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Toward an Understanding of Seasonality: A Study of Seasonal Visitation to Fort Edmonton Park

by

Gary Patrick Hickey 

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation

Edmonton, Alberta

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University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled Toward an Understanding of Seasonality: A Study of Seasonal Visitation to Fort Edmonton Park submitted by Gary Patrick Hickey in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Thomas L. Burton
for Dr. Thomas D. Hinch

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Dr. Edgar L. Jackson

A Finn
Dr. Adam Finn

Date: April 14, 1998

DEDICATION

To my partner, best friend, and love of my life. It's been a fantastic journey. Thank you so much for your constant love and support. And thank you for your patience. You have made the last five years so genuinely worthwhile. I love you, Lisa.

ABSTRACT

Despite the concern expressed by tourism operators and managers over the seasonality of tourism and its perceived negative effects, there has been comparatively little research devoted to the fundamental nature of seasonality and the underlying causes of seasonal fluctuations in demand to tourist attractions.

The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of how natural and institutional variables were perceived as possible constraints which contributed to seasonal visitation to the urban tourist attraction of Fort Edmonton Park in Edmonton, Alberta.

A model of seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park was developed which incorporated findings from this study and theories from previous leisure constraints research. The model suggests that seasonal visitation to the park was influenced by a combination of natural and institutional factors and that these factors were experienced as constraints to visitation. It was also revealed that there was an interactive relationship among constraints, preferences, the negotiation or decision making process, and seasonal visitation.

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1. CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Context of the Study

Seasonal fluctuation in tourism demand is one of the most distinguishable yet paradoxically, poorly understood facets of the Canadian tourism industry. For the most part, seasonality of tourism demand has been viewed as a major problem in the tourism industry, contributing to inefficient resource use, loss of profit potential, periodic overuse of facilities, extreme seasonal employment variability, and strained social and ecological carrying capacities. Taking into consideration the dominant negative context in which the phenomenon of seasonality is typically discussed, it is not surprising to find that a good deal of the literature is devoted to discussing methods for modifying the seasonal pattern of tourism. In spite of the concern over seasonality and its perceived negative effects, there has been comparatively little research devoted to the fundamental nature of seasonality and the underlying causes of seasonal fluctuations in demand (Butler, 1994).

One of the most important components of tourism and tourism seasonality is the tourist attraction itself. Pearce (1991, p. 46) defines a tourist attraction as "a named site with a specific human or natural feature which is the focus of visitor and management attention." Without attractions, in their most general sense, and without the anticipated benefits of visiting them, there would be no reason for people to make discretionary trips from their normal place of residence and there would be no tourism industry (Gunn,

1988a, 1988b). Even when visiting friends and relatives is identified as the major motivation for travel and tourism, tourist attractions often serve as the focal point for visitor and host activities. Understanding the seasonality associated with attractions is therefore essential to understanding and perhaps influencing the seasonality of the broader tourism industry.

Hickey and Hinch's (1997) annotated bibliography reviews topics related to seasonal tourism patterns, methodological approaches, factors influencing seasonality and strategic responses to seasonality. Several generalizations about the state of our knowledge concerning the seasonality of tourism emerged. First, the majority of the literature views seasonality as a problem to be dealt with and therefore many studies focus on measures to counteract the seasonality of demand without first having a clear understanding of what causes seasonality (Cahill, 1987; Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, 1991; Jefferson, 1986; Leuty & Moore, 1997; Manning & Powers, 1984). Seasonality continues to persist in many areas even after these strategies have been implemented, suggesting that the root causes are not being adequately addressed, if indeed it is appropriate to 'solve' this 'problem' (Butler, 1994).

Second, a significant number of descriptive studies have measured general seasonal patterns of tourist activity to reveal reliable and predictable seasonal fluctuations of tourist arrivals in many regions around the world, yet few studies have examined why people travel during these periods. Recently, the Canadian Tourism Commission recognized this omission and highlighted the need for in-depth studies to "determine the basic attitudes of Canadian travellers toward travelling in the off and shoulder seasons;

determine the factors influencing the decision to travel in the off-peak period and their relative importance; and identify barriers to off and shoulder season travel" (1996, p. 33). The relationship between seasonality and motivation of visitors has not been thoroughly explored and it is not known with any certainty whether tourists travel in peak season because they want to, because they have to, or because they have been conditioned to (Butler, 1994).

Third, it is evident that a wealth of research has focussed on the negative impacts of seasonality (e.g. Allcock, 1989; McEnniff, 1992; Ritchie and Beliveau, 1974; Spotts and Mahoney, 1993) while little research has been conducted which has explored the positive aspects of this phenomenon. The problems caused by seasonality are well documented in the tourism literature, but very little research has been done to examine the advantages to destination areas of one or more off-seasons which provide periods of recuperation and restoration, and allow residents to prepare for the next tourist season.

Finally, there is a dearth of substantial qualitative and quantitative research which has resulted in a limited body of knowledge regarding tourism seasonality. There has been little development of theory or concepts pertaining to the topic of seasonality, with much of the existing discussion being based upon unsubstantiated assumptions and supposition. Clearly, more work is needed in this area.

There has been much debate and speculation in the literature regarding the causes of seasonality. For years it was accepted that there were only two basic origins which caused tourism seasonality. This included what is commonly known as 'natural' seasonality and 'institutional' seasonality (BarOn, 1975; Hartmann, 1986). Today, these

two origins are still accepted as the prime factors leading to the seasonality of tourism.

For practitioners and researchers in the field of tourism, a prerequisite question must be answered if certain strategies to mitigate the challenges presented by seasonality are to be found. The first step is to develop an understanding of the causes of seasonal travel behaviour by exploring the relationship between natural and institutional variables and seasonality. In omitting this step, efforts to modify seasonality will continue to have only limited success.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

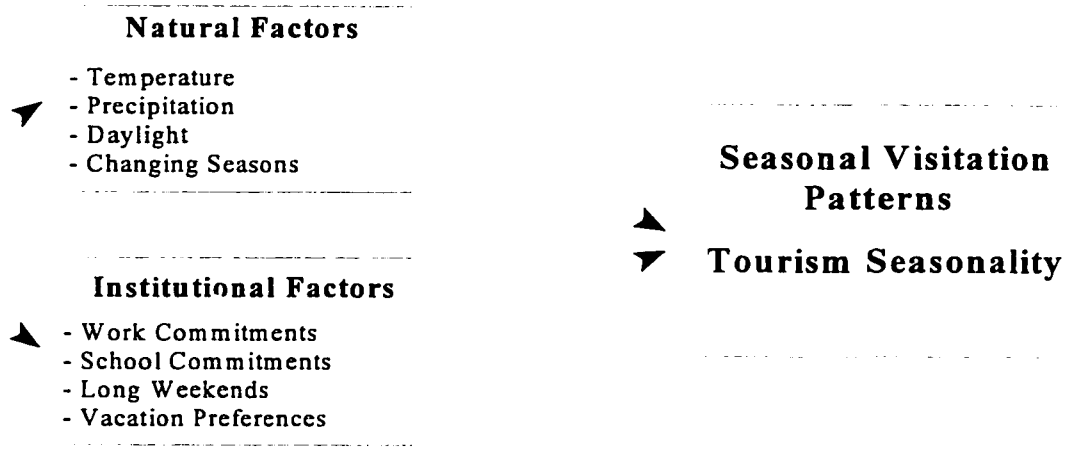
The purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of the variables related to seasonal visitation to the urban tourist attraction of Fort Edmonton Park in Edmonton, Alberta. Within this purpose there were three underlying objectives:

1. To explore the variables related to seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park using four different methodological approaches: descriptive analysis of surveys, factor analysis, cluster analysis, and content analysis of one-on-one interviews.

2. To develop an understanding of how natural and institutional variables were perceived as possible constraints causing seasonal visitation from the perspective of the visitor.

3. To understand the relative influence of natural and institutional variables in the decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park during different times of the year from the perspective of the visitor (see Figure 1).

Figure 1.1. A hypothetical model of tourism seasonality



The variables related to seasonal visitation were explored through the use of in-depth personal interviews and a visitor exit survey. Natural seasonality is defined generally as the regular temporal variations in natural phenomena over the course of a year, particularly those associated with climate (rainfall, snowfall, temperature, daylight, etc.). Institutional seasonality is defined generally as seasonality that is brought about by travel decisions resulting from religious, cultural, ethnic and social factors (e.g., school holidays, religious holidays and public holidays). Seasonal visitation or seasonality will be defined as "a temporal imbalance in the phenomenon of tourism, and may be expressed in terms of dimensions of such elements as number of visitors, expenditure of visitors, traffic on highways, employment, and admissions to attractions" (Butler, 1994, p. 332).

1.3 Significance of the Study

Considering the concerted efforts and substantial expenditures that have been made in attempting to reduce the level of seasonality in destinations across the world (e.g. Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, 1991; McEnnif, 1992), it would seem appropriate for more attention to be given to research designed to explain the causes of the phenomenon before further attempts are made to modify this poorly understood facet of tourism. Given the deficiencies in the existing literature, this study will facilitate a better understanding of the nature of seasonality as well as advance our understanding of people's perceptions and attitudes toward seasonal visitation and travel. In an applied sense, this study may provide planners, managers, and marketers of attractions (especially administrators of Fort Edmonton Park) valuable information regarding the determinants of seasonal visitation behaviour which comprise the essential building blocks of any off-season marketing strategy. More specifically, understanding what prevents or prohibits people from visiting Fort Edmonton during certain times of the year may help management of the park develop strategies to alleviate the effects of these perceived constraints to visitation.

This study will also make a theoretical contribution by exploring the nature of seasonality within the context of leisure constraints research. Many people feel that there are a number of factors that inhibit or prohibit them from participating in certain leisure activities. The leisure constraints literature provides a useful framework for exploring seasonal visitation and how one experiences and negotiates a number of perceived constraints when considering visitation to an attraction like Fort Edmonton Park.

Furthermore, BarOn (1975) and others (e.g. Allcock, 1989; Butler, 1994; Snepenger, Houser and Snepenger, 1990) have stated that seasonality of demand is brought about by natural and institutional variables. This widely accepted theory is based mostly, if not all, on assumption without any actual research investigating the relationship between these variables. Consequently, this work will provide much needed research and evaluation of previously held assumptions regarding the relationship between natural and institutional variables and seasonal visitation using the case of Fort Edmonton Park.

2. CHAPTER TWO

A REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

From an overview of the literature it is apparent that a number of distinct but interrelated sets of categories have been the focus of researchers concerned with the seasonality of tourism. One area of the literature that will be examined in this review of literature deals with the impacts and implications of tourism seasonality. Much of this literature revolves around conceptual and theoretical discussions concerning tourism seasonality in the absence of quantitative or qualitative research. Another area of the literature that will be examined is the role of attractions and how they provide a focal point for the examination of seasonality. Furthermore, the leisure constraints research will be examined with the intention of understanding the process of negotiation and how certain variables are perceived by individuals to prohibit visitation to tourist attractions throughout the four seasons of the year. The review of literature will also examine papers that have discussed the causes of tourism seasonality. It will be revealed that much of the work in this area is based upon educated guesses and assumptions. Finally, the tourism seasonality literature has been influenced to a large extent by studies that examine reliable and predictable patterns of seasonal visitation. These studies will be addressed first as it is established that seasonality is indeed a distinctive feature of the tourism industry.

2.2 Seasonal Patterns of Tourist Activity

Reliable and predictable seasonal fluctuations of tourist arrivals have been measured in a number of studies around the world. One of the earliest and most influential works in the area of tourism seasonality was a publication entitled *Seasonality in Tourism* by BarOn (1975). BarOn (1975) examined the issue of tourism seasonality in 16 different countries using data covering a period of 17 years and concluded that in most tourist areas there is a distinct and strong high season followed by a significant drop in tourist activity during the rest of the year. It was suggested by BarOn (1975) that "most statistical series of arrivals and departures of tourists, bed-nights in accommodation, employment in hotels and other branches of the tourist industry show considerable fluctuations from month to month due to seasonality and other predictable factors, which can be measured" (p. 2). The study and measurement of seasonal tourist patterns are recognized as providing important tools for future forecasting, policy making and marketing of tourist businesses.

Stanley and Moore (1997) found that the characteristic pattern of seasonality in Canada is distinguished by a peak of travel in July and August, with a decline in the fall to a low in November, an upswing in December at Christmas, a slight peak in February due to the ski season, and then a slow build-up through the spring to the peak in the next July and August. Besides examining the seasonality of total person-trips to Canadian destinations, the authors also explored the seasonality of pleasure trips, visiting friends and relatives (VFR) trips, business trips and convention person trips. An interesting finding revealed that business and convention travel follows a reverse seasonality pattern.

That is, convention and business travel experiences a slight peak in the spring and a more even distribution of trips during the rest of the year with a marked decline in the month of July. Murray (1997) found similar seasonal travel patterns across Canada with variations by: trip purpose (business or leisure), location (urban vs. rural, province/region), and market segment (families, group tours, meetings/conventions). Murray (1997) suggests that seasonality is a 'problem' for the Canadian tourism industry and states that "tourism marketing data clearly indicates seasonality of travel patterns and specific tourism businesses" (p. 136).

The Canadian federal government has recently examined the nature of tourism seasonality in Canada. After collecting data through large scale telephone and personal interviews, the findings suggested that:

> about 38 per cent of the 101 million overnight pleasure trips made annually by Canadians to all destinations is accounted for by the summer quarter alone. Winter brings a pronounced drop in holiday-taking, with only 17 per cent of all trips taken during this season. Spring (24 per cent) and fall (21 per cent) lie somewhere in between the peaks of summer and the troughs of winter and can be termed shoulder seasons. It was also found that with regards to seasonal variations in travel to destinations within Canada, some 35.1 million overnight pleasure trips are taken in the three months of summer, compared with only 12.7 million in the winter (Canadian Tourism Commission, 1996, p. I).

The seasonality of travel and tourism is evident in other parts of the world as well. Member countries of the Economic European Commission have found that "thirty eight per cent of all the trips made outside their own countries by adult residents of the Common Market end in the three months July to September. If there were an even distribution of trips across the year no more than twenty five per cent would end in these months" (Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs 1991, p. 17). McEnnif (1992, p. 69) found three interlinked patterns of seasonality:

> the seasonality of domestic holidays is much stronger than international vacations; while main holidays are sharply peaked in the summer, the incidence of other holidays is contrary to normal seasonal patterns; and the seasonality of tourism demand is generally much less peaked in the more affluent northern member states.

Temporal measurements of tourist behaviour have also been the focus of research which examines seasonal migration patterns to Sunbelt destinations (e.g. Hogan, 1987; McHugh and Mings, 1991; McHugh and Mings, 1992; Soesilo and Mings, 1987; Tucker, Marshall, Longing, & Mullins, 1988). Canadian travel to Sunbelt destinations in the United States takes place on a massive scale. Much of the research on seasonal migration from northern places of residence to southern destinations during the winter is in the exploratory stage as the size and scale of seasonal out-migration during the winter months in Canada has just recently been realized. Despite the large number of Canadians leaving the country during the colder months of the year, Tucker et al. (1988) pointed out that we

know more about the seasonal migration of waterfowl in North America than of homo sapiens and even nine years later, this still appears to be true.

This review of the seasonality of travel patterns demonstrates that the existence of seasonal variations in tourism demand is well documented. It has been shown that seasonality of demand is a distinctive feature of tourism, not only in Canada but also on a global basis. The following section will delve further into this topic to examine the literature which explores the economic, social and environmental impacts and implications of seasonality.

2.3 Impacts and Implications of Seasonality

Much of the literature surrounding the topic of tourism seasonality describes seasonal variations in visitation as a problem resulting in a number of negative effects on the destination and the people living within that destination (Allcock, 1989; Edgell, 1990; Go, 1990; Jefferson and Lickorish, 1988; Laws, 1991; Lockwood and Guerrier, 1990; Poon, 1993; Robinson, 1979; Snepenger et al., 1990; Whelihan and Chon, 1991). In contrast to the general acceptance of tourism seasonality being considered a problem, a handful of authors have expressed the opinion that seasonality may have beneficial environmental, social, and economic effects on tourism destinations (Ball, 1988 & 1989; Butler, 1994; Hartmann, 1986; Mourdoukoutas, 1988).

A typical view is expressed by Jefferson (1986) who states "whether assessed in terms of lost revenue or reflected as the enforced termination of employment, there is obviously a major economic and social dimension to these (seasonal) 'troughs' which

evidently is in no-one's interest" (p. 24). McEnnif reported on many of the undesirable negative consequences of seasonal peaks in visitation. The author states that:

> The seasonality of tourism demand creates a range of problems for the tourism industry and the wider economy. These include underutilisation of capacity at one end of the scale and congestion, environmental damage, saturation of transport infrastructure, increased risk of road accidents, higher prices and a negative impact on the quality of the tourism product at the other. Although some countries suffer from traffic congestion and damage to cultural and heritage tourism products through overutilisation, most are chiefly concerned with off-peak underutilisation of capacity.

It is interesting that different regions of the world report many of the same problems associated with seasonality despite having different patterns of seasonal variation. For example, Great Britain's high season occurs in the summer months of July and August with a marked decline in tourism during the winter months, while Jamaica, on the other hand, has a busy winter season but a slow spring season (Robinson, 1979). Both countries experience different temporal patterns of tourist activity yet both report that seasonality has negative environmental, economic, and social effects on their respective destinations.

Very little attention has been paid to the possible benefits that may be attributed to seasonality. Hartmann (1986, pp. 31-2) was one of the first authors to consider the possible beneficial qualities of seasonality by stating that:

dead seasons are the only chance for a social and ecological environment to recover fully. A dormant period for the host environment is simply a necessity in order to preserve its identity.

From an environmental viewpoint, Butler acknowledges that there are advantages and disadvantages to seasonal fluctuations in demand and visitation. He states "while areas may experience very heavy use during peak seasons, in the long run they may well be better off than having that use spread more evenly throughout the year" (1994, p. 335). The author echoes Hartmann's (1986) argument that a lengthy rest period may allow a destination to completely recover from the tourist season, or at least allow stability to be achieved.

It is important to note that most of the literature dealing with the impacts and implications of tourism seasonality are based on observations and assumptions of certain authors without any hard evidence from research investigating the effects of seasonal trends of tourist activity. Despite the lack of research in this area, many authors contend that seasonal patterns of tourism activity have significant effects on tourism destinations and attractions and that the ability to influence these trends is of vital importance.

2.4 The Role of Attractions and Seasonality

A discussion of tourist attractions is necessary in order to understand the role of an urban attraction in dealing with issues of seasonal visitation patterns. Much of what is known about tourism seasonality is the result of seasonal fluctuations in attendance to

tourist attractions. Therefore, attractions provide a useful focal point for the examination of seasonality. It is first necessary to define the word *attraction* and consider what role attractions play in tourism seasonality.

Leiper (1990) referred to tourist attractions as part of a larger system and defined them as:

> a system comprising three elements: a tourist or human element, a nucleus or central element, and a marker or informative element. A tourist attraction comes into existence when the three elements are connected. (p. 371).

Tourists are included as necessary parts of this tourist attraction system, not merely consumers or users of some discrete phenomena. If no tourist ever visited the Tower of London, it would not be thought of as a tourist attraction (Leiper, 1990). Leiper (1990, p. 372) states that "a nucleus, the central element in a tourist attraction system, might be any feature or characteristic of a place that a traveller contemplates visiting or actually visits." The third element of the tourist attraction system consist of markers. Leiper describes markers as "items of information, about any phenomenon that is a potential nuclear element in a tourist attraction" (p. 373).

All types of attractions, be they built, natural or cultural attractions, are affected by seasonal and temporal patterns of visitation. Leiper (1990, p. 376) states that "while all nuclei have a spatial dimension, in some cases temporal dimensions are most relevant, when the event is the thing. Festivals, sporting events, and meetings of families and friends are examples of nuclei that take place at specific times." The nature of the

seasons, the activities that are common during those seasons, and certain events that take place during different seasons all have an effect on the seasonal variation of visitation that characterizes attractions. Most nuclei appear to have seasonal characteristics and given the seasonal nature of the activities that are common to the attraction, the nuclei may be more of an attraction during the high season and perhaps not at all during the low season. Such a reliance upon seasonal activities and events denotes a seasonality of supply. Seasonality is a supply problem in certain instances as attractions have different levels of supply for non-summer tourism and therefore we would expect distinctive degrees of seasonality in different attractions (Stanley & Moore, 1997).

Seasonality of demand is partly the result of people traditionally taking their holidays during the summer months, a matter that is itself linked to temporal variation in the attractions of tourism resources. According to Ball (1989, p. 35):

> The degree of seasonality that confronts any particular type of area thus depends on the nature of the tourist attractions. Coastal resorts are, as such, particularly prone to such 'peaking' because they are dependent on a traditional season linked to climate influences.

Tourist attractions supported by large urban centres tend to have more continuous operation throughout the year because they depend upon a more diversified demand. In contrast, peripheral or remote tourist areas tend to experience a stronger pattern of seasonality than more central locations (Butler, 1994; Hinch and Hickey, 1997). Spatial and temporal patterns of visitation would therefore appear to be linked.

2.5 Leisure Constraints

Over the past decade or so there has been an accumulating body of knowledge about leisure constraints and constrained leisure. Jackson (1991) states that "leisure constraints research aims to investigate and understand the factors that are assumed by researchers and perceived by individuals to inhibit or prohibit participation and enjoyment in leisure" (p. 273). Seasonal visitation patterns represent a specific dimension of participation and would seem to reflect a unique blend of leisure constraints. An understanding of how one experiences and negotiates a number of perceived leisure constraints can be of vital importance when attempting to understand the reasons why people visit attractions such as Fort Edmonton Park during certain times of the year. Seasonality itself can be described as a reflection of a unique blend of perceived constraints to participation in tourist activity on a year round basis and the literature on leisure constraints offers a way to understand seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.

Crawford and Godbey (1987) and later Crawford, Jackson, and Godbey (1991) identified three different types of constraints:

> *Intrapersonal barriers* involve individual psychological states and attributes which interact with leisure preferences rather than intervening between preferences and participation. Examples of intrapersonal barriers include stress, depression, anxiety, religiosity, kin and non-kin reference group attitudes, and subjective evaluations of the appropriateness and availability of various leisure activities (p. 122).

> *Interpersonal barriers* are the result of interpersonal interaction or the relationship between individuals' characteristics... Barriers of this sort may interact with both preference for, and subsequent participation in, companionate leisure activities... An individual may experience an interpersonal leisure barrier if he or she is unable to locate a suitable partner with which to engage in a particular activity (p. 123).

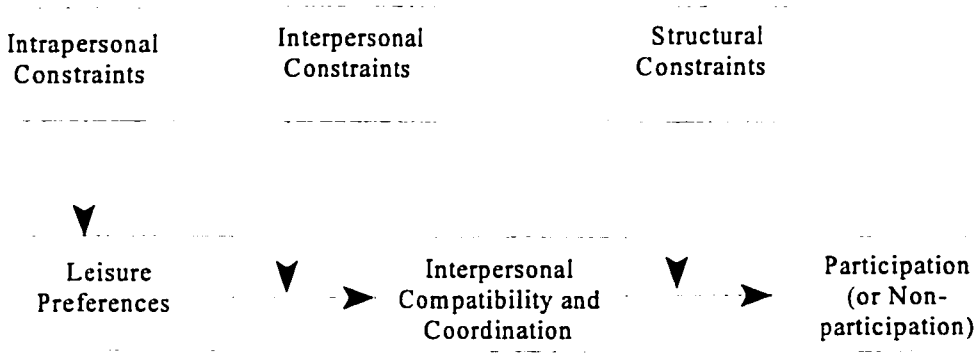
> *Structural barriers* represent constraints as they are commonly conceptualized, as intervening factors between leisure preference and participation. Examples of structural barriers include family life-cycle stage, financial resources, season, climate, the scheduling of work time, availability of opportunity (and knowledge of such availability), and reference group attitudes concerning the appropriateness of certain activities (p. 124).

It has been proposed that these leisure constraints are encountered hierarchically. Leisure constraints must be successfully negotiated if leisure involvement is to occur. Crawford, Jackson and Godbey (1991, p. 313) state that constraints are encountered:

> first at the intrapersonal level. Leisure preferences are formed, it is suggested, when intrapersonal constraints are absent or their effects have been confronted through some combination of privilege and exercise of the human will. Next, depending on the type of activity, the individual may encounter constraints at the interpersonal level; this could happen in activities requiring at least one partner or

coparticipant...It is only when this type of constraint has been overcome that structural constraints begin to be encountered. Participation will result in the absence of, or negotiation through, structural constraints. If structural constraints are sufficiently strong, however, the outcome will be nonparticipation (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1. A hierarchical model of leisure constraints (source: Crawford, Jackson, & Godbey, 1991, p. 313).

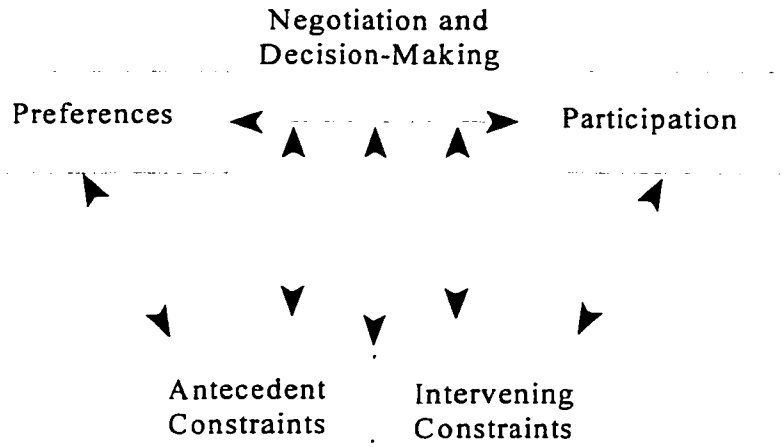


More recently, Jackson, Crawford, and Godbey (1993) proposed that an interaction occurs among constraints categories through the process of negotiation and that a series of feedback loops occur in the process of pursuing a leisure activity. In a study which explored women's leisure constraints, Henderson and Bialeschki (1993) used the classification system of antecedent and intervening constraints rather than intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. The authors stated that the two term classification system was less confusing and offered a way to clarify the complex

interactive nature of constraints. Antecedent constraints were defined as conscious and unconscious psychological states and/or sociological conditions that influenced one's preference or interest in leisure/recreation. Intervening constraints referred to those structural and interpersonal constraints which immediately had an impact on the decisions made regarding a leisure experience or recreation activity (Henderson and Bialeschki, 1993).

From their qualitative analysis of women's leisure constraints, Henderson and Bialeschki developed an expanded model of leisure constraints that suggests that constraints are not sequential and hierarchical, but are rather dynamic and integrated. They stated that the relationship between preferences, constraints, and participation were more complex and interactive and thus offered a more holistic and interactive model instead of the earlier linear models. Also inherent in Henderson and Bialeschki's model of leisure constraints was the interactive link between preferences and participation in the negotiation process instead of a linear and hierarchical relationship (see Figure 2.2). Henderson and Bialeschki (1993) suggested that their holistic and interactive model shared similarities with the work of Jackson et al. (1993) in that an interaction occurs among constraints categories through the process of negotiation.

Figure 2.2. An expanded model of leisure constraints based on women's experiences (Henderson and Bialeschki, 1993).



Inherent in Henderson and Bialeschki's (1993) model of women's leisure constraints are the following four themes:

1. Intervening and antecedent constraints, while distinct, were not mutually exclusive and interacted with one another to influence women's preferences, negotiation, and participation in leisure activities.

2. Constraints (particularly antecedent, but also intervening) influenced leisure preferences.

3. Constraints (particularly intervening, but also antecedent) impacted throughout the negotiation process as women made decisions about participation.

4. An interactive link between preferences and participation was evident in the negotiation process (p. 247).

One of the objectives of this study was to develop an understanding of how natural and institutional variables were perceived as possible constraints to seasonal

visitation. Henderson and Bialeschki's expanded model of leisure constraints offers a useful theoretical framework which will be used to explore constraints to seasonal visitation. Although natural and institutional variables may be considered as intervening constraints that have an immediate impact on the decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park during different seasons, these variables may eventually become internalized into a psychological state or sociological condition to interact as antecedent constraints. The main focus of this study is to develop a better understanding of the role of natural and institutional variables as constraints to seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.

2.6 The Causes of Tourism Seasonality

In order to understand the seasonality of tourism, there must first be an understanding of its underlying causes. There has been much debate and speculation in the literature regarding these causes. It is generally accepted that there are two basic groups of factors which cause tourism seasonality, these being natural and institutional factors (BarOn, 1975; Hartmann, 1986).

Natural seasonality refers to regular temporal variations in natural phenomena, particularly those associated with climate, weather and seasons of the year and how these natural variables impact the demand for or supply of tourism (Allcock, 1989; Butler, 1994). Climate is of fundamental importance to tourism in Canada, although it is often considered as a nuisance factor or constraint to tourist development. Despite images of Canada's harsh climate, a pronounced seasonality across most of the country creates diverse recreational opportunities. Kreutzwiser (p. 29-30) contends that:

> Climate and weather conditions also influence how satisfying particular recreational outings will be. Air temperature, humidity, precipitation, cloudiness, amount of daylight, visibility, wind, water temperature, and snow and ice cover are among the parameters deemed to be important... In summer, air temperature and humidity can combine to create uncomfortable conditions for vigorous activities, while wind and temperature in winter can create a wind chill hazardous to outdoor recreationists... Climate and weather are important elements of the recreational resource base with economic, social, and even environmental implications. The length of the tourist season affects rate of return on capital investments in accommodation and other tourist-related enterprises as well as employment patterns. Seasonality is an often-referred-to limitation to development of tourism in many parts of the country.

The second type of seasonality, known as 'institutional' seasonality, reflects the social norms and practices of society (Hinch and Hickey, 1997). It is brought about by human decisions and based on religious, cultural, ethnic, social and economic considerations as epitomized by religious, school and industrial holidays. Lundgren (1989, p. 136) states that:

> as countries became industrialized over the past 150 years, a process starting in Britain and gradually spreading to other European countries as well as to North America, leisure changed dramatically from being available in loosely defined blocks of time to being constrained within sharp temporal boundaries, often

> defined as non-work time. It is now possible to distinguish three blocks of leisure time (daily, weekend, and vacation leisure time slots), each of which places distinct limitations on the range and types of recreational consumption.

Butler (1994) argued that as the Industrial Revolution progressed, and with it social reform and legislation, the idea of holidays with pay took root, and in most cases such holidays became tied to the main summer season to allow families to holiday together.

The summer school holiday continues to influence the seasonality of the tourist industry throughout the world. With regards to the origins of school holidays, Butler (1994, p. 333) states that:

> the tradition of a family holiday meant that for any family with children of school age, the only time when holidays could be taken without the children missing school, was during the summer recess. Coupled with this was the fact that in most countries that had such legislation, the summer months had the best weather for the traditional holiday, whether this was by the beach, the lake or in the mountains.

Based on an understanding of the relevant literature, the objective of this thesis is to develop an understanding of the relationship between some of the natural and institutional variables described above and seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park. At this point it is speculated that a blend of natural and institutional variables represent some unknown combination of antecedent and intervening constraints which ultimately lead to seasonal trends in visitation to tourist attractions.

3. CHAPTER THREE

THE CASE OF FORT EDMONTON PARK

3.1 The Study Area

Fort Edmonton Park is located on a 65 hectare site on the south bank of the North Saskatchewan River in Edmonton, Alberta. The Park is considered to be a major attraction in the provincial capital of approximately 850,000 people and is owned and operated by the City of Edmonton. Fort Edmonton can be described as a living history interpretive centre which is purported to be Canada's largest historical park (Hinch, in press). The Fort features a number of restored buildings along with other built facilities and interactive programs that depict the living and working conditions of the fur trade and pioneer periods of Edmonton's history. Extensive interpretive programming occurs mostly in the peak summer months and is employed as a way to animate the site and to breathe life into the history of Edmonton. The guiding mission of the Park is to provide "diverse opportunities for people to learn, grow and enjoy themselves through the conservation, animation, and experience of Edmonton's history" (Fort Edmonton Park, 1996).

A typical visit to the Park starts with a train ride that takes the visitor to the first stop of the park which is a replica of the fur trading fort that operated in the Edmonton area in 1846. This fort is intended to serve as the starting point for a typical patron's visit followed by a 'walk through time' along three streets featuring restored buildings from

the 1885, 1905 and 1920 periods (Hinch in press). This 'walk through time' requires patrons to face the natural elements and walk outside along the streets from building to building.

3.2 Challenges Facing Fort Edmonton Park

The province of Alberta experiences relatively extreme temperature fluctuations from season to season. The average temperature for each season is as follows: 4.2 C in Spring, 17.1 C in Summer, 5.1 C in Fall, and -16.6 C in Winter. Precipitation averages 425 millimetres of which 150 millimetres falls as snow. Alberta is known as "sunny Alberta" because it receives over 2500 hours of sunshine per year compared to Canada's west coast which receives less than 1700 hours of sunshine per year (Edmonton Infopage, 1997).

A visit to Fort Edmonton in any other season besides summer would mean subjecting oneself to temperatures ranging from the single digits to well below zero. Furthermore, the buildings and facilities on site offer visitors a rather rustic refuge from the cold weather and climate as many of the buildings contain no modern heating and insulation. All historical buildings and facilities were moved to Fort Edmonton Park from other areas of Edmonton and preserved as representative samples of the era from 1885 to 1920. To safeguard the authenticity of the buildings and retain the facilities as they existed when they were first built, the decision was made to not install modern heating or insulation (Fort Edmonton Park, 1996).

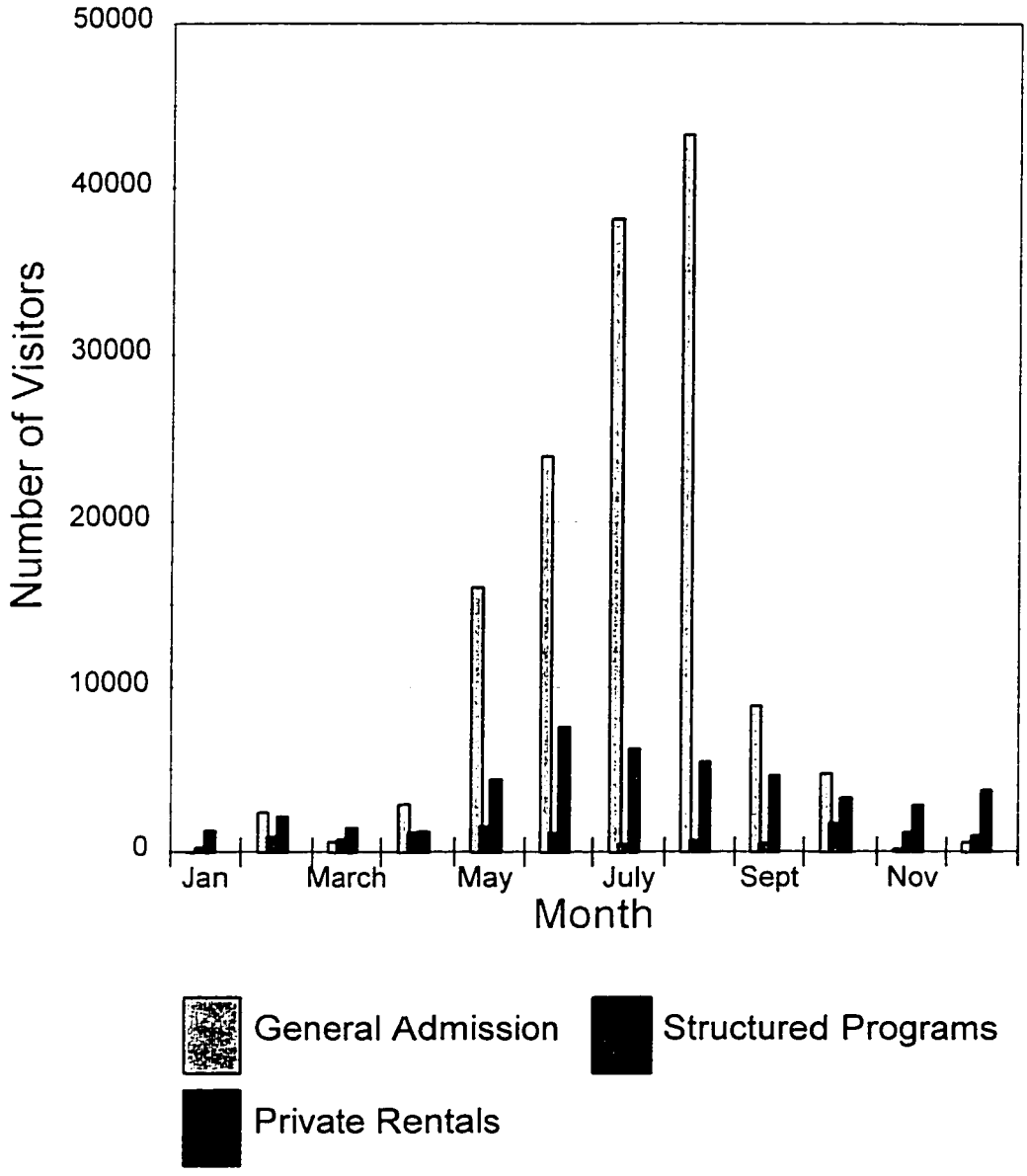
In 1996 operating expenditures of the park were just over $2,848,000 CDN while

the revenues were $1,254,000 CDN which revealed a cost recovery of 44% (Hinch, in press). During the current period of fiscal constraint, the Park is being encouraged to increase its level of cost recovery. Park management has therefore been very supportive of this research as it has the potential to provide consumer information that may be used to alter seasonal visitation patterns resulting in further revenue generation.

3.3 Seasonal Visitation to Fort Edmonton Park

Fort Edmonton Park represents a good example of a major urban tourist attraction characterized by a high degree of seasonal variation in visitation. Two of the park's chief weaknesses as identified by park staff included the dependability on the weather and the low profile of the park during the off-season (Fort Edmonton Park, 1996). Figure 3.1 illustrates the extreme seasonal variation in visitation to Fort Edmonton Park by illustrating monthly admissions for the 1996 year of operation. Visitation patterns to Fort Edmonton reveal a main summer peak season of visitation (May to August) followed by a dramatic decline in visitors during the rest of the year. The park typically closes during certain times of the fall, winter, and spring seasons due to decreased visitation, opening only for special events, guided tours, and private functions.

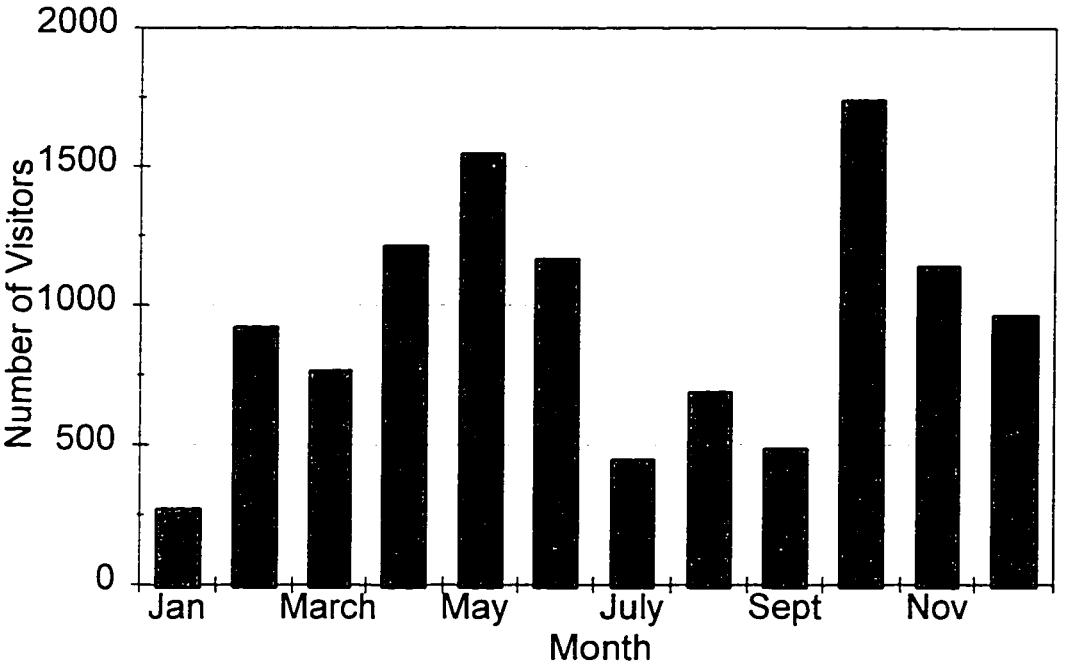
Figure 3.1. 1996 monthly visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.



Visitation to Fort Edmonton is measured in three distinct categories. General admission includes people who visit during regular hours of operation. This category made up 71.7 % of overall visitation to the park in 1996. As figure 3.1 indicates, in January of 1996 the number of people visiting Fort Edmonton categorized as general admission was 0. General admission to the park remained relatively slow until the month of May when 16020 people visited. Over 85 % of total general admission to Fort Edmonton Park during 1996 took place during the months of May to August. The months of June, July, and August were by far the busiest months, with general admission reaching a peak of 43247 visitors for the month of August. General admission declined dramatically during late summer and early fall with 8873 visitors in September, 4760 in October, 148 in November, and 573 in December.

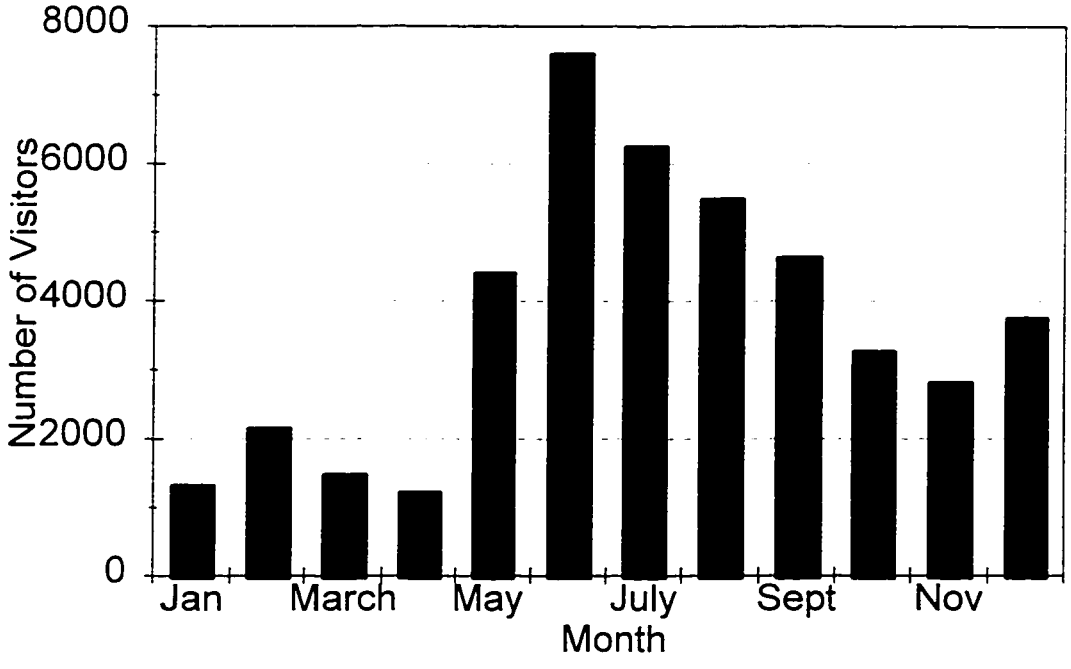
A second measure of attendance to the park falls under the category of structured programs. Included in this category are people visiting the park as part of a school program or guided tour. Structured programs accounted for only 5.7 % of total visitation to Fort Edmonton during 1996. Despite the relatively low numbers, it is interesting to note that more people took part in structured programs during the spring and fall shoulder seasons than in the usual peak season of summer. The second lowest level of visitors taking part in structured programs occurred in July which created a modest, yet distinct reverse seasonality pattern (see Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2. 1996 Fort Edmonton Park structured programs attendance.



A third measure of attendance to the park falls under the category of private rentals. Private rentals include private functions, weddings, parties, or meetings. Visitation via private rentals accounted for 22.5 % of overall visitation during 1996. The peak month of visitation for private rentals was June with 7600 people. Despite this summer peak, visitation through private rentals during the months of May (4406 visitors), September (4637 visitors), October (3274 visitors), and December (3753 visitors) revealed a much more evenly spread pattern of visitation than that of general admissions see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3. 1996 Fort Edmonton Park private rentals attendance.



Structured programs and private rentals accounted for a combined 28.2 % of total visitation to Fort Edmonton Park in 1996. The reverse seasonality pattern of structured program visitation and the more evenly spread pattern of private rental visitation are two areas that have the potential to increase visitation to Fort Edmonton Park into the off season. This discussion reveals that Fort Edmonton Park is a major urban tourist attraction characterized by extreme seasonal visitation with the peak season occurring during the summer months (May to August).

4. CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the rationale for the research approach, the research methodology, and the delimitations and limitations of the study.

4.2 Rationale for the Research Approach

Visiting or travelling to a tourist attraction requires a number of complex decisions in which numerous variables interact to determine that decision. The following research approach is meant to clarify the variables which influence seasonality by considering people's attitudes and perceptions toward seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park. A case study method incorporating both qualitative and quantitative methods was chosen for the study. This type of design can accommodate a variety of disciplinary perspectives, test or build theory, and include quantitative and qualitative data (Merriam, 1988). The intent of researchers combining qualitative and quantitative methods is to "triangulate" findings. The concept of triangulation is based on the assumption that any bias inherent in particular data sources, investigator, and method would be reduced when used in conjunction with other data sources, investigators, and methods (Jick, 1979). It is also suggested that combining qualitative and quantitative measures is a form of triangulation that has the potential to enhance the validity and reliability of one's study while giving impetus to subsequent studies (Creswell, 1994;

Merriam, 1988). Greene et al. (1989) suggest five purposes for combining methods in a single study:

- triangulation in the classic sense of seeking convergence of results
- complimentary, in that overlapping and different facets of a phenomenon may emerge (e.g., peeling the layers of an onion)
- developmentally, wherein the first method is used sequentially to help inform the second method
- initiation, wherein contradictions and fresh perspectives emerge
- expansion, wherein the mixed methods add scope and breadth to a study

It has been shown that there are important gaps in the literature associated with the causes of tourism seasonality (Allcock, 1989; Butler, 1994; Canadian Tourism Commission, 1996). This research design is strengthened by combining quantitative and qualitative research methods. In this study data collection includes two surveys, one that was included on an exit survey of visitors to Fort Edmonton Park and which consisted primarily of closed ended questions, while the other involved more in-depth interviews characterized by open ended questions.

This study explores and examines the qualitative and quantitative research questions concurrently. This approach to methodological triangulation is known as simultaneous triangulation (Morse, 1991). Simultaneous triangulation will be used to address the same issues in order to obtain both breadth and depth of information.

4.3 Exit Survey

The purpose of this survey was to identify how natural and institutional variables related to seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park using factor analysis, cluster analysis, and by using more common manipulations of the data (descriptive findings). The questionnaire consisted of four closed-ended Likert-type questions (see Appendix A) which were constructed by the author and included as part of the larger *1997 Fort Edmonton Park Visitor Satisfaction Survey* which is conducted by Fort Edmonton Park administration on an annual basis. The interview survey was conducted from the months of June through until October, 1997. The surveys were orally administered to patrons as they exited the park by staff members of Fort Edmonton. A convenience sample was selected as respondents were non-randomly asked to participate in the survey as they exited the park. A total of 118 questionnaires were collected over a four month period.

4.3.1 Data Analysis

The initial step in the data analysis process involved the presentation of the descriptive information, such as frequency distributions, mean scores, and bar graphs. Exploring this basic information was a logical starting point as it provided general insight into how people felt about natural and institutional variables when considering visitation to Fort Edmonton.

After an initial examination of the descriptive data, this quantitative component of the study used both factor analysis and cluster analysis to examine the relationship between natural and institutional variables and seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.

Although the correlational design is limited due to the fact that causality cannot be inferred and the order of occurrence of the variables is unknown, Heiman (1995) states that it is a legitimate research approach that allows us to learn about behaviour and discover relationships. Such research is useful not only for describing behaviour but also for identifying relationships that may later turn out to be causal. Researchers often use correlational studies to explore behaviours that are not yet well understood, as is the case in this study. To date, our existing understanding of the variables that influence the seasonality of visitation to tourist attractions is based mostly on assumption and supposition (Butler, 1994). The use of factor analysis will provide an understanding of the underlying structure of the phenomenon of seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park by identifying similar types of underlying variables or constraints. Factor analysis has been used rather frequently in previous leisure constraints research (e.g. Backman, 1991; Backman & Crompton, 1990; Henderson, Stalnaker, & Taylor, 1988; Jackson, 1993; McGuire, 1984; Wright & Goodale, 1991). Jackson (1993) states that "it is only when factor analysis was used to classify items that we begin to witness the statistical analysis of leisure constraints data on an aggregated basis" (p. 131). Using this rationale, factor analysis was employed to classify natural and institutional variables to better understand the phenomenon of seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.

Often a researcher may measure a number of different variables that appear to be related to one another. Factor analysis is a technique for condensing many variables into a few common underlying constructs. In this study, varimax rotated factor analysis was used to reduce seven different variables into two underlying factors. The rationale for

using factor analysis to measure natural and institutional variables related to seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park is as follows: 1) *Data reduction or parsimony.* The management, analysis, and understanding of data can be facilitated by factoring a number of different variables related to seasonal visitation into its basic dimensions. These dimensions, which are fewer in number, make it easier to discuss and compare the underlying factors related to seasonal visitation. 2) *Exploratory use.* Seasonal visitation to tourist attractions is a relatively unknown domain of interest in which the complex interrelations of the phenomena have undergone little systematic investigation. Factor analysis offers a useful way for exploring the unknown. It can reduce complex linkages to a relatively simple linear expression, and it can uncover unsuspected relationships which may at first seem startling but later appear to be common sense (Rummel, 1970).

Although factor analysis can be used to identify similar types of variables, it does not group similar people who share common perceptions and experiences of these constraints or variables (Jackson, 1993). However, this type of grouping can be achieved through cluster analysis. By using the SPSS Quick Cluster program, the data are organized into a "people-based perspective" that provides insight into how different groups of people experience, perceive and respond to a number of possible variables that may influence seasonal visitation. "Clustering is a mathematical technique designed for revealing classification structures in the data collected on real-world phenomena" (Mirkin, 1996, p. 24). It is a multivariate statistical procedure that starts with a data set containing information about a sample of entities and attempts to reorganize these entities into relatively homogeneous groups (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984). Cluster analysis is

an alternative technique for identifying regularities in data that allows for the recognition and investigation of combinations of different types of constraints (Jackson, 1993).

Through factor analysis, the data can be used to classify items on the survey into underlying factors that influence seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park. The use of cluster analysis then allows for the classification of relatively homogeneous groups of people which may lead to new insights about the operation of natural and institutional variables and how different groups of people perceive and experience them.

4.4.1 In-Depth Interviews

The purpose of the qualitative interviews was to develop a more in-depth understanding of visitor's perceptions and feelings toward seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park and to attain a better understanding of the relationship among natural and institutional variables as constraints to seasonal visitation. Data were collected for this study through personal interviews driven by open ended questions. In-depth interviewing is a central research method in the social sciences even though it can be time consuming, require cooperation of the interviewee, lead to misinterpretation of results, and it may be hard to replicate the findings (Patton, 1990). Much of what we claim to know about individuals' attitudes and beliefs is based on their responses to questions that are asked in these types of interviews. Despite the disadvantages, interviews offer many advantages in allowing the researcher to have a greater understanding of the complexities of social reality from a number of perspectives.

An interview guide approach was used in this study. This approach raises the

topics and issues to be covered but does not specify any particular way that the questions should be asked. The interview guide (see Appendix B) provides a general questioning route but it must be taken into consideration that many of these questions were not asked in the exact same sequence every time; rather, they were asked as they were appropriate to the progression of the interview (Henderson, 1991). One advantage of the interview guide is that the outline increases the comprehensiveness of the data and makes data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent. Also, logical gaps in data can be anticipated and closed and the interviews remain fairly conversational and situational (Patton, 1990). The disadvantages of the interview guide approach include the fact that important and salient topics may be omitted and interviewer flexibility in the wording and sequencing of questions can result in substantially different responses thus reducing the comparability of responses (Patton, 1990).

Interviewees were comprised of patrons who were visiting Fort Edmonton Park during August of 1997. The interviews were conducted by the author. Patrons of the park were approached and asked to participate in an interview that dealt with their thoughts and feelings regarding visitation to Fort Edmonton during different times of the year. A total of 10 interviews were conducted. The subjects were comprised of seven female visitors and three male visitors with five of the participants labelled as tourists (visiting Edmonton overnight from a place of residence at least 100 kilometres away) and five of the participants labelled as local residents (reside in the Edmonton area).

The interviewees were asked the following questions in no particular order with the exception of the first question which provided a common starting point for the

interviews: "What time of the year would you consider it best to visit the park? Why do you prefer that time of the year? Are there any other seasons that you would consider as attractive times of the year to visit the park? What would you like about visiting the park during that time of the year? Could you describe some of the factors that would prohibit you from visiting the park during any other season besides summer? What do you perceive as the benefits and drawbacks of visiting during any other season besides summer? Can you think of any other reasons why you wouldn't visit during the winter or spring or fall? What do you think your family or friends think about visiting the park outside of the summer season? Would school or work commitments play a role in determining what time of the year you would visit Fort Edmonton Park, and if so, why?" Probing questions were used with respondents to get them to further elaborate on their responses. Each interview lasted from 10 to 20 minutes and all interviews were audio-taped and transcribed.

4.4.2 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed inductively using content analysis. Inductive analysis means that patterns, themes, and categories of analysis come from the data; they emerge out of the data rather than being imposed on them prior to data collection and analysis (Patton, 1990). Content analysis was used to identify, code, and categorize the primary patterns in the data from interviews. All transcripts were read to develop a broad understanding of the context of the interviews. The data were then coded and sorted into similar recurring categories to reflect the relationships among preferences to visit the park

during different seasons, natural and institutional variables that influenced people's seasonal visitation decisions, and actual seasonal visitation. The process of labelling the various kinds of data and establishing a data index was an important step in data classification and content analysis. The transcripts of the interviews were read and recurring regularities in the data were sorted into categories. Examples of quotations and content were selected from the interviews to illustrate the emergent themes.

4.5 Delimitations

The following delimitations address how the study was narrowed in scope:

1. This research was confined to a case study of a specific urban tourist attraction and people's opinions and feelings toward seasonal visitation to that attraction. Seasonal visitation to other tourist attractions was not studied.

2. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected on people who have visited Fort Edmonton Park. No attempt was made to study the perceptions of people who could not or do not visit Fort Edmonton Park.

3. This study was confined to analysing the phenomenon of seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park by examining and exploring natural and institutional variables. Other variables like accessibility and costs were not examined.

4.6 Limitations

The author acknowledges the following limitations of the research study:

1. Multiple parameters are involved in describing seasonal visitation patterns, yet the analysis focussed on a limited scope of variables to understand this phenomenon.

2. The sampling procedure (selection of a convenience sample) and the limited size of the sample in the exit survey (n = 118) decreases the generalizability of findings. This study will not be generalizable to other tourist attractions.

3. The end result of factor analysis does not result in a proved or disproved hypothesis. Factor analysis offers *suggested* groupings and further research must be carried out to test their validity and reliability.

5. In the qualitative component of the research, the findings could be subject to other interpretations. The qualitative data are dependent upon the honesty and sincerity of the respondents.

5. CHAPTER FIVE

EXIT SURVEY FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents the findings from the survey component of the study. The first section of the chapter will examine the basic descriptive data of the survey, including mean scores of responses and frequency distributions. The second section of the chapter will present the findings of factor analysis and identify the dimensions that emerged from the data. The final section of this chapter will examine the results of cluster analysis and identify sub-groups of people that are characterized by the similarities in the way that they responded to the survey questions.

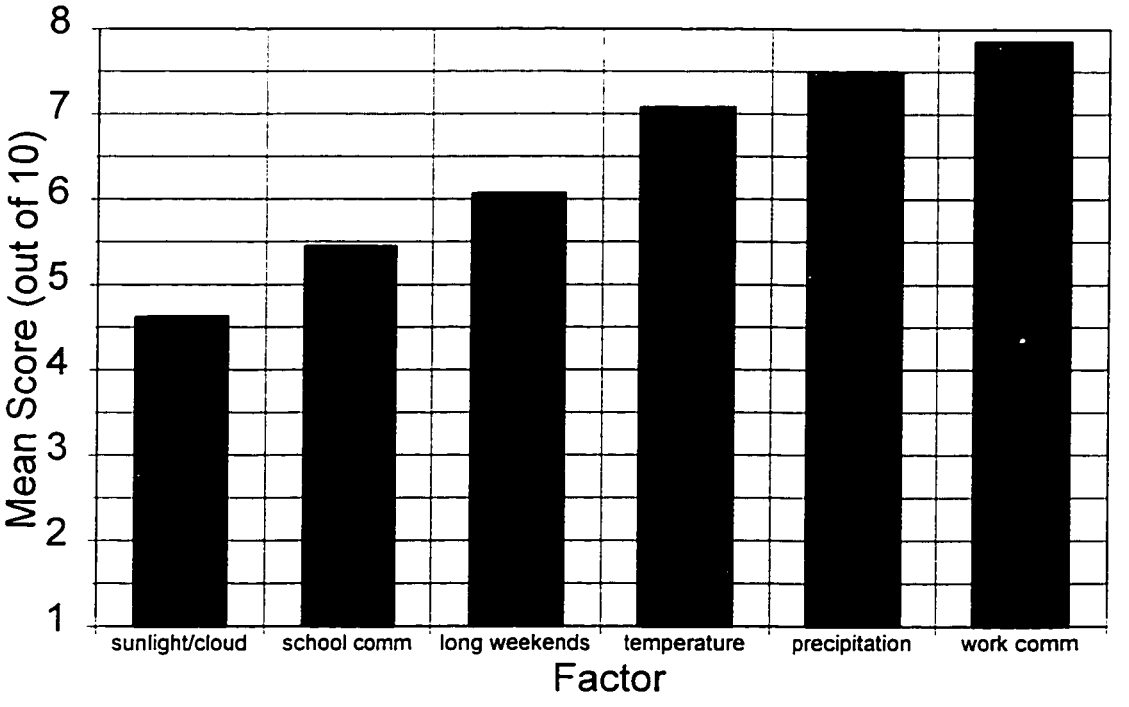
5.2 General Findings

One of the primary objectives of the study was to understand the relative influence of natural and institutional variables in the decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park during different times of the year. Question 24 in the *1997 Fort Edmonton Park Visitor Satisfaction Survey* was designed to gain a better understanding of the natural and institutional variables that influenced visitation to Fort Edmonton. It asked "How strongly do the following factors influence your decisions to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park?" Three natural variables (precipitation, temperature, and sunlight/cloud cover) and three institutional variables (school commitments, long weekends/public holidays, and work commitments) were presented and respondents were asked to rate

each factor on a 10 point Likert-scale (a score of 1 meant that the factor was not a strong influence at all on their decision to visit while a score of 10 signified that the factor had a very strong influence on their decision to visit or not visit the park).

The aforementioned variables were selected for investigation based on previous studies of tourism seasonality where the natural variables of precipitation (rain, snow, etc.), temperature, and sunlight and cloud cover were stated to be important along with the institutional variables of school commitments, work commitments, and long weekends and public holidays (Allcock, 1989; Butler, 1994). The relative importance of each specific factor can be assessed in several ways. With regards to mean scores for each particular factor, work commitments had the highest mean score with 7.86 out of the maximum score of 10. The second highest mean score was 7.5 for precipitation, the third highest was 7.08 for temperature, followed by 6.07 for long weekends/public holidays, 5.45 for school commitments, and 4.62 for sunlight/cloud cover (see Figure 5.1). This early analysis reveals that institutional and natural variables both rate as overall relatively strong influences on respondent's decisions to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park. While this measure offers the opportunity to identify the mean scores and overall influence of each factor, it suffers from the limitation of obscuring the types of variables felt by respondents and how they rated each factor differently.

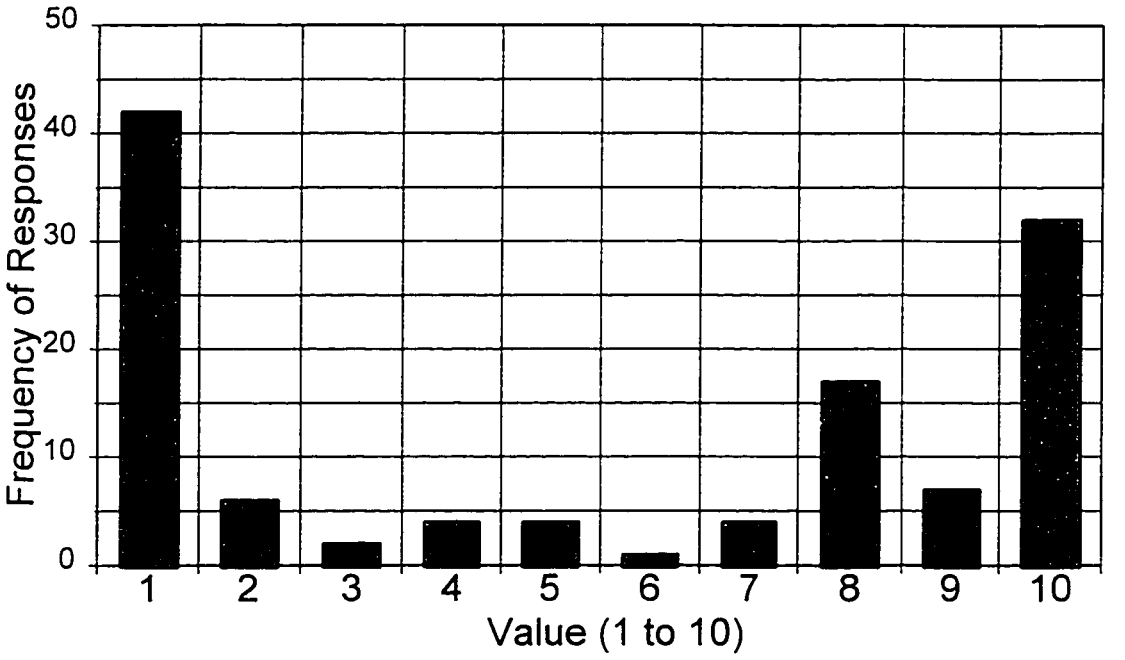
Figure 5.1. Mean score for each factor in question 24 (1 = not at all, 10 = very strongly).



The frequency distribution of responses for the different variables provided additional insight with regards to how people responded to each factor. When asked how strongly the factor of school commitments for the respondent or the respondent's family members influence their decision to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park, a large number of respondents (42) rated school commitments as not having an influence at all on their decision to visit the park while a relatively comparable number of respondents (32) rated school commitments as having a very strong influence on their decision (see Figure 5.2). This extreme polarization in responses may be attributed to age and life cycle differences of respondents. Possibly, respondents who assigned a value of 1 to 3 to the item of

school commitments no longer attended school, did not have children, or did not have children that attended school and therefore felt unconstrained by the factor of school commitments. Conversely, those who assigned a value of 7 to 10 to the item of school commitments may have been attending school or had children that attended school and therefore felt that school commitments very strongly influenced their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park.

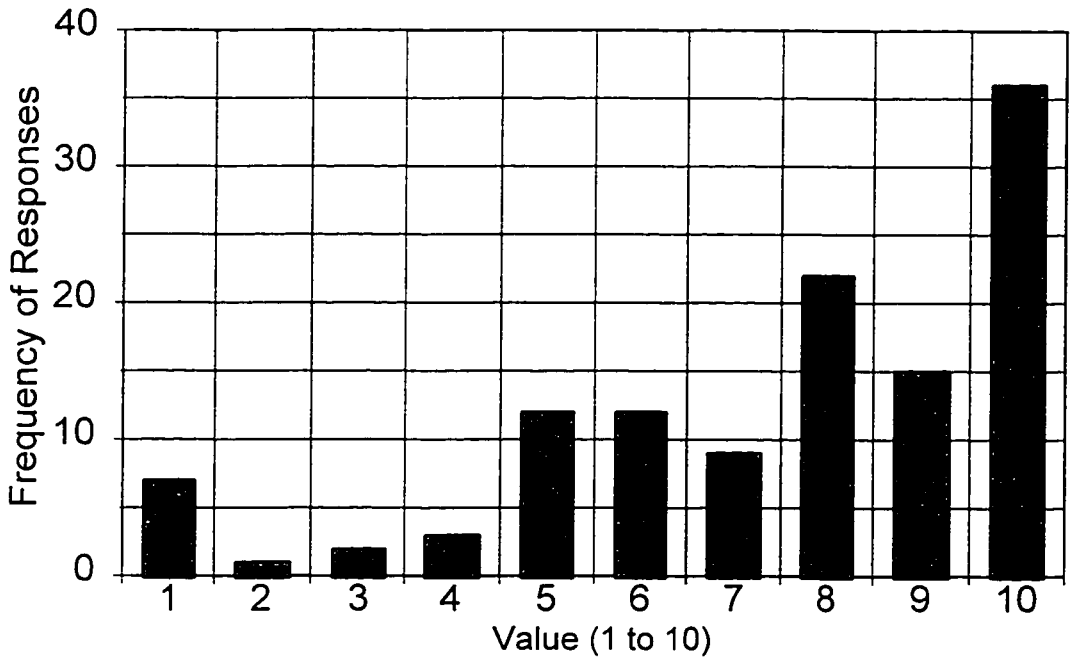
Figure 5.2. Frequency distribution of the influence of school commitments on visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.



A much different distribution emerged when respondents were asked to rate how strongly the factor of precipitation influenced their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park.

Over 79% of the total respondents (n = 94) answered between 6 to 10 on the 10 point Likert scale. This distribution suggests that the natural factor of precipitation had a somewhat strong to very strong influence on the majority of respondents' decisions to visit the park (see Figure 5.3).

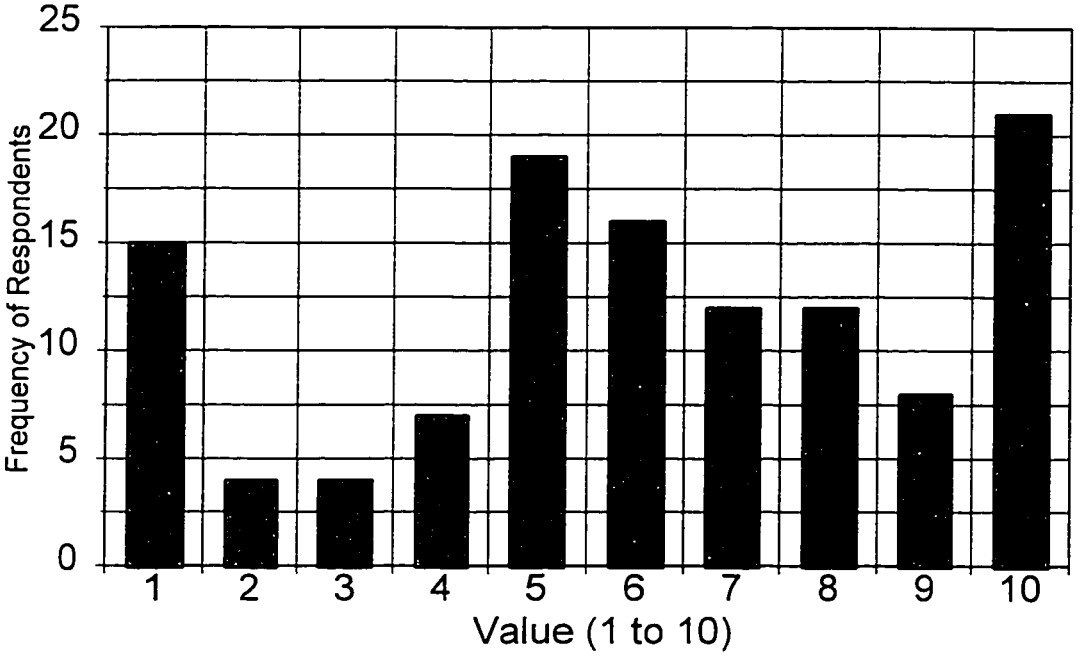
Figure 5.3. Frequency distribution of the influence of precipitation on visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.



The responses for the factor of long weekends/public holidays was much more evenly distributed along the 10 point scale. As shown in Figure 5.4, 15 respondents assigned a value of 1 to the importance of the factor of long weekends/public holidays, while 19 respondents assigned a higher value of 5, and 21 respondents assigned the highest value of 10. This distribution provides an example of how specific variables are

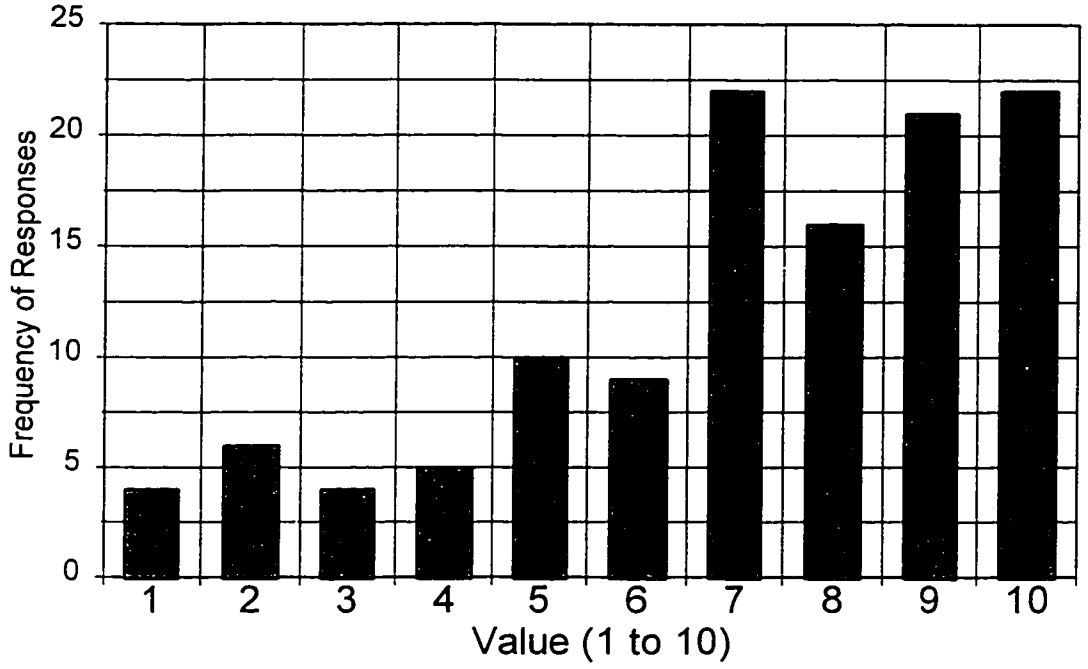
perceived and experienced differently by respondents (see Figure 5.4).

Figure 5.4. Frequency distribution of the influence of long weekends/public holidays on visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.



The distribution of responses for the factor of temperature were skewed more toward the strongly to very strongly end of the 10 point scale than the factor of long weekends/public holidays. For example, 68.6% of respondents assigned a value of 7 or greater to the factor of temperature (see Figure 5.5). The differences in the skewedness of these two distributions suggests that respondents who rated the factor of temperature were more likely to assign a value of 7 to 10 than was the case for the factor of long weekends/public holidays. That is, skewedness of responses suggests a higher level of agreement among respondents.

Figure 5.5. Frequency distribution of the influence of temperature on visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.

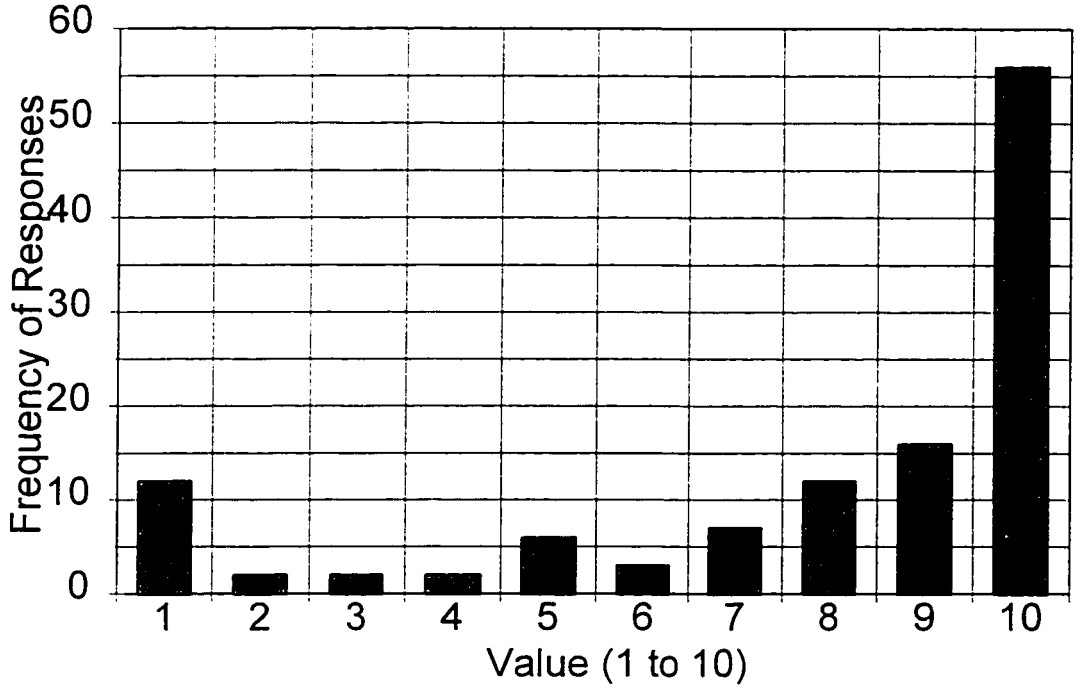


The distribution of responses for the item "work commitments" were the most heavily skewed of any of the items. A large proportion of the respondents (71.2%) assigned a value of 7 or greater to the item of work commitments. Furthermore, 56 of the 118 respondents (47.5%) assigned the highest value of 10 to work commitments indicating that this factor had a very strong influence on their decision to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park (see Figure 5.6).

While many of the respondents felt that work commitments had a major influence on their decision to visit the park, 10.2% of the respondents assigned the lowest value of 1 to the item "work commitments." Interestingly, 6 of the 12 people who assigned a value of 1 to the item "work commitments" identified themselves as being retired from

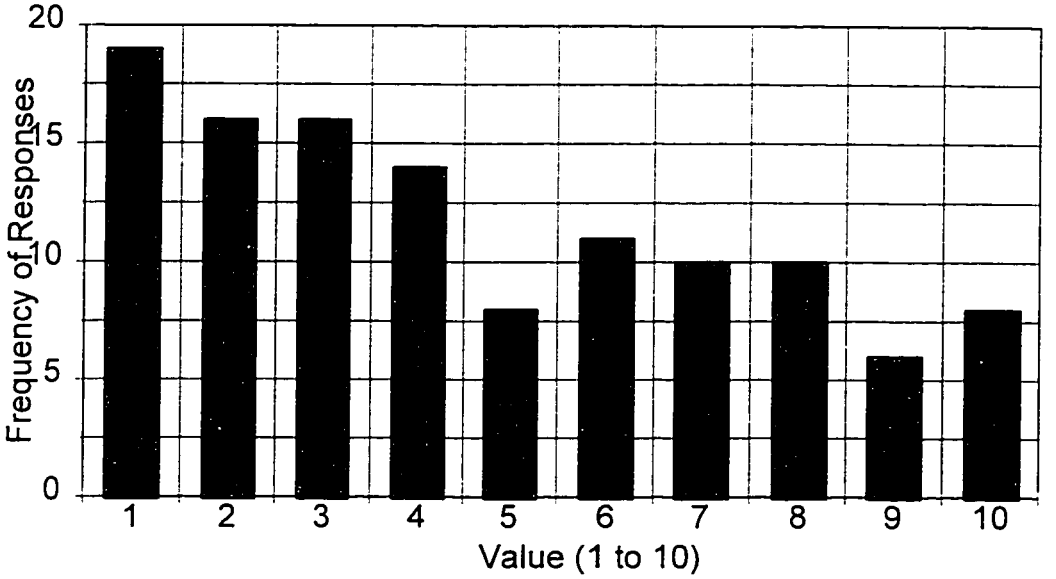
the work force and the surveyors made an additional note of this at the end of the question.

Figure 5.6. Frequency distribution of the influence of work commitments on visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.



A large proportion of the respondents (55%) assigned a value of 1 to 4 to the final item of "sunlight/cloud cover". This indicates that the factor of sunlight/cloud cover did not have a strong influence on many respondents' decision to visit the park, although 29% of the respondents assigned a value of 7 to 10 indicating that this factor had a strong influence for some (see Figure 5.7).

Figure 5.7. Frequency distribution of the influence of sunlight/cloud cover on visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.



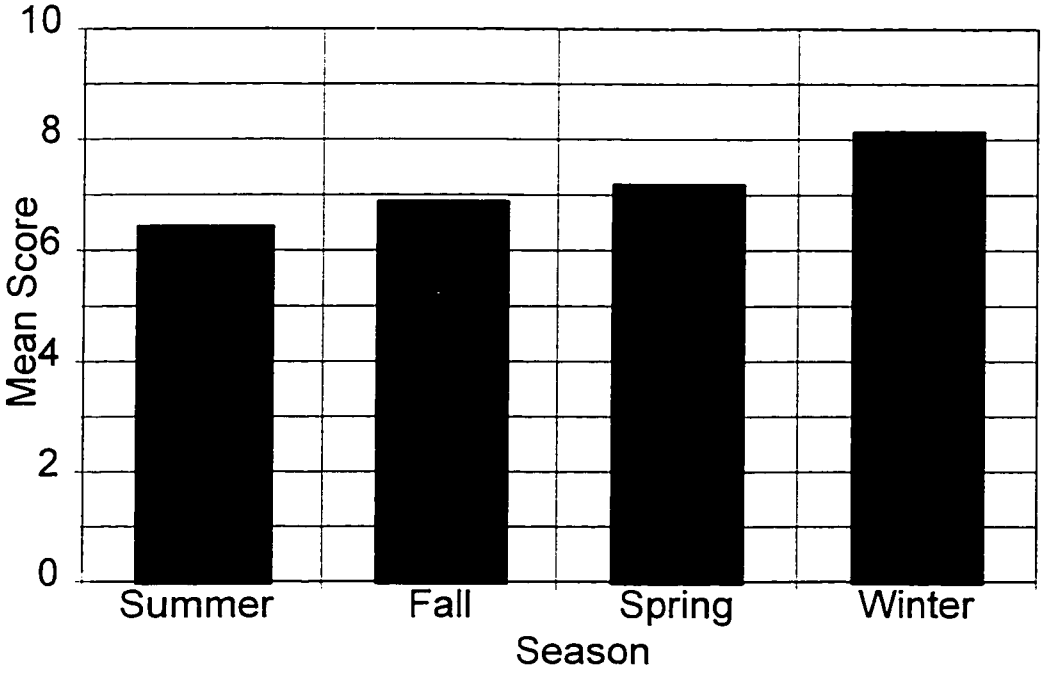
5.3 Importance of Natural and Institutional Factors

The relative importance of natural and institutional variables and how they influence people's decision to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park during spring, summer, winter and fall were measured in questions 25 and 26 of the *1997 Fort Edmonton Park Visitor Satisfaction Survey*. Question 25 asked, "Assuming that the park is open year round, how important would factors like weather conditions be in your future decisions to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park during the following seasons?" Respondents were then asked to assign a value on a 10 point Likert scale signifying the relative importance of natural variables on their decision to visit the park during different seasons (a value of 1 meant that it was not at all important and a value of 10 meant it was

very important).

An analysis of the mean scores out of 10 for each season revealed that summer had the lowest score (6.44), followed by fall (6.89), spring (7.19), and winter (8.14) (see Figure 5.8).

Figure 5.8. Mean scores measuring the importance of natural variables on the decision to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park during different seasons.



Winter emerged as the season in which natural factors like weather conditions were considered most important in the decision to visit the park with a mean score of 8.14 indicating an average overall rating just less than "very important." Summer had the lowest mean score where natural factors were considered not as important as they were in other seasons when considering visitation to the park. It is interesting to note that despite having the lowest mean score, a value of 6.44 indicates that natural factors were still

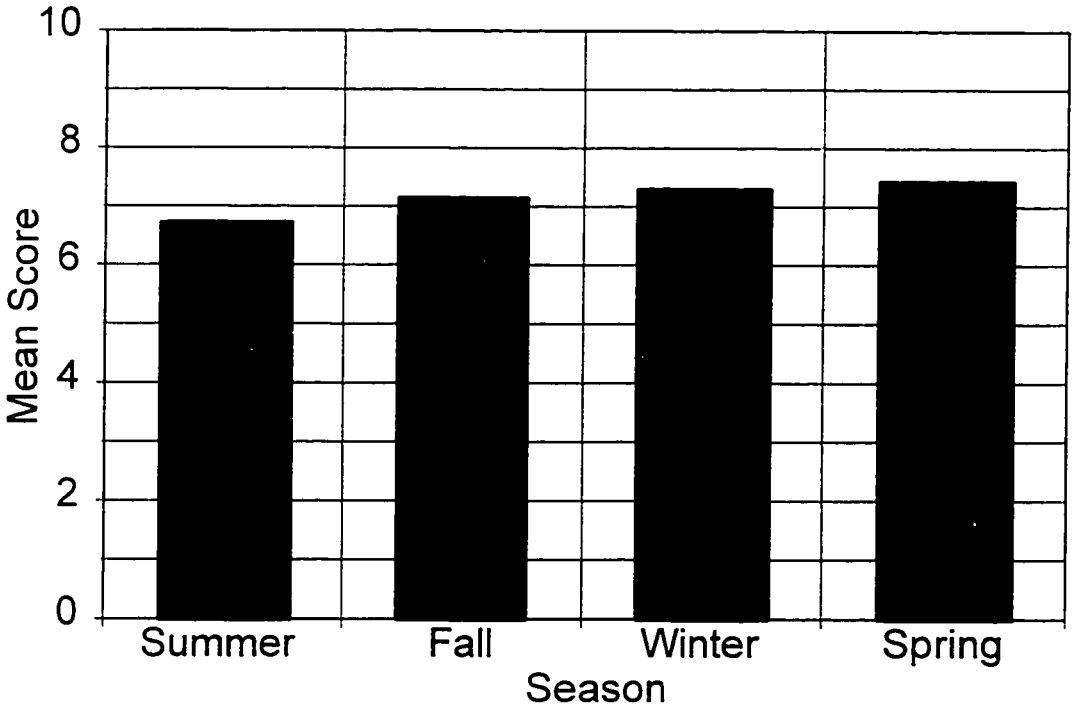
considered to be "somewhat important" when considering visiting the park during the summer season.

Question 26 examined the importance of institutional variables on the decision to visit the park during the four different seasons. It asked, "Assuming that the park is open year round, how important would factors like school and work commitments be in your future decisions to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park during the following seasons?"

The season in which institutional variables were the least important on the decision to visit the park was summer with a mean score of 6.73. This was slightly higher than the mean score for summer when measuring the importance of natural variables by season. Summer was followed by fall with a mean score of 7.15, winter (7.31), and spring (7.44) (see Figure 5.9).

A total factor score was calculated for both questions by summing the scores for each season and dividing the total by 4. While this procedure suffers from the limitation of obscuring the importance of the variables by different seasons, it offers the opportunity to compare the relative importance of natural and institutional variables on the decision to visit Fort Edmonton. The total mean score for natural variables was 7.17, indicating an average overall evaluation of the importance of natural variables as being "somewhat important" in respondents' decisions to visit the park. The total mean score for institutional variables was 7.16, indicating an average overall evaluation of the importance of institutional variables as being "somewhat important." This early analysis suggests that both natural and institutional variables were considered to be quite similar with regards to their importance when respondents consider visiting Fort Edmonton Park.

Figure 5.9. Mean scores measuring the importance of institutional variables on the decision to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park during different seasons.



The above item-by-item analysis provides descriptive information about how each specific variable is experienced by respondents in the survey sample. This type of analysis, however, operates at a high level of detail. Not only may the results be affected by the wording of an item, but items may be viewed as only superficial indicators of underlying phenomena which, by definition, are of more interest to the social scientist (Jackson, 1993). It is therefore useful to examine the data using different approaches to obtain varying insights into how people perceive seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park. The next section examines the data at an intermediate level of aggregation by using factor analysis to condense many variables into a few common underlying constructs.

5.4 Factor Analysis

Factor analysis was performed using the six variables from question 24 of the *1997 Fort Edmonton Park Visitor Satisfaction Survey.* Dimensions of variables that influenced visitation to Fort Edmonton Park were identified using varimax rotated factor analysis. In a varimax rotation, the calculations are done to maximize the tendency of each variable to load highly on only one factor. Factor analysis is a technique for condensing many variables into a few underlying constructs. Two dimensions emerged from a factor analysis of the data (see Table 1).

Table 1. Rotated Factor Analysis of Question 24: 6 Items.

Variables/Items	Factor 1 Secondary Factor	Factor 2 Primary Factor
Factor 1:		
Sunlight/Cloud Cover	**.77918**	-.18936
Temperature	**.68065**	.14143
Long Weekends/Public Holidays	**.60013**	.33789
Factor 2:		
Work Commitments	.06614	**.77222**
School Commitments	.01718	**.74893**
Precipitation	.42163	**.47203**

A factor loading is a measure of the association between a variable and the factor of which it is a component. Factor loadings range from -1.0 to 1.0. Zero would indicate no association; 1 would indicate a perfect association. The sign of the loading indicates whether the association is positive or negative. Rotated factor 1 appears to be associated with variables that measure the importance of natural factors like sunlight/cloud cover and temperature. The variable "sunlight/cloud cover" had the highest loading of .78 on factor 1. The second highest loading on factor 1 was .68 for the variable "temperature." The variable that had the third highest loading on factor 1 was "long weekends/public holidays" with a factor score of 6.0.

Rotated factor 2 appears to be mostly associated with variables that measure the importance of institutional factors like work and school commitments. The variable "work commitments" had the highest loading of .77 on factor 2. The variable "school commitments" had the second highest loading of .75 on factor 2, and the variable "precipitation" loaded .47 on factor 2.

Originally it was expected that the variables with the highest positive loading on factor 1 would include "sunlight/cloud cover," "temperature," and "precipitation" to make up a dimension related to visitation to Fort Edmonton Park known as a natural factor. It was then expected that the variables with the highest positive loading on factor 2 would include "work commitments," "school commitments," and "long weekends/public holidays" to comprise a second dimension known as an institutional factor. However, the actual findings given above do not appear to be consistent with previous assumptions regarding natural and institutional factors that effect visitation to

Fort Edmonton Park. The first factor is comprised of two natural variables (temperature and sunlight/cloud cover) and one institutional variable (long weekends/public holidays) while the second factor is made up of two institutional variables (work commitments and school commitments) and one natural variable (precipitation).

Upon further analysis, rotated factor 1 appears almost exclusively associated with variables that respondents rated as having a moderate influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park, while rotated factor 2 appears almost exclusively associated with variables that respondents rated as having a very important influence on their decision. The frequency distribution of responses (Figures 5.2 to 5.7) revealed that responses were much more evenly distributed along the 10 point Likert scale for the variables sunlight/cloud cover, temperature, and long weekends/public holidays. This suggests that these variables only moderately influenced respondents' decisions to visit Fort Edmonton Park. Therefore, it is suggested that the above three variables had a less extreme influence upon visitation to Fort Edmonton Park and are associated with an underlying dimension known as a secondary factor.

Conversely, the frequency distributions for the variables work commitments, school commitments, and precipitation (Figures 5.2, 5.3, and 5.6) revealed a much more extreme pattern of responses with a higher ratio of respondents assigning values of 10 and fewer respondents assigning middle range values between 2 to 8. This result indicates that these variables had a strong influence on respondents' decisions to visit Fort Edmonton Park. It is therefore suggested that the variables of work commitments, school commitments, and precipitation are associated with a second underlying dimension

known as a primary factor.

In the factor analysis, each variable was placed in the group (factor) on which it had its highest loading. Not all variables, however, loaded strongly on only one factor. For example, the variable precipitation loaded moderately on both factor 1 (.42) and factor 2 (.47). Because it loaded slightly higher on the second grouping, it was assigned to factor 2. It must be taken into consideration that this small difference may not be statistically significant. The distribution of responses for the precipitation variable resembled the distributions of the factor 1 variables, and yet it had the same factor 2 characteristic of having many responses of 10 on the 10 point scale. Therefore, the variable of precipitation loaded moderately on both factors due to its association with the underlying dimensions of more than one group.

The findings of this factor analysis suggest that there are primary and secondary factors that have varying degrees of influence on visitation to Fort Edmonton Park and that these factors consist of a combination of natural and institutional variables. These findings provide insight into the original objective which was to develop an understanding of the relative influence of natural and institutional variables in the decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park. The results of this factor analysis should be interpreted with caution due to the small sample size (N = 118) and the limited scope of the data (six variables). Furthermore, blind faith must not be placed in the noted characteristics of the variable groupings. It must be noted that the factors were described in the context of the author's subjective evaluation of the nature of the variables involved. All variables are of a complex nature in the sense that there may be several different

motivations, attitudes, and experiences regarding visitation to Fort Edmonton Park. The following findings of cluster analysis and the qualitative analysis of interviews will shed further light on the relationship between natural and institutional variables and seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.

5.5.1 Cluster Analysis

Cluster analysis was used as an alternative analysis to identify sub-groups of people characterized by similarities in the combinations of variables they reported as having a strong influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park and the importance of natural and institutional variables on their decision to visit the park during the four distinct seasons. Cluster analysis was conducted using the SPSS Quick Cluster program (SPSS Inc., 1986, pp. 791-798). The procedure was carried out for two through five clusters due to the fact that more than five would result in an insignificant number of respondents in certain clusters.

Selecting an appropriate number of clusters can be a problem in cluster analysis. The small sample size of the study limited the number of meaningful clusters that could be analysed. A 4-cluster solution was rejected for a cluster analysis on question 24 (see Appendix A) because one group contained only 10 respondents while a 2-cluster solution contained a single group with more than 65% of the total number of respondents. Likewise, the clusters for questions 25 and 26 (see Appendix A) were subjectively selected taking into consideration acceptable distributions of respondents that made intuitive sense and lent themselves to practical interpretation.

5.5.2 Cluster Analysis of Question 24 (Natural and Institutional Variables)

For question 24, a 3-cluster solution was selected for analysis and examined in further detail with respect to mean scores on each of the six items comprised of natural and institutional variables. Table 2 identifies the mean score for each cluster along with the total mean score for the sample of 118 respondents. From this table it is possible to distinguish how each cluster rated a particular item and how they differed from other groups of respondents (see Table 2).

Table 2. Item Means for the Three Clusters (Question 24 - Importance of Natural and Institutional Variables).

Items/Variables	Cluster 1 (n = 39)	Cluster 2 (n = 56)	Cluster 3 (n = 23)	Total Mean Score
School Commitments	2.1026	9.1607	2.3043	5.45
Precipitation	7.9487	8.2500	4.9130	7.50
Long Weekends/ Public Holidays	6.8250	6.8750	2.8261	6.07
Temperature	7.3333	7.6429	5.4348	7.08
Work Commitments	6.4872	8.8214	7.8261	7.86
Sunlight/Cloud Cover	5.9231	4.5357	2.0687	4.62

A brief description of each cluster is as follows:

Cluster 1: This cluster was made up of 39 respondents, or 33.1% of the total sample of 118. This group found that five of the six variables had a moderate to

strong influence on their decision to visit the park. The one variable that did not influence their decision at all was school commitments.

Cluster 2: (n = 56; 47.5%). This large group found that school and work commitments had a very strong influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton. Precipitation also had a very strong influence for this group. While not quite as strong as the other variables, long weekends/public holidays and temperature were still reported as being relatively important. The variable sunlight/cloud cover had only a weak to moderate influence on visitation for this group. It is interesting to note that the mean scores for five of the six items were above the average scores for the sample as a whole.

Cluster 3: (n = 23; 19.5%). This smaller group reported that five of the six variables did not strongly influence their decision to visit the park. Mean scores for all items were below the average scores for the sample as a whole and the only variable that had a strong influence on the decision of visitation was work commitments.

This cluster analysis of question 24 revealed that sub-groups of people within the sample perceived variables that influence visitation to the park differently. The first two clusters were influenced by a combination of natural and institutional variables that cut across the dimensions that emerged from factor analysis. The large group in cluster 2 felt that every factor, with the exception of sunlight/cloud cover, had a strong to very strong influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton, while cluster 3 found that only one of

the six variables had a significant influence on their decision. These findings may represent interesting management implications. For example, cluster analysis uncovered a relatively homogeneous group of respondents (cluster 3) that felt uninfluenced by the variables presented in question 24. This cluster represents a specific market segment that felt uninhibited by natural and institutional variables and therefore they may be more easily persuaded to visit the park outside of the summer season.

5.5.3 Cluster Membership of Question 24

Variations in cluster membership was measured by examining the composition of each cluster according to whether the respondent was a tourist versus a local resident or male versus female visitor. The variations in cluster membership by gender and origin of residence is provided in Table 3. This information was gathered by first labelling cases in each cluster analysis according to the aforementioned variables and then tallying the cluster information for each case from the cluster analysis output (see Table 3). The overall sample (n = 118) was comprised of 55 males (46.6%) and 63 females (53.4%) and 58 local residents (49.2%) and 60 tourists (50.8%). The age of each respondent would have provided further insight into the composition of each cluster but unfortunately, this information was not provided.

Table 3. Variations in Cluster Membership by Gender and Origin (Local Versus Tourist) for Question 24 (Importance of Natural and Institutional Variables)

	Cluster 1 ***(n = 39)***	**Cluster 2** ***(n = 56)***	**Cluster 3** **(n = 23)**
Gender			
Male	15	28	12
Female	24	28	11
Origin			
Local	21	27	10
Tourist	18	29	13

Table 3 revealed that the variation in gender for cluster 1 was somewhat significant with the 39 members of the cluster being comprised of 15 males and 24 females. Yet, it must be taken into consideration that the total sample consisted of slightly more females than males. These findings revealed that variations in cluster membership by gender and origin were not significant for question 24.

5.5.4 Cluster Analysis of Question 25 (Importance of Natural Variables by Season)

For question 25, a 2-cluster solution was selected for analysis due to the fact that a 3-cluster solution resulted in a third group of only 10 respondents. Question 25 asked respondents to rate how natural variables like weather conditions would influence their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park during each distinct season assuming the park was open year round. Two distinctly different groups emerged from the data (see Table 4).

Table 4 identifies the mean score on each item for each cluster along with the total mean score of the sample.

Table 4. Item Means for the Two Clusters (Question 25 - The Influence of Natural Variables on Visitation During Each Season).

Items/Seasons	Cluster 1 (n = 89)	Cluster 2 (n = 29)	Total Mean Score
Spring	8.3483	3.6552	7.19
Summer	7.3258	3.7241	6.44
Fall	8.0000	3.4828	6.89
Winter	8.8652	5.8966	8.14

Cluster 1 contained 75.4% of the total sample with 89 respondents. This large sub-group stated that natural variables (i.e., weather conditions) had a very important influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton during all four seasons. Summer received the lowest mean score for this cluster, although a score of 7.3 indicated that natural variables are still considered to be an important factor when deciding to visit the park during the summer.

Cluster 2 contained only 29 respondents representing 24.6% of the sample. Unlike the first group, cluster 2 rated the influence of natural variables as being "not important" when considering visitation to Fort Edmonton during the four different seasons. Natural variables were somewhat important when considering visiting the park in winter, although the mean score of 5.9 was well below the total mean score of 8.1.

5.5.5 Cluster Membership of Question 25

The variations in cluster membership by gender and origin of residence for question 25 is provided in Table 5. The members of the first cluster felt that natural variables had a very important influence on their decision to visit the park during all four seasons. The cluster membership findings revealed that the variation in gender for cluster 1 was somewhat significant with the 89 members of the cluster being comprised of 49 females and only 39 males. Yet before it can be assumed that females are more likely to report that natural variables strongly influence their decision to visit Fort Edmonton during all four seasons, it must again be taken into consideration that the total sample was comprised of eight more females than males. Overall, the variations in cluster membership by gender and origin were not significant for question 25.

Table 5. Variations in Cluster Membership by Gender and Origin (Local Versus Tourist) for Question 25 (Importance of Natural Variables by Season)

	Cluster 1 (n = 89)	**Cluster 2** (n = 29)
Gender		
Male	39	16
Female	49	13
Origin		
Local	41	17
Tourist	45	15

5.5.6 Cluster Analysis of Question 26 (Importance of Institutional Variables by Season)

Analysis of question 26 resulted in a 3-cluster solution with very distinct groups of respondents (see Table 6). For this question respondents were asked to rate the importance of institutional variables (i.e., school and work commitments) on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton during the four seasons of the year assuming the park was open year round. Table 6 identifies the mean score on each item for each cluster along with the total mean score of the sample.

Table 6. Item Means for the Three Clusters (Question 26 - The Influence of Institutional Variables on Visitation During Each Season).

Items/Seasons	Cluster 1 (n = 65)	Cluster 2 (n = 33)	Cluster 3 (n = 20)	Total Mean Score
Spring	9.4154	7.0909	1.6000	7.44
Summer	9.0308	5.1212	1.9000	6.73
Fall	9.3846	6.1515	1.5500	7.15
Winter	9.3385	6.8182	1.5500	7.31

Cluster 1 (n = 65; 55.1%) consisted of respondents who rated institutional variables as having a very important influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park during every season of the year. The results in Table 2 reveal that the mean scores are above 9 for each season in cluster 1 indicating that this large sub-group of the sample

felt that institutional variables play a very important part in their decision to visit the park during any season.

Cluster 2 (n = 33; 28%) consisted of respondents who rated institutional variables as having a somewhat important influence on their decision to visit during different seasons, with the exception of summer where the mean score was 5.1, indicating that institutional variables were only moderately important during this season.

Cluster 3 (n = 20; 17%) emerged to be quite different than the other two groups when rating the importance of institutional variables during different seasons. The mean scores for each season were below 2 and well below the mean scores for the whole population. This indicated that the 20 respondents of cluster 3 found that institutional variables were not important when they considered visiting the park during different seasons.

5.5.7 Cluster Membership of Question 26

The only notable variation in cluster membership for question 26 occurred in the gender composition of cluster 1 which was comprised of 38 females and 27 males (see Table 7). The first cluster was comprised of respondents who rated institutional variables like school and work commitments as having a very important influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park during every season of the year. Since this group was made up of 11 more females than males, it could be suggested that females felt slightly more constrained by institutional variables than males when considering visitation to Fort Edmonton Park during every season of the year. Yet again, these results must be

interpreted with caution due to the higher representation of females in the sample. Table 7 reveals that there was very little variation in cluster membership for question 26.

Table 7. Variations in Cluster Membership by Gender and Origin (Local Versus Tourist) for Question 26 (Importance of Institutional Variables by Season)

	Cluster 1 (n = 65)	**Cluster 2 (n = 33)**	**Cluster 3 (n = 20)**
Gender			
Male	27	17	11
Female	38	16	9
Origin			
Local	33	15	10
Tourist	32	18	10

6. CHAPTER SIX

IN-DEPTH INTERVIEW FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 Introduction

The purpose of the qualitative component of the study was to develop a more in-depth understanding of selected individuals' perceptions and feelings toward seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park and to attain a better understanding of the relationship among natural and institutional variables and seasonal visitation. More specifically, interviews were used to develop an understanding of how natural and institutional variables were perceived as possible constraints to seasonal visitation. The data were analysed inductively using content analysis where quotations and content were selected from ten interviews to illustrate emergent themes.

Five themes emerged that described the relationships among natural and institutional variables as constraints, preferences, and visitation to Fort Edmonton. Four of the five themes are consistent with those Henderson and Bialeschki (1993) discovered in their study of women's leisure constraints. In every interview that was conducted natural and institutional variables that contributed to seasonality were perceived by interviewees as constraints to seasonal visitation. Similar to Henderson and Bialeschki's (1993) work on women's leisure constraints, these natural and institutional variables were experienced and expressed by interviewees as antecedent and intervening constraints which interacted with preferences and actual participation (in this case seasonal visitation). Each of these themes will be explored in further detail in the following

sections of this chapter:

1. Natural and institutional variables were both experienced as constraints to seasonal visitation. Although both sets of constraints interacted to influence seasonal visitation and preferences for seasonal visitation, natural variables were reported as having a much stronger influence.
2. Both natural and institutional variables were experienced as intervening and antecedent constraints. While intervening and antecedent constraints were distinct from one another, they were not mutually exclusive and interacted to influence preferences, negotiation, and participation with regards to seasonal visitation.
3. Constraints (natural and institutional variables) influenced preferences for seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.
4. Constraints impacted throughout the negotiating process as respondents made decisions about visiting the park during different seasons.
5. An interactive link between preferences and visitation was evident in the negotiation process (Henderson & Bialeschi, 1993).

6.2 The Relative Influence of Natural and Institutional Variables as Constraints to Seasonal Visitation

In the absence of substantial research, the tourism literature has assumed that tourism seasonality is caused by both natural and institutional factors (Allcock, 1989; Butler, 1994; Canadian Tourism Commission, 1996). The primary focus of the one-on-

one interviews was to explore the influence of natural and institutional variables on people's attitudes toward seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton. Respondents from the interviews gave reasons why they preferred to visit Fort Edmonton during a specific season and why visitation during other seasons was not desirable or even possible.

It was no surprise that nine of the ten interviewees reported that summer was the most desirable season to visit the park. When asked for reasons why they preferred to visit during the summer, most of the interviewees suggested that warm weather conditions played an important role in shaping their preferences for the summer season. For example, Susan suggested:

> Summer is my favourite time to come down here just because on a summer day you can really get the most out of your visit. You can walk around in comfort and take your time, go for an ice cream, visit all of the buildings, and enjoy the sunshine. I don't think that you could do things like that in the winter just because it would be too cold.

This woman obviously preferred the warm summer months to leisurely walk around the park and enjoy the weather as well as the park itself. She also points to the reality that Fort Edmonton is for the most part an outdoor attraction that requires that visitors be exposed to the natural elements. Because of this exposure to the natural elements, she felt that summer was the best season to visit while winter would be "too cold." This finding indicates that weather and climate is an integral part of the attraction. When asked about the possibility of visiting the park during the winter, another woman

expressed that "Personally, I don't think that I would be interested in coming here during the winter mainly because of the cold weather that we get. It just gets too cold during our winters and I couldn't see myself walking around down here in -30 weather!"

Another patron of the park explained that "nice weather" influenced his preference to visit during the summer. He also commented that Fort Edmonton is an outdoor attraction thereby requiring that visitors are exposed to the natural elements. John stated:

> I just think that the weather conditions during the summer would be ideal for a park like this. You would almost need nice weather to walk around and enjoy all of the sights since you are required to walk around the streets to the different buildings. I think that the summer would definitely be the best season to come for a visit.

Outside of summer, fall was reported as the second most favourable season to visit Fort Edmonton. The fall scenery and colors along with agreeable weather were stated as the main reasons why respondents felt that the fall season would be a good time to visit the park. Jane described her preference for the fall season as follows:

> I really enjoy the fall of the year - especially during the month of September when the leaves are turning and it is still not too cold outside. I think that walking around down here when the leaves are turning would be awfully pretty. It would be a chance to see what Edmonton was like in the 1800's during Autumn. I think that when people come here they forget that early settlers of Edmonton had to

endure the conditions all year round and that they had it pretty tough.

Another woman also felt that the fall season, as an extension of the summer season, would be an attractive time to visit. Diane stated:

> I think that fall would be a nice time to come here. Just because there would still be nice enough weather to walk around. The weather would still be reasonably good so that you could walk from place to place in comfort. I'd say outside of summer, the fall would be my next choice.

It was evident from these comments that a natural factor like cold temperatures was reported as the most frequent constraint to visitation outside of the summer season. When asked about their attitudes toward visiting the park in different seasons, every interviewee mentioned cold weather and undesirable weather conditions as main constraints. For example, Lisa described her lack of interest in other seasons by stating:

> I think that the weather has a lot to do with it. And I'm sure that other people feel the same way. It's just not warm enough here in the winter and even in the spring for people to walk around outside for long periods of time without suffering from the cold and snow. If this place were located in a place like Victoria somewhere, then I'm sure that people would be more willing to go visit during the winter because it wouldn't be so cold.

Natural variables (cold temperature and precipitation) as a constraint to seasonal visitation emerged as the most obvious theme from the data although institutional

variables as a constraint to visitation became more evident as respondents discussed their feelings toward visiting the park outside of the summer season. School and work commitments were the most frequently discussed institutional variables that inhibited respondents' decisions to visit the park during the off-season. For example, Lisa described her lack of leisure time during the fall, winter, and spring months:

> Being a student, most of my year is spent studying and concentrating on school. I'm trying to get into medical school so I've been really concentrating on getting good marks. So for most of the year, I don't have time to travel or get to see places like this because of school and the time that I have to put into it. When the summer comes, it's like a release valve from all of the pressures of school. It gives me a chance to get away and to travel and relax I guess.

The influence of seasonal work commitments and other time commitments were apparent as Greg, a teacher, discusses the possibility of taking his family to the park during the fall or winter:

> During the year I am busy with school and my teaching duties and I also coach my son's hockey team, which usually accounts for the holidays I have away from school. So it's not until school is over during summer holidays that I can get the chance to get out with my family and go to Fort Edmonton. We also do a fair amount of travelling during the summer which we wouldn't be able to do any other time of the year because of my commitments to work and other things.

The majority of the interviewees felt constrained either by work or school

commitments when considering visitation to the park outside of the summer season. Yet Sandra did not feel that her school commitments were a constraint to visiting the park. She stated:

> I don't think that school commitments would really get in the way for me. I just finished up at the U of A and I'm now going to Grant MacEwan and I'm able to manage my time effectively during the year. I usually have time during the weekends, so if I wanted to do something or go visit somewhere during the winter, I'm sure that I would have time to do so on my weekends.

Despite this view, seven out of the ten respondents identified and described either work and/or school commitments as contributing to time constraints which influenced off-season visitation to Fort Edmonton.

It is clear from the interviews that both natural and institutional variables led to specific constraints regarding off-season visitation to Fort Edmonton Park. The relative influence of natural and institutional variables and how they interacted in the negotiation and decision-making process will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.3 Interaction Between Antecedent and Intervening Constraints

It has been suggested that constraints intervene in the relationship between preferences and participation in a leisure activity. It has also been postulated that constraints are encountered at the *intrapersonal* level where leisure preferences are formed, at the *interpersonal* level as the result of interpersonal interaction or the

relationship between individuals' characteristics, and finally at the *structural* level as intervening factors between leisure preference and participation (Crawford et al., 1991; Jackson et al., 1993). In a study which explored women's leisure constraints, Henderson and Bialeschki (1993) used a classification system of *antecedent* and *intervening* constraints rather than intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural constraints. They suggested that "the two terms were broader and seemed to evolve naturally from the data" (1993, p. 237) while others have suggested that the two term classification system is less confusing and offered a way to clarify the complex interactive nature of constraints (Shaw, Bonen, & McCabe, 1991). Antecedent constraints have been defined as conscious and unconscious psychological states and/or sociological conditions that influenced one's preference or interest in leisure/recreation. Intervening constraints referred to those structural and interpersonal constraints which immediately had an impact on the decisions made regarding a leisure experience or recreation activity (Henderson and Bialeschki, 1993).

It was difficult to determine antecedent from intervening constraints based on an analysis of the responses. In certain situations they seemed to overlap and interact. For example, in three different instances respondents suggested that an antecedent stereotype of "cold Alberta winters" resulted in an intervening constraint of lack of opportunity to visit due to the cold weather in winter. John stated:

> I think a place like this is geared more towards summer activities. With the weather we get here in Alberta, I'm not sure if it would be a good place to come in the winter and there wouldn't be much to do, unless there was some kind of

festival or activities taking place. I think that the fall or spring would offer the opportunity to get out and enjoy the park, yet it still tends to get pretty nasty during those months of the year.

In similar fashion, Cindy was visiting from outside of the province and she alluded once again to the antecedent stereotype of "cold Alberta winters" which led to the intervening constraint of lack of opportunity:

> I'm sure that they couldn't have people (interpreters) working here in the winter because it would be too cold for them. And that's one of the things that makes this place interesting - the people who are dressed up and talk about the history kind of bring this place to life. I think that this place would look a little desolate in the winter and I've heard a lot about the Alberta winters that you get here. I think the cold weather would be a little too much for me, and besides, there just aren't many things you could do in the winter.

Antecedent and intervening constraints therefore appear to be interrelated and they both interact to influence preferences and participation. Many of the respondents seemed to have an aversion to outdoor activities in cold temperatures which influenced their preferences and resulted in a negative attitude toward visitation to the park in the winter. Lack of opportunity was an intervening constraint that also affected the relationship between preferences and participation. It also seemed that one type of constraint influenced the other. That is, the antecedent constraint of stereotypical "cold Alberta winters" seemed to be interrelated with and influence the intervening constraint

of lack of opportunity.

6.4 Interaction Between Constraints and Preferences for Seasonal Visitation

In their examination of how constraints influenced preferences, Henderson and Bialeschki (1993) suggested that preferences could be classified into at least three facets: no interest, distal interest (or mild interest), and proximate interest (enthusiastic interest). For the most part, interviewees expressed a mild to moderate interest when asked to describe their feelings toward visiting the park outside of the summer months. When asked to describe why they did not visit during the off-season, most described that significant natural and institutional variables (constraints) prevented them from visiting and that these constraints in turn led to a lack of preference. In other cases, interviewees expressed a lack of interest along with uncompelling evidence of constraints. For example, Bob expressed little interest in returning to visit the park a second or third time and therefore placed little importance in the variables of weather or work commitments. He explained his disinterest in returning to visit the park:

> I'm not sure. I think that when you visit a place like this once or twice, the novelty kind of wears off and you are no longer interested in visiting the place as much as you once were. I think that if you are only interested in visiting this place maybe once or twice, the best time to come would be during the best season of the year to do this kind of stuff, which is during the summer. The weather and other things aren't all that important to me because this will probably be one of the few times that I come here.

In this response the respondent is interpreted as having distal to no interest when it comes to visiting Fort Edmonton Park during different seasons. This lack of interest resulted in no or little preference to visit Fort Edmonton and therefore it is interpreted that the respondent expressed that antecedent and intervening constraints of natural and institutional variables were unimportant.

Greg expressed a distal interest in visiting the park during the Christmas holidays, but as he explored the idea further he simply dismissed the possibility due to lack of time and family commitments. He stated:

> Well, I think it would be a neat thing to do during Christmas or something. I think that this place has almost a Christmas feel. The old buildings and the history would make for a nice Christmas setting. But then again, there's just so much going on during the Christmas season with family and all of the running around.

Another respondent stereotyped Fort Edmonton as a summer attraction which could be considered an antecedent constraint to seasonal visitation and therefore resulted in a lack of preference to visit during the off-season. When asked about her thoughts concerning the possibility of visiting the park in the fall, Susan replied, "I guess that when someone thinks of Fort Edmonton, they associate going there in the summer time. I guess that I just think of going to Fort Edmonton as a summer activity and the thought of visiting during other times just doesn't occur to me."

Another interesting finding was evident in the fact that many of the interviewees

expressed that they were just not interested in visiting the park outside of the summer season and yet they felt that variables like weather conditions and time commitments were major constraints to off-season visitation. One woman stated "Personally, I don't think I would be interested in coming here during the winter mainly because of the cold weather that we get. I couldn't see myself walking around down here in -30 weather!" In this respect, the relationship between constraints and preferences was evident with variables being perceived as major constraints contributing to a distal preference or no preference at all.

6.5 Constraints Influenced the Negotiation Process for Off-Season Visitation

Once an individual develops a distal or proximate preference for participating in an activity, they are faced with a number of constraints which they must negotiate through before participation takes place. Crawford et al. (1991) suggested that the negotiating process is initiated as individuals determine the relationships among constraints, preferences, and participation. Despite having a reported interest in visiting the park during the off-season, many of the interviewees described constraints that influenced their decision-making process. Jill expressed a distal interest in visiting the park during the winter to attend a special event and went on to identify natural variables that prevented visitation:

> If there's events going on in the winter, then it would be interesting to come down. Maybe if there was a winter carnival with different things to do... though I wouldn't consider the winter as being an ideal time to visit the park. It would be

too cold to tour around.

Other interviewees explicitly described the decision-making process of seasonal visitation to include a complex interaction between natural and institutional variables. These variables became antecedent and intervening constraints to visitation that required negotiation which resulted in visitation or non-visitation. Lisa, who was visiting from outside the province, explained the complexity of the negotiating process taking into consideration her preferences, and natural and institutional variables:

> Well, usually during the fall and winter I'm busy with school. During the spring I usually take a break from school, but I usually try to head down south during that time. After a long winter I feel like getting out in the sun again, so for me, I don't think that the spring would be a good time to come to Edmonton to visit. This spring break I took a trip to California because I wanted to go south for some sun. I then planned a trip to Alberta in the summer because I have family here and I'm interested in exploring our country further. And I think the best time to do that is during the summer... I think that both of these things are important in determining when I travel and visit places like this. Usually the only time I get to do stuff like this is during the summer and that's because I'd rather the weather in the summer... but also because it's the only time that I can get to actually do these things.

When asked to discuss the relative influence of weather conditions and work commitments, John, who is an Edmonton resident with a family of three, described the

interaction between these intervening constraints and how they both influenced participation:

> It's hard to say. The weather definitely has a lot to do with our decision to visit here because with children, it's important that the weather is decent in order to engage in any type of outdoor activity. But work also restricts the time of year that I get to take my family on special outings. You know, sure, we do lots of things as a family throughout the year, but it seems that the summer is the time when we really all get together and visit the zoo, the park here, the river valley. Having the summers off gives me time to spend with my family.

Although natural and institutional variables were reported as explicit intervening constraints to off-season visitation, they were also apparent as antecedent constraints that indirectly influenced the decision of visiting Fort Edmonton outside of the summer season. The above findings support Henderson and Bialeschki's (1993) claims that "constraints and the negotiation process were interacting with one another and were dynamic in their interaction" (p. 244). Interviewees discussed a combination of natural and institutional variables which ultimately influenced their decision making process regarding off-season visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.

6.6 Interactive Links Between Preference and Seasonal Visitation

To this point it has been suggested that constraints influenced preferences, negotiation, and off-season visitation to Fort Edmonton Park. The data have also

revealed, albeit in a limited capacity, that an interactive link exists between preferences and seasonal visitation. This relationship between preferences and participation is a symbiotic one where preferences influence visitation and visitation influences preferences. For example, Susan recalled visiting the park during Christmas which negatively influenced her attitude and preference for visiting during that time:

> We've mostly been here during the summer months because it's the best time of the year weather wise. We once came down during Christmas and the cold was unbearable. I didn't really enjoy it that much... I'm not sure if I would do it again. Today is an ideal day for something like this - a little cloudy, not too hot so you can walk around in comfort and enjoy the sights and sounds.

In another case, visiting the park during the fall season resulted in a favourable preference and attitude toward visitation during that time:

> I was here two years ago in October and I think I enjoyed it more than coming here in the summer... Why? It wasn't as hot and there weren't as many kids. It also wasn't as overcrowded. You could poke around a little more and ask questions without all of the traffic. It was a little cooler, which is how I prefer it. Weather like today is just a little too hot for me. Especially when I'm out doing things like this.

In this case, fall visitation led to a preference to visit Fort Edmonton during that specific time of the year. Although the evidence is not overwhelming in this study, a few specific cases point to an interactive link between preferences and participation. Attitudes, which

help to form preferences, are important determinants of behaviour and participation in certain activities. Likewise, participating in an activity can determine and influence people's attitudes and preferences. In a discussion of how participating in a travel experience can lead to attitude change, Mayo and Jarvis (1981) state that:

> Sometimes the unique experience of travel itself can create a state of mind that lowers the mental barriers to resist attitude change. For many, travel is clearly linked to changes in attitudes... An opportune time for changing people's attitudes toward various travel services, therefore, may be when they are travelling away from home.

This attitude change through participation applies not only to tourists who may be visiting Fort Edmonton Park, but also to local visitors who may decide to visit outside of the summer season.

This chapter provided the opportunity to develop a further understanding of the relationship among natural and institutional variables and how these variables were perceived as possible constraints to seasonal visitation. Henderson and Bialeschki's (1993) qualitative analysis of women's leisure constraints provided a constructive framework in understanding how natural and institutional variables are perceived as antecedent and intervening constraints that influenced preferences, negotiation, and seasonal visitation. In the final chapter, the themes from this qualitative analysis along with the findings from chapter four will be used to develop a model of seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.

7. CHAPTER SEVEN

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1.1 Summary

The central purpose of this study was to develop an understanding of seasonal visitation to the urban tourist attraction of Fort Edmonton Park in Edmonton, Alberta. Within this purpose there were three underlying objectives:

1. To explore the variables related to seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park using four different methodological approaches: descriptive analysis of surveys, factor analysis, cluster analysis, and content analysis of one-on-one interviews.

2. To develop an understanding of how natural and institutional variables were perceived as possible constraints to seasonal visitation from the perspective of the visitor.

3. To understand the relative influence of natural and institutional variables in the decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park during different times of the year from the perspective of the visitor.

This study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative component of the study included a closed-ended questionnaire survey that was developed by the author. The survey instrument consisted of questions concerning the respondent's feelings toward natural and institutional variables that influenced their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park and how strongly these variables influenced their decision to visit or not visit in each season of the year. After an initial examination of the descriptive data, factor analysis and cluster analysis were preformed to examine the relationship between natural and institutional variables and seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park. Factor analysis was used to identify similar types of variables, while

cluster analysis was used to group similar people who shared common perceptions and experiences of these constraints or variables.

The qualitative component of the study included one-on-one personal interviews featuring open ended questions so as to develop an understanding of how natural and institutional variables were perceived as possible constraints to seasonal visitation. The data were analyzed inductively using content analysis (the process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data from interviews).

7.1.2 Findings

In chapter four, 1996 monthly admissions revealed that Fort Edmonton Park represents an urban tourist attraction characterized by extreme seasonal variation in visitation. Visitation patterns to Fort Edmonton Park revealed a main summer peak season of visitation (May to August) followed by a dramatic decline in visitors during the rest of the year.

In chapter five, varimax rotated factor analysis revealed that two different dimensions emerged from a combination of six natural and institutional variables. The first dimension appeared to be associated with a combination of natural and institutional variables that respondents rated as having a moderate influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park and was identified as a secondary factor due to its moderate influence on visitation. The second dimension appeared to be associated with a combination of natural and institutional variables that respondents rated as having a very important influence on their decision and was identified as a primary factor due to its

strong influence on visitation.

A cluster analysis of the same six variables used in the factor analysis revealed that three sub-groups of people within the sample perceived variables that influenced visitation to the park differently. The first two clusters were influenced by a combination of natural and institutional variables that cut across the dimensions that emerged from factor analysis. The large group in cluster 2 felt that every factor, with the exception of sunlight/cloud cover, had a strong to very strong influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton, while two smaller clusters of respondents found that the variables only slightly to moderately influenced their decision.

When asked to rate the influence of natural variables on the decision to visit the park during each season, two significantly distinct clusters emerged from the data. One large sub-group containing 75.4% of the total sample stated that natural variables (i.e., weather conditions) had a very important influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton during all four seasons. The second cluster, which contained 24.6% of the sample, rated the influence of natural variables as being "not important" when considering visitation to Fort Edmonton during the four different seasons.

When asked to rate the influence of institutional variables on the decision to visit the park during each season, three distinct clusters emerged from the sample. The first cluster, which represented 55.1% of the total sample, rated institutional variables as having a very important influence on their decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park during every season of the year. Cluster 2 (n = 33; 28%) rated institutional variables as having a somewhat important influence on their decision to visit during different seasons, with the

exception of summer where institutional variables were only moderately important during this season. Cluster 3 (n = 20; 17%) indicated that institutional variables were not important when they considered visiting the park during different seasons.

The qualitative analysis of chapter six revealed five themes that described the relationships among natural and institutional variables as constraints, preferences, and visitation to Fort Edmonton. The last four of the following five themes were consistent with those Henderson and Bialeschki (1993) discovered in their study of women's leisure constraints. These themes included:

1. Natural and institutional variables were both experienced as constraints to seasonal visitation. Although both sets of constraints interacted to influence seasonal visitation and preferences for seasonal visitation, natural variables were reported as having a much stronger influence.
2. Both natural and institutional variables were experienced as intervening and antecedent constraints. While intervening and antecedent constraints were distinct from one another, they were not mutually exclusive and interacted to influence preferences, negotiation, and participation with regards to seasonal visitation.
3. Constraints (natural and institutional variables) influenced preferences for seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park.
4. Constraints impacted throughout the negotiating process as respondents made decisions about visiting the park during different seasons.
5. An interactive link between preferences and visitation was evident in the negotiation process (Henderson & Bialeschki, 1993).

7.2.1 Theoretical Contributions

The results from the four different types of data analysis (descriptive analysis of surveys, factor analysis, cluster analysis, and in-depth interview content analysis) provided varying insights into how natural and institutional variables influenced people's decisions to visit Fort Edmonton Park during different seasons. Despite the limitations of the study, which included a small non-representative sample of respondents and an examination of a limited range of variables associated with seasonal visitation, the findings represent a step toward a greater understanding of the often mentioned, but rarely analyzed topic of seasonal visitation to tourist attractions.

This case study method which incorporated both quantitative and qualitative approaches led to an overlapping of different facets of the phenomenon of seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton. For example, both the quantitative and qualitative analysis found that a combination of natural and institutional variables influenced seasonal visitation to the park.

Each method also resulted in unique findings which shed further light on seasonal visitation and offered different perspectives. Factor analysis was a useful approach for describing the underlying structure of the phenomenon of seasonal visitation to the park. It also reduced six variables into two internally cohesive dimensions that included a combination of natural and institutional variables. Cluster analysis provided the opportunity to examine how individuals and groups of people encountered varying arrays of variables that influenced seasonal visitation (Jackson, 1993). The quantitative component of this study has supported earlier work in the area of tourism seasonality

which stated that seasonality is brought about by a number of natural and institutional factors (Allcock, 1989; BarOn, 1975; Butler, 1994). Previous studies have made broad generalizations about the causes and consequences of seasonality on a national or macro scale with no insight into seasonal visitation at a local or micro level. The use of cluster analysis provided the opportunity to investigate how individuals and similar groups of people shared similar attitudes toward seasonal visitation to a specific tourist attraction.

Content analysis of interviews provided a much more in-depth analysis of how people perceived natural and institutional variables as constraints to seasonal visitation and provided rich data that parallelled the earlier work of Henderson and Bialeschki (1993).

Based on the analysis of the findings that emerged in this study, a model of seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park was developed (see Figure 7.1). The model summarizes the complimentary quantitative and qualitative findings that suggest seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park is influenced by a combination of natural and institutional variables. It also suggests that these variables were experienced as constraints and that there was an interactive relationship among constraints, preferences, and seasonal visitation.

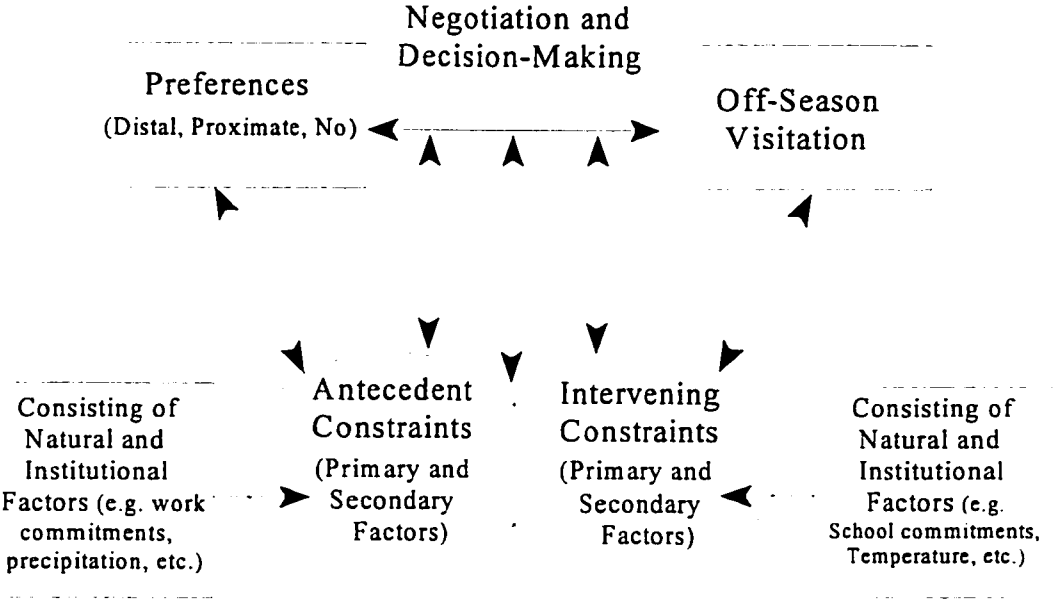
Similar to Henderson and Bialeschki's (1993) findings, the model summarizes the five themes into a framework "that suggests constraints are not sequential and hierarchical, but dynamic and integrated" (p. 247). The findings of this study suggest that natural and institutional variables are both experienced as antecedent and intervening constraints to off-season visitation to Fort Edmonton Park and that some people feel more constrained by these variables than others. Also, natural and institutional variables

influenced preferences and impacted the negotiation process as people made decisions regarding seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton.

This study has also made a contribution to the growing body of knowledge of leisure constraints research by incorporating previous leisure constraints theories to study a poorly understood, yet important facet of the tourism industry. Henderson and Bialeschki's (1993) model of women's leisure constraints has evolved to incorporate information regarding people's perceptions and attitudes toward seasonal visitation to a specific tourism attraction and the constraints that must be negotiated in order for seasonal visitation to occur.

A further development of the seasonal visitation model highlights the existence of primary and secondary factors that become antecedent and intervening constraints to seasonal visitation. Factor analysis of natural and institutional variables in chapter 5 revealed two underlying dimensions related to seasonal visitation. The first dimension (comprised of the variables work commitments, school commitments, and precipitation) was identified as a primary factor which was characterized by its extreme importance upon the decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park. The second dimension, identified as a secondary factor, was characterized by its moderate importance upon the decision to visit Fort Edmonton Park and consisted of the variables sunlight/cloud cover, temperature, and long weekends/public holidays. It is suggested that primary and secondary factors may consist of different variables for different people. These primary and secondary factors become antecedent and intervening constraints and have varying degrees of influence on visitation to Fort Edmonton Park (see Figure 7.1).

Figure 7.1. A model of seasonal visitation to Fort Edmonton Park based on people's experiences (adapted from Henderson and Bialeschki's expanded model of leisure constraints based on women's experiences).



7.2.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Considering the investments that have been made in attempting to reduce the level of seasonality in destinations across the world, it would seem appropriate for more attention to be given to research which might explain the phenomenon before continuing to attempt to modify what is essentially a poorly understood facet of tourism (Butler, 1994). There has been little development of theory or concepts pertaining to the topic of seasonality and the relationship between seasonality and motivation and preferences of visitors has not been explored. Given the concern over seasonality and its perceived negative effects upon tourism and tourism attractions, this exploratory study represents a

step towards a greater understanding of constraints to seasonal visitation and the importance of natural and institutional variables on people's decisions to visit Fort Edmonton Park during the off-season. Although this exploratory study has revealed relationships among natural and institutional variables and constraints, preferences, and seasonal visitation, there is a need for a stronger element of causal investigation to address the underlying causes of seasonality.

There is also a need to examine a wider range of variables in examining seasonal visitation to tourist attractions. The diversity of people's lives must be acknowledged in future studies. It is important to examine particular groups of people and their perceived constraints toward seasonal visitation related to such aspects as age, socioeconomic level, and race. Furthermore, there is a need to examine the seasonality of tourism at a higher level of aggregation than the one presented in this study. Future research inclusive of a similar study with a larger number of respondents would build on the findings presented in this study and possibly provide impetus for further research.

7.3.1 Applied Recommendations

A review of the related literature has revealed that the seasonal nature of tourism is generally regarded as a problem of considerable magnitude for tourism destinations, attractions, and operators. In fact, a considerable amount of the seasonality literature is devoted to strategic responses aimed at reducing the level of seasonality and does so from the point of view of the marketing and management of tourist destinations and attractions

(BarOn, 1975; Cahill, 1987; Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs, 1991; Edgell, 1990; Go, 1989; Jefferson & Lickorish, 1988; Laws, 1991; Manning & Powers, 1984; McEnnif, 1992; Meredith, 1997; Murray, 1997; Owens, 1994). An attraction characterized by extreme seasonal variation in visitation like Fort Edmonton Park can work toward stimulating demand during off-peak periods which may result in a number of potential benefits. These benefits include increased profitability, continuous employment as opposed to part-time seasonal use of resources, a less congested and crowded holiday environment during the peak and off-season leading to higher customer satisfaction, and higher service standards and an improved quality tourism product (Meredith, 1997).

There have been four principal strategies for the purpose of counteracting the seasonality of tourism. They include: state encouragement or facilitation of the 'staggering' of holidays, variation of the product-mix, diversification of the market, and differential pricing strategies (Allcock, 1989). Legislation directed towards changing the timing of school and public holidays is still somewhat in the experimental stage with European countries leading the way. Critics contend that such legislation will not effectively lead to an improvement in the seasonality of tourist demand (Allcock, 1989; BarOn, 1975; Butler, 1994). In response to the strategy of staggering school holidays, Butler (1994, p. 336) argues that it is unlikely that there would be no seasonal fluctuations in tourism due to the fact that:

> some people would not wish to go at alternative times, some would find the off-season weather at some destinations to be unattractive, and a full range of services and attractions may not be available in destination areas. Finally, there may be

reaction in host communities against a lengthening of the season or the attraction of more visitors at non-traditional times; thus policies designed to reduce seasonality need the support of destination area communities if they are to be successful in all aspects.

One of the more commonly used strategies used to alter seasonal visitation deals with variation of the product mix (Jefferson & Lickorish, 1988; Leuty & Moore, 1997; Manning & Powers, 1984; Meredith, 1997; Ritchie & Beliveau, 1974; Zaru, 1997). Allcock (1989, p. 389) describes variation of the product-mix as "the creation and marketing of attractions additional to those which provided the focus for the original development." A recent example involves a destination or attraction's use of heritage tourism and festival events to extend the tourism season past the summer months (Leuty & Moore, 1997; Zaru, 1997). Many of the interviewees in chapter six expressed an interest in visiting Fort Edmonton Park during the winter season to attend a special event or festival. Variation of Fort Edmonton Park's product mix through the promotion of festivals and special events is a potentially important strategy for increasing off-season visitation to the park. Off-season business can be generated around significant sporting events, major exhibitions, arts festivals, religious celebrations and important anniversaries (Jefferson & Lickorish, 1988). Ritchie and Beliveau (1974) have found that the "hallmark event" known as the Quebec Winter Carnival acts as an important strategy which "contributes significantly to the offsetting cyclical lack of demand in the tourism market" (p. 18). As it now stands, Fort Edmonton Park does offer special off-season

events such as the Harvest Fair in the fall, special Halloween celebrations, along with special events during the Christmas season. Yet an examination of seasonal visitation to the park reveals that this strategy could be used more extensively to generate further off-season visitation.

The strategy of variation of the product mix concentrates upon the marketing and promotion of attractions and the destination area rather than the consumer. The success of such off-season special events is determined by a number of factors, two of which may be related to natural and institutional variables which have been the focus of this study. Furthermore, Butler (1994, p. 336) argues that "many efforts have been made to diversify the appeal of attractions and destinations, presumably on the assumption that if they are made more attractive in relatively unattractive seasons, then tourists will come. This assumption would appear not to be entirely accurate."

A third strategy used to increase off-season demand and counteract seasonality is known as the diversification of the market where the attempt is made to present a product to new potential purchasers or to people who may have a more favourable attitude toward purchasing a certain product. Diversification of the market has been documented by a number of authors as a popular strategy to counteract seasonality (Bonn et al., 1990; Canadian Tourism Commission, 1996; Loverseed, 1993; McEniff, 1992; Owens, 1994; Sorensen, 1993; Spotts & Mahoney, 1993; Whelihan & Chon, 1991). It is suggested that attractions like Fort Edmonton Park can extend their seasons by not only offering a more diverse product line, but by also appealing to multiple market segments (Owens, 1994). Key market segments like senior citizens and "empty nesters", a group comprised of

people usually over 45 years of age whose children have left home and the mortgage is probably paid, may be identified which can be persuaded to visit the park at any time of the year.

The results from cluster analysis revealed groups of people who felt relatively unconstrained by either natural or institutional variables in certain seasons when considering a visit to the park. In this respect, large scale cluster analysis would seem to offer considerable potential with regards to target marketing by identifying large groups of people with a propensity to visit the park during the off-season. In-depth interviews also identified people who felt that the fall season was an attractive time of the year to visit the park. In a study of the fall tourism market, Spotts and Mahoney (1993) concluded that the fall market is distinct and is not homogeneous in character and that fall tourism marketing, to be successful, requires deliberate, targeted, and carefully timed strategy, as opposed to the mere extension of the summer season. It must also be taken into account that a strong preference to visit the park during the off-season may not result in actual off-season visitation. This study has shown that there are a number of perceived constraints to off-season visitation that must be negotiated through before an actual preference results in participation.

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APPENDIX A

The purpose of the following questions is to find out what times of the year that you visit Fort Edmonton Park and to clarify the factors that may influence your future visitation decisions.

23. During which of the following seasons have you visited Fort Edmonton Park in the past two years (any visit including special events and private functions).

Spring	Summer	Fall	Winter
(Apr. 15-June 14)	(June 15-Sept. 9)	(Sept. 10-Oct. 31)	(Nov.1-Apr. 14)

24. How strongly do the following factors influence your decisions to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park?

	Not at all									**Very strongly**
school commitments (for you or family members)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
precipitation (rain, snow, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
long weekends/ public holidays	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
temperature	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
work commitments	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
sunlight/cloud cover	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

25. Assuming that the park is open year round, how important would factors like weather conditions be in your future decisions to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park during the following seasons?

	Not at all important									**Very Important**
spring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
summer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
fall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
winter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

26. Assuming that the park is open year round, how important would factors like school and work commitments be in your future decisions to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park during the following seasons?

	Not at all important									**Very important**
spring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
summer	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
fall	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
winter	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

27. Are there any other factors that would influence your decision to visit or not visit Fort Edmonton Park during different times of the year? If so, what are they?

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

Q: There are periods when Fort Edmonton closes during the winter months yet the park is open for special events and private functions throughout the year. What time of the year would you consider it best to visit the park? Why?

Q: Are there any other seasons that you would consider as attractive times of the year to visit the park? What would you like about visiting the park during that time of the year?

Q: Could you describe some of the factors that would prohibit you from visiting the park during any other season besides summer?

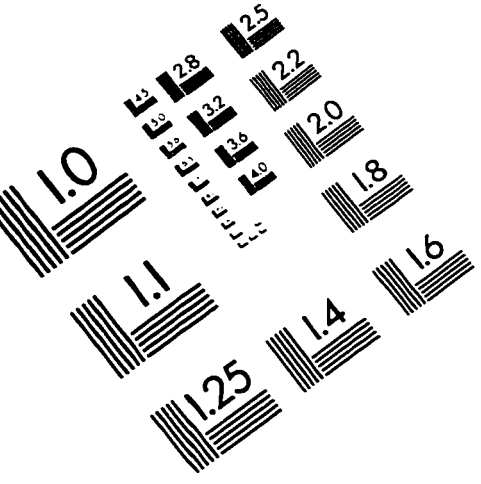
Q: What do you perceive as the benefits of visiting during any other season besides summer?

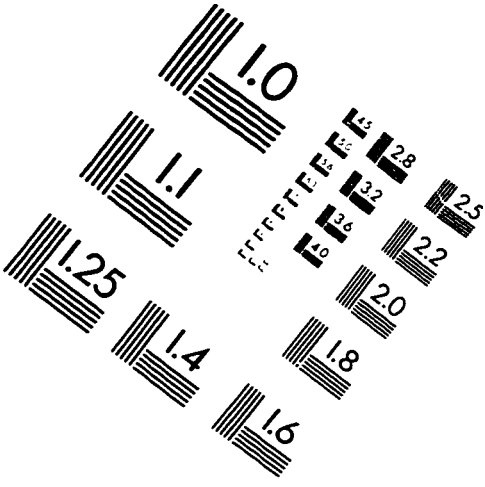
Q: So outside of summer, what time of the year would you consider to be the most attractive to visit Fort Edmonton Park and why?

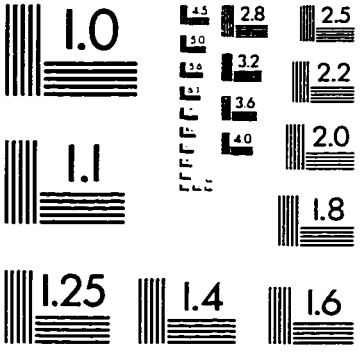
Q: Can you think of any other reasons why you wouldn't visit during the winter or spring or fall?

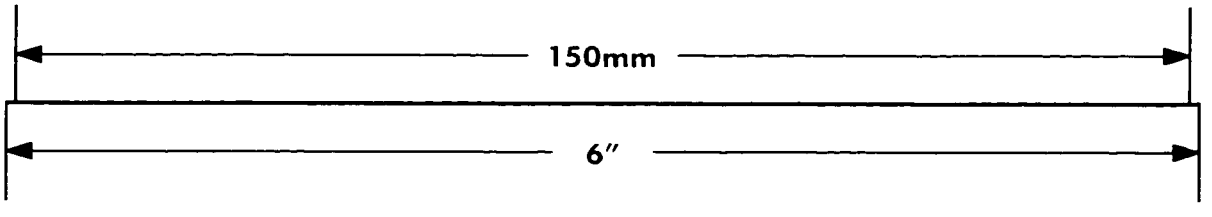
Q: How about school or work commitments? Would they play a role in determining what time of the year that you would visit here? Why?

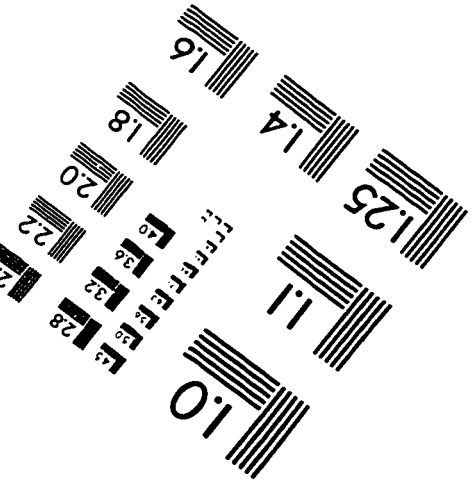
IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)

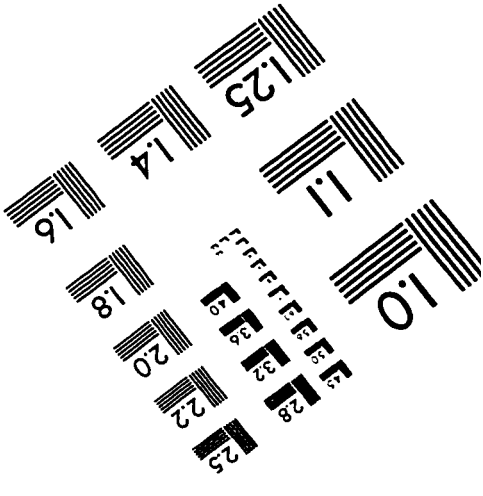












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