

An exploration of the development of countryside leisure attitudes and behaviour from childhood: A photo based analysis.

Stephen Calver

Reader, Faculty of Management, Bournemouth University

Abstract

There is a need to better understand how attitudes towards countryside leisure are formed amongst a largely urban based UK population, in order that those responsible for the management of the countryside can more effectively anticipate future demand. This research uses a photo based analysis in order to elicit spontaneous reactions to images of countryside areas, in an attempt to understand what people recognize as countryside and where this understanding originates.

Background factors, specifically the role of socializing influences such as, family, peers, mass media and education are explored in order to identify the contribution they make to attitude formation regarding countryside leisure visits. The results provide useful guidance for those managing and planning the countryside and access to it. While the role of family influence in the early years of development and peer groups during adolescence is evident, there is also a significant group of countryside leisure visitors who developed their interest later in life from early adulthood onwards, without the early encouragement of family. The comprehensive and increasingly pervasive role of the mass media, during all life stages has grown in importance compared to family and peer group influences. However, the media representation of countryside as a leisure resource is balanced by its portrayal as an important resource to resolve pressing social issues such as housing, transport and energy infrastructure

needs. The shape of the countryside in the UK will be decided by the resolution of these often conflicting demands.

Introduction

The countryside appears to remain an important feature in the lives of many Britons (Natural England, 2009), even though less than 1% of the UK population has any direct involvement with it through employment or other economic activity (ONS, 2001). The importance of the countryside for leisure purposes has been identified in different surveys by the Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA, 2009). Surveys conducted by DEFRA in 2007 and 2009, confirmed the importance of accessible green space, with over two-thirds of respondents stating that it was 'very important' to have green spaces (including public gardens and parks) nearby.

Physical detachment from the countryside is manifested by an increasingly urbanized population, with alternative leisure options in the home or in the near vicinity (Antrop, 2004; Dempsey et al., 2012). While attachment to the countryside endures, actual engagement in the UK has been a fluctuating downward trend since 2005 (Natural England, 2009). Curry and Brown (2010) suggest that while the use of countryside for outdoor recreation is decreasing, outdoor recreation as a whole, possibly in urban environments, is increasing. Without direct, day to day, involvement with the countryside, these apparently incongruous trends are possibly influenced by current social and cultural memes, as well as earlier developmental processes forming attitudes towards countryside leisure behaviour.

Attitudes and behaviour

Central to an understanding of countryside leisure visit behaviour is a consideration of how that behaviour is formed and the processes that underlie it. This understanding is increasingly important for those involved with the planning and management of the countryside, as development pressures on countryside increase and largely urban based populations renegotiate their relationship with the countryside, in the context of competing alternatives for their leisure time (Williams and Shaw, 2009).

The theory relating to attitudes is a fundamental concept in understanding behaviour and a focus of research in the social sciences since the 1920's (McGuire, 1986). Attitudes represent summary evaluations of an object (Zanna and Rempel, 1988) or behaviour such as countryside visitation. The evaluative nature of attitudes and their significant relationship with behaviour is consistent with the definitions proposed by many researchers (Bohner and Wanke, 2002; Petty et al., 1997; Zanna and Rempel, 1988), thus:

'Attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour' (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993).

Eagly and Chaiken (1993) explained 'psychological tendency' as a type of bias that predisposes an individual toward evaluative responses, whether positive or negative. Responses can be grouped in a variety of ways, response to others, private responses, public responses and so on. The most accepted classification by social scientists, proposes that responses which express evaluation and therefore underlying attitudes, can be divided into three classes, affective (emotions), cognitive

(beliefs) or conative (behavioural), (Katz and Stotland, 1959; Rosenberg and Hovland, 1960).

These three response classes are not necessarily separable from each other, and any one of them may represent the primary response in a given situation (Bohner and Wanke, 2002). Researchers such as Eagly and Chaiken (1993) and Zanna and Rempel (1988) have concluded that attitudes can be formed on the basis of any one of the three types of processes. They have also emphasised the 'cooperative, synergistic relation to one another' (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993), to the extent that they impinge on each other in their influence upon attitudes.

One of the most frequently applied frameworks, used to understand the relationship between attitudes and the evaluative meaning of beliefs, is the expectancy-value model proposed by Fishbein (1967). The main proposition of this model is that an attitude is a function of beliefs, represented as the sum of the expected values of the attributes ascribed to an attitude object. The expectancy component is the considered probability that an attitude object possesses a certain attribute and the value component is the evaluation of the component. The use of expectancy-value models has been applied to decision making processes, (Abelson and Levi, 1985) and has been used in the field of environmental psychology. For instance, Staats et al. (2003) conducted research into attitudes towards the restorative effects of urban and rural environments and Fransson and Garling (1999) investigated attitudes towards protecting the environment using the expectancy value approach. The model has been criticised for assuming that beliefs are the determinants of attitudes (McGuire, 1986), ignoring the influence of emotions and the ambivalent nature of

some evaluations (Macnaghten, 1995) which cause actual behaviour to diverge from summated beliefs (Kaplan, 1972).

However, Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) provided one of the most systematic statements of the causal relationship between intention and actual behaviour. The assumption that people think and act in more or less logical ways is embedded in Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action and its successor the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1985, 1991). Attitudes are said to follow from the beliefs people hold about the object of the attitude, just as intentions and actions follow reasonably from attitudes.

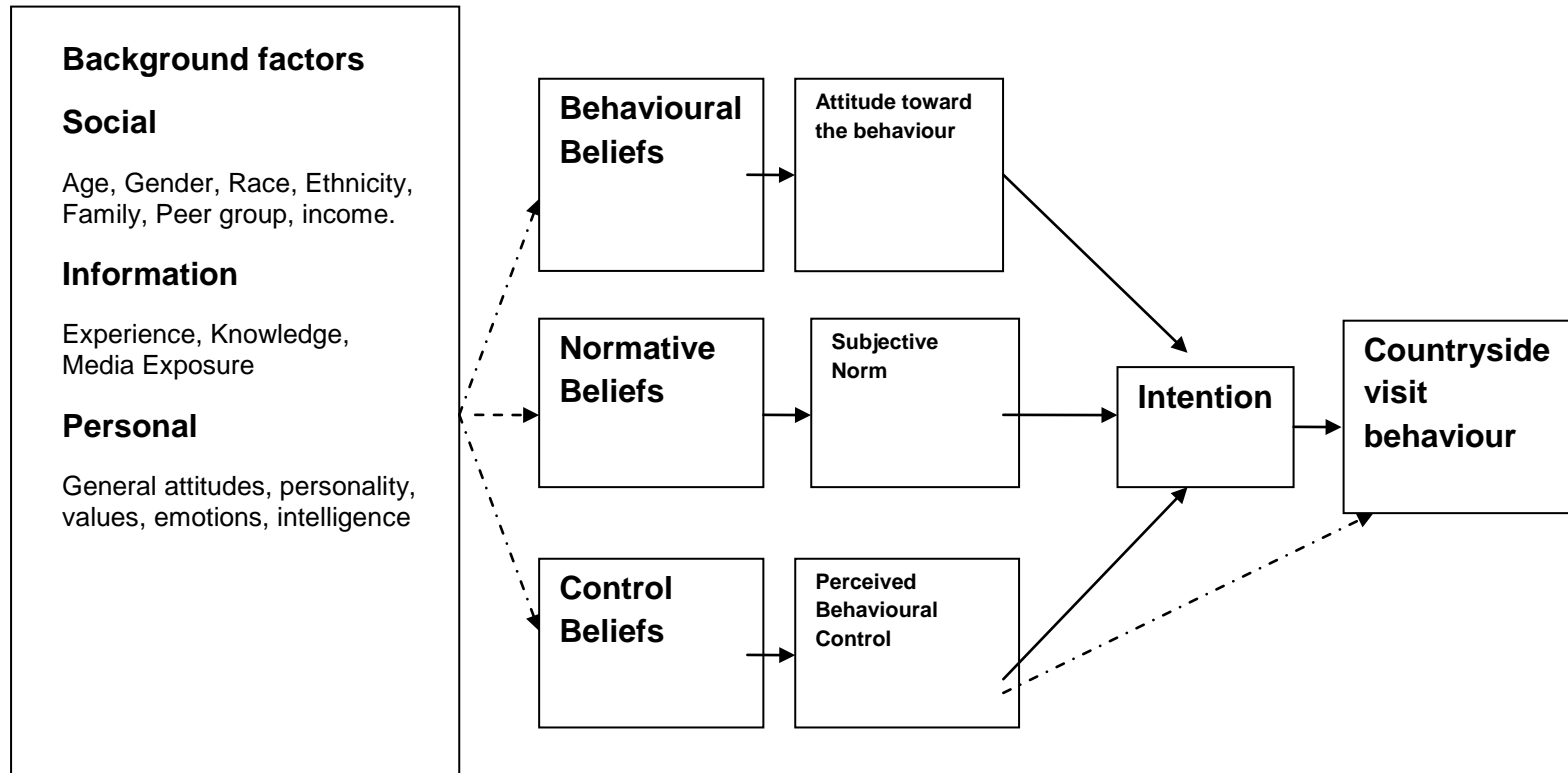
Various studies such as those undertaken by Ryan and Bonfield (1975), Bettman et al. (1975), Lam and Hsu (2004) and Agarwal and Malhotra (2005) have evaluated the model and concluded that measures of attitude (conative, affective and cognitive), provide a greater contribution to predictive ability than normative and compliance measures.

The theory of planned behaviour proposes that influences on behavioural beliefs and attitudes are modified by the social context of the individual and the willingness of the individual to comply with social norms (Normative Beliefs). Ajzen also suggests that people may behave contrary to their attitudes or display ambivalence, because of 'Control Beliefs'. For instance, even though an individual has a positive attitude toward the countryside, a perception that the social group, friends or family, have a negative regard may deter them from visiting.

Ajzen, (2005) has suggested a relationship, in the theory of planned behaviour, between socializing influences, as 'background factors,' and attitudes, behavioural, normative and control beliefs (Figure 2-1). However, the background factors are not

part of Ajzen's planned behaviour model; the dotted lines in the diagram indicate that although background factors may influence beliefs, the nature of the connection has not been fully established. The assumption is that the 'background factors' affect attitudes towards the behaviour and eventually, intentions and actions. In a similar fashion, general attitudes may also sometimes be found to exert an effect on normative or control beliefs and influence behaviour indirectly by changing subjective norms or perceptions of behavioural control.

Figure Error! No text of specified style in document.-1 The role of background factors, in the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen,I, 2005)



Development from childhood: Social norms and socialization

The role of social norms, acting as important moderating and developmental influences upon the evaluative nature of beliefs, affects and behaviours, has been discussed by many researchers, (Ajzen, 2005; Haustein et al., 2009; Hrubes et al., 2001; Sparks, 2007). The evolution of normative behaviour and beliefs, formed by socialization is also regarded as an enduring, life long process, influenced by parents, teachers, peers and siblings, schools, societies and the media, (Arnett, 1998; Fingerman and Pitzer, 2007; Grusec and Hastings, 2007) that equips individuals to work with, adapt and belong to social groups.

Socialization in the broadest terms refers to the way in which individuals are assisted to develop as members of one or more social groups. The process is seen as interactive, with new members of a group being selective in their acceptance of particular behaviours. In some circumstances interaction may result in the modification of the behaviour of older members (Grusec and Hastings, 2007). This interactive process is reflected in the definition of socialization by Zigler and Child (1969):

Socialization is a broad term for the whole process by which an individual develops, through transaction with other people, his specific patterns of socially relevant behaviour and experience.

The outcomes of the socialization process are also suggested by (Grusec and Hastings, 2007) in their definition as *'a variety of outcomes, including the acquisition of rules, roles, standards, and values across the social, emotional, cognitive, and personal domains.'*

Research from developmental psychology has indicated six domains of family interaction, which can theoretically influence a child, these are, physical development, emotional development, social development, cognitive development and cultural and aesthetic development (Landesman et al., 1991). The attitudes and values that parents display and represent, partly determines the extent to which children accept or reject them (Grusec and Hastings, 2007). Parents may also inculcate an interpretive framework, providing guidance on how to evaluate objects, situations or behaviour (Moschis, 1985; Ward, 1974) or they influence children indirectly, through parental behaviours which are observed and evaluated by the child (Landesman et al., 1991).

Beliefs surrounding leisure in general or relating to specific forms of activity (Hultsman, 1993; Orthner et al., 1994) which are established by parents during childhood, are particularly enduring. Kelly (1977) found that more than 60% of leisure activities engaged in during adulthood began with family during childhood. However research into the relative influence of early life socialization compared to later life socialization by McGuire et al. (1987) identified a divergence within leisure socialization models. One group within McGuire et al's (1987), sample population had learnt most of their leisure portfolio before the age of 18 and had added little after this age. A second group had developed most of their leisure portfolio after the age of 18 and their leisure life-style reflected change rather than continuity. McGuire et al (1987) provided evidence that leisure behaviour patterns established during adolescence are continued in later life. Approximately two thirds of the older adults in their study initiated 70% of their outdoor recreation activities before age 21.

The leisure visitors understanding of countryside

The lexicon surrounding discussion of the countryside is extensive, with terms often used interchangeably and with imprecision. The terms 'rural' and 'countryside' are frequently used to describe non-urban areas, with features that include open fields, broad vistas, historic, nucleated settlements and sparse populations. The experiential, psycho-social and sensory stimuli provided by these non-urban areas are also important features for visitors, implicit in the notion of 'sense of place' (Tuan, 1974). Urry (1990) emphasised the essentially visual nature of tourists consumption of places with his concept of the 'tourist gaze' and Agapito et al. (2014) discussed the sensory dimension of tourist experiences in rural Portugal. There is an extensive literature investigating human-environment relationships that seeks to explain the subjective experience of places. For instance the concepts of 'rurality' (Cloke, 2003; Halfacree, 1995) and 'sense of place' (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Tuan, 1974) respectively propose the meaning of what is rural and the emotional attachment to countryside. Stokols and Shumaker (1981) and Proshansky et al. (1983) provide good examples of the latter, investigating the interdependence of place and people to create identity and meaning. In this discourse, consideration of the factors that influence the behaviour of mainly urban based populations, towards the countryside, is limited while the focus on the relationship with the rural place is the main consideration.

The idea that 'sense of place' is a composite construct reflecting the tripartite structure of attitudes has been discussed by Jorgensen and Stedman (2006). In this proposition the notion that the countryside provides scope to know and understand (cognitive dimension) approximates to the construct of 'place identity' (Proshansky et al., 1983), the emotional attachment to special places (affective dimension)

approximates to 'place attachment' (Moore and Graefe, 1994) and the behaviour in and towards countryside locations (conative dimension) approximates to the concept of 'place dependence' (Stokols, and Shumaker, 1981).

The terms 'countryside' and 'rural' are often used synonymously where the countryside is regarded as an evocation and dimension of what is rural. The distinction and definition of these terms is often elusive, an issue discussed by Hall and Page (2014), who cited Walmsley (2003) and Bunce (1994), proposing that constructs of rurality are often based upon 'images of rusticity and the idyllic village life reinforced by the media.' Lane (1994), Roberts and Hall (2001) and Sharpley and Sharpley (1997) have commented on the difficulty of defining rural tourism, suggesting that what might be considered urban tourism can be located in a rural area.

Hall and Page (2014) argue that traditional approaches to rurality are becoming less meaningful. Discussing rurality from a leisure/tourism perspective, Hall and Page argue that research needs to recognise the essential qualities of what is rural and cite the diversity of approaches used by many researchers, who emphasise the concept of an urban-rural continuum as a means of establishing differing degrees of rurality and the essential qualities of 'ruralness'.

The definition of urban is as problematic as that of rural, with urban areas increasingly introducing aspects of the rural in the 'greening' of town and cityscapes, just as rural settlements develop urban infrastructure, in the form of new housing and industrial buildings on their periphery (Robinson, 1990). *'The delimitation between urban and rural becomes a difficult task involving a lot of uncertainty and it is very unlikely that land zoning borders remain a stable delineation'* (Antrop, 2004).

Despite the difficulties of defining rural tourism, Bramwell (1994) suggests that the concept of 'rural' is valid, as rural areas can have distinctive characteristics that result in social and economic interactions in the countryside.

Rural tourism has been defined by Lane (1994) simply as tourism that takes place in the countryside or a rural area, an approach supported by Keane (1992). Lane (1994) argues that rurality is the principal appeal and that as a concept can be connected to low population densities with open space and small scale settlements, generally with less than 10,000 inhabitants. In addition the land use is dominated by farming, forestry and natural areas. Societies tend to be traditionalist with a strong sense of the past. Government policies lean towards conservation rather than radical and rapid change.

Lane (1994) proposes that rural tourism in its purest form should be:

1. Located in rural areas
2. Functionally rural – built upon the rural world's special features of small-scale enterprise, open space, contact with nature and the natural world, heritage, 'traditional' societies and 'traditional' practices.
3. Rural in scale – both in terms of buildings and settlements – and therefore usually small-scale.
4. Traditional in character, growing slowly and organically and connected with local families. It will often be largely controlled locally and developed for the long term good of the area.
5. Of many different kinds, representing the complex pattern of rural environment, economy, history and location.

Methodology

The objective of this study is to identify the pre-determinants of attitudes towards leisure behaviour in the countryside. The methodology was designed with the intention of encouraging participants to provide responses which were not 'learnt' from stereotypical scenarios. For instance, if respondents were asked to describe favourite countryside places this may result in post-rationalised, reconstructed notions of locations and evaluations that may be perceived as being acceptable to the interviewer or facilitator.

Photo-elicitation has been used successfully as a research tool for many years, since Collier (1967) first proposed the technique to aid anthropological enquiry. It has been used to conduct research in a wide range of research areas including consumer behaviour, sports, tourism, landscape assessment and journalism,(Croghan et al., 2008; Curry, 1986; Garrod, 2007; Jenkins, 1999; Scott, 2002; Smith and Woodward, 1999).

The data collected is qualitative, using small groups of respondents and recorded responses to photographs of countryside locations that were, for the initial part of the discussion unidentified. The aim was to explore the themes and concepts that typified countryside leisure behaviour or non-behaviour using visual representations.

Interpretative methodologies have been used extensively for countryside and landscape research, (Burgess, 1989; Kneafsey, 2001; Oreszczyn and Lane, 2000; Scott, 2002; Sidaway, 1990) in various contexts. Burgess used qualitative techniques to examine the role of mass media in the consumption of the natural environment, Kneafsey examined the commodification of the countryside, Oreszczyn

and Lane investigated the meaning of hedgerows in the landscape, Scott and Sidaway conducted research into the public perception of landscape values.

Appreciation of and engagement with the countryside is predominantly visual (Reis and Shelton, 2011; Urry, 1990) and representation and discussion of countryside will usually involve references to scenery and the emotional effect of it on the observer. Countryside research techniques that involve visual representations represent a means of artificially reproducing some of this visual – emotional – cognitive spontaneity that arises from the human-natural environment interaction. The use of photographs can help to prompt memories and associations that may otherwise be overlooked as the participant is removed from the context of the topic (Harper, 2002).

In addition, the use of visual prompts such as photographs can help to reduce interviewer fatigue (Collier, 1967) and improve the rapport between the facilitator and participants in interview or focus group situations (Clarke-Ibanez, 2004).

Photo elicitation has been used in a number of studies exploring the relationships with the natural environment and destinations.

Garrod, (2007) used photo-elicitation techniques in order to explore the perceptions of residents and tourists of a Welsh seaside resort, (Kyle and Chick, 2007) investigated the social construction of a sense of place, Loeffler (2004) conducted research into the meanings of outdoor adventure experiences Chronis (2012) examined the relationship between the history of Gettysburg as place and tourism imagery and Caton and Almeida Santos (2007) explored the emotional associations of Route 66 in the U.S.A. using photo-elicitation methods.

The photo elicitation method can either use images selected by the researcher in order to assess the response to certain criteria, for instance, modern development in a rural area, or specific viewpoints. Alternatively a more participant driven approach can be adopted in which images selected by the participants are used and form the basis of the interviews (Harper, 2002). The former approach may be criticised for constraining the spontaneity and intuitive responses of participants thus compromising some of the advantages of this method of research. However, there are also obvious, potential problems with the participant led approach. Notably, some participants may not possess photographic equipment or take photographs on their excursions into the countryside. Also, photographs taken specifically for the purposes of the discussion may not be a true reflection of personal preference but a composition to be viewed by an audience and include references that may distract other participants, for instance, the people and events represented in the photograph.

In order to explore the background to countryside leisure attitudes the researcher wanted a representation of different types of countryside and an indication of how urban dwellers responded to these different representations. Thus the images had to include a continuum of vistas from views that most people would agree portray a countryside area, to those which perhaps were less clear-cut, for instance a country park around a mansion property or a small area of open land, close to or in an urban area. Images supplied by the researcher have been used in similar studies, notably Choi et al. (2007) studying the destination image on the web, various case studies discussed by Harper, (2002), in a review of photo-elicitation techniques and

Coeterier (1996) researching the attributes that visitors used to assess Dutch landscape.

The photographs used in this study represented a hypothetical journey from countryside in the vicinity of urban areas to open countryside characterized by vistas without large scale evident habitation or industrial, reflecting the urban-rural continuum discussed by researchers such as Lane, (1994).

Locations and photographs

The set of photographs prepared for the research (Figs 1-1 to 1-5) represented the countryside types that may be encountered from an urban centre, through peripheral areas to open countryside. The countryside types are described below and include open space near urban settings and natural areas, public open spaces adjacent but not integral to urban areas including local authority managed parks.

1. Natural areas adjacent to urban or suburban settlements, providing mainly local amenity;
2. Archaic settlements, historic structures, archaeology in extensive countryside;
3. Extensive natural areas in open countryside usually over 10 km from the perimeter of the nearest significant urban area (+ 50,000 population). The natural area should include notable features, for instance, viewpoints, woodland, rivers and other natural features;
4. Extensive natural areas in open countryside with coastline, usually over 10 km from the perimeter of the nearest significant urban area.

For each category, one A4 sized photograph was produced with up to five supplementary A5 photographs for each category showing different aspects of the area in the main photograph. All of the photographs were taken specifically for this study.

At the end of the discussion small sections of Ordnance Survey maps were shown to indicate the location of the areas on display in relation to main roads and population centres. The location of the places included in the images was not described until the end of the session in order to elicit a more spontaneous response and minimise the 'branding effect' caused by tourism marketing and other literature (Urry, 1990).

Figure 1-1 Photograph series 1 - Countryside adjacent to urban development SZ 030949



Figure 1-2 Photographs series 2 -Parkland to country house SZ991931



Figure 1-3 Photographs series 3 - Historic village, archaic buildings SZ960821



Figure 1-4 Photographs series 4 - Open countryside with features SZ031822



Figure 1-5 Photographs series 5 - Coastal locations SZ879785



Discussion group composition and conduct.

Data are derived primarily from forty two participants, attending six group discussions, over one year during 2010. A group size of five or six participants gave the best results, allowing plenty of time for each participant to explain their interpretation of the photographs.

Participants were recruited from the general population to be broadly representative by age, gender and social class by occupation. Recruitment was conducted in urban areas of Bournemouth and Poole, in order to recruit participants whose experience of the countryside was not derived first hand through employment or residence. Final group composition included a majority of urban dwellers, with only two participants living in the countryside both of whom worked in conurbations nearby. None of the participants were employed directly in agricultural or rural activities.

A series of questions were constructed for use with the photographs. The main questions are described as follows and these led to other subsidiary questions as the responses evolved:

- 'To me visiting this place would mean' (Photographs).
- 'Are there any personal feelings that you associate with this type of area?' (affective and evaluative).
- 'Are there any features of the countryside that you can see in the photographs that make it particularly attractive/unattractive to you?' (cognitive
- 'Where do you think your beliefs about the countryside and visiting it came from.'
- Can you recall any stories, films or TV programmes that had a strong sense of the countryside, for instance as a location. Examples of films and books as prompts if necessary.

Greater depth of discussion was obtained by asking participants to make comparisons between the countryside areas in the photographs; 'how would you describe your feelings about this place compared to'. Coeterier, (1996) used a similar approach basing his research upon a 'user-dependent' landscape assessment method previously developed by Penning-Rowell (1982) where respondents have opportunities to express their ideas and feelings in partially structured group interviews.

Results

The following results were obtained from the discussion groups responding to the photographs and the interpretation of other participants. The comments included are representative of substantive themes that emerged during the sessions.

Photographs – series 1 – countryside adjacent to urban development

Heath at Canford Bottom, at the edge of the conurbation of Poole with visible modern housing at the perimeter.

The results suggested that the location shown 'lacked atmosphere' and for many participants it did not meet the expectations of a leisure trip to the countryside. The location was recognised as having value, somewhere that offered amenity, walking the dog, jogging, cycling or other forms of physical exercise and that it possessed some aesthetic value for the people living close to it. There was no sense that this was a 'special' place or that it offered 'sense of place' and there was a distinction between countryside that offered opportunity for a range of sensory and emotional experience and countryside that was more limited in its scope.

'It doesn't look particularly inviting; I certainly wouldn't go out of my way to visit. It may be ok for walking the dog, going for a jog or something like that.'

It isn't particularly inspiring, doesn't have the feel-good factor but it's OK for a breath of fresh air'

The proximity of modern housing in the photograph prompted a discussion of priorities for the countryside amongst some participants. There were divergent viewpoints on the use of countryside near conurbations and transport routes for building and development including wind turbines and solar energy 'farms'.

Some participants felt that development should be a priority and that the countryside was over-romanticised, others emphasised the need for recreation and leisure away from urban development. There was quite a widespread view that agriculture was still the primary purpose of the countryside and that this was a significant component of the interest of country areas lacking in the photograph.

Photographs – series 2 – Parkland

Upton House country Park, local authority owned house and park on the edge of Poole conurbation and Poole Harbour.

This location prompted quite a lot of discussion about what constituted countryside. The consensus overall was that this did represent countryside because even though it was an area contained within clearly defined boundaries and there was clear evidence of man-made development, it contained aspects of the natural environment that were considered important by the participants, open space, freedom to roam, free entry, interesting views, some stimulation for the imagination and the location specific aspect of security. The results indicated a limited emotional response to this type of setting.

‘Well if I was planning a trip to the countryside I don’t think I would automatically think of this type of location but, I suppose, depending on the circumstances, I may choose to visit this place. I would say it is a good alternative to visiting the countryside but, there again, I suppose if there is open space and some views that is the countryside’.

This type of location was considered particularly suitable for family outings with young children and animals because of the relative security of the environment.

Photographs – series 3 – Historic village setting

Corfe Castle village, street of historic houses looking toward the Purbeck Ridge.

Even though this was a photograph of a street of houses with a glimpse of a hill in the background, the results indicate a strong conviction that this represented countryside, or a composite part of what may be considered countryside. The discussion tried to resolve why there was equivocation categorizing parkland in the previous photograph as countryside but relative agreement that historic buildings in a small settlement were more clearly identified as countryside. There was no agreement on the size of an historic settlement before it ceased to be countryside and reference was made to the term ‘country towns’ which implied a conflation of larger rural settlements with archaic buildings with the countryside as one entity.

Underlying the evaluation of these three photographs was a consideration of the relative emotional (affective) aesthetic impact of man-made development whether historic or modern.

‘Well it’s obvious to me (why is photograph of a street considered as countryside), one of the reasons you visit the countryside is to take in a

view, get you back to your roots, no, it's not escapism, it's not romantic, you are connecting with who you are, where you came from, its common to all of us – the countryside consists of woods, rivers, hills *and* historic buildings.'

'Even if you decide to visit a village or somewhere like that, you have to drive through the countryside and when you arrive you can usually walk out from the village to the countryside or at least see it and enjoy a view of the countryside from it. They are one and the same thing, it's the same experience.'

There was a strong reaction from several participants to the notion that leisure in the countryside was an escapist adventure driven by an over-romanticised idea of what the countryside actually was. Several people in separate groups gave similar responses, that the countryside was an extension of themselves and a means of understanding more about their shared past and their current circumstances .

Photographs – series 4 – Open countryside with features

Footpath to Agglestone Rock, Studland, Purbeck. A path through woods.

The first photograph in this series included a wooded path; subsequent photographs in this series included a river, a distinctive landmark (Agglestone Rock) and view of hills.

The results indicated a strong appreciation of these various components as countryside without the equivocation and discussion around definition that was prompted by the previous photographs. It was apparent that the first two

categories of photographs were considered controversial because they lacked a strong affective component, and the cognitive component was also weak. The first photograph provided scope for physical exercise and dog walking, strong conative features, the second photograph of parkland encouraged a weak cognitive response, although there were features which stimulated knowledge and understanding, there was also a weak affective response, participants did not feel emotionally engaged with the location and the conative response was constrained to social and young family oriented activities.

The third series of photographs of the historic village in a country setting had a stronger response in all three categories but the cognitive response was compromised by the mitigated natural environment within a man-made context.

The fourth series with ostensibly natural components received stronger responses in cognitive, affective and conative categories. Participants had knowledge of this environment and were receptive to new understanding of it; their expectation was primed for this cognitive experience. The emotional response was strong; participants identified with these locations and these components of countryside, tapping deep into a lexicon that described how they felt in this type of location.

The explanation of conative or behavioural responses in these countryside settings was also a lot more varied. Previous series of photographs caused clear conative orientated responses, 'this is a good place for jogging', 'it's a good dog walking area from home', 'it would be good for families with young children', 'when its wet it may be a good place to go for a walk and a cup of tea'.

With the purely countryside settings there was a greater sense of belonging and ownership of the experience and the emotional connection was far more intense and personal. The response was a more comprehensive representation of the tripartite structure of sense of place suggested by Jorgensen and Stedman (2001, 2006).

‘A walk in a place like that lifts me up, I feel relaxed, preoccupied with the trees, plants, the viewpoints – a place like that does take you out of yourself, just for a while.’

‘When I visit somewhere like that I am always torn, I enjoy a walk but I could happily just sit by the river all afternoon enjoying the peace but then I would feel guilty when I got home.’

Photographs – series 5 – Coastal locations

View from Tyneham Cap, Purbeck, looking westwards towards Worbarrow Bay and Lulworth Cove.

This series of photographs generated the most intense, personal responses and expressed preferences for this type of countryside location. Other locations were shown which were, Studland Beach, Purbeck and Swanage Beach, Purbeck. The former is a very popular beach; it has various visitor facilities, a pub and a small adjacent village, extensive dunes and a hinterland of heathland and woods. Swanage is a small resort town but has easy access to cliffs and downland. All of the coastal locations mentioned are part of the eastern end of the Jurassic Coast, a UNESCO World Heritage Site designation.

While woods and rivers were rated as desirable components of countryside in the previous series of photographs, the sea and proximity to it were rated as the most desirable components for a visit to the natural environment but were often not categorized as a 'countryside visit' unless prompted. The explanations associated with this view drew on cognitive, affective and conative responses. Participants often had knowledge about the sea and understanding of it which was categorized differently to their knowledge and understanding of the wider countryside. There was usually strong personal identification with both but they were regarded separately.

'I've always talked about the coast as a separate trip to countryside, I think most people do. If you say that you have been to the coast people can picture a certain type of day-out compared to the countryside I don't know; people always refer to coast and countryside don't they [This was in response to a prompt from the facilitator asking why the participant referred to a trip to the coast in a different context to countryside].

There was also a strong environmental theme which was muted in other photographic series. This may have been a result of local reporting and publicity about coastal erosion and the information provided at some of the locations about the cause and effects of coastal erosion. There has also been a great deal of local and national publicity about the Jurassic Coast which may have heightened awareness of environmental issues.

There were references to the emotional appeal of the sea, the sensory impact, the views looking out to sea and along the coast were all prominent factors in creating a more intense emotional response to this type of countryside. The activities and

behaviour were similar to other country contexts with the obvious exception of beach based activities such as bathing.

Origin of beliefs about the countryside

The discussion was loosely structured around attitude constructs, 'where did your knowledge and understanding of the countryside come from?' (cognitive), 'How do think your feelings about the countryside evolved?' (affective), 'What experiences do you think encouraged these feelings (conative)?', 'What activities, interests do you personally associate with leisure trips to the countryside?'

Early emotional responses to the countryside were often connected to family members or carers who demonstrated their own positive or negative response to countryside. References to parents or carers encouraging interest or demonstrating their own interest, often involved exposure to books, films, stories and illustrations which seemed to have a significant effect on the emotional responses. One participant described how the prints of fairy pictures and illustrations by Cicely Mary Barker were hung around her room at home and created an 'atmosphere' about the countryside when she visited that remained with her to the present.

'My parents were the main inspiration for my interest, not in a particularly obvious way, they weren't enthusiasts they just enjoyed taking us out in to the countryside. By countryside I don't just mean the open fields and woodlands; we would visit villages, country towns, historic properties and so on which invariably would involve visits to more open areas as well'

The results indicated that the early years of childhood were often seen as the happiest for many participants and these positive feelings were often entwined with memories of family outings to the countryside, school trips, harvest festivals, nature

rambles and the extensive inclusion of topics at school about the natural environment, which encouraged pupils to collect their own examples, a task invariably undertaken with family members. There was evidence to suggest that positive or negative emotions from early years' development seemed to have an enduring impact on later interest in countryside visits.

'I really loved all that stuff about fairies and goblins when I was a child but when you hit the teenage years you have to drop all that and rage against global warming and pollution while insisting your Dad drives you round the corner to your friend's house. I never lost the feeling though and sometimes think of the fairies when I visit a bluebell wood or something
Bit daft really.'

During adolescence the influence of peer groups became pre-eminent and the emotional response of these groups to the natural environment seemed to reinforce or stymie interest in the countryside that had formed during childhood. The role of personal choice, during adolescence, in the decision to engage with the countryside was apparent in the results regardless of peer influences. Strong emotional bonds formed during childhood were often maintained regardless of peer influence, through means of membership of clubs and associations or with the support of family.

The emotional response to the countryside appears to be multi-faceted during adulthood, sustained by literature, film, documentaries, art and connection with the natural world, either directly for instance the ownership of pets or animals, or indirectly through courses of formal study or membership of associations and societies.

If encouragement was absent at home the influence of formal education also appeared to be limited and vice versa and media influence appeared to have a disproportionate influence in these circumstances.

‘Our household was a bit chaotic; it was just my Mum and my brothers and sisters. Mum worked most of the time and we organised ourselves when we were children, mainly around the telly and we had a lot of videos, Walt Disney mainly. My brother and I developed an interest in the countryside even though it was difficult for us to get out of town. When we were older we would go on adventures and now we spend a lot of time on country visits’

Peers and media including fiction and non-fiction literature were also often mentioned as increasingly important during adolescence.

‘I remember going on a school trip when I was about twelve, the other children were messing around but I was really interested in the bird feathers that were lying around. When I got home I started looking them up, I don’t remember anybody influencing me, although my Mum encouraged me and I took an interest in related TV programmes but that expedition did kick start a lifelong interest in wildlife and the countryside.’

Younger participants were disproportionately influenced by media compared older participants regarding parental influence:

‘ I’m not sure what you mean by media, I don’t watch the TV that much, neither do my friends, maybe movies and some chat shows, I use the Internet a lot for information or social media, if I need to know something I

can ask my friends anytime. I like to go to the beach and the coast generally, the countryside is not somewhere I visit much or is that important to me or my friends , I'm glad it's there maybe I will take an interest later'

This was a sentiment expressed by several younger participants; the role of the media; television and the Internet in particular, were cited as important agents in the provision of knowledge about the countryside in the absence of other influences. The results also suggested the growing influence of the Internet in providing information about locations and activities, such as geocaching and off road cycling.

Many participants explained that interest in the countryside only evolved during early adulthood or later because there was little encouragement from parents and carers earlier in their development. For some reason many of the participants describing this experience also developed an interest in sustainable life styles, including growing your own food and an interest in how food was produced and distributed. Awareness of local food production and organic products was also an aspect of the discussions in the groups. Specific programmes on television, the Internet and, for some, higher education provided knowledge and understanding of countryside.

'My interest in the countryside only developed in my early twenties. Our parents didn't really have any interest and didn't encourage us in any way but I watched nature programmes on TV and children's stories always seemed to be located in the countryside. It was only when I left home and got some wheels that I started to get more involved with the countryside. I'm not a hobbyist or anything, I wouldn't know a duck from wood pigeon, I love a ramble though; maybe with a pub at the end'

Learning and understanding were still important motivators for countryside leisure visits either as a principal motivation, for instance, to help with school projects or a subsidiary motivation while engaged in some other activity such as walking.

The results indicated that participants engaged in countryside behaviour on any particular occasion for a combination of cognitive and affective based processes. Taking the dog for a walk is an instrumental behaviour, largely cognitive based although ownership of the dog could be motivated by an emotional connection with the countryside and a desire to engage with it in a specific way. A trip to the countryside for a walk may have a conative component, for instance physical exercise, but the affective based motivation, the desire to be in a special place that stirs the imagination may be extremely strong as well.

The results suggested that when the decision was made to visit the countryside, either individually or as a group, the discussion tended to focus on the activity, the length of the journey to the destination, the length and difficulty of the walk or other activity, availability of refreshments, car parks and so on. There was often little discussion of the affective components of the behaviour other than key aspects of the location, 'the views are spectacular', 'the woodland is beautiful, very peaceful.' It was acknowledged by some participants that the affective, emotional aspects of the place were, however, the most important but very personal. The physical exercise and refreshment aspects of the expedition to the countryside could be achieved much closer to home but the experiential aspects could not be replicated there.

There were moderating and control influences exerted on individual decisions by the social group of which they were a part but these were often occasion specific:

‘Most of my friends will happily come out for a walk in the countryside no matter what the weather but if we visit some of my husband’s friends we just accept that this will not happen, which can be a bit frustrating sometimes, particularly if the weather is good’

There was also evidence of an internal control mechanism which involved broader social issues, regulating attitudes towards the countryside however; it was difficult to determine the overall influence of this control mechanism on behaviour:

‘I think it’s possible to over-romanticise the countryside, I enjoy living in town and I really wouldn’t want to move to the countryside, I like to visit it, it makes me feel good but we need land to build houses, improve roads and build sustainable energy for the future, we shouldn’t forget that.’

The often complex relationship between the cognitive and the affective, the pragmatic and the emotional did not appear to be resolved by the individual until later adulthood. The results seemed to indicate that young adults start the process of evaluating cognitive and affective responses towards countryside behaviour from their childhood and adolescence experiences and the process continues through adulthood within a social context but influenced significantly by the cultural and media *milieu*. The influence of work place social groups, hobbies and interests was also evident from the results, these changed over time as complex patterns of interaction emerged during adulthood. For instance, some participants explained that a change of work introduced the idea of countryside involvement. One example cited a change to a job where there was an ethos of encouraging sport and exercise which led him to join an off-road cycling club connected to work, which involved trips to the countryside.

Discussion

The important role of parents and peers in the development of leisure patterns both in childhood and adolescence has been discussed by various researchers (Hultsman, 1993; Kelly, 1977; McGuire et al., 1987; Orthner et al., 1994). The research results confirm this phenomenon but identify two distinctive patterns of development.

There appeared to be one group of respondents who had learned their leisure behaviour during childhood and adolescence and another who developed their interest from early adulthood. Raymore et al. (1995) and Scott and Willits (1989) discussed the changing role of socializing influences with parental influence declining in adolescence as peer groups, formal education and work place social groups grow in influence (Rubin et al., 1998). It was apparent from the results that the mass media seems to play a disproportionate role in the socialization process during all of the various life stages of the individual, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. This phenomenon appeared to be more pronounced than has been previously identified by researchers such as Huesmann (2005) and Vandewater et al. (2006). During childhood and adolescence, media exposure tempers and forms attitudes towards the countryside in parallel with parental influence but from early adulthood, the mass media becomes the main socializing influence as individuals seek to manage their understanding and knowledge of the countryside with the feelings and emotions towards it. While the mass media, represented in this current research by children's stories, television, film and press and the Internet, exert a significant and ongoing influence on the development of attitudes, the role of family and friends continues to act as a control mechanism on countryside visit decisions in a manner suggested by Azjen (2005 and Rubin et al., (2006).

The role of mass media influencing countryside leisure behaviour

Countryside as a cultural construct, influenced by the mass media has been examined by several authors and researchers including Cloke and Milbourne (1992) who made a distinction between the local experience of the rural life in Wales and the circulated images in the national media. Cloke (2003) has suggested a relationship between the media and perceptions of the countryside but implies a rather negative effect of countryside representations in the mass media. Cloke refers to 'brainwashing' suggesting involuntary responses, involving a radical change in beliefs and values, without the moderating influences of support networks, such as parents or peers but there appeared little evidence for this from the research. Phillips et al. (2001) determined a more nuanced effect of media on understanding of the countryside for which there was evidence from this research. The term 'mediated representations of rurality', was used by Phillips et al (2001) to explore how the media conveys a sense of the countryside to those who have little direct experience of it. The conclusion reached, suggested that the media, represented by fictional TV programmes do enact idyllic constructions of rurality but that understanding of the countryside was not simply reduced to this.

Phillips et al (2001) conclude that the influence of televised representations of the countryside may be part of a cyclical process where the adult audience, already socialized into accepted cultural representations of the countryside expect to see these representations in any televisual output. Phillips et al (2001), propose that the audience is not necessarily uncritical of these representations seeing them as escapist or aspirational rather than real. These cultural representations may reinforce existing positive or negative attitudes towards the countryside rather than change attitudes or persuade.

Horton (2008) discussed early exposure to rural themes in his analysis of a popular children's television programme, Postman Pat. The use of a strong rural theme as a backdrop and as part of the main narrative is just one example of the early cultural exposure of children in the UK, Europe and the USA to rural themes creating attitudes and beliefs about the countryside that Phillips et al (2001) suggest are reinforced by later exposure to adult programmes.

The evidence from this research suggests that the pervasive nature of mass media is making a significant contribution to the development of attitudes challenging the traditional role of parents and carers. Several researchers have identified the fact that the role of the mass media has become more significant in the socialization process as it expands and evolves (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Rideout, 2016). This is evident from the increase in the amount of time that all ages spend interacting with media and the greater interconnectivity of the various media platforms used (OFCOM, 2009).

Countryside as a leisure setting

The definition of countryside and the distinction between rural and urban has proved problematic (Antrop, 2004; Hall and Page, 2014) and Swanwick (2009) has recommended a visitor based approach when trying to understand attitudes towards the countryside. The results of this research suggest that countryside provides different contexts for leisure experiences. The visitor based definitions strongly reflected the urban-rural continuum and criteria for defining countryside suggested by Lane (1994) and others.

Types of countryside defined by visitors include:

- Areas near urban development – considered suitable for physical exercise, e.g. dog walking.
- Accessible parkland near urban areas – considered suitable for family recreation.
- Archaic small settlements – villages in rural settings, possibly small market towns, with easy access to the countryside and countryside views.
Comprehensive leisure opportunities, intellectual, emotional stimulation.
- Open countryside – predominantly the natural environment with natural components, woods, rivers, hills, vistas, evidence of archaeology and historic structures, agriculture. Comprehensive opportunities for leisure opportunities, scope for spiritual enrichment.
- Coastal – beaches with small settlements, resort town with access to the countryside, cliffs and coastal vistas – reported as the preferred countryside context satisfying intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs.

Dimensions of the visitor relationship with countryside

The physical attributes of the countryside, woods, rivers and hills represent the tangible dimensions of the visitor experience (Glyptis, 1981). However, there are also more profound, intangible, meanings that the countryside holds for visitors, which were confirmed by the current research. The generic term for the emotional bond with place is widely accepted as 'sense of place' (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001; Kyle and Chick, 2007). The current research confirmed the importance of countryside locations as a means of defining personal identity, a phenomenon described by Proshansky et al. (1983) as 'place identity'. The emotional bond with countryside, which was also evident from the research reflects the notion of place attachment (Moore and Graefe, 1994), which is described as an experience based

emotional bond between a person and place. The more behavioural and activity based dimensions of sense of place have been defined as 'place dependence' (Stokols and Shumaker, 1981) and is conceptualized as the opportunities a setting provides for the achievement of goals and pursuit of activities.

Respectively the three place dimensions, place identity, attachment and dependence, may be regarded as cognitive, affective and conative responses, (Jorgensen, and Stedman, 2006), which can provide evidence of underlying attitudes towards specific behaviours arising from a sense of place.

Much of the literature and discussion of sense of place understandably has a focus upon human interaction with specific places however, attitudes can also be directed towards composite constructs, such as the countryside (Eagly, and Chaiken, 1993, Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975; Rosenberg, and Hovland, 1960). However it was evident from the research that the construct of countryside meaning to individuals may vary, depending upon landscape preferences, social interaction with special places, interests and beliefs.

The factors that give rise to these beliefs and their meaning have been discussed by Jepson, and Sharpley (2014). In their view cultural understanding of the terrain (Gieryn, 2000), the multiple landscapes or visit areas embodied in a specific location because of different cultural understanding (Greider and Garkovich, 1994) and people's experience of the place combined with the social context of that experience (Jepson, and Sharpley, 2014) are the three components that give rise to the significance of rural places to tourists and residents.

Leisure visitor relationships with the countryside, evident from the discussion groups, can be summarised as:

- Personal identification and attachment – the countryside as an extension of the individual, a sense of belonging and connection to it.
- Learning and understanding – understanding personal and social history, learning about nature and agriculture.
- Normative behaviour – the influence of family and friends on leisure behaviour in the countryside.
- Exercise and wellbeing – types of activity undertaken for physical wellbeing.
- Control factors – ease of access, parking, the weather.
- Countryside utility – understanding the pressures upon the countryside for infrastructure, houses and energy needs.
- Countryside aspirations – increasing engagement with the countryside, habitation, life-style and conservation.

Attitudes towards countryside visit behaviour

The results from the current research suggest that the affective domain has a strong influence upon most decisions regarding countryside leisure behaviour. Even routine dog walking or exercise regimes involve choices about the location for these activities which were often directed by preferences for locations with some emotional attachment. However, the three response classes, cognitive, affective and conative, are not necessarily separable from each other, and any one of them may represent the primary response in a given situation (Bohner and Wanke, 2002, Eagly and Chaiken, 1993).

Summary

This research set out to explore the socializing influences upon countryside leisure behaviour in the context of fluctuating, declining visit trends but continued emotional attachment to the countryside. The results confirmed the important role of parents and carers providing early inspiration for countryside attachment and visit behaviour but identified the important and increasing role of mass media as a pervasive influence, challenging the traditional role family influence upon behaviour. There was evidence that groups who had received no parental encouragement for countryside engagement developed interest from the media and non-family social groups. It was also apparent from the research that the over romanticised notion of countryside sometimes attributed to visitors was not an accurate representation. Participants often recognised the countryside as part of their personal identity but did not necessarily have unrealistic expectations of it. There was also a significant view emerging from the discussions that a more pragmatic approach should be adopted generally. This viewpoint identified the countryside as an important resource to alleviate and resolve some of the pressing social issues, also widely reported in the media, such as housing, transport and energy infrastructure. Thus while the media does have a significant role in forming attachment to the countryside it may also play an important part in causing disengagement and erosion of the attachment traditionally associated with it.

Information sheet for photo discussion group attendees.

Contact Stephen Calver, Project Co-ordinator, School of Tourism, Bournemouth University, Talbot Campus, Poole, BH12 5BB -Tel 01202 961378 Email scalver@bournemouth.ac.uk

Nature and purpose of the research

The aim of study is to improve understanding of attitudes towards visiting the countryside for leisure purposes. This research is part of a programme managed by the School of Tourism at Bournemouth University This research is trying to identify what the countryside means to people, if it has any relevance at all to their lives or leisure time choices and where beliefs about the countryside originate.

This research is intended to improve management of the countryside for visitors and to try and engage more people, including those who currently visit only infrequently or not at all. .

The discussion group

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a discussion group, if you decide at any stage you do not want to take part or you cannot attend for any reason we would be grateful if you could let us know. We will contact you shortly with the dates and locations of the discussion groups. The groups consist of up to eight people and they are very informal.

There will be a short introduction, repeating the issues contained in this information sheet and specific topics about countryside beliefs and behaviour will be introduced for the group to consider and discuss. In order to provide a focus for discussion photographs of country locations will be shown to you and we will ask you to comment on them.

Ideally there should be very little input from the organiser, having introduced the topic and the photographs the group are relatively free to contribute as they wish. The organiser may explore comments and introduce questions for clarification during the discussion but will generally try not to intervene. IF AT ANY STAGE DURING THE DISCUSSION YOU FEEL UNCOMFORTABLE AND DO NOT WISH TO PARTICIPATE YOU ARE FREE TO LEAVE.

Duration of the discussion group.

The discussion should not last more than 1.5 hours, there are refreshments (tea, coffee, biscuits) available for the duration of the discussion. If you have any special requirements please let us know beforehand.

Recording and use of the discussion materials

No recording equipment will be used during the discussion, there will be one or two researchers in the room making notes, no names will be used or recorded only the number in front of you. If you leave the table for refreshments etc. please make sure you return to the same seat and number.

Use of the information collected

The notes from the different discussion groups (six are planned) will be compiled, the comments recorded will be anonymous and we will be trying to identify themes that are occurring in all of the groups and specific points that are relevant but mentioned by only one or two people. You will not be contacted again about this research and your personal details (address, telephone number) will be destroyed once the notes have been compiled. If you wish to find out how the information collected has been used please feel free to telephone or email any of the contacts included on this sheet.

The information will be compiled into an academic thesis and may be used for other academic purposes, for instance teaching or academic articles. No personal details will be included or retained in any form.

Thank you

As a small token of our appreciation for your time and contribution to this research we will provide you with a Marks and Spencer gift token to the value of £20, we will also cover travel expenses to and from the venue for the discussion, please submit tickets for public transport or an estimate of mileage which will be paid at £0.50p a mile.

Photo-elicitation group questionnaire

Countryside Leisure Research

Thank you for your interest in our research project, your contribution will assist in a greater understanding of the way people think about and use the countryside during their leisure time. It would be very helpful if you could provide some details below to help us to make sure that we have included a range of views about countryside leisure and understand the information collected during the discussion. ONCE WE HAVE CONFIRMED YOUR ATTENDANCE THE PERSONAL DETAILS ON THE SLIP ATTACHED TO THIS QUESTIONNAIRE WILL BE DESTROYED AND NO RECORD KEPT.

1. **Are you a member of a club or group that regularly visits the countryside? For instance ramblers, off road cyclists, bird watchers and so on.**

Yes_ No_ If yes please specify which organisation(s) _____

2. **Do you pay a subscription for membership of any conservation or environmental organisation for instance, The Woodland Trust, The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, The National Trust.**

Yes_ No_

3. **Do you own a dog which is housed at your home?**

Yes_ No_

4. **Approximately how far from your home is the nearest countryside area that you can visit?**

- Less than 1 mile _
- 1-5 miles _
- More 5 miles _

5. **Approximate age**

- 16-24 _
- 25-34 _
- 35-55 _
- 65+ _

6. **Gender** Male_ Female_

7. **Do you have children living at home? Yes_ No_**

8. **How frequently do you visit the countryside in your leisure time?**

- Very frequently _
- Frequently _
- Occasionally _
- Not at all

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