



Perceptions of Service Quality at The Australian National Botanic Gardens.

Prepared for: Australian National Botanic Gardens

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<http://www.unisa.edu.au/tourismleisure>

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Other main activities undertaken

Other main prompt or motivator for visit

What do you personally value most about the Gardens?

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1 STUDY OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

The implementation of this study is an important step in the benchmarking of visitor service quality at botanic gardens.

This survey was undertaken to provide the Australian National Botanic Gardens staff with feedback to use as part of their management information. From this information, staff can consider ways to develop strategies to improve visitor services.

1.2 Methods

Data for this study was collected using the University of South Australia (UniSA) *Visitor Service Quality Survey* questionnaire under the guidance of the protocols developed by researchers from UniSA. The questionnaire used at the Australian National Botanic Gardens was adapted from previous studies conducted in Australia and New Zealand in 2008. Copies of the questionnaire and the UniSA protocol or administration guide are available upon request from the Centre for Tourism and Leisure Management.

Adult visitors to the Gardens were intercepted at various points selected by Gardens staff, on a 'next-available' basis and asked to complete a self-administered questionnaire. The data collection period commenced in mid-October and ran until early November 2011.

In total 446 self-administered questionnaires were suitable for analysis and are reported on in this report. The response rate for the survey was 81%, with the most common reasons given for declining to be involved in the survey being a lack of time.

The times chosen to administer the questionnaire were selected to produce a representative sample of visitors to the Gardens over a one week period. Survey times included a sample from all hours of the days that the Gardens were open. Adults and volunteers with school groups, or those attending special events, as well as staff on duty during the data collection times were not included in the study.

1.3 Analysis

The questionnaire was developed to provide Gardens staff with diagnostic value in the area of visitor profiles and service quality management.

Gardens staff have an in-depth understanding of the wider environmental context in which the Australian National Botanic Garden operates and are best placed to interpret the results provided in this report. Accordingly, the special circumstances of the Gardens must be considered in interpreting the results. This study should not be treated in isolation but be used as part of the total information on which management decisions are based.

1.4 Confidentiality

The information contained in the report is the property of the Australian National Botanic Gardens and CT&LM and may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form without their joint consent. CT&LM may choose to use information gathered for further research and education and is committed to do so whilst protecting the confidentiality of the Australian National Botanic Gardens. Outcomes of research efforts are usually reported in professional association journals or forums such as industry conferences.

1.5 Snapshot Report

A user friendly Snapshot Report has also been provided in addition to this report. The Snapshot is a brief summary of the findings and will allow staff, visitors, and stakeholders a quick overview of results contained in the report.

2.1 Patterns of Use

Activity undertaken

Activity choices indicate the majority of visitors recorded their primary activities as 'view plants', 'visit the kiosk or restaurant' and 'walk/exercise'.

Figure 1 Activities Undertaken

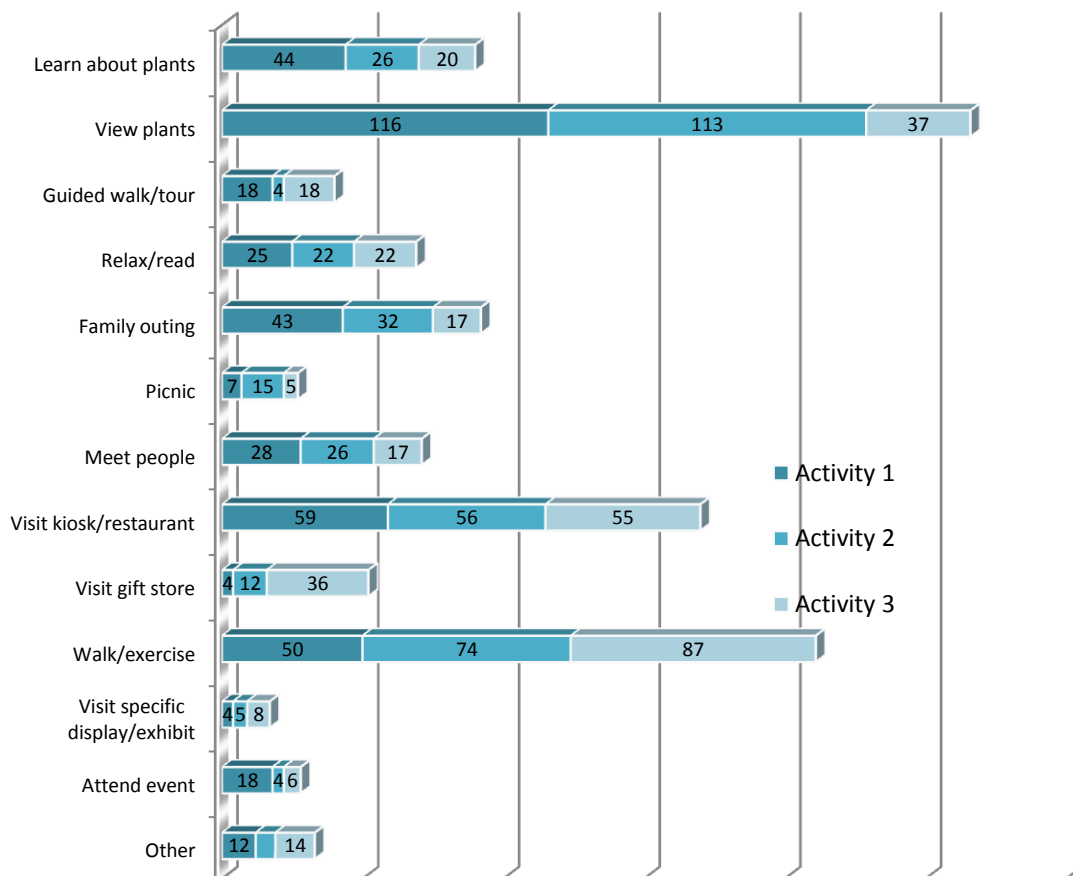


Table 1 Activities undertaken during visit

Main Activity	First activity %	Second activity %	Third activity %
Learn about plants	10	7	6
View plants	27	29	11
Guided walk/tour	4	1	5
Relax/read	6	6	6
Family outing	10	8	5
Picnic	2	4	2
Meet people	7	7	5
Visit kiosk/restaurant	14	14	16
Visit gift store	1	3	11
Walk/exercise	12	19	25
Visit specific display/exhibit	1	1	2
Attend event	4	1	2

Visiting group

The majority of visitors to the Australian National Botanic Gardens visited with family, with a partner or spouse, or with friends. Comparatively fewer visitors attended alone. Around one quarter of the visitors attended with children. Nineteen per cent of visitors attending in a group attended with children under the age of 5, and a further 6 per cent with children in the 5 to 15 years age group.

Figure 2 Group visitors attended with

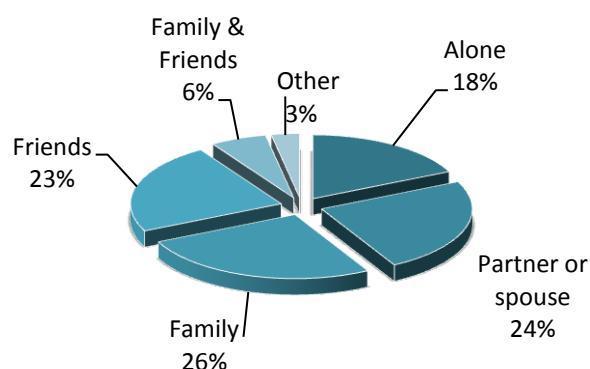


Table 2 Visitors attended the Gardens

	%
Alone	18
With partner/spouse	24
With family	26
With friends	23
With family and friends	6
Other	3

Table 3 Did your group* include children

	%
Children under 5 years of age	19
Children 5 to 15 years of age	6
No children	74

*Note: Percentage of visitors who attended with either 'Family' 'Friends' or 'Other'.

Length of visit

Table 4 Time spent at the Gardens today

	%
Around 1 hour	4
Around 2 hours	67
Around 3 hours	23
Around 4 hours or more	6

Time of visit Table 5 What time did you arrive at the Gardens today?

	%
Before 9am	3
Between 9am and 12pm	51
Between 12pm and 3pm	40
After 3pm	6

Number of visits

A large proportion of the visitors indicated this was their first visit to the Gardens. A considerable number had visited between 2 and 5 times, while the remaining thirty percent were reasonably regular visitors indicating that they visited 6 or more times during the past year.

Table 6 Number of visits to the Gardens in the past year

	%
1	39
2-5	31
6-12	12
More than 12	18

Member of Friends of the Gardens

Table 7 Member of Friends of the Gardens

	%
No	83
Yes	17

Prompt for visit Table 8 Main prompt for today's visit

	%
Brochure	5
Television story/ad	0
Radio ad/story	0
Website	2
Another botanic garden	5
Friends/colleague/relative	37
Poster	0
Thoroughfare	0
Street signage	1
Tourism information centre	3
Print media story/ad	1
Other	43

*'Other' responses are listed in Appendix 1.

2.2 Profile of Visitors

Gender

Table 9

Gender of visitors

	%
Male	30
Female	70

Education

Table 10

Level of education

	%
Primary/some secondary	2
Secondary	12
Vocational/technical	15
Tertiary	71

Age category

Table 11 Age group profile of visitors surveyed

	%
15-19	1
20-29	10
30-39	14
40-49	11
50-59	20
60-64	17
65 years and over	27

Disability

Table 12 Ongoing illness or permanent disability, & support needs

	%
Yes	15
No support required	69
Moderate support required	24
High level of support required	7

*Note: Percentage of visitors who indicated they have an ongoing illness or permanent disability

Residential address

While the majority of visitors were from ACT, a large percentage were also from NSW. Five percent were from overseas.

Table 13 **Location of residence**

	%
Australian Capital Territory	48
New South Wales	31
Victoria	5
Queensland	5
South Australia	2
Western Australia	2
Tasmania	1
UK	2
Other Overseas	3

Purpose of Garden

Table 14 **What do you think is the main purpose of the Garden?**

	%
Conservation/Biodiversity	34
Display of plants	23
Peaceful place to relax	17
Education	14
Recreation	6
Research	5
Other	2

2.3 Visitor Service Quality (VSQ)

Service quality is described as the extent to which visitor expectations or attributes of importance are matched by the perceived level of service provision. Table 15 shows the average/mean ratings for importance and performance of service quality attributes. Explanation for the use of the 'VSQ Gap' are provided in Appendix 2.

Table 15: Summary for Visitor Service Quality

*The scale used for this part of the questionnaire ranges from 1 ('disagree') to 6 ('very strongly agree')

VSQ ATTRIBUTES (attributes paraphrased)	Importance mean	Performance mean	VSQ Gap
Staffing			
Staff are friendly & responsive	5.1	5.1	0.0
Staff & volunteers experienced & knowledgeable	5.1	5.1	0.0
Aesthetics			
Easily accessible	5.0	4.7	-0.3
Peaceful & tranquil	5.4	5.3	-0.1
Pleasing physical layout	5.2	5.1	-0.1
Built amenities clean & well presented	5.1	5.0	-0.1
Gardens present well as tourist attraction	5.1	5.1	0.0
I feel safe when visiting Gardens	5.4	5.5	+0.1
Display plants appear healthy	5.1	5.0	-0.1
Has adequate directional signage	5.0	4.9	-0.1
Accurate & current information available	4.9	4.8	-0.1
Hospitality Services			
Broad range of experiences	4.8	4.9	+0.1
Food and drink outlets provide value for money	4.5	4.2	-0.3
Engagement & Learning			
Wide diversity of plants	5.4	5.3	-0.1
Display special collections of plants	5.0	4.9	-0.1
Plants adequately labelled	5.0	4.8	-0.2
Signs informative & interesting	4.9	4.8	-0.1
Opportunities to learn about plants	4.9	4.8	-0.1

From these results, the more positive attributes of service quality have been identified as:

- Offer a broad range of experiences
- I feel safe when visiting the Gardens
- The Garden showcases a wide diversity of plants
- The Garden is peaceful and tranquil

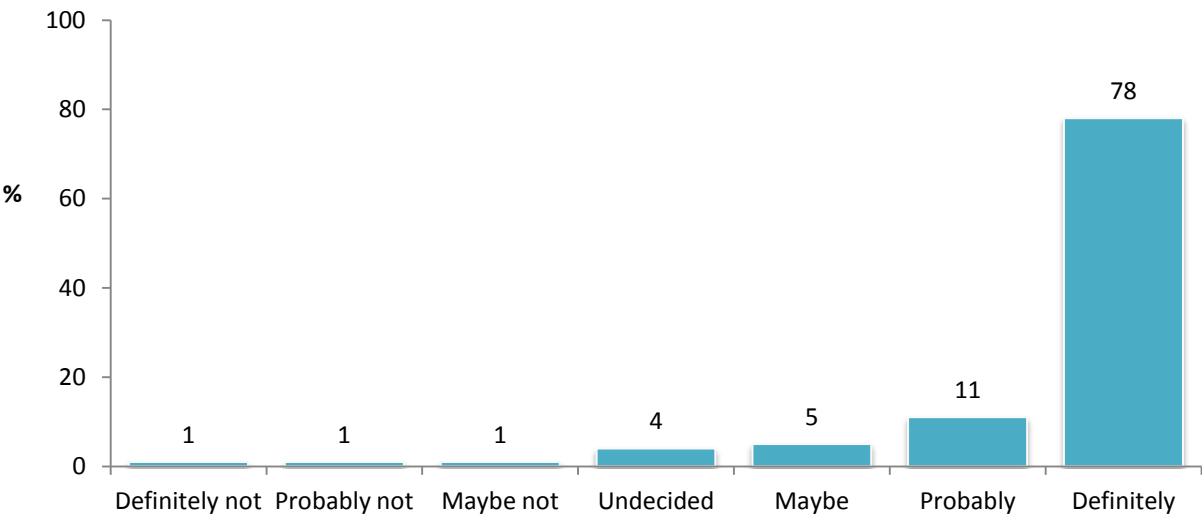
The attributes that may benefit from review are:

- The Garden is easily accessible
- Food and drink outlets provide value for money

2.4 Visitor Relations

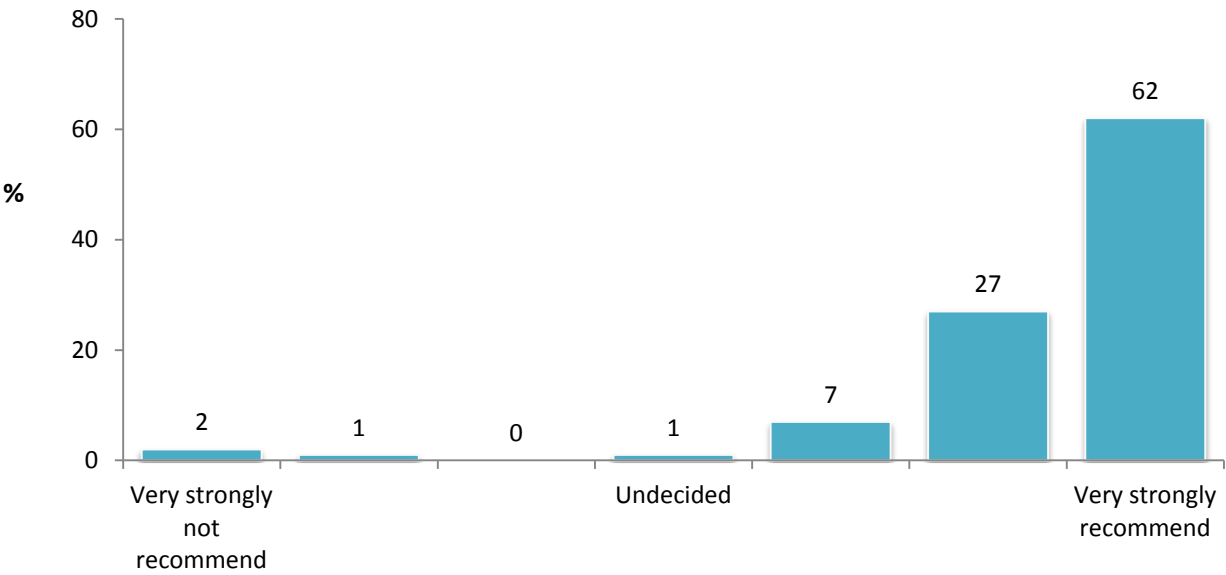
Intention to revisit

Figure 3 Intentions to Revisit



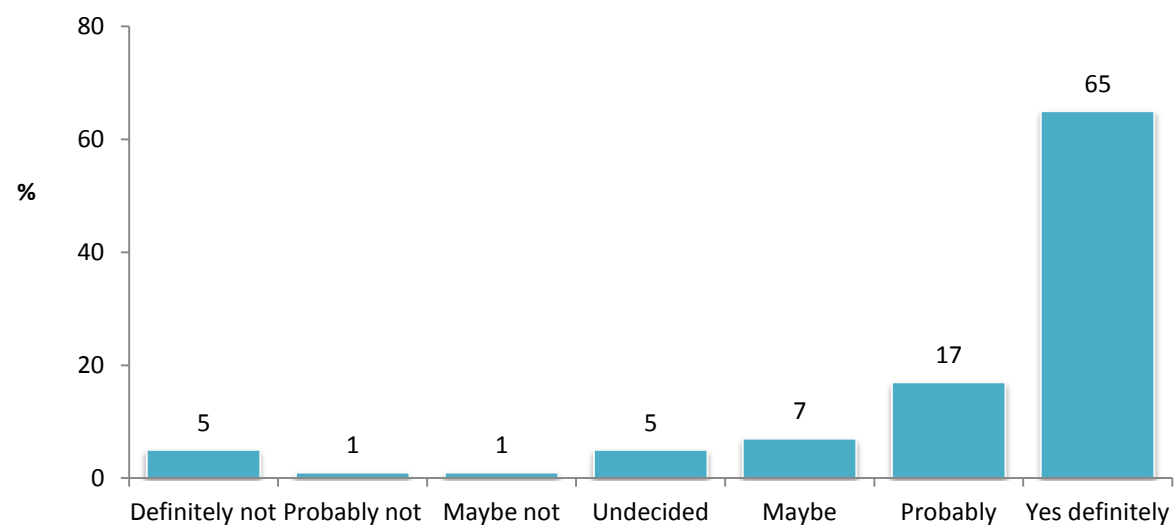
Visitor recommendation

Figure 4 Level of Recommendation



Encourage others

Figure 5 Have you encouraged friends and relatives to visit?



Overall satisfaction

Figure 6 Overall Satisfaction, by %

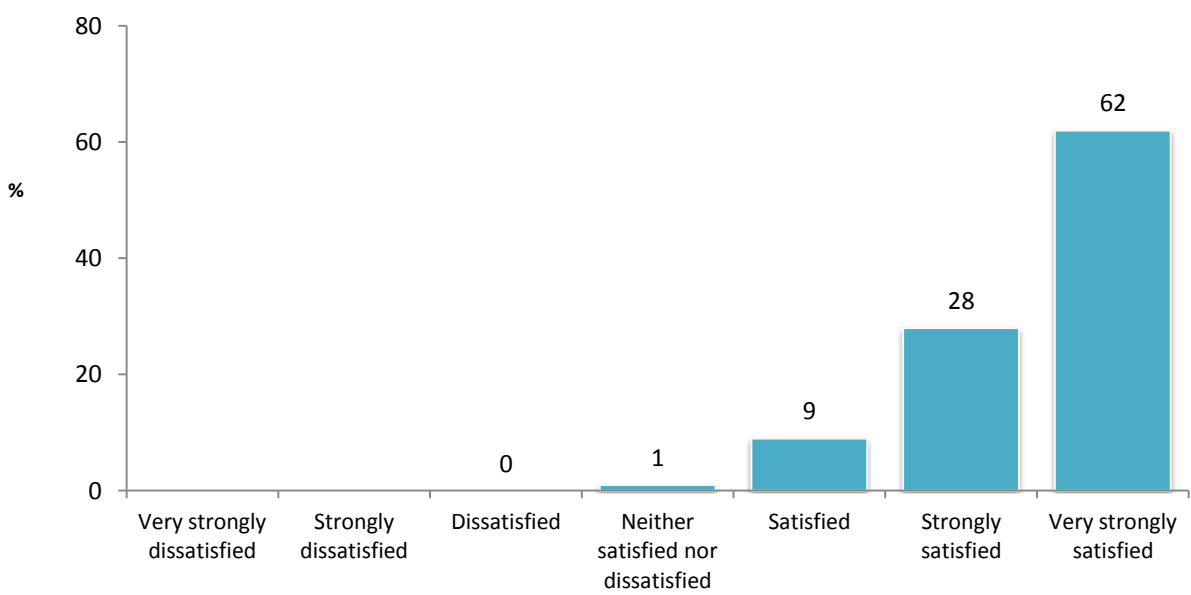
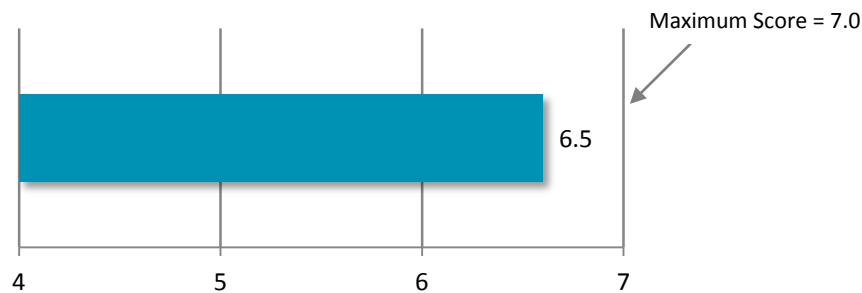


Figure 7 Mean Overall Satisfaction



On a scale from 1 ‘very dissatisfied’ to 7 ‘very satisfied’, the mean overall satisfaction was 6.5.

2.5 Additional questions

Table 16 Did you participate in a free guided walk presented by a volunteer guide?

	%
No	94
Yes	6

Table 17 If you were to participate in a free guided walk how long should it go for?

	%
15-30 minutes	18
30-45 minutes	40
45-60 minutes	30
60-75 minutes	12

Table 18 If the Garden were to provide a 'ride stop and talk' tour what would you pay for it?

	%
\$4 adult \$2 child	19
\$5 adult \$2.50 child	24
\$6 adult \$3.50 child	12
\$7 adult \$3.50 child	8
Not interested in this service	36

3 SUMMARY OF PERCEPTIONS & ISSUES OF VISITOR SERVICE QUALITY AT THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS, 2011

Visitors attend the Australian National Botanic Gardens largely to view plants, to visit the kiosk or restaurant and to walk or exercise. Most visitors attended the Gardens with family, a partner or spouse or with friends, and to a lesser extent alone. Of those attending with family, friends, or in other groups, around one-quarter included children in the group.

By a large margin, the majority of visitors visited the Gardens for around two hours. Half arrived between 9am and noon, with the majority of the remainder arriving between noon and 3pm.

For 39% of the sample this was their first visit to these Gardens in the past 12 months. Approximately one third of visitors had attended 2 to 5 times previously and another third were reasonably regular visitors, having attended at least six times in the past year.

All age groups were relatively well represented, other than the 15-19 comprising just 1% of the respondents. When considering this report, it should be kept in mind that the views of younger visitors were not captured in the data and therefore do not feature in this report.

The majority of visitors were from Australia (95%). Of these visitors, visitors from the ACT made up the largest proportion (48%), with NSW also well represented (31%). Overseas visitors comprised 5 per cent of the sample, with the majority of overseas visitors residing in the UK (2%).

Five of the 18 service quality attributes' performances were rated as matching or exceeding visitors' ratings of importance for those attributes, these include 'Staff are friendly and responsive', 'staff and volunteers are experienced and knowledgeable', 'Gardens present well as a tourist attraction', 'I feel safe when visiting the Gardens', and 'the Gardens offers a broad range of experiences'. Generally, negative gaps were quite small with issues of 'accessibility' and 'food and drink outlets providing value for money' of most concern to visitors. Overall, visitors rated the provision of most attributes of service quality relatively well.

Ninety four per cent of visitors intended to revisit the Gardens, with a large majority (78%) indicating they definitely intend to revisit. Recommendation levels were similar, with 96% of visitors indicating a positive level of recommendation to others (62% would strongly recommend). Overall, 62% of visitors indicated they were very strongly satisfied with their visit. A mean of 6.5 out of 7 was recorded for overall satisfaction (on a 7 point scale where 1 is most negative and 7 is most positive).

Appendix 1

Written responses

Main activities you undertook during your visit to the Gardens

Main activities you undertook during your visit to the Gardens	
Attend event	21
Thursday talk (7)	
Talk (3)	
Ian Fraser talk (2)	
Lunch time talk (2)	
Friends talk (2)	
15 th schools photographic comp	
Ian Anderson talk	
Birthday	
Friends	
Reptiles	
Visit specific display/exhibit	7
Glasshouse (2)	
Rainforest (2)	
Greenhouse	
Children's walk	
Orchids	
Other	17
Photography (7)	
Bird watching (3)	
Lunch (2)	
Friends lecture	
Birthday	
ANPS talk	
Tour around nursery	
See water dragons	

Main motivator or prompt for your visit to the Gardens

What was the main motivator or prompt for your visit to these gardens?	
Other:	144
Been here before (51)	
Weather (8)	
Friends of the garden (7)	
Walk (6)	
Lunch (6)	
Lecture (5)	
Work nearby (5)	
Friends of ANBG activity (4)	
School excursion (4)	
Going out with grandchildren (4)	
Talk (3)	
Work (3)	
Bird watching (2)	
Relaxation (2)	
Uni (2)	
Exercise (2)	
Shop (2)	
Buy books	
Friends newsletter	
Meeting ANBG staff member	
Canberra website	
Fun for the kids	
Preschool visit	
Favourite spot in Canberra	

Hotel recommendation	
ANPS talk	
Roommate	
Overseas visitors	
Birthday	
Family outing	
Research	
Event	
Took kids for breakfast	
Photography	
Recommended by a friend	
Free and shady	
Plant sale	
Beautiful place	
Spring flowers	
Family	
Visit tower	
Coffee	
Public holiday	
See rainforest	
Friend	

What do you personally value most about the Garden

Most valued aspects identified by respondents	Number of times mentioned
Ambiance	245
Peaceful (76)	
Tranquillity (46)	
Quiet (36)	
Beautiful (20)	
Relaxing (12)	
Atmosphere (11)	
Pleasant (7)	
Space (5)	
Ambience (4)	
Aesthetic surroundings (3)	
Serenity (3)	
The smell (3)	
Beauty of nature (3)	
Setting (2)	
Open (2)	
Fresh air (2)	
Solitude (2)	
Greenery (2)	
Nice place to meet friends and walk	
Naturalistic setting	
Wonderful place that engages all senses	
Large open areas	
Restful	
Close to nature	
Plants & Gardens	213
Native flora (63)	

Variety/diverse range of plants (57)	
Plants (45)	
Rainforest (15)	
Beautiful flowers (9)	
Nature (5)	
Terrific scenery (5)	
Themed areas (2)	
Rock gardens (2)	
Fern area (2)	
Great place to see plants that you don't find at home (2)	
Plant diversity	
Wildlife habitats	
Healthy plants	
Native bush setting	
Strong biodiversity	
Diverse habitats	
Activities	48
Walking (18)	
Opportunity to learn about plants (11)	
Shaded walks (4)	
Photographing plants (4)	
Getting gardening ideas (2)	
Informative talks (2)	
Seeing plants I have not seen before (2)	
Range of activities	
Informative events	
Identifying plants	
Sunday night jazz concerts	
Opportunity to see plants	
Fauna	36
Birdlife (19)	
Variety of birds (7)	
Wildlife (6)	
Water dragons (2)	
Kangaroos	
Reptiles	
Facilities	20
Good paths for walking (11)	
Picnic facilities (2)	
Shady areas (2)	
Bookshop (2)	
Water	
Different areas to sit	
Use of motorised scooter	
Access	15
Easy to get to (15)	
Value for money	12
Free (11)	
Affordable outing	

Family friendly	
Great place to bring the kids (4)	10
Family friendly (3)	
Kids love it (2)	
Bring children to a natural setting where they can roam and learn to appreciate the beauty of the outdoors	
Staff	4
Friendly staff (2)	
Being educated by the wonderful guides	
Knowledgeable staff	
Organisation	3
Well maintained (2)	
Clear labelling of plants	
Food and drink facilities	3
Cafe	
Dinning with friends	
Restaurant	
Other	27
Layout (10)	
Close to the city (8)	
Educational (2)	
I am a guide and I value the opportunity to show off the gardens	
Consistent	
Well presented	
Uncrowded	
Clean	
Safe	
Large	

Appendix 2

VSQ explained

Visitor Service Quality (VSQ)

Service quality is described as the extent to which visitor expectations or attributes of importance are matched by perceived service provision. Importance, rather than expectation was used with the rationale that service quality at the Garden reflects the extent that the 'importance' level assigned to an attribute is met by the Garden's perceived 'performance' on that same attribute. A VSQ figure is generated by subtracting importance (I) from performance (P), i.e.,

$$P \text{ minus } I = \text{VSQ}$$

The main value of visitor-determined service quality results to managers is to identify significant differences between attributes of importance to visitors and their perceptions of the Garden's performance on delivering or providing these same attributes.

The attributes of visitor service quality for the Garden were developed from focus groups with visitors and are reviewed on a regular basis. The attributes of service quality identified in the focus groups were pilot tested at gardens through a survey of visitors and senior staff of various botanic gardens reviewed these results before finalising the questionnaire used for their study.

For visitor importance, a high mean (strongly agree) may represent the impact of promotional messages or the visitors' previous experiences. Alternately, a low mean on importance (disagree/not very important) may indicate the visitor has relatively limited interest or need for this service attribute.

A high mean for performance may indicate a Garden's relative strength as identified by visitors. A low mean for performance may identify a relative weakness of the Garden on this service attribute. Alternatively, a low mean may be due to a unique circumstance of the Garden, such as site works, that is understood and accepted by management.

In interpreting Table 15, the importance rating can be taken as indicative of the visitors' priority for the attributes.