ended questions, respondents also stated their personal emotionality on SBG. To quote a few:

“*the Botanic Gardens is a little gem in my heart.*”

“I always feel very poetic there”.

The first quote expressed metaphoric emotional relationship with the parks, whereas the second quote demonstrated special feelings of a respondent experienced in SBG:

Last but not least, an individual ascribing meaning to a place is often based on their life path “and expressed in terms of experience and memories” (*ibid*). Again, from the open-ended survey questions, there were many responses on visitors’ experiences and/or memories that were related to their different life paths as childhood, adolescence, parenthood and so on. To quote a few on memories:
“When it’s time to leave Singapore, the Botanic Gardens will give me many good memories of my years living in this great country.” (Memories about park extended to feelings about the country).

“Bringing my kids for the first time.” (First experience with children).

“My deceased dog running like a lunatic around the big open space... he was so happy whenever he was there and running.” (Associating a park with good times with a pet).

5.3 Self-Others

This is one of the most important categories for the attribution of place meaning, i.e. the relationship between self and others (Gustafson, 2001). This is the social aspects of it, which the recreation & leisure industry is mostly about. Place meaning is often very much socially constructed, where the meanings assigned to a place may either be unique to a person or be similarly shared by a group of people that are created from the interaction and relationships between people (Walsh, 2000).

Looking at the survey results on whom respondents went to SBG with, the majority went with their significant others, children and friends/extended family members (Graph 1). Though pets were not the top 3 choices, there was still a 19.2% response for that. Thus it is clear, visitation to the park was very social, a process of interaction between self and others. See Graph 3 on purpose of visit. Note that the numbers on the graphs were the actual numbers of responses for each of the purposes that respondents selected. Respondents were allowed to select multiple purposes. The percentages given in this text are based on the total number of respondents (instead of the total number of selections by all respondents for the different purposes of visiting SBG).
In terms of the purpose of visiting SBG, several of the top answers were also social, such as “meet / catch up with friends” 35.6%, “spend time with family” 35.6%, “take part in SBG events / stage performances” 29.5%. There were also 10.3% of respondents who indicated that they felt particularly “sociable” in SBG. As an indicator of the place attachment conceptualization in place meaning, social bonding is one of the most important aspects (Kil et al, 2010).

Referring to the open-ended survey questions on memories, there were numerous responses relating to this social interaction and relationship between people. These responses were mainly classified under “bonding”, “romantic memories” among others, as many answers fell into a few different classifications simultaneously, such as “bonding” with “childhood memories” or “youth memories” (Appendix 2). To quote a few romantic memories:

“The romantic times of having music under the stars with my boyfriend.”

“My wedding day where I had photos taken.”

The following quotes show how meanings to SBG were ascribed via social relationship with humans or pets:

“Botanic Gardens is a big part of my life because I’m there so much with my baby and friends.”

“Playing with my 5 dashhunds at the park when I was very young.”

“I spent so much time here with my boys, the dogs and the friends, so I will remember the Botanic Gardens as something very special for my life in Singapore.”
Some of the respondents identified the park through the memories which included bonding with others:

“Our form teacher bringing the whole class out to Botanic Gardens after our O level exams. We had such a fun day out and till today, when we have a class gathering or meet our teacher at weddings, we still talked about the day out in Botanic Gardens.”

“Performing with the school band at the park when I was a student.”

“I got to know all my closest friends in Singapore at the Botanic Gardens!”

The next quote represents the importance of seeing loved ones being happy and how meaning of it was extended over to SBG:

“Mummy is happy”

Gustafson (2001:9) mentioned the “sense of community that such social relations create” under this dimension. “My wife fell down and we got a lot of help from people and staff to get us home safely. Feels like family.” This was quoted from a respondent who was over 55, visiting SBG once a week or more and who felt “at home”, “peaceful” and “contented” in SBG.

5.4 Environment-Self

This dimension represents the relationship between the setting and self, which is usually dependent on an individual’s knowledge / familiarity with the place, individual’s perception that the place offers something desirable as well as the place’s localization (Gustafson, 2001). In other words, this is about the value of a place for an individual, based on the place’s functionality and attributes, that lead to serving an individual’s needs and satisfaction (Walsh, 2000).

89% of respondents indicated SBG as their main and preferred choice of park that they visit. According to the survey question on the reasons for respondents’ preference for SBG instead of other parks, the top answers were for the “nature / greenery” 69.2%, “beauty of the park” 54.1%, “park design / landscaping” 45.2%, “restaurants / cafes” 36.3%, “park events / stage performances” 34.9% and “convenient to get to the park” 34.9%. See Graph 4.
One of the forms of place attachment is place dependence (Walsh, 2000; Kil et al, 2010). Place dependence is “a place where the needs and goals of an individual can be met, which then stimulates a connection and reliance on that place” (as described in Kil et al, 2010 using the works of Shumaker & Taylor, 1983; Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Williams & Roggenbuck, 1989). A total of 52.7% of respondents have selected that they need and depend on SBG (Graph 2).

Besides place dependence, “the emotional bonding between individuals and natural settings” (Low & Altman, 1992 as mentioned in Kil et al, 2010) cannot be undermined too. Many responses were relevant to this, and to quote a few:

“The landscape and design of the park makes me feel really good getting my activities done here. I jog-walk my dog and meet up with friends regularly.”

“I like that our heritage is preserved in the park with the Heritage trees and buildings. I am also impressed that Botanic Gardens also promote culture with their jazz and classical concerts and art sculptures placed around the park.”

Graph 4: Reasons for Choosing SBG
“This is the place I that I always go to test out my new cameras with the most recent one being the Canon 60D which gave me really good shots of the park.”

The first response provides information on the relationship between a park visitor and the landscape. The second quote points to different environmental features and the meanings they have for a respondent. The last quote explains how environment of SBG was valued for creating memories.

5.5 Others

Gustafson (2001) category Others implicates something unrelated to encounters between self and others that could be traits, characteristics of place inhabitants (in our research, park visitors). The most significant results relevant to the category were received in an open-ended question about first-minute association with SBG. Respondents mentioned “children”, “pets” and “tourists” as association with the park. “Others” are detached from the respondent, which can be represented by the answers’ formulation: “a paradise for people and pets”, “happy children and pets”, “many tourists”. This implies that some respondents saw SBG as something “for” others, as something that is opposed to “Self” and personal involvement. Social relations are not involved in this association. “We” (locals) – “They” (tourists) or We (adults) – They (children).

Speaking about tourists as opposed to locals we can turn to the observation notes: “At the National Orchid Garden, it was the same usual tourist crowd that was there.” On a rainy day: Throughout the way, I didn’t see anything much, until I’m at the National Orchid Garden, which has the usual package tour group tourists with their stickers and so on.
Looking at the observation field notes, the researcher used such linguistic phrases as “same usual…crowd” or “usual package tour”. This also shows how embodied the researcher was and that influenced the discourse (Gillian, 2003). Crowds of tourists appeared for the researcher as something very predictable and old as the world.

The lack of personal involvement is represented through the choice “indifferent” in the questions on “feelings” (question 9) and “attitudes” (question 10) on SBG (Appendix 3). Although the results showed very tiny number of respondents with this opinion (1.4% and 2% respectively) it can be concluded that not everyone attribute personal meanings to the place. Interestingly, the 2% of indifference were shown by respondents under 18 years old. This might happen because some ties with a place develop with time.

5.6 Others-Environment

Difficult to be strictly defined, this category implies that people tend to connect the traits and properties of inhabitants to the environment (Gustafson, 2001). In the research this interrelation can be seen when respondents defined the park environment through the different groups of park visitors. Gustafson’s examples are “atmosphere”, “street life” etc. The question concerning associations provided some answers that fall into this category. “Family-friendly” type of answers showed the perception of the park: “family-friendly park”, “family park and animal friendly”.

Empirical data presented below reflects how other visitors in the park can create certain meaning for an individual in terms of ethnicity and cultural difference. From the observations (underlined):

“Looking towards Casa Verde, again, I saw the Turkish woman whom I spoke to on 5th Jan. This is the 3rd time I saw her at SBG and the 2nd time seeing her at Casa Verde with a group of other Western women. They were talking and laughing rather loudly, particularly on this quiet day. They looked very at ease with each other and enjoying themselves.”

“I was one of the few non Western person at Casa Verde. Most of them were Western women in pairs or groups or with their children.”
May be this was why there were associations with Europe-like environment. The regular big number of expatriates and western-looking residents form the perceptions of SBG as something non-Asian, especially if complemented with a sense of space and lush greenery.

A female aged 31-45 stated: “the [husband] once observed that there are more foreigners than Singaporeans in BG. That prompted me to look up around me to find there are indeed more golden hair than black hair people around us!” Such attitude represents that the meaning of SBG was derived from contemplating others in the environmental context.

5.7 Self-Others-Environment

Gustafson (2001) exemplifies this relationship through “anonymity” and “citizenship” as well as “traditions”, “festivals” and “anniversaries”. In the category self, others and environment interact intensively. The emerged category from the open-question coding, “National Identity”, fairly falls into self-others-environment. It included the following responses: “Europe-like”, “heritage” and “national symbol”. From “associations”: “an awesome green asset of Singapore”, “our heritage”, “Singapore’s iconic park”.

Responses to Question 10 received a percentage of 36.3% for the option of “I am proud of SBG”. Feeling of pride was relevant to national identity and represented the self-others-environment relation. Reasons for choosing SBG because of its “History/Heritage” received 30.1% of responses. This result showed the significance of the park as a heritage and a meaning of it that stretched far over personal experiences.

Gustafson also introduced other repeated themes that do not match the 3-pole model: distinction, valuation, continuity and change. Let’s see how the results reflected these theoretical conceptualizations.

5.8 Distinction

A meaningful place must appear as an identifiable, distinguishable territorial unit. Distinction is a basic feature of human (and social) cognition (Zerubavel, 1991, 1997, ch.4 in Gustafson 2001:13). What is unique about the place and how does it differ from other places? That was why most of respondents associated SBG with “greenery” and other physical park attributes (like flowers, lake, swans) and “natural sounds” (as opposed to, e.g. urban city sounds). The
“Oasis”-code demonstrated contradistinction of the park as a “haven” and “oasis” in the middle of a concrete jungle. Here are some quotes from the survey answers: “a green paradise in the middle of the city”, “an oasis for lovely strolls in the evenings”, “a haven in the city”.

“Physical park attribute”-category arose again in analysis of “biggest impression” in the open-ended question 11. Greenery and wild life were mentioned by many respondents. That is why “nature” (69.2%), “beauty” (54.1%) and “design” (45.2%) are leading in the question of the reason of choice SBG (Graph 4).

5.9 Valuation

Valuation is based on comparison and leads to a general positive or negative perception of place. “The valuation aspect is often important in making places meaningful; a strong or weak, positive or negative valuation may influence the level of personal involvement in specific places” (Gustafson, 2001: 13). Generally results show positive perception towards SBG. In a question 10, the leading position was the option of “like” (93.8%) (Graph 2). In the open-ended question 12 about most memorable experiences, there were responses stating nothing special but with overall positive valuation:

“There isn’t any particularly memorable experience, but when it’s time to leave Singapore, the botanic gardens will give me many good memories of my years living in this great country” aged 31-45, supposedly temporary resident.
The next quote shows no special feelings, but includes an assessment of one’s experience in the park:

“It’s always a lovely experience at the botanic gardens. It will be my most precious memory of Singapore”

However there have been a few negative valuation noticed. Most of them referred to some practical inconvenience and inefficiency in SBG (underlined):

“Sometimes when there are too many people, then it isn’t so comfortable.”

“Car parks are insufficient at times.”

Under “association” (open-ended question 8), some of the respondents expressed themselves through such assessments as “nice”, “wonderful”, “amazing”, “beautiful” and superior “the best” (e.g.: “one of the most amazing gardens I’ve ever been”; “a wonderful garden”; “one of the best place to chill out and a great open café!”).

5.10 Continuity

Gustafson (2001) called it “life paths”; Mazo (2005) referred to continuity dimensions as the “milestones” of life. The point is that people ascribe meanings to places when they are connected to important events in their lives. Although this refers to self Gustafson pointed out that as an underlying dimension it is not limited to any of the poles. In “most memorable experiences” (from open-ended question 12) responses included a great deal of such “milestones”: “romantic memories”, “childhood memories”, “youth memories”.

From the responses regarding romantic memories:

“Our first ever date with my husband was to watch an evening performance at the park” (Age 31-45).

“I had my first kiss there. (Shhhhhhhhhhh, don’t tell my mummy). (Age under 18)

The next quote represents meanings based on youth memories and continuity:

“The walks I took there with my parents when I was very young. In the future I hope my 2 daughters will also remember the times we spent there together” (Age 31-45).
The following quote unites romantic memories and other important life events which became a tradition and continuity:

“We had part of our wedding photos taking there, my parents in law had their 60th anniversary photos taken there, my younger brother had some of his graduation photos taken there with the family, will be planning a birthday party at the Children’s Garden for my daughter later in the year” (Age 19-30).

5.11 Change

Related to the previous dimension, this implies that place meaning changes, develops and that it is an ongoing process. E.g.:

“We frequented the park when I was very young and from those fond memories, I chose to return when I started to jog regularly” age 31-45; underlined parts represent how old meanings motivate new meanings.

From observations (the underlined sentences prove that meaning of the park changed several times throughout a respondent’s life path): “A Singaporean man of Indian ethnicity was sitting in the middle of the square, drinking a freshly fruit juice and looking into his phone. I talked to him briefly to find out that he just finished jogging at the park. He jogs at SBG “almost every day” because of the fresh air, safety and big space. He lives nearby and goes to work (his own business) around 11am after his shower when he gets home from SBG every day. He has always lived “around the area” and has been going to SBG very often since he was young. The phase in his life which he hadn’t been going to SBG much was when he was in his twenties when he was busy with career and “women”. However, since he started his family and children were born, as well as got older, he started coming back to SBG again to keep himself healthy with the jogging.”

So far the results were consistent with previous researches on the topic. The above quotes concluded that meaning which people ascribe to places are various, complex and may change over the time.
5.12 Place Dependence/Attachment and Time

Looking at question 10, it is reasonable to note the causality between attitude and age range of the respondent. The highest percentage of “I need SBG” which demonstrated a certain necessity and importance of park in life was found in the age category 18-30 (31.4%) and over 55 (30.4%). An even higher level of need for SBG was represented in the choice “I depend on SBG”, where the highest number of selection were given by those over 55 years old (52%). For comparison, the lowest rate of “need” and “dependence” was found in the age group under 18 years (5% and 10% respectively). The strongest place dependence is demonstrated by older respondents.

The question is: is there a relation between frequency of visits and place attachment in the respective age groups? So “one per week and more” has the biggest number of respondents in the age group “over 55” (69.6 %); and 46-55 (30%); Age 18-30 mostly visited park “once per month or more” (37.1%). This is evident that the elderly visited the park more frequently and consequently develop deeper meaning of place and dependence to the place over time.

These results were in line with the hypothesis of Smaldone et al (2008:499) that time plays a significant role in connecting people to places: “…people with longer lengths of association more frequently reported social connections to their special places as well as some types of emotional connections (i.e., special moments and solitude)”.

5.13 Other Findings

5.13.1 Feelings

Less intense (but not less important) emotions than that of needs and dependence are described as feelings in the survey question. The results have shown that generally, respondents felt positive towards the park. The most popular response to the closed question “Feelings in SBG” (Graph 5) was feeling “happy” (50.7%). The respondents often felt “relaxed” (44.5%) and “at home” (33.6%) too. Only 1.4% chose “indifferent”. In the open-ended questions some respondents associated the park with feelings of “tranquillity”, “freedom” and “romance”. “Tranquillity” – code was also discovered while analyzing responses on the biggest impression”. 
Speaking of age groups, interestingly, no one from under 18 felt nostalgic whereas 21.7% felt nostalgic in the group of over 55s. Conventional sad moments of life like the loss of a family member, these were turned into positive oriented outcomes such as a feeling of nostalgia and nostalgic memories. To name a few:

“We used to take our morning walks together before my husband was called home to be with the Lord”
“Taking a walk there with my mother when she was still around.”

The results implied that respondents cared about SBG, and they admitted to having certain feelings towards the park. While feelings like happiness and relaxation were more or less expected given that a park is meant to create calmness, the response “at home” needed more elaboration. For that we take a look at the open-ended question and field notes.

“Botanic Gardens is like my second home. I feel very good when I’m in the park. It makes me feel safe to venture even to quiet corners with my child.” A respondent aged 31-45 expressed her feelings towards SBG as if were her second home.
While we did not receive noticeable amount of explicit expressions of feeling “at home” in the open-ended questions, there was a big response rate for the close-ended questions. Quite a few respondents, however, did mention that they feel comfortable and happy for the open questions.

Observations also showed some people’s behaviour in a relaxed manner as if they were at home. The expressions that are underlined reflected the state of the observed participant and can be interpreted as feeling “at home”.

“Newspaper woman 2 was also reading the Chinese papers under the shade of a tree, on a bench, facing the lawn. She was sitting there peacefully reading and reading, not looking up at all. While reading, she even removed her slippers and lifted up her legs up and down without bending her knees. When she has finished the papers, she carefully and slowly folded the newspapers neatly by the arm of her bench. After which, she opened her red leather bag beside her and took out a Chinese version of Readers’ Digest and started reading again. As she was reading the Readers’ Digest, I approached her and introduced myself, informing her of my intention. She was friendly and welcomed the chat, so I sat beside her on the same bench. She lives in Central Singapore and drove to SBG. She goes to SBG about once a week to read for a couple of hours. She said she loves the peace and quiet on weekday morning, where she won’t feel distracted from her reading, with the natural sound of crickets and birds chirping in the park...”

“...At the far corner of the café patio, sat a Singaporean middle aged couple, slowly eating their lunch quietly. They had no conversation or eye contact whatsoever while they were eating. Just before they finished their food, the male took a phone call. After he hung up, the couple started talking and by then they have finished their food and continued their conversation, sitting there with their legs stretched...”

“On my way, walking back to the new entrance car park, I saw 2 persons (from a distance, I can’t tell their genders) wearing very casually lying down on a picnic mat, under the shade of a palm tree. The even had eye pads over their eyes, looking like they were taking an afternoon nap.”

Body language of the observed visitors revealed that they were feeling comfortable with their bodies as if they were at home. A significant number of observed people seemed to be very familiar with the environment, which also reflected the feel of relaxation and safety.
5.13.2 Nature

As natural as it may seem, nature and nature-related attributes gathered a great deal of attention in respondents’ perceptions. From Graph 4, Nature (69.2%) took a leading position among other reasons to visit SBG, followed by “beauty” (54.1%) and park design (66%). Nature also obtained the leading position (66.4%, Graph 3) in the purpose of visit (that differs from the previous one because the choices here were mostly on the activities). Landscape and park design, greenery and wildlife in the park – these are the codes for the responses for question 11 on “biggest impression in a park”.

A respondent (aged 46-55) recalled her most memorable experience through connecting with nature: “Our friends and I went there to practice tai chi in one early morning during a weekday. The air was fresh; the environment was so peaceful that I could hear the bird sing, the sound of the water fountain was so clear but soft. With the harmony of the nature, it made me forgot about we were still inside the city.”

Greenery and other physical park attributes construct many respondents’ association with the park.

5.14 Concluding Notes

5.14.1 Importance of Services and Facilities in Creating Meanings

The value of dining and other park facilities were noticeable in the responses to questions regarding “Biggest Impression from a park” and “Associations”. However, dining or any artificially built environment was mentioned very rarely in the experiences (exception: “proposed to my wife in Les Amis”, where Les Amis is the name of the SBG restaurant). When respondents described their experiences it tended to be happening in some settings, however the stress was put on feelings, companions, something extraordinary (or ordinary) happening.

5.14.2 Main Findings

1. Social aspects, bonding and connections were of great value and significance when meanings of place were created (exemplifying category “happiness of others”).

2. Environment of the park, its design and features enriched respondents’ experiences.
3. There was a causal relation between the length of experiencing / ascribing meaning to a park and attachment to it.

4. Services and facilities in the park enhanced people’s bonding / escapism which in turn enriched and varied respondents’ experiences.

5. Emotions, memories and activities were significant to constructing meaning of the park.
6 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

6.1 Customer Value Framework for Places

Taking inspiration from existing customer value frameworks like that of Smith & Colgate, 2007 and Khan et al, 2010, the authors of this thesis have come up with a basic conceptual structure for places. Here we present the customer value framework targeted for places (Picture 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Customer Value</th>
<th>Meaning of Place</th>
<th>Self</th>
<th>Others</th>
<th>Environment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Distinction</td>
<td>Valuation</td>
<td>Continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Love, happiness, joy, dependence, tranquility, nostalgia</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive</td>
<td>Memories, judgments, preferences, imagination</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential (Activities)</td>
<td>Bonding, contemplating, reading, doing sports</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>Design, landscape, wildlife, amenities, music performances</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Picture 3: Customer Value Framework for Places

The building of this framework is based on the intention of coming up with a customer value framework that is infused with a meaning of place concept that can result in a higher commitment / loyalty / attachment to places. Thus, this framework is presented as a matrix to demonstrate the attributes of meaning of place and customer value as a single entity, ie infusing the 2 concepts into 1.

The horizontal axis of meaning of place represents all the different ways (through the interactions of Gustafson’s (2001) 3 poles, as well as the other 4 underlying dimensions) customers ascribe meanings to a place, as detailed in chapters 2.2.1 and 5. The vertical axis of customer value embodies the findings of the empirical results in chapter 5, that can be summarized concisely into 4 major themes, namely emotion, cognition, experience and environment. These 4 major themes were valued by visitors of SBG and based on them, meanings were ascribed to the park. Therefore, rooting from the definitions & ideas of customer value (chapter 2.1) and findings in chapter 5, these themes have been translated into emotional, cognitive, experiential and environmental values in the matrix.
Under these 2 axes are the attributes that ascribe meanings to places for customers. These same attributes are also what will be valued by customers if places encourage / enhance them for the customers. For example, if a place can provide an emotional value of enhancing the feeling of love in their visitors, then, with this feeling of love, the visitors will ascribe certain special meanings to the place that can lead to more attachment to it. Or further down the matrix, where doing sports is a type of experiential (activity) value that a place can provide for visitors, and especially when it is performed as a regular habit in the place, this activity will also be the basis of what the place mean to the visitors over time. As such, the attributes in the matrix are both attributes of meaning of place as well as customer value. These attributes are what will encourage customers to ascribe (deeper / more) meanings to places, as well as what will help to form the 4 customer values, which ultimately lead to more commitment / loyalty / attachment to places.

6.1.1 Emotional Value

Different life moments and encounters in a park provoke a large palette of emotions and certain relationships with a place (e.g. see Graph 5 and “Abstract Emotions” – category in codes for “Associations”, Appendix 2). The aspect of emotions was acknowledged in consumer value by Sheth, Newman and Gross, 1991 (in Williams, 2000). This study showed how important feelings and emotions are when forming meaning of park.

The attribute of love indicates more of romance than other kinds of love between people in this part of the matrix. The other kinds of love between parent and child etc are more represented by bonding (experiential value) in the matrix. The emotions of romantic love can been be seen from the high numbers of visitors going to SBG with their significant others (Graph 1) as well as in dimensions of self-others (5.3) and continuity (5.10).

Nostalgia is not only associated with happy life-path memories that are mentioned in many dimensions self (5.2), self-others (5.3), continuity (5.10), change (5.11) etc, but are also elicited from sad moments in life (5.13.1). Finally, dependence is one of the most important attributes that will lead to commitment / loyalty / attachment to a place. This attribute has been directly pointed out by survey responses (Graph 2), but can also be seen particularly in the dimensions of self (5.2) and environment-self (5.4).
All in all, positive emotions are believed to enhance loyalty and commitment to a place, whereas indifference and negative emotions will likely make a visitor choose another park for a visit. As can be seen in Graph 5, the feelings of happiness/joy were the top-rated feeling by visitors.

6.1.2 Cognitive Value

Some researchers noted the cognitive and cognitive/affective nature of customer value (Babin et al., 2004; Park, 2004 in Sanchez-Fernandez & Iniesta-Bonillo, 2006). Cognition is a state of intellectual activity for example learning, remembering, thinking, fantasizing and imagining. Whether it is going back to the past by conscious or unconscious reminiscing or anticipating something happening in the future through fantasizing, it has a big influence over place preference.

Cognitive states have been expressed by the respondents in various ways, in self-others-environment (chapter 5.7) and others (chapter 5.3). The responses indicated that thoughts, established opinions about a place, relating a place to a state or even other ethnicities (judgments) might influence the choice of visiting (or not) the park. Based on the analysis of empirical data, there were grounds to presume that cognitive value would influence a visitor’s final decision to go to the park. Life milestones which happened to be associated with the park were imprinted in the visitors’ memory and constructed the cognitive value of the place.

6.1.3 Experiential Value

Whether it was for a music concert or bonding with friends, the process of mingling with “others” (body, people, activities, nature) held a big value for respondents. Experiential value comes from any activities that park visitors engaged in and gained in experiences. Experiential nature of value is recognized by Holbrook and other practitioners. The social aspects can be found in the analysis of all 3 poles and the pole-to-pole of Gustafson’s (2001) model. This type of customer value is the outcome of the activities that a visitor engaged in once or regularly in SBG.

Acknowledging that it was also emotions that were derived from the activities, it was however, activities that first and foremost, defined the experiential value for visitors. It could be lonely contemplating, sitting silently on a bench or having a loud picnic with bunch of friends. Certainly some activities became a tradition and were repeated regularly (like dog walking, jogging, meeting former classmates etc). In that case, the preference of a place became more
obvious that just random visits to a park. Activities imprinted meanings of place into the minds and hearts of the visitors.

6.1.4 Environmental Value

Here are the physical attributes of a park (nature, design, restaurants, music stage) that made the above three values more comfortable and could be either neglected or highlighted by respondents in the process of establishing meaning. A significant number of responses were devoted to the perfect maintenance of the park, its cleanliness, wildlife, design and landscape. No doubt, these traits of the park left the biggest impression on them.

Having said that, environmental value defined people’s relationship with a place and amenities at the place made it more convenient and comfortable (benches, restrooms, food etc) or less comfortable and thus less positive (examples of respondents experiencing lack of parking spots during weekends). This type of value, although overlapped with service quality and satisfaction studied in previous researches, was extended to park design, landscape and providing space for visitors’ own activities (like jogging paths, clean grass on the lawn, shades) here.

6.1.5 Overlapping Values

So far, the framework of customer value relating to parks / recreational areas (Picture 3) has the potential to better understand the underlying elements of visitors’ long term commitment to a place. Important to mention, values outlined in the framework can certainly overlap and merge with each other. For example:

(i) Experiential: spend time; Emotional: feeling joy

“Nothing specific but I feel the joy of spending time with my son and grandchildren at BG about once every month.”

(ii) Environmental: performance; Experiential: picnic; Emotional: laugh; Experiential: making dinner

“When we were getting ready to catch performance with our picnic, it rained buckets! We laughed it off and proceeded to make dinner at friends instead.”

(iii) Cognitive: judgement that park is well-maintained; Emotional: enjoy; Environmental: greenery and wildlife

“The gardens are always well-maintained and I really enjoy greenery and the wildlife.”
6.2 Practical Implications of the Framework

When considering customer value for a place, we have argued that it is necessary to infuse a place-related concept into it, in order to better understand what values would encourage customer’s attachment to a place and henceforth, enable place managers to build amenities, design the place and establish services in a way that nurture visitors’ commitment / loyalty / attachment to it.

For strategic management purposes, while a multidimensional model, such as Holbrook’s typology of consumer value, can be applied for “segmentation, differentiation and product positioning” (Gallarza & Gil, 2008:16), the customer value framework for places (Picture 3), is more useful for customization or to build a niche. Three of the four values in the framework (emotional, cognitive & experiential) are distinctly person-focused, meaning that they are highly personal and intimate to each individuals, whereas the last value (environmental) works as the foundation (ie place) as well as in support of the first 3 values. Accordingly, when a market segment has been identified, the framework (Picture 3) would be beneficial for place design & service creation to reinforce place differentiation through mass customization or building a niche. Mass customization, which “requires an awareness of individual customer needs and behavior” (Pine & Gilmore, 2000:21), has been lauded as the way to go in today’s hypercompetitive landscape because it minimizes customer sacrifices (Pine & Gilmore, 2000). The framework (Picture 3), being a combination of attributes that affect how people ascribe personal meanings to places and what they value from places, will guide place managers to go into the heart (emotion), mind (cognition) and body (experience / activity) of their visitors.

6.3 Opportunities and Limitations of the Framework: Critical Evaluation

Since the research was carried out through a case study of an urban park, there were grounds to assume that the resulting customer value framework for places could be further studied and applied in no less that the urban park context. The place, being an “oasis” and “haven” in the middle of a concrete jungle certainly differed from other recreational places not least because of its green environment that is achieved through preservation and maintenance of a landscape. A significant number of respondents referred to these specific characteristics and the meanings it provided. Hence, the framework could possibly be considered in studying consumer value in a larger context consisting of outdoor recreational areas: for instance, national parks, rural areas, parks with or without strong significance of cultural or historical value and so forth.
The framework broadens the view on customer value concept because it is based on analysis of very personal meanings ascribed to the park. The framework provides a way of better understanding the meanings that people ascribe to places and henceforth, what is the value of a place. One may argue that place consist of goods and services incorporated in space so why not then apply the existing frameworks and approaches of customer value? Here it can be useful to draw a parallel between a park and a house. House is filled with goods like furniture (sofa, bed etc) and appliances (TV, oven etc). When it comes to value that one derives from sofa or TV it is fair enough to apply customer value that refer to the goods. But perceiving and comprehending the overall value for the house (ie place), one might judge it not only by the quality/satisfaction from the furniture and appliances but much more aspects: that is, what meanings do the house hold, what significant milestones were happening there, the spirit of the house and its inhabitants etc. These are elements that provide special meanings to the house, that transform the house into a home. In this case, the place-related framework (Picture 3) could probably more comprehensively reflect the true customer value of a place.

Given that this research was not meant to generalize findings in any way, there are of course a number of limitations to the framework. The case is meant to be at the utmost exemplifying, therefore some limitations might apply. Leisure places differ depending on scale; they also differ depending on the cultural, social, political and economic environment they are in. That is why it is important to state here that unlike a conventional model, this customer value for places framework (Picture 3) can be fluid. As the word ‘framework’ suggests, it is a skeletal conceptual structure, unlike a model which is more of a miniature representation of a concept. The axes (meaning of place and customer value) are fixed, providing a defined framework for place practitioners to contemplate in the direction of building attachment to places. However, the attributes within it can vary from place to place, depending on what the mission of the place is or what kind of place it is. If the place is a public park with similar mission, the attributes would probably be more or less what is presented here. However if the place is say, Disneyland, then these attributes could be changed to fit the mission of the place. This technicality could be regarded as a limitation of the framework. Nevertheless, the crucial point is that the fixed frames would help practitioners to come up with attributes that are of emotional, cognitive, experiential and environmental values to customers, as well as make customers ascribe deeper / more meanings to the place.
7 CONCLUSION

7.1 Overview
The aim of the study was to enrich a body of theory in consumer research with meaning of place aspects. This aim was triggered by the authors’ reflections on customer value limitations when trying to apply it to the context of leisure scientific field. As Allen (2003:12) put it “Trial and error, conjecture, informed guesswork may not sound that philosophical, but they do convey the speculative element that lies at the heart of what it means to generate new ideas and questions”.

Revisiting the 2 research questions for this thesis:
1. In what ways do park visitors ascribe meaning of place?
2. How can meaning of place contribute to the customer value conceptualization?

With the main use of Gustafson’s (2001) work for the analysis of empirical data that has been collected through survey and field observation, the first research question has been duly answered in chapter 5. Thereupon, grounded on this revelation of the empirical results, previous literature review and argumentation, the second research inquiry was also fulfilled with the customer value framework for places (Picture 3) in chapter 6.

7.2 Infusing Meaning of Place Concept into Customer Value

Customer value has been focused on service quality and customer satisfaction, where hedonic satisfaction is an end value in itself. We argued that other cognitive and emotional values can reflect meanings that customers ascribe to places too.

Jordan et al (2009:19) stated that meanings are “often associated with values and satisfaction”. By incorporating meaning of place concepts into customer value, it filled a critical gap in current customer value research on recreation studies, i.e. what are the values that bring about customer’s attachment / commitment / loyalty to a place? It is believed that the more meaning one ascribes to a place, the more attachment one would have to the place, and thus, the less likelihood of one substituting this place for another (Walsh, 2000). At first glance, what seemed to be incompatible concepts ultimately made a lot of sense. Both lines of thought studied human beings’ intangible expressions, whether it was value or meaning. Even though customer value discourses refer to marketing research and meaning of place refers to human geography, Mair (2006) argued that by critically putting together concepts from different disciplines, it has the potential to strengthen leisure research.
7.3 Future Research

Future research is needed to understand the nature of place meaning for tourists of parks and recreational areas to see if the direction of values is similar to those found in this particular research. Also, it is important to understand if the framework can serve as guidance for visitors’ values not only in the parks but in other leisure localities as well. The framework might need further considerations especially in theoretical or practical applications towards larger scale recreational places, recreational places of other purposes than parks, depending on whether it is a study from the customer or management perspectives, as well as to take into account the underlying cultural and socio-economic factors of different places.
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Gardens by the Bay Website, 2011. Accessed on 16 Mar 2011, from:  


APPENDIX 1: Survey Questionnaire

Urban Park: Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG)

1. My age is:
   - □ Under 18
   - □ 19-30
   - □ 31-45
   - □ 46-55
   - □ Over 56

2. How often do you visit SBG?
   - □ Once a week or more
   - □ Once a fortnight or more
   - □ Once a month or more
   - □ Occasionally or only for specific events / reasons

3. What are your usual purposes of visiting the park? (You may tick more than 1 box)
   - □ Enjoy the nature / beautiful view
   - □ Walk the dog(s)
   - □ To exercise / for any form of sports
   - □ Attend SBG’s courses/ workshops
   - □ Take part in SBG events / stage performances
   - □ For the cafes / restaurants
   - □ Relax / get away from city life / find peace
   - □ Take a walk
   - □ Spend time with family
   - □ Meet/catch up with friends
   - □ To reflect / think over my problems
   - □ To reminisce
   - □ Others (pls specify) ____________________________________
4. Do you mostly go to the park: *(You may tick more than 1 box)*

- [ ] alone?
- [ ] with friends / extended family?
- [ ] with children specifically?
- [ ] with significant other?
- [ ] with pet(s)?
- [ ] with others? (Pls specify) ____________________________

5. Do you visit other park(s) too?

- [ ] Yes, more often than SBG
- [ ] Yes, but not as much as SBG
- [ ] No, SBG is my main choice most of the times

6. What is it about this park that makes you choose to come here? *(You may tick more than 1 box)*

- [ ] History / Heritage
- [ ] Culture
- [ ] Nature / Greenery
- [ ] Flowers
- [ ] Beauty of the park
- [ ] Park design / landscaping
- [ ] Park Events / Stage Performances
- [ ] Educational Programmes / Features
- [ ] Open Space
- [ ] Restaurants / Cafes
- [ ] Retail / souvenir shops
- [ ] Animals in the park (insects/birds/fish etc)
- [ ] Convenient to get to the park
- [ ] Cleanliness
- [ ] Safety
- [ ] Children friendly
- [ ] Peace
- [ ] Other reasons (specify)
7. What do you like the most about the park? *(You may tick UP to 3 boxes)*

☐ History/Heritage
☐ Culture
☐ Nature / Greenery
☐ Flowers
☐ Beauty of the park
☐ Park design / landscaping
☐ Park Events / Stage Performances
☐ Educational Programmes / Features
☐ Open Space
☐ Restaurants / Cafes
☐ Retail / souvenir shops
☐ Animals in the park (insects/birds/fish etc)
☐ Convenient to get to the park
☐ Cleanliness
☐ Safety
☐ Children friendly
☐ Peace
☐ Other reasons (specify)

8. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when you think of SBG?

9. Tick 3 of the sentences that are most applicable:

☐ I need SBG for … … …
☐ I depend on SBG for … … …
☐ I like SBG for … … …
☐ I am indifferent to SBG
☐ I am proud of SBG
10. When I am at SBG I feel: *(You may tick **Up to 3 boxes**)*

- [ ] Contented
- [ ] Peaceful
- [ ] Relaxed
- [ ] Excited
- [ ] Happy
- [ ] At home / comfortable
- [ ] Nostalgic
- [ ] Cultured
- [ ] Healthy
- [ ] Sociable
- [ ] Indifferent
- [ ] Other (pls, specify) ____________________________

11. In what way does the park make a big impression on you in terms of amenities / service / memories / functionalities etc?

12. What is the most memorable experience (can be either positive or negative), that you have in / of the park?

💬 THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND CONSIDERATION! YOU HELPED US A LOT! 😊
APPENDIX 2: Codes and Catégories

**Observation codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Park facilities</th>
<th>Parking, Café, Restaurant, Visitor centre, Signs (rules of behaviour; name of the plants)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Park service</td>
<td>Helpful staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of visitors (Others)</td>
<td>Joggers, women with children, elder people, business colleagues etc, with pets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicities</td>
<td>Chinese, Indonesian, Turkish, Japanese, “Westerners”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities (Interaction: Others-Environment)</td>
<td>Picnic, tai chi, bonding, jogging, taking photos, cycling, having meal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment</td>
<td>Change of weather/change of park, Shades/comfort</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narratives</td>
<td>Story-telling through casual chat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visitors’ Behavior</td>
<td>Relaxing, contemplating, romantic time, involved</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Codes for Open-Ended Survey Questions**

**Associations (130 responds)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Descriptive Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical Park Attributes</strong></td>
<td>Greenery (24)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Flowers (6), Lake (3), Swans(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Others</strong></td>
<td>Children (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pets (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourists (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family-friendly (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sounds</strong></td>
<td>Natural sounds (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Park-organized activity/Play</strong></td>
<td>Music (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Abstract Emotions</strong></td>
<td>Tranquility (8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Romance (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Identity</strong></td>
<td>Like Europe (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heritage (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>National Symbol (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td>Oasis (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Space (6), clean (1), fresh air (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assessment &amp; superior assessment</strong></td>
<td>Nice (1), wonderful (1), amazing (2), beautiful (4), the best (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Built Environment/Excellence</strong></td>
<td>Dining facilities (6), Other facilities (6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Convenience</strong></td>
<td>Free of charge (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self (identity)</strong></td>
<td>“My...”</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-organized activities/Play</strong></td>
<td>Picnic (3), walks (3), sports(1), contemplation (1)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Activity</strong></td>
<td>Relaxation</td>
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<td><strong>Self-Others</strong></td>
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Biggest Impression (126 responds)

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<td>Clean (35)</td>
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<td>Space (15)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Fresh air (2)</td>
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<td>Service</td>
<td>Maintenance (17)</td>
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<td>Park staff (2)</td>
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<td>Memories</td>
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<td>Feelings</td>
<td>Tranquility (21)</td>
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<td>Personal Feelings (10)</td>
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<td>Safe (3)</td>
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<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Beautiful (19)</td>
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<td>Art (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Excellence</td>
<td>For Children, Family, Pets (8)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Universal park (7)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dining Facilities (12)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other facilities (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aesthetics/Excellence</td>
<td>Landscape/design (18)</td>
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<td>Efficiency</td>
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<td>Parking (4)</td>
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<td>Location (3)</td>
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<td>Greenery (12)</td>
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<td>Self-Others</td>
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<td>Organized activity/Play</td>
<td>Performances (9)</td>
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<td>National Identity</td>
<td>Heritage (1)</td>
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<td>Self-Organized activities/Play</td>
<td>Sports (8)</td>
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Memorable Experience (88 responds)

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<td></td>
<td>Value (Self-Others)</td>
<td>Romantic memories (9)</td>
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<td>Fixed memories</td>
<td>Fixing moments</td>
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<td>Past moment</td>
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<td>Self-Environment</td>
<td>Value (Self-Nature)</td>
<td>Connecting with nature (9)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Comparison</td>
<td>Feeling at home (1)</td>
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<td>Comparison</td>
<td>European/foreign-like (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>Value (Loved ones)</td>
<td>Other’s happiness (10)</td>
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<td>Self</td>
<td>Life phase</td>
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<td>Life phase</td>
<td>Youth memories (6)</td>
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<td>Value (Self-Body)</td>
<td>Health (7)</td>
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<td>Value (Self-Self)</td>
<td>Solitude (2)</td>
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<td>Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Non-efficiency&amp;Self-Others</td>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>Negative (5)</td>
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</table>
APPENDIX 3: Survey Results

1 AGE GROUPS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>No. of Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Under 18</td>
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<td>13.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>18-30</td>
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<td>31-45</td>
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<td>46-55</td>
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<td>Over 55</td>
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<tr>
<td>NA</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>146</td>
<td>100</td>
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</table>

2 FREQUENCY OF VISIT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AGE</th>
<th>1x per week &amp; more</th>
<th>1x per fortnight &amp; more</th>
<th>1x per month &amp; more</th>
<th>Occasionally</th>
<th>N.A.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No.</td>
<td>% in age grp</td>
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## PREFERRED CHOICE OF PARK TO VISIT

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Others | Take photos of nature (x3) | Accompany kids for school activities (x1) | Bring overseas guests (x1) | To read (x1)
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<td>Exercise</td>
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<td>Attend courses</td>
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<td>4.1%</td>
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<td>Events</td>
<td>43</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest. / Cafe</td>
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<td>45.2%</td>
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![Bar chart showing the distribution of purposes of visit](chart.png)
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<th>18-30</th>
<th>31-45</th>
<th>46-55</th>
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<td>% in age grp</td>
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Others | Parents (x5) | School (x1) | Uncle (x1) | Overseas guests (x1) | Grandchildren (x4) | Maid (x1) |

<table>
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<td>Others</td>
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**Visiting Companion**

- **Alone**: 38
- **Friends / Extended Family**: 86
- **Children**: 38
- **Significant Other**: 68
- **Pets**: 28
- **Others**: 14

![Visiting Companion Graph](image-url)
6 REASONS FOR CHOOSING SBG

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<p>| Others               | Favourable location (x1) | Jogger friendly (x1) | Lakes (x3) | Tourist friendly (x1) |</p>
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## ATTITUDE TOWARDS SBG

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**Attitude Towards SBG**

![Bar Chart]

The chart above illustrates the distribution of attitudes towards SBG across different age groups. The categories are Need, Depend, Like, Indifferent, and Proud. The total number of respondents and their corresponding percentages are also shown in the table.
## FEELINGS IN SBG

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Others: Solitude (x1)

*Note: The table shows the distribution of feelings for different age groups and includes a separate row for others.*
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<td>44.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>50.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At home</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nostalgic</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultured</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sociable</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indifferent</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Feelings in SBG**

- Happy: 74 (50.7%)
- Relaxed: 65 (44.5%)
- At home: 49 (33.6%)
- Contented: 19 (13.0%)
- Peaceful: 45 (30.8%)
- Excited: 21 (14.4%)
- Nostalgic: 10 (6.8%)
- Cultured: 10 (6.8%)
- Healthy: 12 (8.2%)
- Sociable: 15 (10.3%)
- Indifferent: 2 (1.4%)
- Others: 1 (0.7%)
**APPENDIX 4 : SBG Interview Questionnaire**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Urban Park</th>
<th>Singapore Botanic Gardens (SBG)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name of representative</td>
<td>Alan Tan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title &amp; Department</td>
<td>Deputy Director/Living Collections &amp; Development, SBG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. **What are the essential facilities/assistance that an urban park should provide for their visitors’ convenience and comfort? What do you think is missing or can be improved in SBG in this area?**

   One of the key areas for improvement would be accessibility by public transport - Although SBG is located in the heart of the city, it is currently not directly accessible via train service (a new MRT station is currently under construction which will open in 2011 to address this).

   We are also looking into ways to provide more shade and to implement measures to alleviate Singapore’s very humid and hot climate within the Gardens.

2. **How does SBG manage crowds/queues during peak periods & popular events?**

   As a general rule, SBG does not allow activities with big crowds (eg Corporate Family Day) except for the concerts at the Shaw Stage area. For the latter, the crowds are confined to a specific area where our Rangers are on duty to assist with crowd control.

3. **What does SBG have to offer for visitors with the following expectations:**
   (i) Family time (ii) Individual peace (iii) Social and/or Romantic purposes (iv) Business (v) Educational (vi) Others?

   SBG is divided into 3 cores – the southern Tanglin Core (original site of the Gardens), Central Core (tourist zone) and northern Bukit Timah Core (educational outreach). Each core targets different visitor groups to provide distinct experience within the Gardens.

4. **Can SBG offer anything to a new potential target group of visitors? (For eg: sick people? artists?, overseas student groups? etc) Please specify what target group you could be looking into and what could be offered to them.**

   In our mission to connect plants and people, we strive to be a “People’s Garden” – a place for bonding and making memories, and a sanctuary to recharge the spirit and refresh the soul. For example, our Rain Forest experience provides opportunity for visitors to admire the multi-layered complexity of herbs and ferns, climbers, shrubs and trees that make up the 314 species jostling for space in this precious 6 ha primary tropical forest. As for children, we have Asia’s first children’s garden designed to provide a unique discovery and learning experience in a garden setting.
5. What are the few major improvements that SBG have done to increase visitorship in the last 5-7 years?

We embarked on the renewal of SBG with a redevelopment master plan (1989 - 2006) which gave birth to the National Orchid Garden, Cool House, Eco-Garden, etc.

We also continually develop new horticultural attractions and displays as part of our mission to connect plants and people. Our newer theme Gardens include the Economic Garden (featuring a wide range of plants of use to human kind), Ginger Garden (a beautifully landscaped garden devoted to the ginger group) and Evolution Garden (devoted to telling the story of plants through history), which are acknowledged as the best of their kind in the world.

6. How does SBG strive for “excellence” continuously to keep its position as THE park of the city and the region?

SBG plays an important triple role as a top tourist destination, a botanical institution and a flagship regional park. SBG is a much-loved icon with over 150 years history of connecting plants and people. Over the years, the Gardens has continually re-invented itself to remain relevant to the needs of our visitors. We seek to continuously enhance memorable experiences by creating new horticultural attractions. New attractions that visitors can look forward to include the Healing Garden and Tyersall Learning Forest.

7. If you have to give ONE reason why SBG is the best park in the city and the region, what would it be? And why do you choose that?

The Gardens is one of the great botanic gardens of the world. Our mission to connect plants and people provides our visitors with an unparalleled experience. Whether it was a visit seeking sanctuary and reflection within the Gardens or a recollection of picnics in our childhood years, the Gardens has always been a much-loved green space for our people. SBG has also won international accolades such as Time Magazine’s choice of the Gardens as “Asia’s Best Urban Jungle” and a three-star rating by the Michelin Green Guide, which bear testimony to the Gardens’ endearing charm.

8. Is SBG as enjoyable (fun) as other recreational / leisure destinations in Singapore? If yes, in what way and how does SBG make it fun for its visitors?

While the Gardens remains true to its original scientific mission, it has also evolved into a much-loved civic space and now ranks as Singapore’s top nature-based attraction with over 3 million visitors annually enjoying its dazzling and diverse collection of plants and giant trees, verdant landscapes and primeval forest.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. What kind of experiences does SBG want its visitors to take away?</td>
<td>SBG is a much-loved venue for community bonding. It has enriched the community and is firmly entrenched in the memories of Singaporeans and residents. We continually focus on our strong service culture to create happy memories for our visitors by providing a personal touch in our service delivery. SBG holds an endearing position in the hearts and minds of Singaporeans as a happy part of home where Singaporeans reminisce, re-connect as well as celebrate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. How much emphasis does SBG put into park design? And how do you think it will affect visitorship?</td>
<td>SBG’s 3 cores are designed to be independent with its own visitor amenities and to allow visitors to maximise their time in the Gardens. This provides a positive visitor experience and allows visitors, especially tourists with very limited time, to optimise their visit to the Gardens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. What do you think is a “beautiful” park? (or phrased in another way: What elements make a park “beautiful” in your opinion?)</td>
<td>A “beautiful” park is one that connects people and nature. It should provide adequate facilities and amenities without compromising the aesthetic and beauty of the landscapes. A beautiful park should bring peace, tranquillity and provide some kind of “healing” to the visitors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. How does SBG enhance its “beauty”?</td>
<td>We periodically re-landscape the existing displays and renew the key areas (eg the various entrance vistas) in the Gardens and introduce new displays, species and hybrids. We also hold thematic displays on different orchid groups eg “Mad about Slippers” (featuring the orchid group commonly known as Slipper Orchids) and “Butterflies in Spring” (featuring the orchid group commonly known as Butterfly Orchids).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. How does SBG make use of its cultural / historical values for its visitors?</td>
<td>SBG is a national heritage with a history of more than 150 years. Leveraging on this, we hold educational exhibitions such as “The Seed That Changed the World” which illustrated the incredible story of the rubber phenomenon, and SBG’s pivotal role in pioneering an industry that forever changed the economic landscape of the region.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14. How does SBG maintain the park in tiptop condition considering the huge crowd that are present during major events / concerts / activities / peak periods?

We ensure that there is sufficient time between mass events such as concerts to allow the vegetation to ‘renew’ itself.

15. What does SBG do to help itself to constantly come up with new ideas? (For eg, through collaborations, customer surveys etc. and please also provide some details if possible)

We collaborate with our key sponsors such as Exxon Mobil, Clarins, etc to come up with new innovative ideas for joint promotions.

Your time & participation in this interview questionnaire is greatly appreciated. We wish you and the Singapore Botanic Gardens the very best in your future endeavour.

With thanks,

* Siew Li, Lim

and

* Daria, Khokina
APPENDIX 5 : SBG Field Notes (An Excerpt)

(Pages 31-34 out of a total of 50)

Data collector & typist : Siew Li, Lim
Date : 24th January 2011
Time : 1000h – 1530h

Today, I parked at the new entrance’s basement car park. This is the part of the park where the Botany Centre is. Also in this part of the park, where there were much less people and big well developed space and landscape. Unlike the Bukit Timah core which seems to be still under extension and further development, this Tanglin Core is fully developed without the ugly construction sites or sounds around. Thus for people looking for individual peace or big natural space, the Tanglin Core is for them. The huge green space in the Tanglin Core here allow many people to their own quiet space in the park.

As I walked past the Swan Lake towards the big field, I saw Newspaper woman 2 (whom I spoke to on 5th Jan) sitting on the same bench. She was sitting on the same bench, at the same place, if my memory serves me right. She was reading a Chinese women’s magazine this time, with a Chinese newspaper folded neatly beside her. I walked past her from behind without disturbing her peace.

At the other far corner however, there was another woman sitting down reading newspapers. I asked if she could do a quick survey for me and she said yes. She was between 45-55 years old, who visited SBG more than once a week alone to enjoy the nature, find peace/relax/get away from city life and to reflect. She liked SBG for its nature / greenery, beauty, park design / landscaping and open space. Asked what was her most memorable experience in SBG she just answered that she mostly enjoyed reading in the peaceful environment.

This was a cloudy day and it looks like it could rain anytime. There weren’t too many people around, as compared to Central Core, and especially when the sky seems to be threatening with rain anytime. As usual, there were many Westerners, mostly women, but also men. The women were mostly in exercise gears, running or walking in pairs, or with a stroller or with their dog(s). The men were mostly alone or in pairs or with their dog(s). I did not spot any Western men jogging with strollers today. As I was walking, a Western lady in Nike jogging gear was walking slowly nearby. She looked relaxed and her white iPod ear piece / headphone was hanging on her shoulders instead of in her ears. I went over to try chatting with her. She was from Britain, married to an Australian and has 2 children. She lives near Holland Road (another premium residential area in Singapore that is around 5-10 mins’ drive to SBG). Her family has been living in Singapore for 3 years, where she went to SBG about 4-5 times a week. She jogs at SBG 3 times a week and will also go there to meet her friends about once a week for brunch / lunch. She said that as an expatriate wife in Singapore, her circle of friends in Singapore was built up at SBG. A wife of her husband’s colleague who came to Singapore earlier brought her to SBG to meet her friends and from there, she formed her own circle of friends from there. They would meet at Casa Verde most of the time. As her children are already in school, so she mostly clicked with other expatriate friends who were like her, ie without very young children in tow. When asked what is her favourite hangout place in Singapore, she answered “without a doubt, here! I love the Botanic Gardens!” Her family would also come to SBG with her on weekends sometimes either for the Symphony Stage performance, or to meet up with other families at Casa Verde for brunch. When asked what is the reason she likes SBG so much, she thought about it for a while and said that it was near to where she stayed and she just feels very comfortable
there. She said she doesn’t like doing the treadmill in a gym and SBG offers her a nice, quiet and safe environment for her to jog. And of course, Casa Verde café is really nice for meeting up, chatting and relaxing with her friends.

As I left the nice woman, I see some people carrying shopping bags with castors walking past. They look purposeful and looks like they were cutting across SBG from one gate to another to get to their destination.

From here I moved on and I saw a lone middle aged Singaporean man of Chinese ethnicity with a big professional looking camera. He was sitting on a bench, packing up his things. I tried going over to talk to him. He wasn’t very friendly nor keen to talk to me. However, I did get that he’s retired and has great interest in photography. He particularly likes to take close up pictures of plants and little animals. He said he comes to SBG “every now and then” without giving more details.

As I crossed the big field, a lone young man was lying under a tree, looking up into the sky. On the other side, was a domestic helper and a little Western girl playing ball. The little girl’s laughter could be heard and she was very actively and energetically running about for the ball. The domestic helper looked like she enjoyed her job too although she was a lot calmer than the little girl.

Walking up the little hilled walking path, 2 Western women, 2 domestic helpers and 5 children, 3 of whom had helmets on their heads were walking towards me. The 2 domestic helpers were carrying a scooter each. One of the boys was riding on his scooter. The 2 Western women were chatting as they walked and the children were also actively run walking along the path. Then, another Western woman in exercise gear pushing a stroller jogged past me from behind. She came to a stop and chatted with the 2 Western women. They were speaking in English but can’t tell in what accent. Their accents don’t sound similar. The last I heard as I passed them was “I’ll see you next Friday then.”

When I reached the National Orchid Garden, there were many tourists around, as usual. Many of them had stickers of their tour group on their shirt. This was also the time where the rain decided to pour and I had to hide inside the National Orchid Garden’s gift shop. The gift shop got more crowded as the rain poured. Surprisingly, although most people were just browsing, there were quite some people purchasing souvenirs too as they 3 cashiers that were open had short queues. After a while, I heard someone sounding like a tour leader shouting in Japanese and provided many of his tour members with umbrellas as they moved out the door of the gift shop. It was probably time for them to hop up their tour coaches for another destination. After this big group left, the gift shop became less crowded and more quiet. In no time, however, tourists who came out from the Orchid Garden started filling up the gift shop again. This is a Western group, sounding like British. Slightly less people bought from the shop this time, so only 1 cashier was opened, but a short queue formed. In a while again, umbrellas were provided and this group left. I was trapped in the shop for a while. As the shop was quite small, I didn’t feel comfortable talking too much as the whole shop would probably be able to hear whatever we talked about when the shop is not crowded. I spoke to a tourist from China. He was on a 5 day trip to Singapore and they had 30 hours for SBG. So it is a drop directly at SBG’s National Orchid Garden coach entrance, see the Orchids and then go in less than an hour. I spent almost an hour here waiting for the rain to stop.

As the rain just stopped, there weren’t many people at the Symphony Stage field. However, as I walked, I see more and more people making their way here from the original visitor centre. The dog walkers, women / domestic helpers with strollers, people in exercise gears and so on.
By the time I arrived at the original visitor centre there were already a lot of activities. People with pets coming into and leaving SBG, people waiting for friends, people coming for or leaving after a jog, people with strollers and children coming in and out.

I got into Casa Verde and ordered my late lunch. By this time, most people have probably finished their lunches, so the café was a little quiet. Somewhere on my left sat a Western woman and 2 children who have just finished their meal. The little boy was just outside the patio playing with his ball while the little girl just sat on the table opposite the woman, colouring on a colouring book. The woman sat there relaxingly and drank her coffee. After a while the woman gathered up her children, packed up and left. Sitting diagonally in front of her was 2 Western women dressed very neatly. Their attire looked like they came out of their working office rather than for a casual day out in a park. One was holding on to her blackberry the whole time and talking to the other woman intently. Somewhere on my right, sat a middle aged woman, a domestic helper and an elderly man in a wheelchair. The elderly man did not look very alert. He only looked around and did not seem able to talk. The entire time, it was only the middle aged woman talking to him or the domestic helper talking to him when she was feeding him something or cleaning his mouth etc.

Around this time, the rain came again. When before the rain, there were still people walking to and fro at the palm tree open area, but now, there were almost no one in sight in front of Casa Verde. Except the few people with umbrellas walking out of the park every once in a while. For the rest of the hour, I see almost no one walking into the park from the visitor centre. By the time the rain became a very light drizzle, I made a very tiring jog back to the Tanglin Core car park. On my way there, did not see many people, except at the National Orchid Garden.

---------------------------------------------------------------- 24th Jan 2011 END  -----------------------------------------------------------