

# **Social Interactions Between Visitors**

## **An analysis of complex phenomena**

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# What?

## The research subject and aims and objectives

- Contacts between visitors are a core part of the visitor experience (P. Pearce 2005)
- Even their simple presence provides people with the ability to influence others and possibly alter their experience significantly (Crouch, Aronsson et al. 2004)

### **How do social out-group interactions between visitors affect the satisfaction with the visitor experience?**

1. What are the dimensions and processes of social interactions between visitors?
2. Why do social interactions between visitors occur?
3. How are these social interactions perceived?
4. How does the evaluation of social interactions affect the visitor experience?

# How?

## The research process

### 1. Literature Review

#### **Social Interactions**

i.e. Goffman 1967, Parsons 1968, Argyle et al. 1981

#### **Visitor Experience**

i.e. Pearce 2005, Cutler and Carmichael 2010, Ryan 2010

#### **C2C and Visitor-Visitor Relationships**

i.e. Harris and Baron 2004, Levy et al. 2011, Murphy 2001, Heimtun 2011, Pearce 1984, 1990

#### **Social Carrying Capacity and Perceived Crowding**

i.e. Baum et al. 1975, Ditton et al. 1983

#### **Outdoor Recreation Conflict**

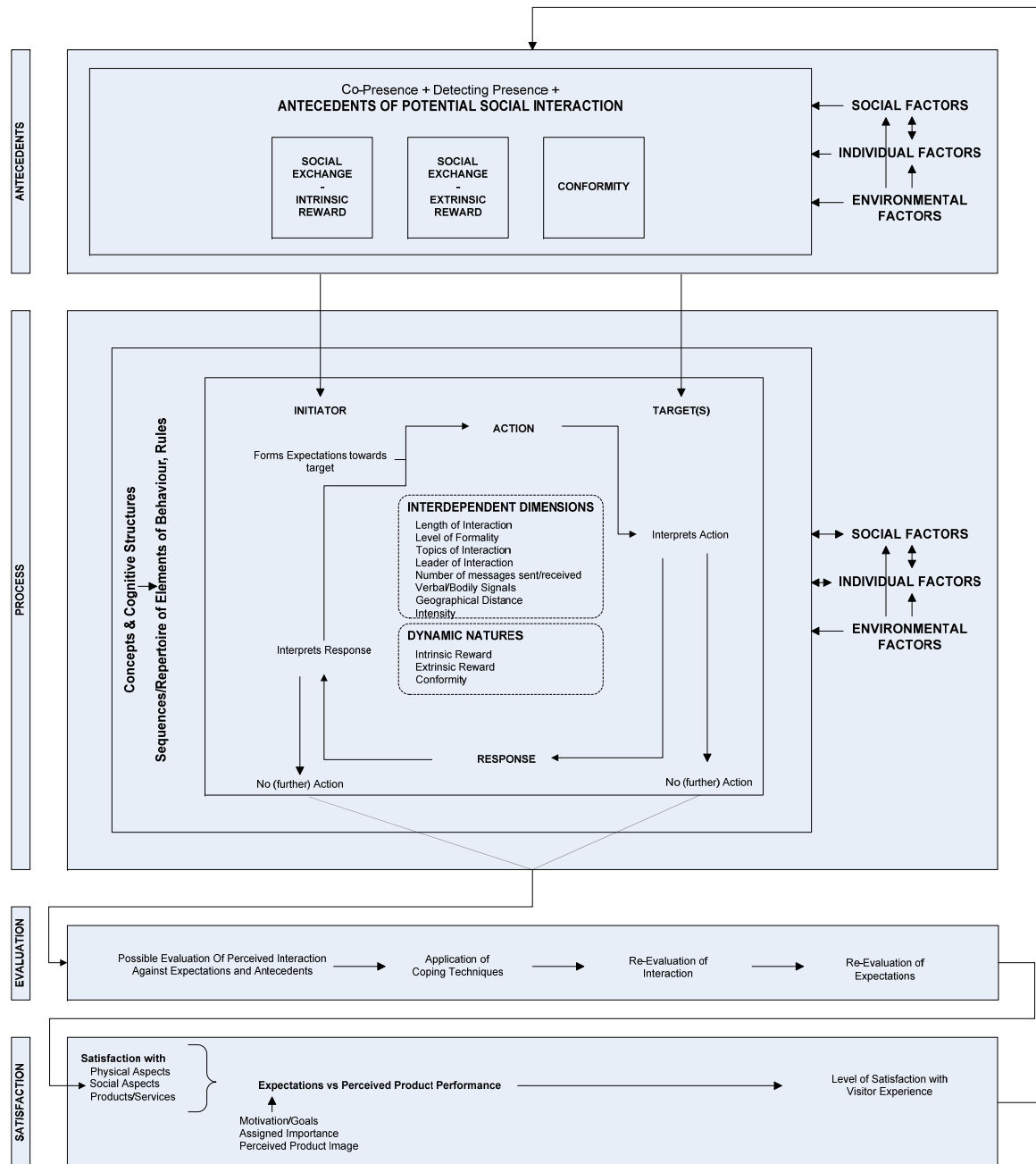
i.e. Jacob and Schreyer 1980, Schneider and Hammitt 1995

### 2. Development of conceptual framework

### 3. Methodology/Research

# Conceptual Framework

## For social out-group interactions in tourism settings



# Methodology

## The research process

### Phenomenological approach:

- In-depth understanding of individual experiences is required to understand how other visitors can influence a visitor experience – strong focus on meanings and perceptions

### Flexibility:

- Framework limitations: Varied and often unrelated sources, not validated, possible emergence of previously unconsidered factors and aspects

### → Multi-staged exploratory qualitative research approach

### Methodology:

- 40 exploratory semi-structured in-depth interviews to gain first insight into the manifestation of visitor-visitor interactions in New Zealand
- 76 personal semi-structured/structured in-depth interviews with international visitors, each providing specific details on two recent social interactions they have had with other travellers

# The data

## What information did I collect?

### Interview guidelines – semi structured:

- General importance of contacts with other visitors
- How do other visitors influence the holiday
- Negative experiences with other visitors

### Interview guidelines – structured:

- Specific details on two recent social interactions with other visitors, including:  
Time, location, company, purpose at location, time spent at location, characteristics of interaction partners, reasons for entering interaction, length of interaction, conversation topics, perceived depth, perceived formality, prior expectations, reasons for ending interaction, emotional response to interaction, impact on current situation, impact on satisfaction with current situation, etc.
- Demographic and travel characteristics, including:  
Age, country of origin, group constellation, length of stay, accommodation types, transport types, etc.



# The data

## Approach to data analysis

### Problem:

- Huge amount of very detailed and specific data
- All details covered in the structured part of the interviews seemed to be interconnected, but not clear how and why
- How to approach the transcripts?

### Solution:

- Quantitizing my qualitative data collected during the structured parts of the interviews

### Advantages:

- Internal generalizability – confirm applicability of patterns
- Identify diversity without bias
- Identify larger, underlying and complex patterns
- Evidence for findings – reduce bias and identify amount of evidence for specific patterns

### Disadvantages:

- Risk of overestimating generalizability of findings
- Focusing on linear relationships while neglecting complexity

Maxwell (2010)

# The data

## Combining qualitative and quantitative analysis

### Goal:

- Identifying not only 'what' happened but also 'why' it happened and what this meant for respondents

### Approach:

- Quantitative analysis (SPSS) to identify potential relationships between variables (chi square)
- 70% of cells usually had a value less than 5 → unreliable chi square
- Quantitative analysis provided only directions for qualitative analysis
- Qualitative analysis confirmed whether or not and why indicated relationships existed
- If qualitative analysis confirmed statistical results while providing explanations, findings were internally generalizable

# The data

## Presenting quantitative and qualitative data

**Combining two approaches to data analysis allowed for results to be presented in this way:**

Shorter interactions were less likely to be perceived as profound, and only initiated interactions with a duration of less than 30 minutes were occasionally regarded as more than only superficial. In most cases, a timeframe of at least 30 minutes was required for an interaction to reach a profound level, otherwise the rules applicable to visitor-visitor interactions did not allow to proceed to more personal topics. Profound interactions included a far higher proportion of personal conversation topics, whereas superficial interactions were frequently based upon country comparisons and circumstantial topics:

*“Probably no more than a few minutes each time. In total maybe two and a half hours, and it was just snippets that we occasionally exchanged, there was no in-depth conversation going on. Just, you know, what we’ve seen.”*

*“It’s usually just a brief conversation really. They’ve been kind of short and followed the usual where you’ve been, where you’re from pattern. Nothing too memorable really, and quite superficial.”*

**Thank you!**

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