

**Community and visitor benefits associated
with the Otago Central Rail Trail, New Zealand**

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By Dean Blackwell

Outdoor recreation and heritage resources have the potential to provide a wide range of benefits to individuals, groups of individuals and the economy. An increased knowledge of these benefits can give recreation managers and planners a better understanding of how their actions and decisions regarding a resource may impact upon the visitors and communities that they serve. Placed within a climate of increasing public sector accountability, this information might also prove useful in justifying the allocation of scarce resources to recreation and heritage preservation.

Justifying the value that recreation adds to society is an issue recognised by Benefits Based Management (BBM), a recreation management and planning framework that seeks to identify and target the positive outcomes realised by individuals, groups, local businesses and communities that result from participation in recreation and leisure. To date, recreation planners and managers have not been presented with a BBM research effort that seeks to describe and understand the visitor and community benefits associated with a rail to trail conversion. This study aimed to identify and describe benefits gained by visitors and neighbouring communities, with specific reference to the Otago Central Rail Trail (OCRT), Central Otago, New Zealand.

Information was gathered from seventy-seven semi-structured interviews with visiting users of the OCRT, residents of neighbouring communities and trail managers. The results of the study indicated that community stakeholders reported benefits such as local economic development linked to visitor expenditure, heightened sense of community identity and solidarity and social contact with people from outside the local area. An additional finding was that the perceived benefits of the OCRT have reportedly had a positive influence on local people's attitudes towards the rail trail.

Visitor interviews revealed that personal and social well-being benefits such as physical activity, aesthetic appreciation, sense of achievement, psychological refreshment, family togetherness and social interaction with friends and local people were outcomes of an OCRT visit. Reported visitor benefits were further linked to physical fitness and health, enhanced mood and positive mental state, leading a balanced lifestyle and stronger relationships within families and between friends. Visitors also perceived that an OCRT visit had forged a greater knowledge and awareness of railway heritage through gaining insight into railway and Central Otago history and appreciation of the engineering skills and craftsmanship associated with 19th century railway construction. Following the benefit chain of causality (Driver, 1994; Driver & Bruns, 1999; McIntosh, 1999), interview responses were linked to potential community and visitor benefits that could be realised off-site such as enhanced quality of life, community satisfaction and a greater connection with and appreciation of New Zealand's historic and cultural heritage.

Key Words: community and visitor perspectives, Benefits Based Management (BBM), the Otago Central Rail Trail, recreation planning and management, heritage preservation.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Benefits of Rail Trails

In an era of closer scrutiny of scarce public funds, the providers of recreation resources are increasingly being asked to justify the need for recreation opportunities, and to better articulate the value that is added to people's lives through their provision (Driver, 1994; Law, Vaneveld & Waring, 1997; Lee, 1995). What is needed, therefore, is a clearer understanding and documentation of the positive outcomes that are associated with recreation resources (Physical Activity Taskforce, 1998). This is one focus of a recent initiative known as Benefits Based Management (BBM) (Driver, 1994; Driver & Bruns, 1999; Lee, 1995).

BBM recognises that visiting users of the recreation services delivered and local community residents who might or might not use those services are the people who are potentially most affected by the actions of recreation resource managers and planners (Allen, 1996; Bruns, 1998). As community and visitor benefits are a core product of recreation resources, an increased focus on the benefits gained by people who live close to and/or visit recreation resources is therefore vital if managers and planners are to respond to visitor and neighbouring community needs (Allen, 1996; Anderson, Nickerson, Stein & Lee, 2000; Bruns, 1998).

Knowledge of local community and visitor benefits can, in turn, be used to optimise the performance and delivery of recreation services, promote sound resource allocation decisions and provide justification for the allocation of public funds to recreation (Anderson et al., 2000; Bruns, Driver, Lee, Anderson & Brown, 1994; Driver & Bruns, 1999). Within BBM, a benefit is defined as a perceived change in the condition of an individual or a group of individuals (family, community or society at large) that is viewed as desirable, or as creating an improved condition or state. The prevention of a worse condition and a satisfying psychological experience are also considered to be benefits of recreation (Bruns, Driver, Lee, Anderson & Brown, 1994; Driver, 1994).

This thesis is about the community and visitor benefits associated with the recreational use of the Otago Central Rail Trail (OCRT), Central Otago, New Zealand. Officially opened in

2000, the OCRT is a 150 kilometre long railway corridor converted by the Department of Conservation (DOC)¹ and the Otago Central Rail Trail Charitable Trust from the disestablished Otago Central branch railway line into a recreational trail. A primary justification for the cost² of redeveloping the OCRT was the potential social and economic benefits that such a trail offered the local community and prospective visitors. However, in contrast to the principles underlying BBM, little effort has been made by the trail developers to provide evidence that supports these claims.

In addition to searching for evidence to substantiate a benefits-focused justification for developing the OCRT, further impetus for this thesis came from the limited amount of research that has been conducted on benefits associated with specific recreation opportunities in New Zealand. New Zealand researchers have often focused on negative impacts associated with the recreational use of natural and historic resources (Booth & Cullen, 1995; Cessford, 1995, 1999; Cessford & Dingwall, 1997; Horn, 1994; Kearsley, Coughlan, Higham, Higham, & Thyne, 1998; Leberman & Mason, 2000). However, as a means of achieving a more balanced perspective and greater justification for allocating resources to recreation, it is vital that the benefits associated with resource-based recreation are also taken into account. As Driver, Brown and Peterson (1991) and Driver and Bruns (1999) summarise, other research has revealed that individuals, groups of individuals, communities and economies derive significant benefits from resource-based recreation activities.

Rail trails provide an example of a type of recreation setting that offers opportunities for visitor (Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001) and neighbouring community benefits (Doherty, 1998; Moore, Gitelson & Graefe, 1994). Rail trails are disestablished railway corridors that have been converted into public recreation trails. They are typically flat, hard-surfaced and managed to accommodate a variety of uses, particularly cycling, walking and running (Moore, Graefe & Gitelson, 1994a). According to the New Zealand Physical Activity Survey, cycling, walking and running are three of the top ten recreation activities (Hillary Commission, 1999). Thus, the participation statistics relating to these activities in New Zealand attest to the recreational potential of rail trails.

¹ The Department of Conservation (DOC) is the government department responsible for managing public natural resources in New Zealand.

² The estimated cost of redeveloping the OCRT was approximately eight hundred and fifty thousand New Zealand dollars. Costs included bridge restoration, installation of information signs, trail resurfacing, earthmoving and fencing (Department of Conservation and Otago Central Rail Trail Trust, 1999).

In addition to outdoor recreation benefits derived from such activities (e.g. physical fitness and health, relaxation and nature appreciation), the rejuvenation of disused railway lines provides other potential benefits for trail visitors and neighbouring communities including family togetherness, enhanced community pride and significant cultural and heritage conservation value (Hamel, 1994, 1995; Iles & Wiele, 1993; Moore & Ross, 1998). It has also been suggested that, as a means of potential local area economic development, tourism revenue derived from outdoor recreation opportunities is increasingly being seen as important for rural communities (Allen, Hafer, Long & Perdue, 1993; Betz & Perdue, 1993; Butler, Hall & Jenkins, 1998; Clements, Schultz & Lime, 1993; Schutt, 1999). Outdoor recreation and heritage preservation contribute significantly, not only in tourism revenue, but also to the personal and social well-being of New Zealanders through education, community and national identity and cohesion (Hall & McArthur, 1996; Jensen, Sullivan, Wilson, Berkley & Russell, 1993). This means that rail trails have the potential to provide a wide range of benefits to both local residents and visitors (Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1998).

Most BBM studies have focused on the visitor rather than on the community. Thus, the positive effects of many recreation resources on both visitors and communities have been overlooked (Stein & Lee, 1995). As a consequence, recreation planners and managers have not been presented with an applied BBM research effort that seeks to identify and describe visitor and community benefits specifically associated with a rail trail. As a contribution to this area, this study addresses neighbouring community and visitor benefits with specific reference to the views of people who are directly affected by the OCRT through either living close to, visiting, and/or being involved in the management of the trail.

The present study has therefore sought to gather evidence about the perceived benefits of the OCRT by conducting face-to-face semi-structured interviews with a selection of local residents, trail managers and visitors. While the majority of rail trail studies have used predominantly quantitative approaches, the exploratory semi-structured interview approach used in the current study was deemed necessary since rail trail research involving BBM has received no empirical investigation. The intention of the interviews, therefore, was to gain greater insight into, rather than measure, the benefits reported by interview participants.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

The overall aim of the research was to identify and describe the benefits accruing to neighbouring communities and visitors associated with the recreational usage of the OCRT. Specific objectives that guided this research were as follows:

- To gain insight into the personal and community benefits of the Otago Central Rail Trail as reported by residents of neighbouring communities and trail managers.
- To gain insight into the personal and potential social benefits that result from recreational engagement/s on the Otago Central Rail Trail as reported by visiting trail users.

1.3 The Contribution/Value of this Research

The thesis outlines an empirical exploration of the benefits of the Otago Central Rail Trail. In so doing, a threefold contribution is made to the recreation benefits literature. First, this study offers the benefits-based management approach as a method to evaluate not just the economic, but also the social and personal contribution that the Otago Central Rail Trail makes to people's lives. An addition will therefore be made to the BBM framework, which, although growing internationally, is still in its infancy in New Zealand. Second, this study will consider visitors and communities conjointly. Knowledge of reported beneficial outcomes for both visiting and resident OCRT users and the Central Otago community in general is important in the application of management and planning techniques which can sustain these desired conditions. Third, this thesis expands rail trail research beyond a solitary New Zealand study of neighbouring landowner attitudes towards the OCRT (Graham, 1996) and studies of rail trail impacts that have been conducted in North America (Moore, Graefe, Gitelson & Porter, 1992).

1.4 Thesis Outline

The thesis is divided into six chapters. This chapter, the introduction, has established that because of resource constraints in the public provision of recreation it is important to gain a clearer understanding and documentation of the benefits associated with recreation resources. BBM provides a framework on which to base this type of research. However, the chapter has highlighted the neglect in focus of BBM towards the community and visitor benefits of specific settings such as rail trails.

In light of this perceived research gap, Chapter Two reviews and critiques previous research on community and/or visitor benefits associated with recreation resources and heritage attractions. The literature review also introduces and explains hierarchical models of recreation. The description of two hierarchical models of recreation highlights the link between the attributes of recreation settings and the community and visitor benefits realised from a recreation experience in that setting. This relationship suggests that knowledge of the setting is needed if the community and visitor benefits of the OCRT are to be better understood.

Chapter Three begins by briefly describing the setting characteristics of the OCRT. The description of the OCRT setting leads into a justification of the semi-structured interview approach to data collection. The purposive sampling technique is discussed and the interview participants are described. An explanation of the interview process and how the data derived from interviews is analysed and a brief discussion of the ethical considerations involved in the research process are also included.

The findings of this study are divided between two chapters. Chapter Four identifies and describes local residents' and trail managers' perceptions of the community benefits associated with the OCRT. Chapter Five presents insight into visiting trail users' perceptions of the benefits that result from recreational engagements on the OCRT. The interpretation of interview data in the Chapters Four and Five is focused on identifying and describing OCRT benefits, rather than analysing differences in perceptions according to characteristics such as age, sex, role in the community, recreation activity or visitor type.

Chapter Six summarises the results of the study and further discusses the reported benefits of the OCRT by drawing the visitor and community benefits together into an integrated framework that allows for wider explanation of the value that the OCRT has as a recreation resource. Finally, the implications of these findings for the future management of the OCRT and further research are briefly outlined.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Greater significance is being placed on justifying the allocation of resources to recreation and heritage preservation through advocating the benefits associated with their use. Based on the close relationship that visitors and neighbouring residents have with recreation and heritage resources, this study recognises that a focus on the views these people have about the benefits associated with the OCRT is crucial. This chapter will review and synthesise recreation models and applied research to better understand the benefits that a rail trail might have for visitors and neighbouring communities.

2.1 Hierarchical Models of Recreation Benefits

Discussions of recreation benefits can be characterised into two hierarchical models: means end theory and the recreation opportunity demand hierarchy. Both models propose that recreation behaviour is motivated by interdependent relationships that exist between recreation activities/settings, the on-site experiences people derive, and that the final outcome of this interaction are the benefits produced by these experiences (Prentice, Witt & Hamer, 1998). This proposition evolved out of a tradition in outdoor recreation research whereby recreation is defined as goal-directed, purposeful human behaviour intended to realise specific outcomes for the individual such as a positive state of mind or a satisfying experience (Crandall, 1980; Driver & Tocher, 1970; Gunter, 1987; Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987; Manning, 1986; Schreyer & Driver, 1989; Schreyer, Knopf & Williams, 1984).

An office worker, for example, plans a trip to the Otago Central Rail Trail for a weekend mountain bike ride for the purposes of experiencing physical exercise, escaping the daily routine and to enjoy the scenery. The office worker in this case is motivated to seek a rewarding experience through mountain biking on a rail trail, from which specific beneficial outcomes might be derived. Implicit in hierarchical models of recreation, therefore, is the need to look at activities, settings, experiences and benefits simultaneously if the outcomes of recreation and heritage resources are to be understood (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Prentice, Witt & Wydenbach, 1994).

A hierarchical model that has been used to explore the factors that influence beneficial recreation experiences is the means-end approach (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Klenosky, Frauman, Norman, & Gengler, 1998; Klenosky, Gengler, & Mulvey, 1999). Based on the work of Gutman (1982), means-end theory concentrated on three levels of meaning (attributes, benefits and values) typically associated with how consumers think about products. Simply stated, the rationale underlying means-end theory focuses on the linkages between the relatively concrete attributes that exist in products (the means), the increasingly abstract benefits associated with these attributes and the personal values (the ends) these benefits help to reinforce (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Reynolds & Gutman, 1988). Using the work of Frauman & Cunningham (2001) as an example, the means-end approach would suggest that one's use of a rail trail might be linked with the physical attributes it possesses such as scenic views or historical interest. This, in turn, might be associated with benefits like enhanced appreciation and knowledge of nature and heritage, which reinforce personal values such as self-fulfilment and belonging.

The means-end perspective closely parallels expectancy value theory (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001), which suggested that people engage in activities in specific settings to realise a group of psychological outcomes that are known, expected and valued (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1974; Manning, 1986). A further hierarchical framework grounded in expectancy value theory is the recreation opportunity demand hierarchy (Table 2.1). The recreation demand hierarchy differs from the individual-focused means end theory by expanding the focus on the individual to include other people in the benefit realisation process. The recreation demand hierarchy therefore links the benefits gained by a visitor to a rail trail with beneficial outcomes that accrue not only to that person but also to neighbouring communities. This relationship is summarised by Driver (1994: p.16):

“Recreationists have demands to engage in preferred recreation activities within preferred settings to realise satisfying experiences which usually can be viewed as beneficial in and of themselves or which can contribute to immediate or subsequent benefits to those recreationists and perhaps to other people”.

The recreation demand hierarchy acknowledges four ascending levels of demand (Driver & Brown, 1978; Manning, 1986; Prentice, 1993). The levels are ordered sequentially, according to the complexity they possess (Driver, 1994; Driver & Brown, 1978). Activities are the least complex level (level one) and include recreation pursuits such as horse riding, walking or mountain-biking. Settings (level two) are the places where activities occur and include the

physical resource (e.g., accessibility to, size and modification of), social (e.g., number and type of people) and managerial (e.g., facilities, restrictions, maintenance) conditions of these places (Manfredo, Driver & Brown, 1983; Taylor, 1993) (the physical, social and managerial setting characteristics of the OCRT are illustrated in Figure 2.1). Level one and two demands constitute the inputs into the recreation experience.

Table 2.1 The Recreation Demand Hierarchy

Level of hierarchy	Example 1	Example 2
Level 1: <i>Activities</i>	Mountain-biking	Visiting heritage attractions (e.g. preserved railway artefacts)
Level 2: <i>Settings</i>		
(a) Physical setting	Rural area	Railway tunnel in a river gorge
(b) Social setting	Families and friends	Farmer moving sheep
(c) Managerial setting	Warning signs (e.g. Private Property - No Trespassing)	Interpretation panels
Level 3: <i>Experiences</i>	Physical exercise Social interaction Viewing scenery	Educational Exploration
Level 4: <i>Benefits</i>		
(a) Personal	Physical and social well-being	Increased knowledge
(b) Social	Family bonding	Meeting local people
(c) Economic	Reduced health costs	The economic effects associated with visitor expenditure in the local area

Source: Adapted from Beeho and Prentice (1997) and Manning (1986)

The outcomes or end states of a recreation opportunity are found in the final two levels of the hierarchy. Level three demands reflect people's participation in activities in different settings to realise multiple experiences (Manning, 1986) such as enjoyment of the scenery, an extraordinary occasion, relaxation, positive mood, adventure, a sense of achievement, or high-risk (Arnould & Price, 1993; Celsi, Rose & Leigh, 1993; Ewert, 1989; Hull, 1991).

Csikszentmihalyi (1975) provided a useful conceptualisation of the experience derived from participation in recreation activities. He offered 'flow' as a term to describe what happens during a recreation experience, such as rock climbing. Varying states of 'flow' are achieved dependent on the degree to which the challenge of a rock climbing activity, for instance, matches the skills that the rock climber possesses. Maslow's (1968) notion of 'peak experience' is another useful conceptualisation of experience for leisure researchers (Mannell & Iso-Ahola, 1987). Maslow (1968: p. 73) described peak experiences as "moments of

highest happiness and fulfilment” often achieved through physical exercise, aesthetic appreciation and meeting a challenge.

Two alternative views of the leisure experience, which relate more specifically to historic and cultural heritage viewing, are ‘insightfulness’ (McIntosh & Prentice, 1999) and ‘mindfulness’ (Moscardo, 1996). McIntosh & Prentice (1999) and Moscardo (1996) suggested that visitors to cultural heritage attractions gain a personal insight, derived from enjoyable and mindful or stimulating interaction with that setting. Being ‘mindful’ means that a person is actively processing information and questioning what is going on in a setting in contrast to a ‘mindless’ state where little understanding or appreciation is achieved (Moscardo, 1996). ‘Insightfulness’ is a term that describes a beneficial experience gained from heritage visiting whereby visitors receive emotionally-charged and value-laden personal insights characterised by a deep involvement, understanding, meaning and sensory feelings resulting from a ‘mindful’ experience (McIntosh, 1999; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999).

Implicit in conceptualisations of the recreation and heritage viewing experience is the notion that the satisfaction of that experience produces positive outcomes. For example, by matching skills with challenges thus reaching an optimal state of flow, perceived competence is enhanced, or by gaining ‘insight’ into the history of a place, visitors become more ‘mindful’ of what has gone before them. These outcomes motivate future participation (Driver and Tocher, 1970, Mannell, 1989; Schreyer, Knopf & Williams, 1984). Likewise, it can be assumed that if the recreation experience does not meet expectations and is thus deemed unsatisfactory by the participant the motivation to repeat that behaviour in the future will be low.

The recreation experience then, is a psychological outcome that plays a part in a person’s decision to participate (or not to participate) in a recreational engagement (Driver & Tocher, 1970; Manfredo, Driver & Brown, 1983; Mannell, 1999; Moore, 1995). A focus on the recreation experience holds the key of why people participate in recreation, guides in the understanding of what people want from recreation and offers insight into how recreation might benefit them (Manfredo, Driver & Tarrant, 1996). A satisfactory recreation experience can therefore be regarded as an antecedent condition, causal factor, or precursor of subsequent benefits such as life satisfaction (Marans & Mohai, 1991), subjective well-being (Iso-Ahola, 1980) or even personal growth (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986).

Benefits are the fourth level of the demand hierarchy (Table 2.1). Benefits are the core product of recreation because they are the ultimate outcomes that flow from a recreation experience (Manning, 1986). As noted in Chapter One, benefits are defined as an improved condition, the prevention of an unwanted condition, a satisfying psychological outcome, or the attainment of a desired condition (Driver, 1994). Benefits can accrue to individuals, groups of individuals, communities, economies and natural and historic resources (Driver & Bruns, 1999). Benefits may therefore include psychological benefits like ‘mood’ benefits (Hull, 1991; Hull & Michael, 1995) and education benefits (Roggenbuck, Loomis & Dagostino, 1991), physiological benefits like improved cardiovascular functioning (National Health Committee, 1998), also strengthened family relationships as social benefits are prominent (Orthner & Mancini, 1991), as are the positive effects of recreation on the economy (Frater, Miller & Harris, 1998). Benefits associated with the preservation of natural and heritage resources are demonstrated in the heightened sense of national, regional and local identity generated by their conservation (Hall & McArthur, 1996). Table 2.2 outlines personal and socio-economic benefits that have been linked to recreation.

Table 2.2: Personal and socio-economic benefits associated with recreation.

Personal benefits	Socio-economic benefits
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced risk of coronary heart disease and stroke • Prevention of and reduced depression, anxiety and anger • Positive changes in mood and emotion • Self-confidence • Spiritual growth • Natural, cultural and historic awareness, learning and appreciation • Active living and a well-balanced lifestyle • Challenge, achievement and self-esteem • Skill development • Improved quality of life • Increased muscle strength • Increased life expectancy • Increased bone mass and strength in children • Improved balance and co-ordination • Weight control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community satisfaction • Cultural and historical awareness and appreciation • Family bonding • Builds community pride and identity • Promotes socialisation, understanding and tolerance of other people • Social contact between companions • Cohesion and co-operation • Promotes growth in local and regional economies • Associated health cost reductions due to healthier communities • Safeguarding and preservation of local, regional and national historic sites and areas for future generations

Source: Adapted from Kapelle (2001), Canadian Parks/Recreation Association (1997) and Driver and Bruns (1999)

The increased emphasis on benefits in the final level of the recreation demand hierarchy is what focuses recreation management more towards BBM. By incorporating recreation activities, settings and experiences, BBM builds on, rather than replaces, traditional recreation management and planning approaches such as Experience Based Management (EBM) (Bruns

et al., 1994). Bruns et al. (1994) argued that EBM is preoccupied with activity and resource provision and setting attributes and the influence that these factors have on supplying a diversity of quality on-site experience opportunities for participants. Accordingly, this management approach is inclusive of the concepts outlined in levels one to three of the recreation demand hierarchy only.

The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is an EBM framework used by the Otago Conservancy of the Department of Conservation (DOC)³ to plan and manage recreation opportunities including the OCRT (Connell, 1998). The ROS provides a systematic approach to assessing possible management actions by zoning recreation opportunities according to the activities in which people participate, the settings in which they participate, and the experiences people derive from participation (Driver & Brown, 1978; Clark & Stankey, 1979; Driver, Brown, Stankey & Gregoire, 1987; Mason, 1988). Recreation opportunity zones are defined by considering the extent of human modification to the landscape setting, the topography, the ease and type of access, and the proximity to human settlement (Harper, 1992; Mason, 1988; Taylor, 1993). It is the mix of these physical, social and managerial site characteristics that provide a spectrum or diversity of activity and experience opportunities for visitors to recreation settings.

The basic concept underlying the ROS, therefore, is that a range of different recreation opportunities can be provided to efficiently serve diverse public tastes for recreation. A recreation opportunity such as the OCRT, for example, could be viewed as offering a family group (social setting) the chance to ride their mountain bikes on a well-maintained route (management setting) in a rural area (physical setting) to experience physical exercise and family bonding. In contrast, a recreation opportunity such as an excursion into a mountain environment during winter could be viewed as offering a small group of experienced cross-country skiers the chance to experience risk, to test skills and view mountain scenery in a remote area with limited facilities. Figure 2.1 provides further illustration of the factors that make up each recreation opportunity zone and, more specifically, how this relates to the current management practises applied to the OCRT.

³ The Otago Conservancy of DOC is the regional organisation of DOC – the government department responsible for managing public natural resources in New Zealand.

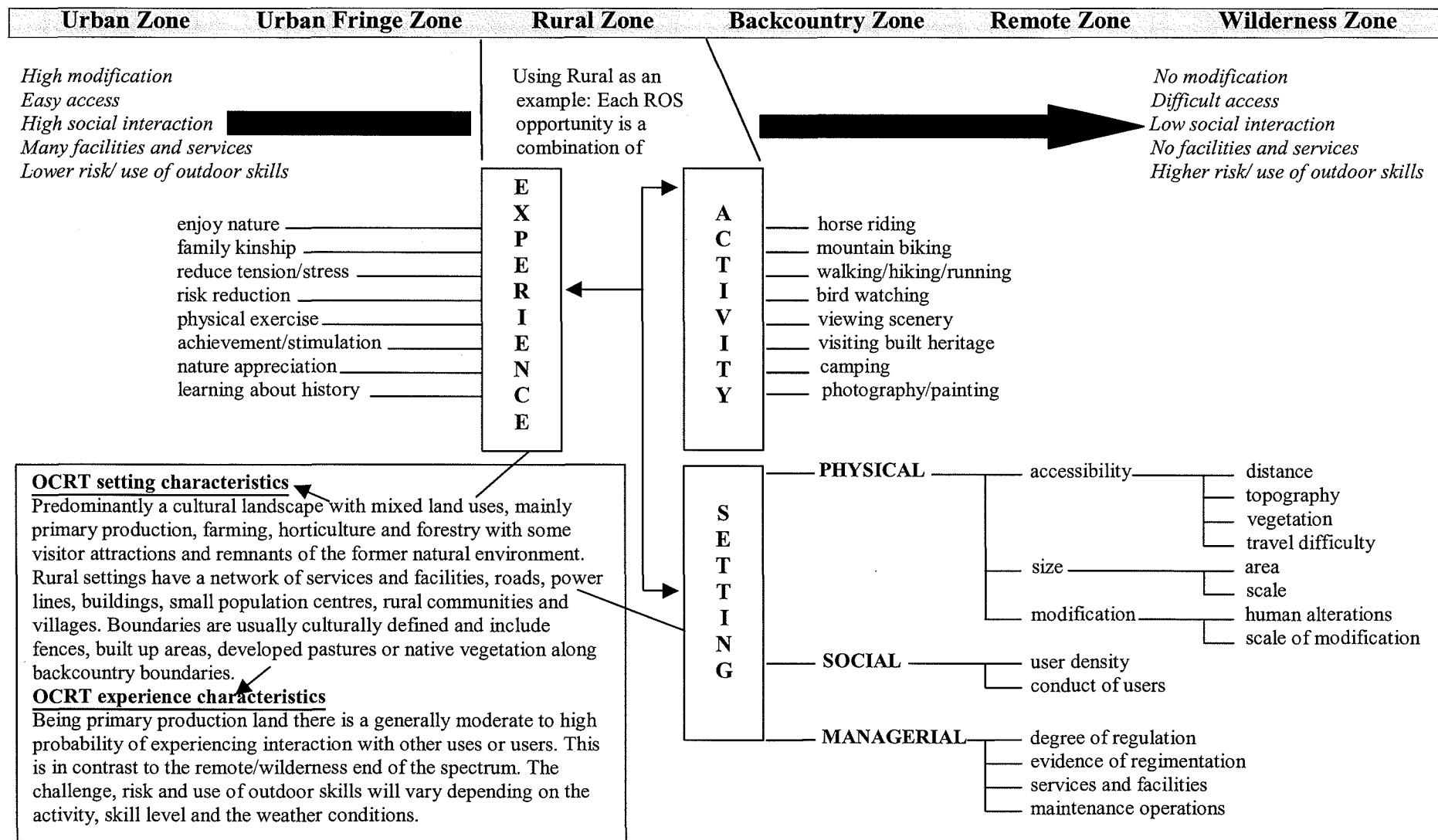


Figure 2.1: Factors that make up the ROS

Source: Adapted from Harper (1992) and Taylor (1993)

While Bruns et al. (1994) noted that managing the setting for activities that realise multiple experiences is an integral part of recreation management, they stress that the management of recreation opportunities goes beyond activity and setting inputs, and beyond on-site experiences to improved conditions for individuals as well as communities. On-site experiences, in particular, are recognised as an important and integral part of BBM (Bruns et al., 1994) as they result in the satisfaction of some psychological needs of the individual. The satisfaction of psychological needs has a beneficial effect on his or her mental and physical health and satisfaction with life, which in turn has a beneficial effect on his or her personal growth (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986). This concept is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

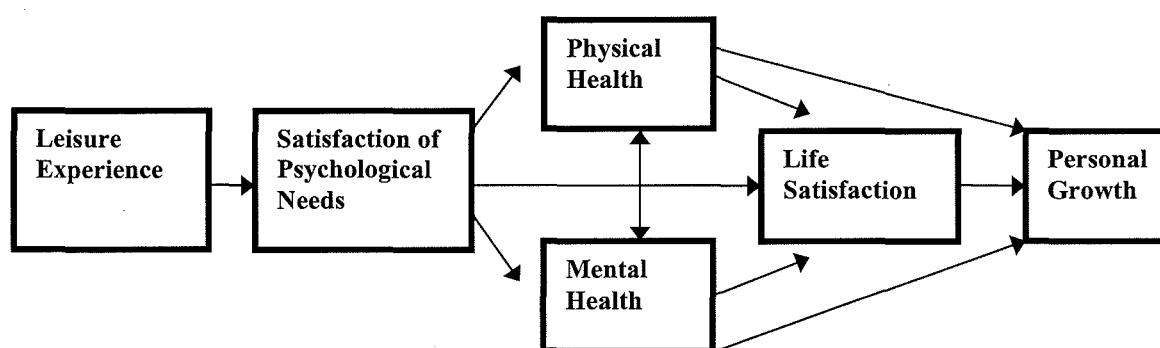


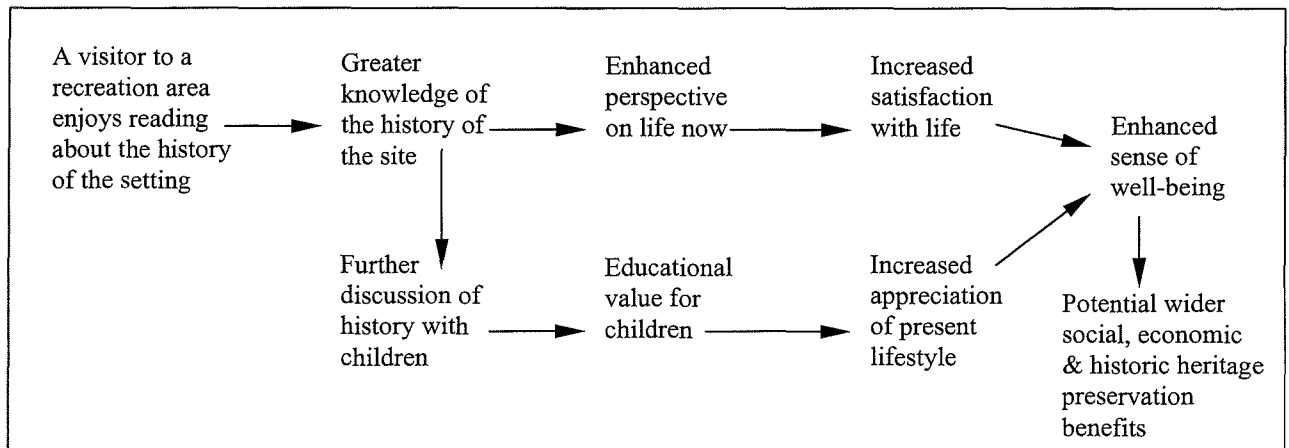
Figure 2.2: Causal effects of leisure experience

Source: Tinsley and Tinsley (1986)

The flow on of experiences into benefits has been termed the benefit chain of causality (Bruns et al., 1994; Driver et al., 1991; Driver & Bruns, 1999). The main thrust of the benefit chain of causality (Figure 2.3) is the connection it establishes between the third and fourth levels of the recreation demand hierarchy, thus linking the positive experiences gained by an individual from a recreational engagement with other beneficial outcomes that accrue not only to that person but also to groups of individuals, communities and the economy (Bruns et al., 1994; Driver et al., 1991; Driver & Bruns, 1999). A benefits (level four) approach therefore moves an investigation of outcomes away from, although still including, the on-site immediate psychological experiences of individuals towards longer lasting off-site outcomes for those individuals and society as a whole (McIntosh, 1999).

As a result of this relationship, the benefit chain of causality makes it possible for BBM to broaden EBM's emphasis beyond individuals' psychological on-site experiences by implying that these same experiences serve as intermediate outcomes, which lead to longer-term benefits for individuals as well as communities. For example, factors associated with a rail trail experience such as exercise, purchasing food and services, and being with friends can result in longer-term beneficial outcomes like decreased risk of developing coronary heart

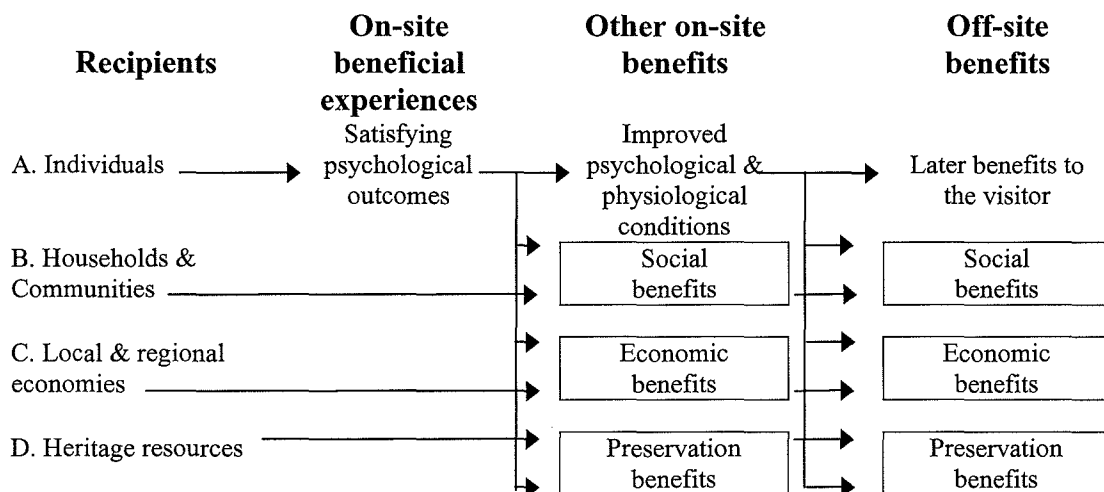
disease, economic growth and strengthened bonds of friendship (Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1998; Driver & Bruns, 1999; Sefton & Mummary, 1995).



Source: Developed from Bruns et al. (1994) and McIntosh (1999)

Figure 2.3: The Benefit Chain of Causality

The overlap of experiences and benefits inherent within the benefit chain of causality also explains why benefit analyses of individuals in practise include measures of both experiences and benefits (McIntosh, 1999; Prentice, 1993). A focus on experiences and benefits thus enables greater insight into what positive outcomes are actually being gained from leisure activity (Bruns, 1998; Prentice, 1993; Prentice et al., 1998). The relationship between the on-site recreation experiences of the visitor and the off-site benefits that potentially flow to the visitor, the neighbouring community and wider society is reflected in Figure 2.4.



Source: Developed from Bruns (1998) and Driver and Bruns (1999)

Figure 2.4: The relationship between on and off-site benefits and the recipients of those benefits

2.2 Visitor and Community Perspectives

The review of means end theory and the recreation demand hierarchy implies that an understanding of the benefits that visitors associate with recreation resources is important if recreation planners and managers are to respond to visitor needs and wants. This means that the views of visitors need to be addressed in the research process (Beeho & Prentice, 1997; McIntosh, 1999; Prentice, 1993; Stein & Lee, 1995). However, if recreation planners and managers are to serve the needs and wants of the public equally, the recreation demand hierarchy suggests that the benefits for local community residents who might or might not use the resource also need to be identified (Driver & Bruns, 1999). Many of these residents receive significant satisfaction and benefit just from knowing that resources are being maintained and preserved in their local area (Driver & Bruns, 1999). Allen and Beattie (1984), for example, reported that leisure services strongly contribute to overall feelings of satisfaction within a community.

As Allen (1996), Bruns et al. (1994) and Bruns (1998) argued, the successful implementation of a management plan for a recreation resource requires an understanding of visitor and community benefits. To date, recreation planners and managers have not been presented with a benefits-based management research effort that seeks to describe and understand the benefits that visitors and local residents associate with the recreational use of a rail trail. As a contribution to this area, this thesis seeks to study both visitor and community benefits.

2.2.1 Visitor perspectives

Much emphasis in the leisure benefits literature has been given to the personal benefits that accrue to visitors from their participation in or experience of recreation and heritage resources. Studies addressing this issue have identified and described perceived beneficial experiences for visitors to parks (Behan, Richards & Lee, 2001; Klenosky, Frauman, Norman & Gengler, 1998; Stein & Lee, 1995; Walker, Hull & Roggenbuck, 1998), rail trails and greenways⁴ (Bichis Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Frauman & Cunningham, 2001), wild life viewing (Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000) and cultural heritage attractions (Beeho & Prentice, 1996, 1997; McIntosh, 1997, 1999). A major contention of these studies is that by making a concerted effort to deliver appropriate beneficial experiences to visitors (in terms of satisfying

⁴ Greenways are broadly defined as open-space corridors that follow natural or built features such as riverfronts, stream valleys, railway rights-of-way converted to recreational use, canal paths, scenic roads and other routes (Moore & Shafer, 2001).

their needs and wants), recreation planners and managers might survive current market forces in an increasingly competitive leisure market (Beeho & Prentice, 1997; Driver & Bruns, 1999). For example, the benefit of learning about railway heritage may direct planners and managers towards providing resources, such as interpretation panels and guides, that stimulate learning, appreciation and ultimate public support for preservation (Moscardo, 1996).

Additional evidence, relating to intangible benefits for visitors to rail trails, has been offered. Moore et al. (1992), for example, found that recreational opportunity value, health and fitness, aesthetic beauty and public education about nature and the environment were the benefits of rail trails ranked most highly by trail users. Apart from their identification, however, Moore et al. (1992) provided limited explanation about these benefits. This was due to the fact that measuring neighbouring landowner attitudes and economic analysis were the main aims of the study, rather than the personal benefits associated with visiting the trail.

A visitor benefit segmentation study conducted by Bichis-Lupas and Moisey (2001) is the only other published study that has examined rail trail visitor benefits more specifically. However, several studies have researched the visitor benefits associated with parks, greenways and heritage attractions. Despite the fact that these studies are based on research in different recreation and leisure settings, it seems likely that many of the same benefits are highly related to the recreational usage of rail trails. The findings of these studies therefore provide an expanded understanding of potential benefits that might accrue to OCRT visitors.

In several studies (e.g. Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Stein & Lee, 1995; Walker et al., 1998), researchers have used questionnaires that included an assortment of near-identical benefit statements that respondents rated on a five-point Likert scale. Results from these studies showed that the benefits highlighted by visitors to rail trails are comparable with the visitor benefits associated with greenways and parks. These benefits included physical fitness/exercise, enhanced appreciation of and relationships with nature (e.g. increased understanding of the natural environment and observing scenic beauty), restorative (e.g. relaxing, reducing stress and escaping everyday routines), achievement (e.g. challenge, skill improvement and exploration) and social interaction (e.g. spending time with family and friends) (Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Stein & Lee, 1995; Walker et al., 1998). Rail trails, greenways and parks therefore offer opportunities for visitors to realise a diverse range of individual and group benefits.

In each of these studies, identified benefits were further compared against socio-demographic data (Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001), setting preferences (e.g. contact with other people, access to the area and the amount, quality and type of facilities) (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Stein & Lee, 1995) or the degree to which visitors realise optimal experiences (e.g. peak and flow experiences) (Walker et al., 1998). According to the results of these comparisons, the types of benefits sought by visitors may vary due to certain physical, social and managerial characteristics associated with the setting (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Stein & Lee, 1995), and the quantity of the on-site optimal experience is related to the degree of benefit visitors recollect off-site (Walker et al., 1998). These results have at least two potential implications for the current study, both of which focus on meeting the diverse needs of prospective visitors.

The first implication is that, although rail trails have the potential to serve a broad range of visitor benefits, they are also unique settings. As such, the physical, social and managerial attributes of the OCRT might not provide benefit opportunities for all types of visitors. This suggests that research is needed which specifically seeks to identify and describe the perceived benefits that visitors personally associate with the OCRT. Answers to such questions could be used to promote greater public understanding of the link between attributes of the OCRT setting and the underlying benefit opportunities that it addresses. Thus matching the types of benefits that prospective visitors desire from an outdoor recreation experience with the types of benefits potentially offered by the OCRT.

Second, because optimal experiences are related to the quantity of perceived benefit, insight is needed from the visitors themselves about opportunities on the OCRT that might potentially facilitate such experiences. For example, Bichis-Lupas and Moisey (2001) concluded that as a means of conveying the natural and cultural values identified as beneficial to some visitors' experience, scenic views, tourist attractions and historic sites along a rail trail could be better marked and visitor information provided about these unique and special places. The benefits people experience when visiting rail trails are therefore a core component in their management, marketing and interpretation. As a consequence, attention to the outcomes gained by the individual consumer of the OCRT is vital because, in essence, a core product of heritage and recreation resources is the benefits gained by visitors (McIntosh, 1997, 1999).

Studies, which have attempted to address such issues, include Beeho and Prentice (1996, 1997), McIntosh (1997, 1999), McIntosh and Prentice (1999), Prentice et al. (1998), and

Schänzel and McIntosh (2000). The common theme of these studies is that a customer focus is what is needed if heritage or wildlife viewing attractions are to deliver beneficial experiences to visitors and thus customer satisfaction. Findings suggested that heritage and wild life viewing attraction settings have the potential to provide visitor experiences which positively influence personal well-being and extend knowledge in a more meaningful way than has been shown in previous recreation research (Beeho & Prentice 1996, 1997; McIntosh, 1997, 1999; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999). The ability to provide opportunities that realise such experiences equates with the future sustainability of heritage and wildlife-viewing attractions (Beeho & Prentice, 1996, 1997; McIntosh, 1997, 1999; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000). Increased direct and indirect competition within the leisure marketplace (Collow et al., 1993; Ross, 2000) means that the same is likely to be true for public recreation resources like the OCRT.

This body of work therefore adds another dimension to the visitor benefits suggested by rail trail, greenway and park studies. The latter studies have focused on beneficial experiences defined in terms of the degree to which desired and expected outcomes are realised whereas the former studies have sought a deeper exploration of the personal perspectives of visitors. For example, McIntosh (1997, 1999) conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews aimed at exploring the experiential processes associated with heritage viewing, rather than measuring and comparing the benefits reported by visitors. While the benefit statement approach may tell us that people who visit a rail trail like the trail for its scenic beauty, this technique, unlike in-depth interviews, does not explore the personal value that the visitor attaches to viewing beautiful scenery (i.e. the process by which people gain from, emotionally respond to and perceive scenic beauty). The actual nature of the beneficial experience and thus the strong emotional impact that this potentially has on the visitor is therefore neglected (McIntosh, 1999).

The researchers' inclusion of specific items in these surveys shapes the range of responses. Thus, a question arises as to whether or not the study participants would have identified those benefits if the researcher had not prompted them. Additionally, the findings of these studies fail to clarify how and why study participants believed benefits like emotional attachment to place, nature appreciation and exercise were important. The approach used in this thesis differs to the majority of the studies conducted in this field because it focuses on using the study participants' perspectives and language to identify how, and develop a better understanding of why, the key benefits of a specific rail trail are important for visitors.

In addition to personal benefits to visitors, there are also likely to be benefits to society as a whole (Stein, Anderson & Thompson, 1999). For example, from a community perspective, if an outdoor recreation area or heritage attraction provides access for community residents to attain personal benefits, such as physical exercise and/or learning about history, the community might also benefit through the enhanced physical and mental health of some of its residents or the increased commitment to the preservation of historic sites. As such, information supplied by benefits-based research directed only at visitors to recreation resources, while valuable, does not provide a complete picture for planners and managers. The views of the community also need to be considered.

2.2.2 Community perspectives

The community benefits associated with visitor spending and recreation resources have received much emphasis in recreation research (see for example, Jensen et al., 1993; National Park Service, 1992). This is due to the link that is commonly made between developing and maintaining recreation resources and the actual or anticipated economic spin-off effects this has for neighbouring communities. However, researchers have given relatively little attention to the personal and social benefits that recreation opportunities provide for the residents of local communities (Stein et al., 1999). In contrast to research in recreation settings, consideration of the personal and social needs of communities has been widely adopted for some time as a prerequisite in the tourism planning process (Getz, 1986, 1987; Gunn, 1988; Haywood, 1988; Inskeep, 1991; Murphy, 1985; Simmons, 1994, 1995). As Simmons (1994: p. 99) stated, "Planning at the community level is vital if any region wishes to deliver tourism experiences which ensure both visitor satisfaction and ongoing benefits for the residents of destination areas".

One reason given for a community-driven approach to tourism planning is that, because of the frequency of interaction residents have with visitors their willingness to serve as hosts is critical to the success of a visitor attraction. This implies that the satisfaction of visitors is highly dependent on their interaction with local residents. More specifically, the suggested detrimental effects of resentful and hostile residents means there is a need to keep in touch with resident views because, without local resident support, the chance of a dissatisfying visitor experience is increased (Lankford, 1994). This could potentially decrease the benefits that recreation resources might bring to a community.

The goodwill and co-operation of local residents alone, however, does not create a beneficial visitor experience. The quality of the visitor experience is determined by interactions between private providers (e.g. camp grounds, pubs), public providers (e.g. recreation area managers, local government tourism promoters), local residents, visitors and the natural and physical setting (Betz & Perdue, 1993; Bruns, 1998). For instance, the relationships between private providers and visitors might influence the visitor experience, or the numbers and behaviour of visitors to an area might affect the way in which local people perceive visitors or the level of impact on the natural and physical setting. This also has implications for public providers of recreation resources.

In New Zealand, for example, the Department of Conservation (DOC) recognises that building positive relationships with local businesses and the wider community is an important component in heritage conservation (DOC, 1998). As local residents must live with the outcomes of recreation resource developments, they must be involved in the planning and their perceptions of its impact on community life must be continually assessed (Allen, Long, Perdue & Kieselbach, 1988). What is needed, therefore, is a greater research effort directed at identifying personal and social benefits of recreation resources from a community-based perspective (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1994; Bruns, 1998; Clements, Schultz & Lime, 1993; Stein et al., 1999). While negative impacts should not be ignored, a community benefits focus places emphasis on positive rather than negative outcomes in the recreation resource planning and management process.

Rather than researching wider community benefits, studies of the relationships between local residents and rail trails have concentrated on the effects that trail-related problems, visitor spending, and current satisfaction have on neighbouring landowner attitudes towards rail trails (Graham, 1996; Moore et al., 1992; Moore et al., 1994a; Moore et al., 1994b; National Park Service, 1992; Parker & Moore, 1998). The research indicated that visitor spending generates modest economic impacts for the communities neighbouring rail trails (Moore et al., 1994b; National Park Service, 1992). In addition, neighbouring landowners also suggested that rail trails potentially offered opportunities for local resident recreation, health and fitness, tourism and business development, and building community pride (Graham, 1996; Moore et al., 1992).

It appears that the economic consequences of rail trails and the attitudes of neighbouring landowners towards their development, rather than the wider benefits that local people

perceived to be most important, were the major objectives of these studies. Little attention has therefore been focused specifically on the community benefits associated with rail trails. For that reason, the interpretation of findings about the community benefits of rail trails is therefore limited to measurements of their economic impact and neighbouring landowner anticipations of the potential community benefits thought to be associated with those trails. As a consequence, questions have not been asked which explore whether local residents believe the benefits associated with rail trails are significant, and if so, for what reasons. This means that little insight has been offered to the personal and social value assigned to a rail trail by a cross-section of local residents.

However, the benefits based management approach has previously been used as a means of pinpointing the perceived community benefits that local residents associate with local recreation resources such as parks, leisure centres and cultural tourism attractions (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1995; Besculides et al., 2002; Stein et al., 1999). Results from these studies highlight that community leisure centres have the potential to become the hub of the local community and a showcase of community pride and achievement (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1995). The act of presenting the cultural features of a community to visitors, for example, can strengthen the idea of what it means to live within that community (Besculides et al., 2002).

Research has also shown that local community stakeholders perceived their communities as having a special relationship with a nearby park (Stein et al., 1999). In general, this relationship was characterised by a belief that the park provided a chance to attract tourism dollars to the community, a chance to experience unique outdoor recreation opportunities and a place to preserve/conservate various natural and unique ecosystems. It has also been suggested that cultural tourism attractions act as a catalyst for increased tolerance and understanding through the exposure of local residents to outsiders (Besculides et al., 2002).

Other studies, focused more on recreation areas as key tourist attractions, have reported similar results (Clements et al., 1993; Perdue, Long & Allen, 1987). These studies have analysed local residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and personal benefits associated with neighbouring recreation areas. Findings suggested that recreation-oriented tourism has the potential to strengthen local economies, stimulate investment and visitor spending in the area and encourage the development of a variety of cultural activities (e.g. arts and crafts) (Clements et al., 1993). Local residents also highlighted that scenic enjoyment and increased access to natural areas, parks and trails were personal benefits of living near recreation areas

(Clements et al., 1993). Additionally, in a study of rural towns, Perdue et al. (1987) found that tourism development based on outdoor recreation opportunities in the surrounding areas had improved both the appearance of the community and the quality of life of local residents.

The work of Clements et al. (1993) and Perdue et al. (1987) illustrates a relationship between recreation resources, increased visitation and community benefits. Their findings support the claim that recreation resources increase the attractiveness of an area. This has the potential to increase the number of visitors to the area, thus adding revenue, which in turn, can be reinvested to improve facilities and opportunities for local residents (Allen et al., 1993; Betz & Perdue, 1993; Lankford, Williams & Knowles-Lankford, 1997). In New Zealand, for example, Warren and Taylor (1999) noted that outdoor activities are major attractions for visitors to rural areas and that tourism based around these opportunities is increasingly being seen as a potential strategy for rural economic development. Warren and Taylor (1999: p. 3) further explain that:

“The economic stability of rural communities has been undermined over the last fifteen years by changing markets, removal of agricultural subsidies, falling export prices, urban migration, loss of jobs and services and the impact of globalisation on food distribution and retailing”.

To develop a more stable economic base, it was therefore suggested that many of New Zealand's rural communities were diversifying their economic activities by capitalising on undervalued and underused local assets such as historic, recreational and scenic attractions (Warren & Taylor, 1999). However, although economic returns remain a major motivating force for this development, rural tourism operators also valued the social benefits of hosting and interacting with visitors (Warren & Taylor, 1999). Additionally, in some rural communities recreation-related tourism has been found to promote community spirit particularly through the development of cultural and entertainment activities (e.g. events and festivals) and the creation of conditions for safeguarding and enhancing local cultural resources (e.g. historic buildings) (Gannon, 1994).

The results of the preceding studies highlight that recreation facilities, parks and cultural tourism attractions have the potential to promote community pride, stimulate local economies, improve local recreation opportunities, provide an opportunity for social contact with visitors and create conditions that facilitate the preservation of local cultural resources. Satisfaction with each of these community attributes contributes significantly to one's satisfaction with community life (Allen, 1991). However, while it seems likely that many of the community

benefits associated with parks, recreation facilities and cultural heritage attractions could potentially apply to communities neighbouring the OCRT, these studies have not addressed the community benefits directly related to rail trails. More site-specific research is therefore needed which focuses on how local people and communities benefit from the OCRT and why these outcomes are important to them. This gap is highlighted by the lack of research focused on the community benefits associated with specific rail trail settings.

2.3 Chapter Summary

Means end theory and the recreation demand hierarchy have evolved from a tradition in which it is suggested that observable human behaviour can be explained by examining the determinants of motivation. Both models identify these determinants as the activities, settings and experiences that people seek in order to realise benefits. In effect, benefits flow from the activity, setting and experience provided by a recreation opportunity. Thus, the four levels of the recreation demand hierarchy are integrated with and influenced by each other (Driver, 1994; Prentice, 1993).

A strong applied orientation reflected in experience and benefits based management has been guided by what is suggested by the recreation demand hierarchy. As knowledge of the concepts inherent in the recreation demand hierarchy has grown, so too has each new recreation management tradition built upon and integrated its predecessor. The benefit chain of causality, in particular, demonstrates the overlapping relationship that exists between levels three and four of the recreation demand hierarchy. The over-riding implications of the benefit chain of causality make it possible to imply off-site benefits from the satisfying psychological outcomes that are reported by visitors to recreation areas. Likewise, the benefit chain of causality makes it explicit that off-site benefits potentially flow to the residents of local communities. Thus, by asking local people to identify the community benefits of neighbouring recreation resources provides a broader perspective of the benefits beyond those realised only by visitors.

It is interesting that although studies addressing visitor and community perspectives may be from the standpoint of broadening the knowledge base of the benefits associated with rail trails and recreation resources in general, there has been little systematic investigation into the combined community and visitor benefits linked to a specific rail trail. Rather, studies of rail trails have tended to focus research on other aims such as emotional attachment to rail trail settings, visitor benefit segmentation, neighbouring landowner attitudes and economic

impacts (e.g. Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Graham 1996; Moore & Graefe, 1994; Moore et al., 1994b). Regardless of the specific aims, however, the pattern of evidence from these studies confirms that rail trails have the potential to provide beneficial outcomes for visitors and local communities. In addition, the results of studies that address the benefits associated with other recreation and heritage resources can equally be used to suggest the community and visitor benefits that might potentially result from the recreational use of rail trails.

While evidence suggests that rail trails, recreation and heritage resources provide a wide range of benefits there is limited insight into the visitor and neighbouring community benefits associated with the OCRT. This thesis aims to provide this insight by exploring the benefits that local residents, trail managers, and visitors personally associate with the OCRT. Further explanation of the approach that was adopted in order to achieve this aim is given in Chapter Three.

Chapter Three

Methods

This chapter outlines the procedures that were used to identify and describe community and visitor benefits associated with the Otago Central Rail Trail (OCRT). In order to gain insight into the community and visitor benefits of the OCRT, a face-to-face semi-structured interview method was selected with the intention of exploring respondents' own interpretations or descriptions of the benefits gained from their association with the trail. This type of exploratory case study approach is necessary since research involving BBM and specific recreation settings like rail trails has received little empirical investigation. A case study approach was therefore justified because the fundamental point of focus in this situation was an understanding of how the OCRT operates in its own context (Kapelle, 2001). As the setting where the recreation experience takes place is a central factor in the benefits realised by visitors and communities, knowledge of the context of that setting is essential for understanding these benefits (Driver & Brown, 1978; Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Manning, 1986; Prentice, 1993; Prentice, Witt & Wydenbach, 1994).

3.1 The Study Setting

The present study was undertaken on the Otago Central Rail Trail (OCRT) and in the neighbouring towns and rural areas of Central Otago, New Zealand. Rejuvenated from a 150 kilometre stretch of the disestablished Otago Central branch railway line, the OCRT is a public recreation trail located one hour's drive from Dunedin, the major city in the Otago Province (Figure 3.1). Reflecting its former use as a working railway line, the OCRT passes through several towns and rural settlements located along the trail (Figure 3.1). The bulk of the people who live near the OCRT are concentrated in Alexandra (pop. 4617), the largest town and administrative centre of the Central Otago District. Elsewhere, the population is widely dispersed in smaller towns adjacent to the trail such as Middelmarsh (pop. 202), Ranfurly (pop. 846), Clyde (pop. 849) and Omakau, rural settlements (e.g. Waipiata and Otarehua) and farm homesteads (Central Otago District Council, 1998; Statistics New Zealand, 1999).

Acting primarily as service centres for local farms and orchards, the towns and rural settlements provide a variety of associated facilities and amenities for local people and

visitors including country pubs, schools, public toilets, visitor information, food and accommodation, retail outlets and postal agencies. While agriculture and horticulture remain the dominant industries in Central Otago, tourism centred on natural and historic heritage sightseeing, events and festivals, wine tasting and outdoor recreation has grown in recent years with Alexandra, Naseby and Clyde, in particular, being popular domestic summer holiday destinations (Central Otago District Council, 1998; Kearsley, 1998; Springer, 1993).

The landscape through which the OCRT traverses, consists of four broad basins: the Manuherikia Valley, the Ida Valley (Plate 3), the Maniototo Plain (Plate 1), and the Strath Taieri Plain. The valleys and plains are flanked by several low mountain ranges (Figure 3.1). The contrast between the modified farmland environment of the basins and the natural environment of the mountains is a prominent scenic feature of the study area (Plates 2, 3, 4 and 5) (Central Otago District Council, 1998; Mason, 1988; Peat & Patrick, 1999).

While the gold rush of the 1860s originally laid the social and industrial foundations of Central Otago, it was the economic potential of fruit growing and sheep farming, which came to prominence in the 1870s, that was instrumental in the construction of the Otago Central branch railway line (Cowan, 1948; Forrest, 1965; Moore, 1953; Pyke, 1962). Commenced in 1879 and completed to Clyde in 1907, the railway carried both passengers and freight between the farming and fruit growing communities of Central Otago and Dunedin (Plate 6). “Indeed it was the railway which enabled those communities to develop and prosper” (Dangerfield & Emerson, 1995: p. 71).

Through serving as a transport link between the inland towns of Central Otago and the coastal port city of Dunedin the railway played a major part in building the social and economic foundations of the Central Otago District (Cowan, 1948; Forrest, 1965; Moore, 1953; Thompson, 1949). The development of the railway, for example, promoted population movement within Central Otago, as services moved away from former gold mining towns such as Ophir and Naseby, to the newer railway towns like Ranfurly and Omakau, which were more centrally located to serve expanding farm development. A major contribution of the Otago Central railway, therefore, was the emergence of Ranfurly as the chief town of the Maniototo and the rapid development of Omakau in the Manuherikia valley (Forrest, 1965; Todd, 1998). As such, the railway’s historical connection with neighbouring communities is a significant aspect of the cultural heritage of the area.

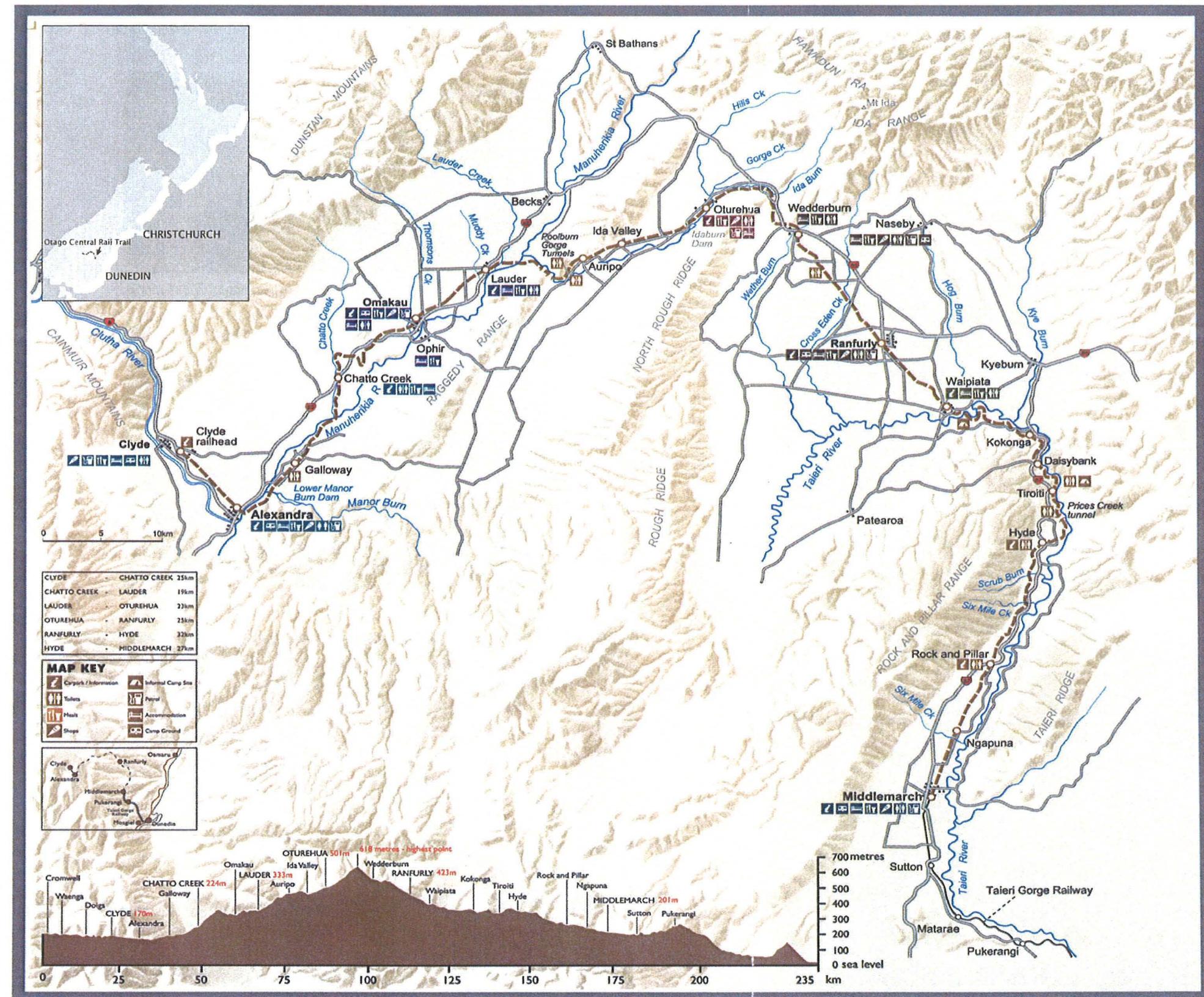


Figure 3.1: Map of the OCRT

Source: The Department of Conservation, Otago Conservancy, Dunedin



Plate 1: Cycling across the Maniototo Plain.



Plate 2: Across-trail gates, adjacent farmland and mountain views.

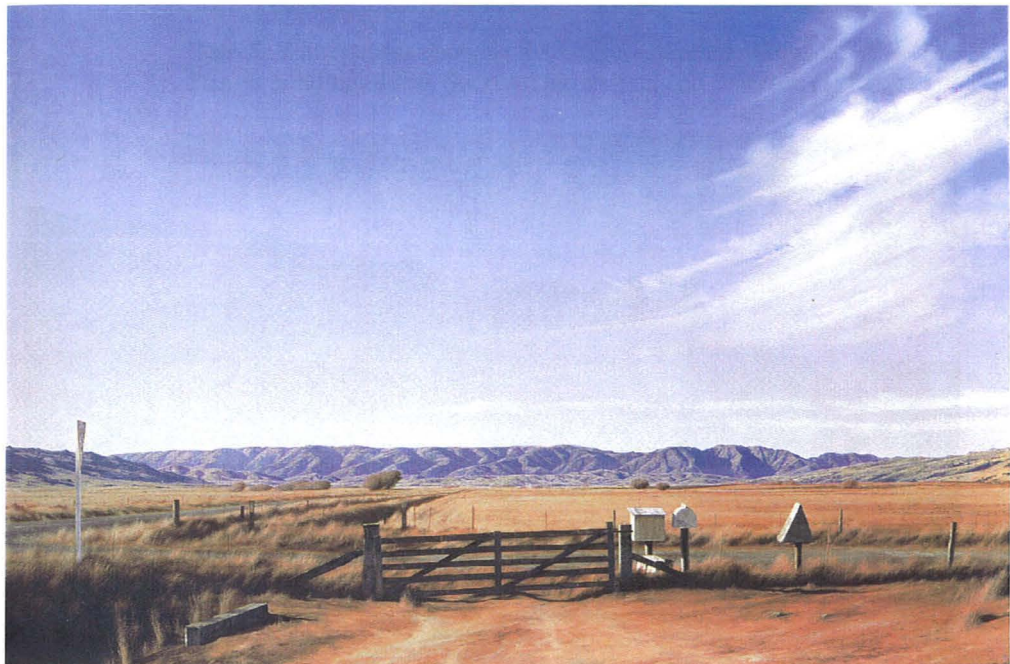


Plate 3: *Andersons Lane*, 1998, oil on linen, by Grahame Sydney. The setting for this painting is the Ida Valley with the Hawkdun Range in the background. Source: Sydney (2000).



Plate 4: The OCRT runs alongside the Raggedy Range near Chatto Creek. Schist rock outcrops known as tors are prominent on the surrounding hillsides.



Plate 5: Winter scene showing the former Oturehua Railway Station buildings 1986. Source: Dangerfield and Emerson (1995).

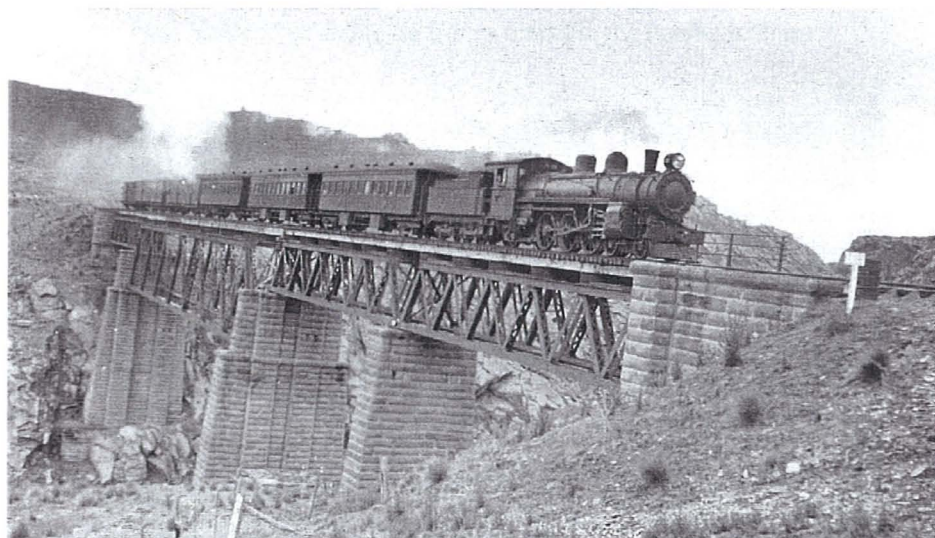


Plate 6: A passenger train crossing the Poolburn Viaduct 1938. Source: Hermann (1997).



Plate 7: Cyclists crossing the Poolburn Viaduct.



Plate 8: A cyclist emerging from a tunnel in the Poolburn Gorge.



Plate 9: Restored historic buildings located along the main street of Clyde.

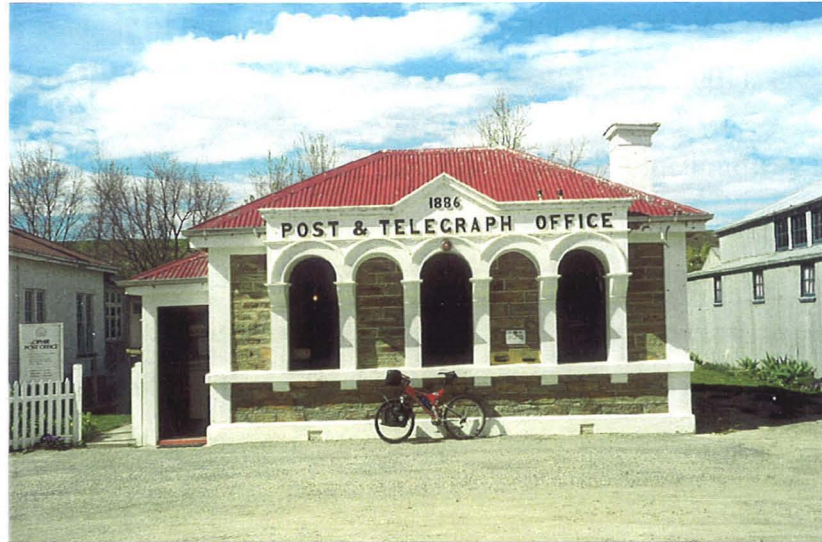


Plate 10: The historic Ophir Post Office.



Plate 11: Built in 1880, the Daniel O'Connell Bridge spans the Manuherikia River between Ophir and Omakau.

Another, more poignant historical connection that the local community has with the OCRT is the 1943 Hyde railway disaster. A memorial to the 21 local people killed in the train crash is located next to the OCRT, just south of the Hyde railway station. In addition to the trail's historical and cultural connection with neighbouring communities, the OCRT is also significant for the historical heritage that it preserves. A tangible example of the built heritage of the OCRT is the 37 metre high Poolburn Viaduct (Plate 7). The stone piers of this structure

provide a unique example of brought-to-course stone work⁵, typical of Victorian era railway construction (Dangerfield & Emerson, 1995; Hamel, 1994; Hamel, 2001).

Several factors contributed to the demise of the Otago Central branch railway line including increased competition, technological and economic changes (Churchman & Hurst, 1990; Dangerfield & Emerson, 1995; Sorrell, 1999). For instance, better roads and the subsequent removal of restrictions on the distance that livestock and freight could be transported by road meant that by 1977, the railway line no longer carried livestock and no fruit was carried after January 1983 (Dangerfield & Emerson, 1995). The railway's decline was compounded by a slow deterioration in the Central Otago agricultural economy brought about by the decision of Britain in 1974 to join the European Economic Community (EEC) (Brooking, 1999). As Britain was New Zealand's largest trading partner at the time, this decision had a negative effect on the balance of trade, leading to gradual economic decline throughout the country (Brooking, 1999). In 1984, because of the poor state of the economy and the large and growing overseas debt, the New Zealand Government embarked upon a comprehensive restructuring of the New Zealand economy (Britton, Le Heron & Pawson, 1992; Sandrey & Reynolds, 1990).

Economic restructuring had large ramifications for rural areas including decreased farm revenue, the rationalisation of state sector services (e.g. post offices and rural primary schools) and the corporatisation and privatisation of government owned utilities (e.g. telecommunications and railways) (Britton, LeHeron & Pawson, 1992; Horn, Simmons & Fairweather, 1998). A combined effect of agricultural and state sector restructuring was the job, population, education and income losses suffered by the small rural service towns of Central Otago (Brooking, 1999; Kearsley, 1998; Sorrell, 1999; Taylor & Warren, 1999). However, the transport of materials associated with the construction of the Clyde Hydroelectric Dam kept the railway line open until the dam neared its completion. The Otago Central branch railway line was eventually closed in 1990 (Churchman & Hurst, 1990; Dangerfield & Emerson, 1995). In 1993, the management of the railway corridor became the responsibility of the Otago Conservancy of DOC (Connell, 1998; Graham, 1996).

⁵ Brought-to-course stone work is the crafting by stonemasons of even-sized blocks of stone which were quarried from schist outcrops adjacent to the railway line. Once crafted, the schist blocks were, in turn, used to build the stone piers and abutments of the Poolburn Viaduct (Dangerfield & Emerson, 1995).

DOC's idea to transform the former railway line into a recreational trail followed similar rail to trail conversion projects in Britain and the United States (Graham, 1996). However, state sector rationalisation meant that DOC faced resource constraints comparable with those which had contributed to the demise of the railway. In order to overcome these constraints, the OCRT Charitable Trust was established in 1994 with the aim of applying for and administering the funds that were needed for developing the trail (OCRT Trust, 1994). Grants were subsequently obtained from local funding sources (including the Trust Bank Otago Community Trust, the Lottery Grants Board, the New Zealand Employment Service and donations from individuals)

Drawing from this support, the OCRT Charitable Trust and DOC initiated a development project including replacing the original coarse stone surface of the trail with a three metre wide compacted gravel track and installing solid timber decking and safety railings on the railway bridges and viaducts (Plates 1, 4 and 7). In addition, gates were mounted across the trail for controlling livestock movement (Plate 2), interpretation, directional and warning signs (Figure 5.1 and Plates 13,14 and 15) were erected and several car parks and toilets were positioned at former station sites and locations adjacent to the trail (DOC, 1994). The OCRT was fully completed and officially opened in February 2000.

The justification for this development focused on the potential benefits that such a trail offered for recreation in the region, not just for local people, but also for visitors to the area. Claims about the potential benefits of the OCRT were amplified by the cultural and historic heritage attributes that the OCRT conserved (Connell, 1998). The relatively gentle gradient (Plates 1 and 4) of the OCRT, the high sunshine hours⁶, good access on public and farm roads (Figure 3.1), and the variety of natural and historic interest provide an excellent basis for a range of recreation opportunities for local residents as well as visitors to the area (Connell, 1998; DOC, 1994; Harper, 1992; Springer, 1993). For instance, recreational opportunities associated with the OCRT might include activities such as jogging for fitness, picnicking at a scenic spot beside a river, camping, walking, cycle touring (Plate 8), horse riding, visiting local country pubs or viewing rural scenery and late 19th century railway architecture.

⁶ The average yearly sunshine hours for Central Otago are between 2000 and 2100 hours. Central Otago has a semi-arid climate with a low average annual rainfall. Temperatures range from an average of 4 degrees Celsius in winter to an average of 23 degrees Celsius in summer. Snow collects on the ranges in winter and spring but does not usually lie for long on the valley and basin floors (Peat & Patrick, 1999).

The OCRT also offers visitors the opportunity to participate in activities which are independent of the trail. For example, the OCRT links other sites that give a sense of history and identity to the Central Otago area including the former gold-mining towns of Clyde (Plate 9), Ophir (Plates 10 and 11) and Naseby, Hayes Engineering Works and the Golden Progress Mine in Otarehua (Central Otago District Council, 1998; Connell, 1998; Galer, 1989; Hamel, 2001; Porter, 1983). Plus, the accessibility of the rail trail via multiple entrance points permits recreational users to participate in shorter duration or combine sections for longer day, overnight or multi-day trips (Connell, 1998). It is because of the high number of entry points, however, that actual OCRT visitor numbers are difficult to estimate.

As a means of substantiating the justification for the development of the OCRT, a greater understanding of the positive outcomes associated with the preservation and recreational use of the trail is vital. The present study sought to better understand the positive outcomes that local residents and visitors to the OCRT can potentially experience through conducting semi-structured interviews with study participants.

3.2 The Research Approach

To gain insight into the community and visitor benefits associated with the OCRT, a semi-structured interview approach to data collection was used. In April 2001 one-to-one personal interviews were conducted with neighbouring community residents, trail managers and visiting trail users to explore their views about the benefits associated with the OCRT. As noted in Chapter Two, this method contrasts with most of the research on the beneficial outcomes of recreation engagements which have relied on the use of structured questionnaires (Hamilton-Smith & Driscoll, 1990) largely focused on the statistical analysis of scale items (Burr & Gitelson, 1991). For example, visitor benefit studies frequently included core items from a standardised list of beneficial experiences (see Driver, Tinsley & Manfredi, 1991) in survey instruments designed to rate the desirability of potential benefits such as enjoy natural scenery, do something challenging and get away from the usual demands of life (Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Stein & Lee, 1995; Walker et al., 1998).

While such studies offer important data, the richness of the study participants' own thoughts and feelings can be lost through using statistical procedures that infer benefits from responses to preconceived scale items (Gunter, 1987; Mannell, 1980; Masberg & Silverman, 1996;

McIntosh, 1998; Pearce & Moscardo, 1999). In contrast, a semi-structured interviewing method allows the researcher to gain insight and richer detail about the unique mental experiences of respondents as expressed in their own terms (Henderson, 1991; Mannell, 1980; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997; McIntosh, 1998; Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000). As Henderson (1991: p. 71) states:

“Interviewing is the best method for pursuing a subject, operating in a discovery mode, and creating interaction with an individual.... The purpose of interviews is to find out what is on people’s minds and to access the perspective of others”.

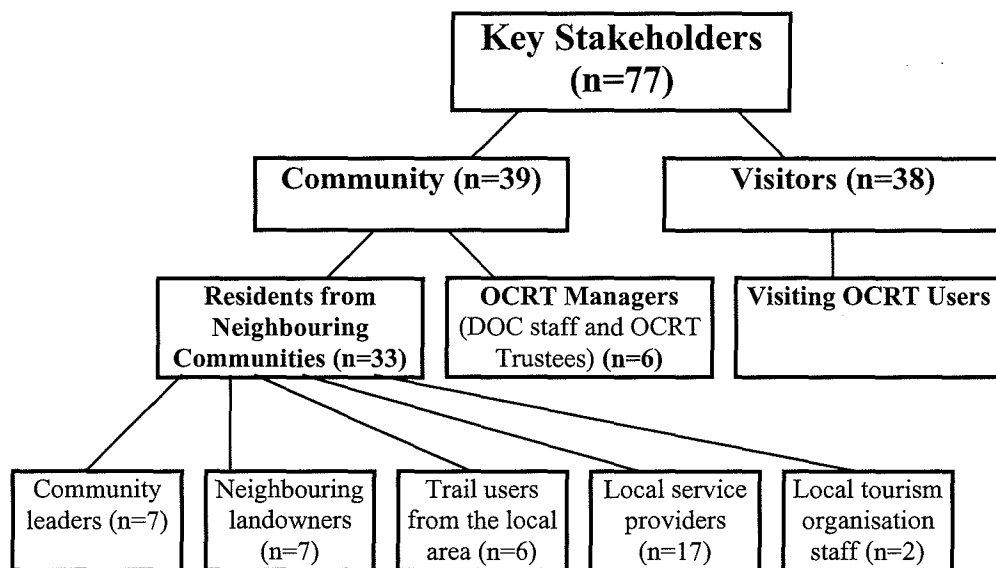
Semi-structured interviewing, however, does have limitations (Henderson, 1991). For example, the generality of findings are limited (McIntosh, 1999) and the selection of interview participants can be biased (Henderson, 1991). Nevertheless, data collection methods, which “rely on subjective and usually verbal self-reports of perceived benefits” (Driver, 1990: 33), although viewed as less reliable should not detract from their validity and usefulness for applied BBM studies (Anderson et al., 2000; Bruns, 1998; Driver & Bruns, 1999). Moreover, since the aim of this study was to gain insights into the benefits of the OCRT, as reported by local residents, trail managers and visitors, richness of detail was sought at the expense of statistical generalisability.

It is inappropriate, therefore, to draw conclusions about the extent to which these benefits are distributed across the total population of visitors to or residents of the communities neighbouring the OCRT. Nevertheless, semi-structured interviews have often been advocated as an effective method applied to understand the outcomes of recreation and leisure participation (Ap & Crompton, 1993; Beeho & Prentice, 1996, 1997; Fishwick & Vining, 1992; Klenosky, Frauman, Norman & Gengler, 1998; Klenosky, Gengler & Mulvey, 1999; Patterson, Watson, Williams & Roggenbuck, 1998; Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000). Furthermore, semi-structured interviews can serve as a useful preliminary phase for subsequent quantitative and/or mixed method testing of perceived visitor (Arnould & Price, 1993; McIntosh, 1998, 1999; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999) and community benefits (Anderson et al., 2000; Stein, Anderson & Thompson, 1999).

3.3 Data Gathering

3.3.1 Sample Selection

Having established semi-structured interviews as the means of data collection for this research, study participants were selected for interviews using a purposive sampling technique (Henderson, 1991; Perkins, 1988). In comparison to the random selection of study participants, the purposive sampling technique concentrates on selecting additional cases to be studied according to the potential for expanding the concept being explored (Henderson, 1991; Mannell & Kleiber, 1997). In the current study, prospective interviewees were identified and later selected on the basis of being key stakeholders in the OCRT (Allen, 1996; Bruns, 1998). Allen (1996) and Bruns (1998) suggest that key stakeholders include neighbouring community residents, trail managers and visiting trail users. The selection of study participants' who either live close to the recreation area, know about the recreation area, visit the recreation area, and/or are directly involved or effected by the management of that area, is substantiated by Kapelle (2001) and Stein et al. (1999). From the three stakeholder groups, a total of seventy-seven key informants were selected for face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Figure 3.2 outlines the composition of each stakeholder group.



N.B. In some cases, residents from neighbouring communities were members of more than one community stakeholder group. For example, a neighbouring landowner may have also been a community leader. As a result, the total number of community residents presented in the figure totals more than the number of interviews.

Figure 3.2: Stakeholder sample composition

3.3.2 The Community Sample

In order to gain insights into the benefits of the OCRT from the community's perspective, interview participants were selected from the residents of local communities immediately neighbouring the OCRT and trail managers. Following the principles of purposive sampling, members of these stakeholder groups were deliberately targeted because they lived in or interacted with the local communities most likely to be impacted by the rail trail. They were also considered by the researcher to be the most likely to be knowledgeable and well informed about possible benefits that the trail may have been providing for these communities (as in Stein et al, 1999). As suggested by Allen (1996) and Lee (1995), informed constituents such as managers and community influentials are a valuable source of information to initially identify benefits.

Local community residents were chosen because this group is potentially the most affected by visitors to recreation resources within their local area (Lankford, 1994; Perdue, Long & Allen, 1987; Simmons, 1994) although often local residents have different opinions about these impacts (Allen, Long, Perdue & Kieselbach, 1988; Lankford, 1994). Owing to the likelihood that residents hold different views on benefits, interviews were sought with a selection of residents who might offer distinctive and significant perspectives on the benefits that the OCRT potentially provides to the community. Included in this group were local service providers, neighbouring landowners, local trail users, local tourism organisation employees and community leaders who resided in towns and rural areas neighbouring the OCRT. Specifically, these towns/rural areas were Middelmarsh, Ranfurly/Maniototo, Naseby, Hyde, Lauder, Omakau/Ophir, Otarehua, Poolburn, Wedderburn and Alexandra (Figure 3.1). Because of resource limitations, the researcher did not select an interview participant from every local town or area that might have been impacted by the OCRT. Consequently, the benefits that the OCRT has for all neighbouring towns and/or local areas should not be inferred from the results of this study.

Trail managers were interviewed because of their direct involvement with local people in the development and ongoing management of the OCRT. As an example, publicised OCRT management meetings, in which local resident participation is encouraged, are held every two months. The researcher thought that the feedback received by trail managers from local residents attending these meetings could offer rich and insightful information on possible community benefits associated with the OCRT. Included in the trail managers group were

Department of Conservation (DOC) staff-members and Otago Central Rail Trail Trust committee members. Following Kapelle (2001), a description of the associations between the OCRT, local residents and trail managers is summarised in Table 3.1. A profile of community interview participants, noting their place of residence, age and sex is outlined in Table 3.2.

Table 3.1: Community stakeholder relationships to the OCRT

Stakeholders	Relationship with the OCRT
Local Service Providers	Owners and/or operators of local businesses that provide services to OCRT visitors e.g. accommodation, pubs, grocery stores and petrol stations
Neighbouring landowners	Own or lease farmland that has a boundary with the OCRT
Local community trail users	Regularly use the OCRT for recreation and/or travelling to and from work or members of the joint Central Otago Lions OCRT Duathlon committee (concessionaires)
Community leaders	Members of local area Community Boards (Strath-Taieri, Maniototo and Manuherikia-Earnscliffe) and/or the Central Otago District Council
Local tourism organisation employees	Employees of local tourism organisations operating within the Central Otago District
DOC employees	Employees directly involved in the management of the OCRT based in the Alexandra Area Office and the Dunedin Regional Office of the Otago Conservancy of the Department of Conservation
OCRT Charitable Trust Committee members	Voluntary members of the Charitable Trust responsible for OCRT development fundraising and facilitating community – DOC consultation

Source: Developed from Kapelle (2001)

Table 3.2: Characteristics of community and trail manager stakeholders

Community Stakeholder:	Place of Residence*											Age			Sex	
	A	D	H	L	M	N	O	Ot	P	R	W	32-45	46-59	≥60	M	F
Local Service Providers	1			2	3	1	3	2		3	2	5	15		14	6
Neighbouring landowners			1		1		1	1	1	1	1		6	1	6	1
Trail users from local community	2				1					3		3	3		5	1
Community leaders	1				2		2	1		2		1	6	1	4	4
Local tourism org. employees	1					1						1	1		1	1
DOC employees	1	1										2			2	
OCRT Trustees	1	2								1		1	2	1	2	2

* A – Alexandra D – Dunedin H – Hyde L – Lauder M – Middlemarch N – Naseby O – Omakau/Ophir Ot – Otarehua P – Poolburn R – Ranfury/Maniototo W – Wedderburn

N.B. In some cases, residents from neighbouring communities were members of more than one community stakeholder group. For example, a neighbouring landowner may have also been a community leader. As a result, the total number of community residents presented in the figure totals more than the number of interviews.

From discussion with local trail managers, community leaders and local tourism organisation staff, the researcher developed an initial list of prospective informants from the community. Initial interview contacts were then broadened in scope through the use of snowball sampling (Henderson, 1991; Tolich & Davidson, 1999). This technique relies on key informants recommending others, who may be able to elucidate points relevant to the research (Perkins, 1988; Tolich & Davidson, 1999). After being interviewed, the initial informants were asked for the names of other potentially useful interview participants. Applying this 'snowball technique' to the initial interviewees expanded the list to more than forty potential participants. In total, thirty-nine interviews were conducted. The reason for interviewing this number of community stakeholders was determined by time limitations placed on the researcher, the extensiveness of the data obtained and the consistency of interviewee responses evident within the data. A summary of local residents and trail managers interviewed for this study indicates that the age range was 32 – 65 years old and that 70 per cent of these people were male.

3.3.3 The OCRT visitor sample

To gain insight into the benefits reported by visitors to the OCRT, interviews were also conducted with a sample of visiting trail users. Trail visitors were considered to be a significant stakeholder group for this study because it is widely held that visitors to recreation and heritage resources derive benefits from their recreation experience (Beeho & Prentice, 1997; Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1998; Driver & Bruns, 1999; McIntosh, 1999; Sefton & Mummery, 1995).

The rail trail has multiple entrance and exit points spread over a total distance of 150 kilometres. It was difficult, therefore, for a single researcher to interview every trail user on any given day. Consequently, a convenience sampling technique was adopted for selecting visitors to the OCRT. In an effort to interview as wide a range of trail visitors as possible, the researcher stopped at convenient points (pubs, shops, towns, road intersections, historic sites etc) along the trail and selected interviewees on a next-person-to-pass basis. Powe and Willis (1996) and Schänzel and McIntosh (2000) recommend using this method for the selection of interview respondents in outdoor settings. Following Booth (1991), prospective interview participants were not considered for an interview if they were less than 15 years of age. In total, thirty-eight interviews were undertaken with visiting trail users. The selection of this

number of visitors was guided by, and is consistent with, other exploratory studies of visitor benefits (Beeho & Prentice, 1996, 1997; Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000).

3.3.4 OCRT visitor sample description

This section provides a profile of the OCRT visitors who were interviewed in this study (Table 3.3). The intention of this profile is to allow for some degree of comparison with other samples of visitors to rail trails and other heritage and recreation resources. The characteristics of the OCRT visitor sample are outlined in Table 3.4. The information in this table is consistent with the ‘day visitor’ and ‘overnighter’ visitor profiles identified by DOC (1996). Most interview participants were from urban centres situated in the Canterbury, Otago and Southland regions of the South Island, New Zealand.

Table 3.3: OCRT visitor profile

Day visitor profile	Overnighter visitor profile
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors are domestic holidaymakers (non-locals) and a small number of international tourists • These people use the OCRT for day visits ranging from one hour up to a full day • Participants seek experiences in a natural or rural setting with a sense of space and freedom where visits are often associated with a family or group activity like picnicking or walking • Day visitors seek a high standard of facilities and services, including carparks, picnic facilities, on-site orientation/interpretation signs and toilets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors are mainly New Zealand family groups and groups of friends partaking in the traditional New Zealand summer holiday experience • These people stay in campsites (with electricity found at a small number of serviced campgrounds) and overnight accommodation in the local area • The setting is often associated with a unique natural or historic attraction that will determine the recreation experience • Participants expect low risk activities including day walks and mountain biking and prefer a high standard of facilities (e.g. toilets, water supply, on-site orientation/interpretation signs)

Source: Developed from DOC (1996)

A summary of the visiting trail users who were interviewed for this study indicates that the interviewee profile of the OCRT was predominantly middle-aged (i.e. between 30 – 60 years old) (Table 3.4). This profile is consistent with visitors to rail trails (Mowen, Graefe & Williams, 1998), heritage attractions (Beeho & Prentice, 1997, Prentice, Witt & Hamer, 1998), rural areas (Warren & Taylor, 1999) and DOC managed rural settings (Booth, 1989; Harper, 1993). Three quarters of the visitors interviewed were cyclists. More males were interviewed than females. This was not a gender bias on the part of the researcher because interview participants were selected on a next-person-to-pass basis. Approximately two-thirds of all trail users interviewed were traveling without children 15 years of age or under in their personal group. Group composition ranged from couples to friends to extended families

(average group size is 3.4). Three of the 38 visitors interviewed were travelling alone. The high proportion of group participants in this study is consistent with studies of visitors to rail trails (Mowen, Graefe & Williams, 1998) and outdoor recreation settings in general (Manning, 1986).

Table 3.4: Visiting OCRT user characteristics

OCRT Visitor Profile:	Place of Residence		Age				Activity Type		Sex		Group Size	
	C,O,S ¹	Other	≤30	31 – 45	46 – 59	≥60	W ²	C ³	M	F	<5	≥5
‘Day Visitor’	8	3	1	2	6	2	5	6	7	4	8	3
‘Overnighter’	22	5	5	13	5	4	4	23	18	9	19	8
1 Canterbury, Otago, Southland 2 Walking 3 Cycling												

3.4 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews with community stakeholders about their perceptions of the benefits associated with the OCRT were conducted at a time and place of their own choosing. Interviews with OCRT visitors about their perceptions of the benefits associated with the OCRT were conducted on, or in premises near to, the OCRT. The purpose of the interview, the background of the interviewer and issues of confidentiality and consent were outlined before each interview (for a further discussion of these procedures, refer to section 3.6 Ethical Considerations). Each of the interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were either tape recorded (47 interviews were tape recorded) or detailed written notes were taken during the interview (written notes were taken for 30 interviews). The reason for using a tape recorder in some interviews and not others was due to the impracticality of using a tape recorder in some situations. Additional written notes were also made after each interview to facilitate later analyses (Henderson, 1991).

Interview schedules were devised for the community and the OCRT visitor samples. Common to both interview schedules were questions that focused on the perceived experiences, satisfactions and benefits associated with the rail trail. The interview questions were open-ended and designed to encourage participants to give an answer specific to his or her own particular thoughts, and in his or her own words. Following the principles of a procedure known as laddering (Reynolds & Gutman, 1988), the researcher utilised a series of probes designed to uncover higher-level personal meanings and beliefs that interview participants

may have had about his or her association with the OCRT. Derived from means end theory, laddering focuses on linking relatively concrete meanings at the attribute level to increasingly more abstract meanings at the benefit and personal value level (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001).

The laddering approach has been used and justified in recreation and leisure research by Frauman and Cunningham (2001), McIntosh (1999), Klenosky et al. (1999) and Klenosky et al. (1998). Specifically, the laddering procedure involves one-on-one personal interviews where the respondent is presented with a series of open-ended questions such as “Reflecting on your visit to the OCRT, what have you gained from your experience?” The response given is then used as the focus of the researcher’s next questions such as “Why is it important that you gain _____?” or “How does _____ benefit you?”. Through this technique, study participants are encouraged to expand their thoughts about why and how a particular concept is important to them (Klenosky et al., 1999). This enables the capture and recording of more abstract meanings and associations about that concept as expressed by study participants in their own words (McIntosh, 1999).

3.4.1 The community and trail manager interview

Community-based research about the benefits of recreation has received little attention (Anderson et al., 2000). The researcher was unable to find a list of questions, therefore, which could form a basis for the preparation of a semi-structured interview schedule. Consequently, from a preliminary investigation of the research setting carried out in January 2001, a community interview schedule was developed in order to: (a) identify perceived personal and community benefits that could be attributed to the OCRT; and (b) identify how important the interview participants believed these benefits were for the local community.

Following Henderson (1991) and Tolich and Davidson (1999), each interview began with an introductory question designed to get the informant talking about the topic. This question asked the interview participant how they would describe the OCRT to a prospective user. Further questions included those that asked interview participants whether they thought that the OCRT had provided benefits for the local community and if so to provide some examples. Interview participants were also asked to describe why they thought the example benefit(s) they associated with the OCRT were important, both for themselves and the wider community. Another question searched for greater personal meaning by asking the participant

to think about an aspect of the OCRT that benefited them in some way and then to describe these thoughts. Because the researcher wanted the participant to clarify his or her views about the most important benefits, a question was included to articulate what he or she personally believed were the three most important benefits of the OCRT for the community. The full list of questions used for community interviews is included as Appendix I.

3.4.2 The visitor interview

Semi-structured interview questions for the OCRT visitor interviews were adapted from a schedule developed by Beeho and Prentice (1996) to suit the specific setting and the nature of the activities engaged in on the OCRT. Interview questions aimed to: (a) identify perceived individual and social benefits associated with recreation activities on the OCRT; and (b) gain an insight into the importance that visitors placed on these benefits.

Interview questions included those asking OCRT visitors about how they thought they had benefited from their visit to the OCRT, which aspect of their OCRT experience they found most satisfying, what the most disappointing aspect of their visit was, and how they thought others in their group had benefited from the visit to the OCRT. Also included were questions asking the study participant to reflect on the visit to the OCRT, what had been gained from the visit and what thoughts and feelings had come to mind when reflecting on salient aspect(s) of the OCRT. The full list of questions used for OCRT visitor interviews is included as Appendix II.

3.5 Data Analysis

The audiotaped and hand written responses gathered from face-to-face interviews were transcribed verbatim, and later reviewed. 'Raw' data, in the form of pertinent quotes, were drawn from each interview and coded into descriptive heading categories (Miles & Huberman, 1984) according to the objectives of this study. The resultant categories therefore consisted of interview responses aggregated into community and visitor 'benefit themes' (Tolich & Davidson, 1999).

During the data coding process, the researcher attached written notes to the data drawn from the interviews (Henderson, 1991; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). Flow diagrams were also developed as a means to display each benefit theme (Henderson, 1991; Miles & Huberman, 1984) (Figures 4.1, 5.1 and 5.2). The notes and flow diagrams allowed for further

interpretation by the researcher of ideas, concepts and patterns identified within the data (Henderson, 1991; Lofland & Lofland, 1995). As part of this process, emergent benefit themes were compared with recreation benefits that were evident in the literature review. For example, following the logic of the 'benefit chain of causality' (Driver, 1994) (this concept is discussed in Chapter 2, Section 2.1), the flow diagrams were used by the researcher to link identified benefits with other benefits evidenced in the recreation benefits literature.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations in this thesis involved the researcher obtaining consent prior to interviews and assuring the confidentiality of responses. As a means of addressing the first issue, interviewees who were selected from within the community were first telephoned in order to request their co-operation and to enquire about a convenient time and a place for the interview to be conducted. It was not possible to telephone OCRT visitors prior to their visit, however as with the community sample the first step taken by the researcher prior to an interview was to verbally request permission to undertake the interview.

Participation in the study was voluntary and written consent was obtained from all study participants prior to the interview (a copy of the consent form is included in Appendix III). In the process of obtaining consent, study participants were informed about the purpose of the interview and the background of the interviewer. The time commitment and what was required of them during the interview was stated. These details, plus the name and address of the researcher were supplied to the interviewee in the form of an information sheet (a copy of the information sheet is included in Appendix IV). The purpose of this introduction was important in outlining to participants what their rights were and what to expect in the interview.

Because individuals interviewed in this study participated voluntarily, it was necessary to protect interviewee privacy. For confidentiality purposes, therefore, interview data stored on computer was password protected and only accessible to the researcher. The written notes and audiotapes of participant interviews were stored in a locked room. This study was reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee prior to the research being conducted.

In addition, because of the small size of rural communities in New Zealand it is particularly difficult to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of research participants drawn from such

communities (Kapelle, 2001). In order to safeguard the anonymity of study participants the researcher has assigned each study participant a pseudonym (the study participant's association with the pseudonym is known only by the researcher). The researcher has endeavoured to report the quotations and the discussion revolving around those quotations so that the chance of participant identification is minimised.

3.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the data gathering and analysis procedures that were used to identify and describe individual and group benefits associated with the OCRT. The thoughts of community and visitor stakeholders about the benefits that they feel are associated with the OCRT are crucial if recreation managers and planners are to deliver opportunities that respond to community and visitor needs. In order to gain such an insight, face-to-face semi-structured interviews have been used with the intention of exploring, rather than quantitatively measuring, study participants' own interpretations or descriptions of the benefits gained from their association with the OCRT.

Chapters Four and Five utilise quotes of study participants' own words drawn from interviews to provide insight into the personal perceptions of community, trail management, and visitor stakeholders. Additionally, the researcher's interpretation of the key themes that emerged from the data is discussed. Chapter Four concentrates on presenting, describing and discussing study findings related to benefits specific to the community. The perceptions of visitors about the benefits of the OCRT are outlined in Chapter Five.

Chapter Four

Community Benefits

A community benefit is an improved condition, the prevention of an unwanted condition or the attainment of a desired condition that is perceived to accrue to local people, businesses, towns and rural areas neighbouring the OCRT. This chapter addresses community benefits associated with the recreational use of the OCRT by giving insight into the perceptions of local business people, community leaders and trail managers. The interpretation of community interview data is focused on identifying and describing OCRT benefits, rather than analysing differences in perceptions according to characteristics such as age, sex, or role in the community.

When community participants were asked what they perceived to be the specific benefits of the OCRT for themselves and/or the local community, their responses reflected four broad themes: economic development, community identity and solidarity, social interaction between local people and visitors, and personal well-being benefits attached to the recreational use of the trail by local people. Interviews revealed that economic development, community identity and solidarity, and social interaction also had a positive relationship with a change in attitude towards the OCRT. These findings are discussed in more detail below.

Consistent with past research on recreation benefits, analysis of the data derived from the interviews identified a range of key community benefits associated with the OCRT (Allen, 1991; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1995; Besculides et al., 2002; Clements et al., 1993; Moore et al., 1992; Perdue et al., 1987; Stein et al., 1999). Research findings revealed that local residents and trail managers responded in a positive way when asked whether they believed the rail trail provided benefits for the local area. This finding is reinforced by words which were used by community participants as the initial response to this question such as 'definitely', 'absolutely' and 'without a doubt' or 'no doubt about it'. This conclusion is substantiated by other recreation benefits literature (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1995; Besculides et al., 2002; Clements et al., 1993; Perdue, Long & Allen, 1987; Stein et al., 1999).

However, in comparison to past research into the benefits of recreation resources for communities (Besculides et al., 2002; Stein et al., 1999), community interviews revealed how benefits related to the OCRT such as economic development, community identity and

solidarity, and social interaction were perceived as beneficial to the local area. As illustrated in Figure 4.1, community interview participants reported in their own words how the OCRT contributes to the development of the local economy through diversifying sources of revenue for local businesses. In addition, community interviews revealed how the OCRT contributes to community identity and pride through enhancing the sense of value that community stakeholders have for their local area and how the OCRT adds to community solidarity through facilitating community-based projects and events. Community respondents also reported how the OCRT had helped to forge a greater tolerance towards outsiders through encouraging social interaction between local residents and OCRT visitors. The findings of the present study therefore offer greater insight into the community benefits associated with the recreational use of rail trails.

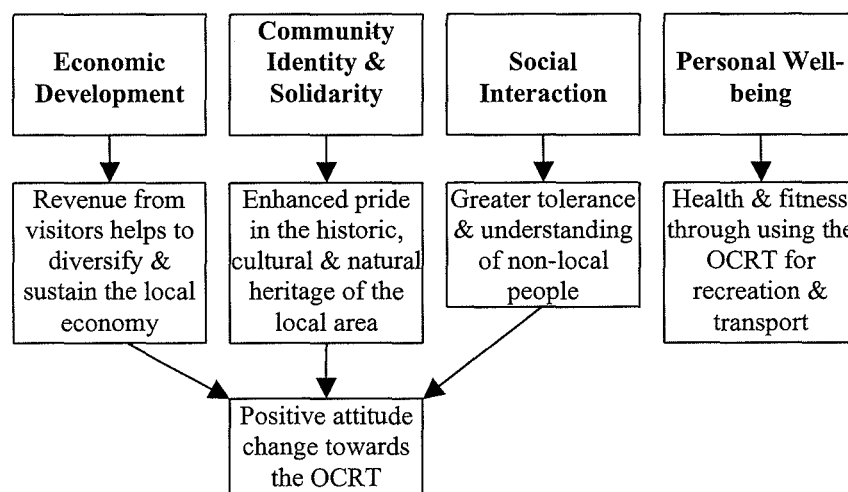


Figure 4.1: Community benefits of the OCRT

4.1 Economic Development

While this study did not set out to calculate the magnitude of the economic impacts associated with the OCRT, community participants consistently reported that economic development was what they believed to be the most important benefit of the OCRT for the local community. Community interviews revealed that economic development was related to the perception that the OCRT had attracted visitors to the area, those visitors spend money, which, in turn, adds to the local economy. Community participants believed that, because this revenue came from outside the immediate area it was important for diversifying income sources for local businesses.

A major category of community benefits that emerged from the interview data was therefore the perceived economic development potential associated with the money spent by visitors to the OCRT. Reinforcing this idea, one local resident mentioned that the major benefit associated with the OCRT was simply ‘dollars’, which, in turn, had been important for economic development in the small towns and rural areas neighbouring the trail. Due to the fact that the economic stability of the rural communities adjacent to the rail trail had been undermined over the last fifteen years by the removal of agricultural subsidies, falling export prices, urban migration and the loss of jobs and services, the idea that the OCRT would be viewed for its economic development potential was expected (Brooking, 1999; Warren & Taylor, 1999).

The perception that visitor spending associated with the OCRT had injected cash into local businesses, which, in turn, provided a small but valuable contribution to local economic development was balanced by a somewhat pragmatic view held by many community respondents that visitor spending associated with the OCRT was not a panacea for the local economy. For example, community interviews revealed the perception that the financial earnings of local businesses, in particular, had been supplemented, that this had the potential to help to sustain local businesses, ‘especially with the smaller towns’ and thus services and facilities for the residents of these areas. This response seemed to suggest, therefore, that the OCRT adds a new dimension to the local economy whereby revenue from traditional sources (e.g. farming) is complemented by revenue derived from OCRT visitors. To a lesser extent, the presence of the OCRT was reported as a factor in the development of new visitor based businesses and had also led to the creation of a small number of employment opportunities.

The comments of Jim, a local tourism organisation employee, emphasise the relationship between the OCRT, an increase in visitors, and the potential this had for economic development in the local area. When asked specifically about the benefits of the OCRT for the community, Jim’s initial remarks pointed to the economic ramifications of the rail trail for neighbouring businesses.

“There’s been the financial benefit of having more people. We estimate between 7 and 10,000 people have used the rail trail over this last summer. So there’s the financial benefit there and it’s a difficult one to measure. But you take it for read that these people are travelling in motor vehicles so gas stations are getting more sales, they need to buy food, they need to buy water bottles, they need their bikes to be fixed. So the dollar’s getting sliced up and spread” (Jim).

These comments appear to suggest that, with increased visitor numbers, come increased incomes for various businesses in the local area. Interviews with local business people confirm the perception that the OCRT has provided extra income to established and newer businesses such as pubs, retail shops, petrol stations, camping grounds and other accommodation providers. The following excerpts give some idea of the perceived contribution that OCRT visitor expenditure has made to the incomes of local service providers.

“Well, as an accommodation facility I probably get, I don’t know the exact percentage, but a third or possibly more of my customers come through the rail trail. So it’s generated extra business for me” (Michael – owner of a local farm stay/backpackers hostel).

“Having people coming here to the shop off the trail they spend anything from 5 dollars to about 40 so that’s quite good... Over the summer season there’d be something like 15 people a day coming in off the trail. Some days less, some days a few more” (Norm – local grocery store owner).

Coupled with bringing people into the local area and the money that these visitors spend were the economic ‘spin-off’ effects that community participants reported were helping to sustain local businesses. Local feelings about perceived economic spin-offs related directly to the presence of the OCRT are illustrated in the following two excerpts. When asked to explain what they believed to be the most important benefit of the OCRT for the community, Bob and Graeme explained:

“With increasing numbers an obvious example is probably improved trade for the shop and hotel and the garage and so forth, those facilities are obvious...If you look at spin-offs to the community the reality is that we have a store, a hotel, a garage here. Those businesses right through Central were struggling for survival. They need the extra trade. If that trade, for example, doesn’t help those businesses then we are going to end up losing those services as well and that’s actually an indirect benefit. The benefit is that they’re a little bit more robust because of the extra trade. Tourism would probably contribute, at a guess 35% - possibly more” (Bob – neighbouring landowner).

“Well it seems to bring a lot of people in and they’re staying overnight at the pub. Some stop here, they bring school groups through and stay at the camping ground. It’s all generating income and it seems to be bringing people through, an awful lot of people. The likes of Omakau seem to be seeing quite a lot of spin-offs from it. I assume somewhere the likes of Lauder probably does, Otire as well. Anywhere that they’ve got some accommodation and stuff like that. I think that’s probably the biggest positive. It’s got to be good for some of the businesses around here” (Graeme – community leader).

Local business people further illustrate the perceived ‘economic spin-offs’ that Bob and Graeme associate with the OCRT. For example, when asked to give an example of the economic benefit that he believed his business received from the OCRT, Patrick, a local hotel owner, reported the increased patronage he feels the OCRT has given not only to the pub, but also to other businesses in the community.

“For instance, I would say about a month ago now just one Saturday night our restaurant was completely full of people. Not too many people actually stayed here though but on that night I went outside and I counted the bicycles and there were 37 parked outside the hotel, 37 bicycles. And then last week, Tuesday, between the hotel and the backpackers, just here, I put up 31 on the rail trail, 31, one night. There was 8 other people, older people, that walked the rail trail and they stayed at (another backpackers) and then some other people that were at the motel they came down for a meal and I heard there were other people in the camping ground too, that was one night. So we’re talking about 50 or 60 people just in one night. No one would have envisaged this. If I said this to someone 2 years ago they would have called me the biggest liar in the world. I really feel between that and the art deco, which we’re pushing here – they are the two main things for Ranfurly at the moment. Getting people here to spend some money and helping the area. Between here and the kitchen, we got about 12 staff employed. I mean we keep 12 families living don’t we. The rail trail has definitely helped a lot, it has” (Patrick).

Likewise, Elizabeth, a local backpacker hostel owner, in response to a probing question about the perceived economic benefits that she believed the OCRT offered to local businesses in the community, commented:

“Without a doubt, yes, without a doubt because if we make money, if the garage is making money, the hotel is making money it starts to go around because there is money being spent. We’ve got to use tradesmen for certain things, so does the hotel. You’re buying things for the gardens; you’re buying things for the backpackers themselves like for the running of the toilet bowls. There’s obviously money going out somewhere as well as coming in, so there’s money coming into the area so it’s going around and then people are buying things here. Even the local craft shop across the road is benefiting because there are more people around, more people taking an interest in the area” (Elizabeth).

The above excerpts suggest that business people with a direct financial interest in the rail trail and local residents who had no financial connection both reported similar perceptions about the benefits associated with the OCRT and the economic spin-off effects congruent with the flow of OCRT visitors into and throughout the local area.

In addition, the comments of community stakeholders appear to support the idea that realistic perceptions are held about the tangible benefits of the OCRT. Interviews revealed, for instance, that it appears community stakeholders possess a certain degree of pragmatism about

the financial implications of the OCRT for the local community. The following comments reiterate this point:

“I don’t think it’s going to provide huge amounts of gold for the local community, but it is certainly going to provide the lift that they need and in which other things may well flow and I think that’s probably its most important aspect at this stage” (Emily – community leader).

“Maybe down the track it might make places grow a little or keep them going. Having any people around, it’s always good and it’s good for business like the pub that’s here. Whether it will grow into something that can become a proper business I’m not really sure. We’ll just have to see. At the moment it’s something that’s cruising along, it’s not a cash cow, not at this stage. Everyone is saying it’s going to boom, so we’ll see. We’ll see how next summer goes or whatever” (Brenda – local bed and breakfast owner).

The comments of Emily and Brenda reflected a perception expressed by many community stakeholders that the OCRT was not an economic panacea for the local economy. That is, community stakeholders were reportedly circumspect about pinning the financial hopes of the local community entirely on the OCRT. More realistically, they perceived the OCRT as a means by which the subsistence needs (e.g. financial earnings) of local businesses, in particular, might be supplemented through being lifted a little bit.

The above excerpts begin to suggest a widely held belief that, in reality, local businesses, particularly those associated with servicing visitors, are the primary economic benefactors of the OCRT. A local publican, for instance, reported that the benefits were predominantly “financial for the people that have got vested interests in the tourism side of things”.

Additional comments expressed by community stakeholders reported other realistic feelings about the economic implications of the OCRT. Some community stakeholders mentioned, for example, that the extra income attributable to the rail trail was small in scale, subject to seasonal variation and most noticeable in the towns that possess service-oriented businesses. For example, Bernadette, a neighbouring landowner from Hyde, a smaller town where little service infrastructure exists, believed that although the OCRT had helped the larger community of Ranfurly financially, visitor expenditure had a minimal effect on Hyde because of the absence of a pub, accommodation facilities or a shop in the Hyde township.

This realistic stance was reinforced by the words of other respondents who perceived that the rail trail provided some economic positives, but also some negatives. For example, Nicola reported that while revenue derived from the OCRT potentially provided alternative income for local businesses, it also had possible negative economic impacts:

“Farming is always going to be the key, the most important land income here or certainly for the next wee while...there is a need to diversify. Farming has its highs and lows and swings very sharply and if you can get an income, which isn’t dependent only on one thing, you can get income related to tourism on the rail trail as well – that’s really good. For the town as well, they’re not reliant on just farmer’s spending money there... However, encouraging people to come here with their cars only just causes a huge hassle... Instead of being able to cross your sheep across the road, for example, you then have to have markers on each side of the state highway, you have to have people there manning it. This increases labour costs and potential accidents”

Nicola’s thoughts substantiate the suggestion of Betz and Perdue (1993: p. 16) that:

“Although certainly not a panacea, recreation and tourism development has become noteworthy for its potential role in diversifying local and regional economies”

Closely related to local economic development and the diversification of the local agriculture-dominated economy is an acknowledged downturn in rural communities throughout the Central Otago area (Brooking, 1999). For many community stakeholders, the reason why economic benefits derived from the OCRT were perceived to be so important for the local community was due to the downturn in the local economy over the last few years. Jack, for example, related his concerns about the economic downturn of the area with positive perceptions about the OCRT by saying:

“The farms are getting bigger and bigger and bigger. I don’t think there’d be any married couples in the area now where most farms used to have a married couple. There’s houses’ sitting empty all over the place. It was just going back and back but they just didn’t seem to realise that it was going to die a natural death. It wasn’t until the rail trail started up that oh gosh there might be something in this tourism... With the droughts and that in the area there’s not the money about and the likes of the rail trail is keeping the businesses going. They’re all on the bones of their bums and just that bit of extra it just makes a hell of a difference. People are definitely seeing that now. It’s outside money you see coming in. If it wasn’t for the likes of the rail trail it would be money just going round and round in circles around the area. Prior to the rail trail happening people were quite sceptical about it but now they can see the benefits of it, now they’ve changed their tune” (Jack).

Jack’s perceptions are amplified by the thoughts of Anne, a local campground manager. When asked why revenue from OCRT visitors was so important for the community Anne’s reply revolved around a story describing the annual Omakau ‘New Year’ horse racing meeting and the fact that recently it had been changed from a traditional long weekend of festivities to a single day. Anne reported that the potential decrease in camping ground revenue created by this situation had been offset by the presence of the OCRT. Most importantly, she pointed out

that revenue derived from the Omakau camping ground goes towards the upkeep of the Omakau Domain – a local community sports venue. Anne remarked:

“Our revenue from the camping ground. That revenue goes back into the domain and as the result we’re able to build these cabins, we’ve trebled this year. That’s not solely the rail trail but it’s helped us... Because how else are we going to survive or put us on the map for the fact that we’ve had good years but with quite a lot of things someone sits in an office in Wellington and thinks they know everything. Oh no they don’t need two race meetings, one will do them. They never ever thought that the Saturday and Monday race days that have been going for 104 years was a way that brought people to the town. We can’t keep these facilities going. The community can’t keep the domain going for rugby and other sports. It’s just to keep the businesses going because what the races did for years was brought people back for holidays and their families - for years that happened. So the rail trail has picked that up what we’ve lost from that – it’s probably picking up – not probably, it is” (Anne).

The beliefs expressed by Jack and Anne echo the view held by many community stakeholders that the OCRT provides a potential avenue for economic development in local rural areas and thus an opportunity to help sustain local community infrastructure. Allen et al.’s (1993) claim that perceptions of local economic development, through developing recreation opportunities that attract visitors from outside the local area, are most positive in residents from rural areas with low economic activity would suggest that this perception about the OCRT could be expected.

It was reported by community stakeholders that the perceived economic contribution of the OCRT was probably more apparent in the smaller towns along the trail as opposed to the largest town – Alexandra. Bill and Allen explained it this way:

“We’re seeing for the little towns that have really been struggling and looked like they were going to disappear off the surface of the earth, now they’ve been revitalised really. These people don’t expect a lot out there and anything extra they get is a real bonus... We’re getting a spin off – definitely – there’s no doubt about that but as to how the trail effects the Alexandra community I think pretty marginally I suppose. There’s certain places/businesses that do get spin-offs like we’re likely to get spin-offs because we hire bikes, the camping ground obviously, probably some of the motels might get the odd extra night out of it. I think it is more noticeable in the smaller communities because we’ve probably got a bit of tourist trade that comes through here whereas they have absolutely nothing. They had nothing before this so anything they get is a real bonus” (Bill – local retailer).

“To me losing the railway line was fairly catastrophic for some of those towns that barely have a garage and a pub. Another few years of rural decline and population movement and they probably would not have existed as a proper township but only as a locality. The rail trail has basically breathed some new life, it’s like an arterial route, a major artery for them in that every weekend they get a

procession of people from outside of their normal district coming through and spending a little bit of money” (Allen – DOC employee).

The above excerpts appear to substantiate the findings of Moore et al. (1994b), who concluded that whether the economic impacts of rail trails are significant or not depends on the size and economic health of local communities. It could therefore be expected that a larger town such as Alexandra might not notice the impacts of OCRT related visitor expenditure as much as some of the smaller settlements located along the trail. The importance of the effect that the OCRT appeared to be having on the viability of local businesses in smaller towns and rural areas along the trail was reported by Paul, a local farmer and Maniototo community board member. When asked why he thought increased trail-related income for the local pub and shop was important for the local area, his reply highlighted the very real possibility of some business closures and the ramifications this could have for the local transport company. Paul commented:

“Well if things were the way they were going, the pub got really strained, the store could be straining, they folded up and all of a sudden the transport wouldn’t be able to get drivers to come in would they? The transport is an important service for us around here. I mean that could fold up. Basically it can snowball” (Paul – community leader).

In a similar light, further explanation comes in the words of a neighbouring farmer from the Wedderburn area. Charlie directly linked the economic downturn exemplified in the closure of the school and garage with the perceived financial benefits he associated with the OCRT and the future sustainability of the hotel. He remarked:

“We lost our school, garage, the trail might help to keep the pub plus it is more. More back into the community, having various businesses operating in the area brings people to these communities and the rural downturn – survival through lots of little things... It (the rail trail) has brought a lot of people to these small areas and through these small areas...it’s the economics of it. Just bringing people through it grows on. It helps our local community, the hotel for example. People call there, they have a meal, they might have a drink or a coffee... so it’s good that these things are being used...it’s bringing people from outside our area, into the area and they are stopping and enjoying themselves, so that’s got to be positive... Well just spending money here. That’s a positive in any of these rural areas. Just populating them if you like. Just in a transient way if you like, just going through. The spin off from all these things will only get greater. Servicing them and as I say the local hotel. You’d expect that those sorts of businesses would be the biggest to gain and accommodation. Accommodation it would have increased. The Lodge (a local farmhouse converted into a backpackers) - it would have increased, it would have been doubled anyway if not more” (Charlie).

When asked about why he thought it was important that members of the Wedderburn community gained economically from the trail, Charlie replied:

“Well I think that anything that secures your businesses is important. You’ll crumble away if somebody doesn’t put a stake in the sand and say, right we’re not going back beyond that point and I think we’ve done that now at Wedderburn. The number of outside people using the rail trail that we get to come into the lodge, playing golf and as a consequence going into the pub is phenomenal now. We used to have to rely on locals to support the pub if you like and there’s not enough locals who drink to keep the pub going today, it’s as simple as that. None of the areas along the trail have got enough local people. You’ve got now drink driving and things like that. You don’t get the numbers off the road that can stop and schlozzle away. So the hotels’ have had to change and in the normal week now they’d sell as much food as they would liquor I’d imagine or close to through people travelling through on the rail trail and absolutely the pub is important to our community – it’s a meeting place. Some of them must have been pretty close to it (closing down) to be quite honest”.

While not as highly mentioned as direct financial benefits, a number of community stakeholders interviewed reported that as a consequence of the OCRT, employment opportunities had arisen and a handful of new businesses had begun to appear. For example, when asked to specify an important aspect of the OCRT for the community, Jack and Janice remarked:

“The rail trail - it’s sort of giving a wee bit of employment to the locals. People are buying old buildings and doing them up. Look at all the different things. The guy has bought the old pub at Hyde. He’s going to convert it into a backpackers. Then there’s an old house at Wedderburn converted into a backpackers. The old school at Lauder, that’s been converted into a backpackers. A guy just recently bought the old Catholic presbytery and he’s converting it into a B and B. That should be ready for next summer” (Jack).

“There’s more work in the area because there’s more people coming in so the shop needs more people, the takeaway needs more people and we need more people. So I employed 2 more people last night that I wouldn’t have employed if these people hadn’t been here doing the rail trail” (Janice – local hotel owner).

In contrast to studies of trails which have endeavoured to measure economic impact (Moore et al., 1994b; National Park Service, 1992; Schutt, 1998), the above excerpts appear to show how complementary revenue such as that derived from visitor expenditure might help to sustain local businesses, especially within the smaller towns neighbouring the trail, thus jobs, services and facilities for the residents of these areas. The ability of a transport company to attract staff, for example, was related to the OCRT and its perceived contribution towards sustaining the hotel and shop in a small township. In another area, the potential earnings derived from OCRT visitors’ was viewed as crucial for the survival of the local hotel. It was

also reported that this particular hotel was an important meeting place for the residents of the local community.

4.2 Community Identity and Solidarity

The idea that the OCRT brings people into the local area is also viewed by many community stakeholders to have made a positive contribution to community identity and solidarity. The major reason that community stakeholders perceived this benefit to have emanated from the OCRT appears to be coloured by local post office and primary school closures, the disestablishment of the railway line and job losses suffered in the towns and rural areas along the trail over the last two decades. As a consequence of state sector rationalisation, community stakeholders reported that they had seen people and services leaving the area rather than people coming to their towns to live or to visit. Interviews revealed that local residents perceived that the presence of the OCRT is reversing this trend and that, in particular, the OCRT is attracting visitors from outside the area to local towns and rural areas.

For community interview participants, it appears that by attracting visitors, the OCRT reportedly contributes to community identity through enhancing the appreciation of local historic, cultural and natural heritage thus adding to the value and ‘sense of place’ that local people attach to the local area. Directly related to the attachment that local people have with their local area, the OCRT was perceived by community stakeholders as a vehicle for demonstrating community solidarity and pride through local resident participation in community beautification and restoration projects and local community groups assisting with the running of OCRT-based events.

Community identity, as used here, appears to be linked to a belief held by community respondents that, because communities neighbouring the OCRT receive visitors, the area is becoming known for the attraction it holds for other New Zealanders such as Aucklanders and perhaps international visitors. Interview data suggested that this, in turn, might possibly assist in affirming the community identity and pride of the towns and rural areas adjacent to the OCRT. The following remarks illustrate this concept.

“I think one of the big gains is a fairly sort of nebulous one in that people are thinking in terms of their community and feeling that their community is worth something. Over a lot of years we have lost things, lost our school, the church and the railway. Those sorts of things are gone and I think people have just kept going but it’s undermined the feeling of community and I think this is one of the things

this is helping to restore. That they see the value of the landscape and the communities because other people are seeing it and are enthusiastic about it – as a value that other people can see. It's not necessarily a monetary value, it's an appreciation of the area... I'd put that first. That feeling of community, of awareness of the value of the landscape and community... Well there's been comments from locals not exactly along those veins but not directly like that but there is the implication that you have from them saying that there is a lot of people using it is that this is good. They see it as a good thing" (Jessica – local bed and breakfast owner).

"I think it's (the OCRT) putting us on the map positively rather than the negative publicity we've had in the past. Normally, any time we got in the paper or any publicity was when it blew a gale and blew a roof off a shed or something or when there was a drought or a flood. And I suppose there was fairly negative stuff when they stopped the railway line here. The more the rail trail is developed, the more of those people are perhaps going to come back. They'll see what we've got and they'll come back and do things... It's getting used the trail. We probably don't appreciate our scenery - the spectacles that we've got. I mean to run alongside the river in different places, it's quite pretty but we probably don't appreciate it because we look at the hill every day, look at the rocks" (Malcolm – community leader).

As exemplified in the above excerpts, because people are visiting the OCRT, it appears that community stakeholders have gained a heightened sense of appreciation of their local area. That is, the popularity of the rail trail has reportedly intensified local peoples' feelings about the special value of the natural and built environment that the OCRT passes through. Jessica's words, for example, place an emphasis on a strong relationship between people visiting the OCRT and that in the face of prior losses this perhaps makes local people feel that their community is 'worth something'. Seeing other people use a recreation resource that passes through their community therefore appears to give community stakeholders a sense of greater satisfaction with their community. This finding potentially confirms a claim by Allen (1991), that recreation resources have the potential to contribute towards community satisfaction and thus an enriched 'sense of community'. The essence of what Allen (1991) suggested is evidenced in the perceptions of other community stakeholders. For example, when asked what it is about the rail trail that makes it good for the community, Charlie, a neighbouring landowner, remarked:

"One chap visited here one day and his wife was American, came from Montana. He said if I blindfolded her and dropped her in here and I said where are you, she'd say Montana. So they're getting these images, people, and I find that very positive that we've got something to offer. There's something that they can see that they find attractive. I think it gives us a bit more pride about the place we live in. You don't have to walk the Routeburn or the Milford track to get these scenes. We've got scenes out here too that are different but people are appreciating them,

that's good. The Hawkdun range for example, not many people have seen it and nobody climbs it, but it's there, Mount Ida. It's all there"(Charlie).

Similarly, the act of seeing people use the rail trail appears to draw out a realisation in Paul, a neighbouring landowner, that the scenery in the local area that he takes for granted is beautiful.

"The other very good thing I have noticed is that there are 3 places where they (Rail Trail Management) have actually banged a couple of posts in and put a sleeper across so that you can sit on. At first I thought what the bloody hell are they doing there but I actually got out of the truck one day and I was sneaking round and sat down on one of them. It was looking, I didn't think at anything but when I sat and had a look at it, you had Mount Ida on one side and on the other you had the Hawkduns. You come round the corner to the old house and there's another so I sat on it and straight at Mount St Bathans. And Mount St Bathans with the top third of it covered in snow is another beautiful view I feel... We live here, we take everything for granted around us. Those mountains even without snow on it look quite impressive. They're a beautiful colour and right through" (Paul).

The above excerpts draw attention to how the appreciation of the area by visitors appears to enhance the value attached by local residents to previously taken for granted attributes such as the mountains, the landscape and the scenic spectacles, thus reportedly embellishing local residents' sense of identity. For example, when asked why she believed it was important that the railway corridor had been preserved, Rachael defined her feelings in reference to the value that she perceived had been added to the community by the development of a facility such as the OCRT.

"Each facility that Middlemarch has where it had very few in the past, like in the recent past due to the restructuring, you know the neo-liberal complete devastation of the rural community's. Each little thing like this which has added to our idea about our place I think is vitally important. I think it is hugely important – A sense of value. We haven't got a lot to offer around here in many ways" (Rachael – neighbouring landowner).

The preservation of the OCRT appears to heighten the sense of value that Rachael attaches to the locality in which she lives. The remarks of Jessica provide additional support for Rachael's suggestion. When asked why the trail was important for the local community, Jessica claimed that the OCRT:

"Has enhanced the communities' perspective of the history around this area as well. Our sense of place. That's why I feel strongly that you could so easily spoil it. The rail trail is something that is very precious... It's a part of Central Otago. Central Otago is a special place and it just sort of gets into your bones, gets into your skin" (Jessica – community leader).

Sense of place represents an intense attachment to an environment and is tied to local artefacts of society and culture (Kappelle, 2001). It could be assumed, therefore, that the preservation of the OCRT could be tied to a larger emotional attachment that Jessica and Rachael feel for the local area.

While Jessica stressed the conservation of the OCRT in terms of its value as a component of the history of a 'special place', other community interviews highlighted the connection between the OCRT and the preservation of local heritage, not just for local people, but also for New Zealanders in general. The implication is that historical preservation could be perceived to have a wider social value as an aspect of New Zealand's cultural and historic heritage. For example, when asked about the importance of the OCRT, Jack and Jim stated that:

"There's no doubt it's (the OCRT) preserved the railway in some way. What would they have done with the Poolburn Viaduct if they didn't use it for a tourist attraction – what would have happened to it. It would have just sat there. I suppose they could've scrapped it for the steel. But, it would have been terrible to pull it down. It would be like taking a part of New Zealand's heritage away. The rail trail preserves our heritage in a way. It is important that our heritage is preserved and perhaps even more now that other people can see it and experience it" (Jack).

"...the craftsmanship which the men that built those viaducts put into building them. All those stones were all pointed, they didn't have to do that – there's just a certain quality of workmanship, which is something you don't see now. So there's that sort of pride or that standard of workmanship which was shown and also it must have been bloody hard work putting that railway line through there – it's fairly intense country. So you get that sort of – I don't know – it's that thing about; it's your history, it's your culture, it makes you sort of – you know one of the many facets which makes New Zealand is those sort of pioneering endeavours. That comes through quite strongly on the rail trail. It is that pioneer spirit, it's just incredible staying down there for 3 years to build that. It's just incredible, I mean the hardships and the isolation (Jim – local tourism organisation employee).

The words expressed in the preceding excerpts underline the sense of local and national identity engendered by a relic of the past, such as the preserved remains of the Otago Central Railway, thus substantiating the positive social outcomes of heritage conservation suggested by Hall and McArthur (1996). This theme also emerges in the comments of Fred, a local retailer. Having mentioned his involvement in the restoration of the local railway station, Fred was asked about the importance he placed on preserving the rail trail. Both projects were actually quite separate. The Maniototo Community Board purchased the railway station prior to DOC becoming involved in the transformation of the abandoned railway line into the

OCRT. After purchasing the station, local people provided volunteer labour for the restoration of a local 'landmark'. As Dangerfield & Emerson (1995) claimed and the following remarks indicate, the Otago Central Railway is the reason that Ranfurly exists. Fred expressed his views in the following way:

"I think it's very important that the railway corridor and the station here has been preserved because if it wasn't for the railway Ranfurly would not be here. If they had of preserved the railway then we wouldn't have had the rail trail and you wouldn't have been able to use it for walking or biking. It just wouldn't have been practical to keep the railway lines because eventually the upkeep would have killed it anyway. You take other places on the rail trail who no longer have their railway station, Alexandra is one great example of that, there's no focus whatsoever, as opposed to here, especially with the displays in the railway station being on the history of the railway. If the railway station hadn't been preserved we would've been left with just an empty space in the middle of the town. This could've happened but the local authority bought it and then I got stuck in and made the display centre part. But more important than that, the Lions did the outside – put the veranda on this side and it was just a pot-holed parking area along there before and they made the gardens and all that. That's why I'm proud that the railway station is there forever. Hopefully showing just how important railways were for rural areas, it's a monument... The preservation of the rail trail is the best thing that has ever happened to this area. So far as the Maniototo is concerned, it gives it a whole extra focus for recreation in this area" (Fred).

Two aspects of Fred's thoughts stand out. First, he directly related the absence of a railway station in Alexandra as providing a lack of focus for that town. In so doing, he emphasised the important relationship that Ranfurly has with the railway. Second, he expressed his pride in the fact that the railway station has been preserved as a monument and a centrepiece of the town.

As the last excerpt suggests, there is some reason to believe that the OCRT has a value alongside other attractions in the local area such as the restored Ranfurly railway station. As an example, an OCRT Trustee and a community leader pointed to the OCRT as only one of a number of things that contributed to community identity and pride through stating that "the trail isn't just the only attraction mind you, the area has a hell of a lot to offer" and "the rail trail is not the one thing that has caused this but it's another project helping the district I guess". Charlie, a neighbouring landowner, echoes this opinion by claiming that there are several historic 'icons' in Central Otago such as Hayes Engineering Works and the Golden Progress Mine in Otarehua. In reply to a question that asked why he thought preserving local heritage was important for the community, Charlie stated:

“Look at some of the icons that we’ve got. The young ones especially. I’ve noticed my son; they’re very interested in this sort of thing now. The next generation, it’s almost lost to us a lot of these things, the histories and this gives us a chance, a sense of rejuvenation. It’s about a bygone era. I mean it’s preserving our history...an important part of our pioneering past” (Charlie).

Allen, a DOC employee who believed that the OCRT could be tied to a larger picture of local heritage, amplified Charlie’s thoughts.

“So I see it as a conduit. Not only is it connecting a city with small rural towns but it’s connecting the people with what’s here in Central Otago and our rich pastoral history like the beautiful old homesteads and historic farm buildings. So there’s countryside to see, there’s wonderful mountain views as well as railway architecture, there’s viaducts, bridges, abutments which people can see... it’s all those things that make up Central Otago. The opportunities are just amazing. Hayes Engineering, for example, it’s a time capsule; it’s a marvel (Allen).

Allen and Charlie suggest that it is the special historic, cultural and natural characteristics, which constitute the broader canvas of Central Otago, which potentially make a contribution to community identity. It follows that the preservation and enhancement of these special characteristics act as an outlet for local people to demonstrate the pride they have in their community. As Borrie and Roggenbuck (1995) highlighted, the development of indoor recreation facilities can play an important part in this process through acting as a showcase of community pride and achievement. The following excerpts show that feelings of pride felt within communities can also be related to the development of outdoor recreation facilities.

Closely related to the contribution that the OCRT makes to enriching community stakeholders’ sense of identity suggested in the above excerpts, is that the OCRT has reportedly contributed to the development of a greater sense of community solidarity. This is synonymous with community pride and bonding. As an illustration, some community stakeholders spoke of the role that individuals and groups from local areas played in ‘doing up’ station areas, their own properties and main streets. Activities such as these were linked directly to a perceived demonstration of pride in the local community and bringing local people together. The following excerpts provide good examples of these feelings:

“Now that the rail trail has been opened for about a year we can see that there has been a rejuvenation over the preceding few years as the towns basically did up their old station areas that had been neglected and now as more people come through they are starting to be revitalised and refreshed... I would see that it’s given them a refreshed spirit, increased pride in their towns” (Grant – DOC employee).

“Well, I think because Omakau was sort of going backwards people didn’t have that same drive but now it has got this focal point – the rail trail – it has given the whole town a boost. People are more interested in the town, we’ve started planting trees and because people are stopping from the rail trail we’re going to do a wee picnic area up there. The communities going to do that and because they’re stopping here at the shop they’ve flattened a piece of ground out here so there can be a wee seat there and they’re just cleaning up that bit right on the rail trail so they can sit up there. If they weren’t going through the rail trail bit they wouldn’t even bother cleaning it up. It’s given the whole town a boost really... It’s important for any town to have pride in their own town. If you’ve got pride in the town, you’ve got pride in the people. If you can lift a town up and make it more positive, then people will be more positive. The fact that people feel better about themselves and their town because they’ve got more pride in it because people are coming here and so therefore it’s just not economic for them it’s just a pride in themselves and their town. So, there’s the benefits, not only financial benefits but for the people themselves” (Janice – local hotel owner).

The idea that the OCRT is bringing ‘the communities together’ is further evidenced in community projects like the Wedderburn Goods Shed relocation. This project involves the relocation of the former Wedderburn Railway Station Goods Shed (Plate 12), by the local community trust, from an abandoned coal pit back to its original position. The story behind the relocation project emerged in an interview with Andy, a local Wedderburn resident. When asked about the benefits of the trail for the local community, in addition to giving an answer that highlighted the contribution that he believed the OCRT made to community identity, Andy also illustrated the reported connection between OCRT visitors coming into the area, community identity, community pride and the solidarity that the relocation project had engendered amongst local residents:

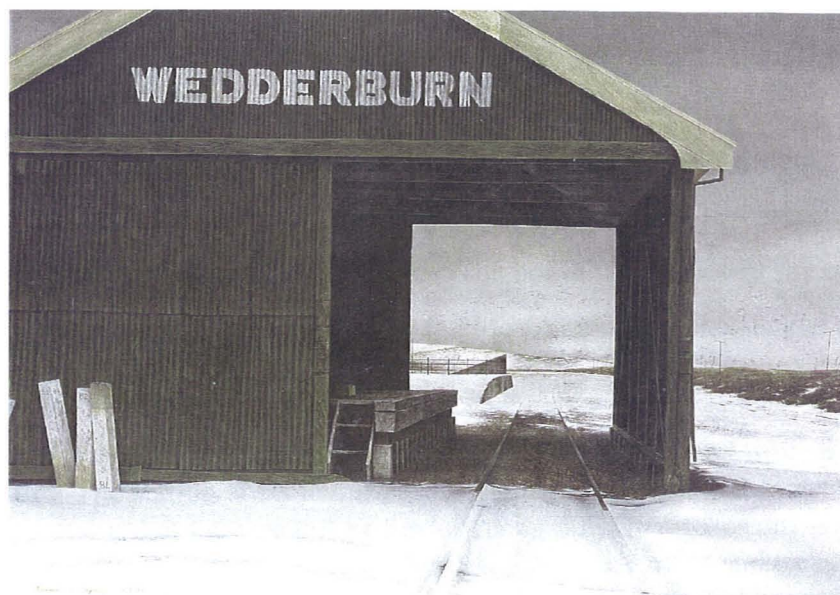


Plate 12: *July on the Maniototo*, 1975, egg tempera, by Grahame Sydney. A painting of the Wedderburn Railway Station Goods Shed. Source: Sydney (2000).

“One would be the highlighting of the fact that people are coming through here and they want to be in the Maniototo and they’re passing through Wedderburn and they want to know more... It’s the awareness and the locals can see that their area is not just part of somewhere where they live. A lot of them are 4th 5th generation but there are people interested in their area, where they live, where they were born and grown up. That’s the pride factor and that gets them in behind anything we sort of put forward from the community association here and one of the big ones we’ve got on the plate right now is bringing the Wedderburn Goods Shed back in... It’s preservation of our history. You’ve got to have it. If you let it go and just let it run down and drop that’s the way it’s going to be remembered.

Researcher: How do you think the goods shed relocation project adds to the community?

“Well it’s brought a focus in organising to put the shed there for a start. It probably wouldn’t have gone ahead if it hadn’t been for the rail trail to sort of give it an audience so that it can expose the Wedderburn area (Andy).

In a similar vein, the actions of the Middlemarch community highlight the involvement of local people in the development of the OCRT. Members of the Middlemarch community reportedly ‘took up the challenge’ through a fundraising effort directed at providing materials to complete the installation of seven safe bridges, costing three to four hundred dollars each. Supporting the OCRT in this way enabled the completion of the Middlemarch to Hyde section. As a consequence the official opening ceremony, which had been threatened by the presence of unsafe bridges, went ahead as planned. Bob, a Middlemarch resident, put it this way:

“The Women’s Division donated money for example. It was a way of getting community involvement. It was also a way of getting immediate funds - to get a job done so that the thing can carry on. I’m sure this sort of thing has gone on right through the trail. Where the community have been brought in on it” (Bob – neighbouring landowner).

Another example of community solidarity that was mentioned was the bonding together of members of the Lauder community to plant trees, erect a picnic area and generally tidy up the previously dishevelled railway station surrounds. The bonding together of the community in order to undertake this project was reported by the local publican. When asked about the positive outcomes of the OCRT for the community the local publican remarked:

“In some ways the rail trail has made the people pull together and tidy up their communities. The station areas and the road frontage although that may have started a bit earlier but they’ve put all the lawns in, dug the ditches out. They mow the edges. They’ve bought bulbs, they’ve put bulbs in and roses and trees down the back. All of that work at the back was done in conjunction and because of the rail trail. Fundraising was done with the ‘Goldrush’ and the Duathlon. They get

out there and they do food. That's why they put that frame up there in some ways. They do barbecues, water, drinks" (William).

Bill, an organiser of the 'Goldrush' multi-sport event, reinforced the community solidarity which he observed in the Lauder community with his description of the work the local people from Lauder had completed in the township. Complementary to the words of the Lauder publican, Bill suggested that:

"The rail trail bonds communities together too I think. You look at Lauder, the extra work they've done around the place to tidy it up. They've spent money, they do a barbecue thing for the 'Goldrush' at Lauder and money that they've got for their beautification has actually come from the 'Goldrush'. But they've put that money back into the community trying to tidy it up and make it attractive for people and that's really good" (Bill – local retailer).

The mention of two local sporting events in the last two excerpts alongside local resident involvement and co-operation, highlights the potential role that these types of events can play in small rural communities. The 'Goldrush' multi-sport race, which includes a running leg on the Poolburn gorge section of the OCRT and the Otago Central Rail Trail Duathlon; a two day run/cycle event organised by the Alexandra, Omakau, Ranfurly and Middlemarch Lions Clubs, as well as offering fundraising opportunities for local communities also reportedly provide an avenue for local resident solidarity.

Local voluntary organisations such as town beautification committees', the Women's Division, Rotary and Lions Clubs provide an example of the solidarity and co-operation of local residents, which is typified in the involvement the members of these groups had in OCRT events such as the OCRT Duathlon, the Goldrush and the OCRT opening ceremony. The perceived social spin-offs that these events potentially have for the local community are illustrated in the following excerpt.

"When you come to the community itself. The Lions Club started many years ago a rail trail race to try and promote the trail... what does it do for the community you know, running an event? Well events where any major tourism activity is, that's actually relatively minor and probably doesn't make much money but there is a spin off to those people living in the community that service the community. So there is always a spin off with the servicing sector. I think there's a deal of pride as well. Right through the community I've seen direct examples as you've gone through no doubt Chatto Creek, Lauder; some of those areas where it was virtually dead. Now they're getting quite a wealth of activity, which wasn't there 5 years ago. So those are the spin-offs. They're not always clear-cut and it's not easy to measure but quite real I think. Because the pride thing. I think it is not only pride, but also an interest in embellishing on what exists already. You know for example the main street committees and the planting of trees, improving facilities and beautifying things" (Bob – neighbouring landowner).

4.3 Social Interaction

Another predominant community benefit theme that emerged from the community interviews was the perception that the OCRT provided a social link between local residents and visitors from outside the local area. As evidenced elsewhere (Besculides et al., 2002), community interviews revealed that social interaction between local people and OCRT visitors was viewed in a positive light because of the breakdown of negative perceptions about strangers that accompanied such social contact. The reported value that some community respondents placed on social contact between local people and trail visitors is evident in the following remarks.

“I just think the towns along the way obviously it comes back to the social contact again and all the shops are selling food to the cyclists. They’re selling a few beers at night and people from a very enclosed community are learning to communicate with people from outside the valley... To get all this extra social contact with people off the rail trail it just makes it a better place for everyone to live, a little more happening in the community, a few new faces down at the local pub” (Michael – the owner of a local backpackers hostel).

“I think there are intangible benefits to the community as a whole, just with people meeting each other, like on the trail – the local farmers. Because it’s not a big community, it’s only through the pub or personal contact on the trail between farmers and the tourists that you’re going to get any other interaction” (Charlie – neighbouring landowner).

William, a local publican, elaborated further on the perceived value he attached to the opportunity that the OCRT provided for local residents to meet new and varied people who regularly visit the local hotel. When asked to give an example of a non-economic benefit of the OCRT for the community, William remarked:

“Meeting the people from all around the world and talking to them and mixing with them and having them come in and mix with the locals. They’re pretty friendly here”.

Researcher: Why is that important for local people?

“Good atmosphere, friendly atmosphere. If you’re just sitting here on your own and no ones talking to you, it can be pretty bloody lonely and when people mix in with you and talk well it’s really quite pleasant and you learn a bit. You learn what’s going on around the world” (William).

As the above excerpt suggests, it appears that the country pubs located along the trail reportedly play a part in facilitating interaction between local residents and OCRT visitors. As another example, Norm, a Middlesmarch resident, talks about the local pub and the role he

perceived it played in providing a setting for communication between locals and outsiders.

Norm remarked:

“I know in the past locals have sort of, like you do when you walk into a strange pub and everybody looks at you as if to say who the hell are you, that sort of look. Well I don’t think they do that anymore. They sort off speak to them and have a good time with them in the end. Have a few drinks” (Norm – local retailer).

When asked about what he thought local people gained from communicating with trail visitors, Norm added:

“Certainly things like with other people, other people learning to appreciate other people because country areas while they’re reasonably friendly towards people they do sort of look at strangers as if they’re from another planet, you know”.

Similarly, the social contact between hosts and guests prevalent in another local pub illustrates the perceived ‘positive feel’ that social interaction facilitates between locals and visitors.

“I think local people too are sort of pleasantly surprised at the sort of people who are using the trail. They haven’t been very keen on having tourists in the area because of the impact. You know, people wandering around farms with guns and that sort of thing but they are realising that the sort of people that are using the trail are not like that – they care for the environment. There’s been a lot of mingling with visitors over at the pub because the pub is providing good meals and a lot of people go there for meals and therefore meet local people and local people meet them. The whole things just starting to have a really good positive feel” (Jessica – local bed and breakfast owner).

Since the OCRT has been established William, Norm and Jessica have reportedly noticed an improved tolerance, from local people, towards people visiting from outside the local area. Thus, it appears with increasing exposure to ‘different’ people an invisible barrier is potentially being removed between local residents and strangers. The words of Margaret exemplified this relationship.

“I think the rail trail is making the local community more aware of other people because this is a very isolated community in some ways. In spite of the through roads it’s some distance from other townships and cities and therefore it tends to be a wee bit insular and I think people have enjoyed meeting people not only from throughout New Zealand but from other countries as well. They’re beginning to realise that you know there’s more than just the Maniototo enclosed inside these hills. You know that’s good for people from an education point of view. I think it is an important gain that the community makes. It’s a benefit aside from the economic benefit that I don’t think people thought would happen or realise would happen just mere contact with people wanting to use the rail trail and the number of farmers that I hear. This is anecdotal again of course, but the number of farmers that I talk to at various times talking about the number of people they’ve seen on

the rail trail. You know, quite surprised that it's being used to the extent it's being used so therefore there perceptions are heightened and they're going to be altered about what benefits it does have... So, the rail trail is socially good as well, because it brings a different perspective to the community, like visitors lunch or they stay overnight and they drink and they talk to people so it has got social impacts as well and it broadens the thinking of the community" (Margaret – community leader).

When asked why this aspect was important for the community, Margaret added:

"That's terribly important because it removes them from the isolated feeling they often have and actually gives them an opportunity to feel that they're not so far away from civilisation. Isolation is a very important thing particularly when there's so many retired people coming in and living here so socially it's important to actually to see that the people aren't all leaving even if they're only coming here for a couple of days – it's restoring confidence and credibility back to a place that you've retired to basically".

When asked for examples of positive social interaction between local people and visitors, Anne offered her perceptions that visitors to the trail provide an outlet for local residents to show friendliness and hospitality to visitors as well as offering a chance to express the pride they have in their local area:

"It's a social thing – I think you'll get that from the pubs, they're meeting people they've never met before like the German tourists or the other people who are coming through. It's that social interaction which is very healthy, very positive and it also gives the locals a chance to show their pride – to be able to tell these people about what they have. You see this as you come through. Did you realise that that bridge it was built this way and that and the next thing. It just gives them a chance to show their pride in their local community" (Anne – OCRT Trustee).

The remarks of Bill, a retailer from Alexandra, provide further insight about how local people go out of their own way to create an atmosphere of friendliness and hospitality. In reply to a question about the benefits of the OCRT, Bill described a similar episode to that told by Anne. Bills tells his story this way:

"As a social thing I guess (the OCRT) is beneficial, once again for those smaller communities it's good because a lot of them don't get to meet people from Auckland or whatever. These 2 Americans who were in yesterday they're going back to Ranfurly because the guy at the motel up there he picked them up and dropped them off out on the trail. What they did, they stayed at Ranfurly one night at the motel, the next day they got up and cycled to Hyde. They'd done enough for the day so the guy from the motels picked them up and took them back to Ranfurly; they stayed the night. He took them back to Hyde the next day so that they could carry on their journey and they just thought that was marvellous, nobody would do that for them in Queenstown or in America where they come from. They got a buzz out of it. They're going back to do some sort of rally – they've befriended them. This is an older couple – they're 60 plus - they're

coming back next year; they're going to do it again. They're going back to Ranfurly. You don't get that in Queenstown. People go to Queenstown and they come down here and they just can't believe the hospitality and that people have got time to actually stop and talk to them. Everything's geared around – their rents are so high and that – they're geared around the dollar whereas people come in here and we spend ½ hour talking to them. You couldn't do that in Queenstown because you'd have someone lining up behind you. Hopefully the trail can grow enough so that everybody gets something out of it but we don't lose that part of it" (Bill – local retailer).

Bill's remark that 'hopefully the trail can grow enough so that everybody gets something out of it but we don't lose that part of it' places emphasis on sustaining the growth of the OCRT so as to maintain its inherent qualities. Qualities like the friendliness and hospitality of local people. For Bill, the capacity to have meaningful social contact on the OCRT, in contrast to Queenstown and America, is a means by which he perceived the more 'down-to-earth' values of the OCRT could be sustained.

However, growth in visitor numbers without the corresponding modifications in infrastructure might potentially lead to tension in the social interactions between local people and visitors (Shone, 2001). There is a risk then, that social interaction can become negative (Doxey, 1975). As an illustration, a neighbouring farmer explained possible negative outcomes in this way:

"Well it hasn't got to the point where the negatives have started happening... I think, in my view anyway, it has been very positive. We may review that and say what have we let ourselves in for if we have thousands traversing this trail and then of course you start to get it bursting at the seam because it ecologically can't handle it. The greater the numbers the more conflict potentially" (Bob).

The potential pitfalls of increased visitation seem to be most pronounced in one small village neighbouring the OCRT. This particular town does not have a reticulated water system. Water, therefore, is a scarce commodity for the local people residing in this town, a situation particularly noticeable for local service providers. As Sarah explained:

"You just don't burst into somebody's pub or shop and use the toilet as of right or expect your water bottles to be filled up. Like in the weekend you couldn't get in the door because from there to there, there were just bikes lying all over the footpath. So actually you could not physically get in here or the other week one of our neighbours saw a large group of bikers urinating out behind the bushes out the back here – alongside the old station area. Our wells are just out the back here. We don't want urine and the other stuff seeping down into them. I'm looking into bike stands but most people are really good but I just think that particularly people from the city just come out here and have absolutely no idea as to these sorts of problems" (Sarah).

A feeling held by the hotel owner and shop manager that they were being ‘imposed on because people were just arriving in to use their toilets and fill up their water bottles’ permeates the social contact that the people in this town have with visitors. Because of local discontent, a local community leader went as far as to say that:

“I think the toilets are going to have to be solved. That’s just something; somebody’s going to have to bite the bloody bullet that do otherwise there will be a few really irate people” (Paul).

What these comments illustrate is that while social interaction between interview participants and visitors is generally perceived as beneficial, contact between hosts and guests can become strained and as a result negative outcomes can eventuate. Nevertheless, it appears that social interaction between visitors and local residents’ is reportedly considered to be more of a positive than a negative consequence of the OCRT. The community benefit themes described up to this point have involved the wider community. However, interviews also revealed benefits associated with local residents using the OCRT for the pursuit of their own individual recreation activities.

4.4 Personal Well-being Benefits

An additional theme revealed in the community interviews was that the OCRT provides an opportunity for local people to realise a wide range of personal well-being benefits, which in themselves were reported to contribute to social benefits such as family bonding and economic benefits like improved work performance (Driver et al., 1991). Specifically, such benefits encompass the positive outcomes that individuals and groups realise from participation in recreation activities such as health and fitness, restoration and family togetherness (Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1998). A majority of the community stakeholders interviewed indicated that they had used the OCRT for recreational purposes at least once. Many had used the rail trail several times and four used the trail regularly.

Recreation on the rail trail is important for local residents for different reasons. Some people highlighted benefits associated with being with their children in a safe, healthy outdoor environment. Others emphasised benefits focused on meeting and talking to new and varied people or catching up with friends. The four regular trail users mainly used the OCRT for exercise purposes and commuting to and from work. As an illustration of the diversity of the personal well-being benefits associated with the OCRT, enjoying the environment, relaxation,

exercise and mental health benefits related to recreation activities are all mentioned in the following excerpt.

“So I’d see it as scenic value, to get away and enjoy the environment, relaxation and fitness, just straight out fitness, it’s a good place to go and do your fitness. I often see older people walking there in the morning. You know they’re retired and they’re walking, doing their morning sort of fitness walking thing. You can see it’s a regular for a lot of them. So it’s good for that reason”.

Researcher: What do you think that adds to people’s lives?

“A lot. Me personally I find it all in the state of mind (laughs). I think also the exercise thing for people it is a state of mind. It makes you feel good. If you’re keeping yourself fit it just gives you a good feeling in your head. Taking you away from work and pressures”.

Researcher: Why is it important for you to mountain bike on the rail trail?

“Keep fit basically, I hate running and it’s far better than riding on the road of course”.

Researcher: Why is keeping fit important to you?

“I’m a far better employee, but obviously being fit is important both work wise and family wise and of course the trouble with family and work is that you’ve got limited time so it’s so easy on the rail trail. You just jump on a mountain bike and zoom down there and round there” (David – local resident who regularly uses the rail trail).

The personal well-being benefits that David perceived, such as the benefit of physical and psychological well-being have been well-documented in the recreation benefits literature (Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1997; Driver and Bruns, 1999). The wider social and economic benefits associated with recreation participation are implied in David’s feelings that using the trail was good for his physical fitness, which he reported, in turn, had positive ramifications for his work and family relationships. Richard, another regular trail user, who lives on the outskirts of Alexandra, shares similar sentiments. Richard believed that there were “definitely” benefits associated with having the rail trail in the local area. His comments reiterated David’s thoughts about the value that personal well-being associated with recreating on the trail not only has for individuals but also the potential value this also has for other local residents. Richard explained:

“...I just think I get recreation and relaxation, peace of mind and general health, getting away from it all. Just a nice peaceful place to walk; I mean the section I’m familiar with is between Alex and Galloway, that’s the only bit I can really talk about with any confidence. It is in a really nice setting, nice lovely cuttings through the rock and I think you get a nice, it’s a nice place to escape and have a

relaxing walk or ride without any noise or run, a lot of people run on it. I use it to commute to and from work and others from our area use it as well, certainly the people I know at Galloway and friends who like biking, they use it to bike to and from work as well. Again we use it because the alternative is to come down the highway which we can use no problem but we don't and the reason is because it's more peaceful, it's relaxing and it's safer. You haven't got cars flying past you. We often use it for access to the mountain bike tracks up in the hills too" (Richard).

Richard perceived that as well as providing a convenient, relaxing, restorative and safe recreation and commuting option for him personally, the trail is also used by many other local residents, both as a means by which to safely cycle to work and for physical activity. The interview responses of other residents of Alexandra substantiate Richard's perceptions. Bill, in particular, remarked:

"There are a lot of local people using the rail trail. I'm quite surprised at how many local people are using it. We live where you actually come over the road-rail bridge and we sit and watch. There's a string of local people going over there all the time. There's people that bike in from Galloway every morning on the rail trail" (Bill – local retailer).

It appears from the preceding comments that the rail trail is a popular resource for recreation for the people of Alexandra and as an alternative off-road transport route for people who live on the outskirts of town. Opportunities associated with using the rail trail, whether it be for an early morning walk for senior citizens or a bicycle ride to work, point towards the rail trail having potential to benefit a variety of Alexandra residents. The health benefits related to regular physical activity and the ramifications that active lifestyles have for the health of the wider community are well documented (National Health Committee, 1998).

In addition to Alexandra, community respondents from other communities had also noticed that local people were using the OCRT for recreation purposes. For example, a neighbouring landowner from the Middlemarch area suggested that local people such as the local school, a horse enduro made up largely of local participants and local senior citizen groups have used the trail for recreation. Some study participants also appear to value the rail trail for the new recreation opportunities it has reportedly provided for local people. Fred, a resident of Ranfurly, commented:

"My wife and I have now either walked or biked a fair section of it and our ambition during the winter on Sundays is to do the whole lot in bits. Especially when we were going tramping we practised on the rail trail. It gives you somewhere more interesting to go than walking around the roads. I'm also seeing the rail trail being used more and more by Ranfurly people... Even last Friday one

of the schoolteachers, him and his wife and their two kids, they were on the trail... I think it's giving people initiatives to actually get out and do it, get out and ride on the trail. Like how many people would think about getting on their pushbike and riding up the main street, they wouldn't. Basically the roads aren't that wide for pushbikes especially with the bloody big trucks and that on the road and when you're on the rail trail you've got no worries about traffic. Doesn't matter how far out of sight the kids go they can't get into trouble" (Fred – local retailer).

Others see the OCRT as a recreational asset for the whole community. For Ted, this was a perception that he associated with seeing local people using the trail and the positive perceptions that he personally has about recreation in general. For example, Ted remarked:

"From a sort of a health aspect it's an asset for local community members to be able to use it. To be able to get out and ride up and down there because I've got crook knees and rather than walk I'll go biking. Local people do use it. There wouldn't be a lot but I think more and more will. People look at me and say you old bugger what are you doing on your bike. I say to them my knees are a bit arthriticy and I find walking gives them hell. I sort of take a use it or lose it approach, so biking – you feel better for it and you get to the stage where you have got to keep doing it because if you slip back and want to start up again it's blimmin hard work... I use it as a way of getting a bit of exercise and it gets me off the main road. I plan my attack and go to Waipiata and back and know that I've done a reasonable amount of exercise or Wedderburn and back and I've chucked the bike in the back and gone from Hyde to Tiroiti and things like that" (Ted – local resident who regularly uses the rail trail).

The excerpt above exemplifies the opportunities that the OCRT provides for short excursions. The nature of the trail makes it possible for local people to explore other parts of the trail, commute to work in the more urban settlement of Alexandra and gain a variety of physical and mental health benefits associated with recreation. The safety aspects of the OCRT have also arisen in the above excerpts. Nicola, a community leader from Middlemarch, emphasised the safety aspects of the OCRT in her description of a local school trip on the trail. Nicola commented:

"I've done it with the kids and it's absolutely fantastic. It is one of the few things that you're safe to let the kids just go ahead of you, do it at your own speed, it's wonderful, I mean you can't do that many places, it's exceedingly safe and it's a really wonderful family oriented thing. I've done it with groups of up to 35 kids, with very few adults".

Researcher: What benefits do you think this gave them?

"Absolutely brilliant and it gave them the independence that they wanted. They could do it with their friends at their pace but they had their sense of achievement of doing it at their own pace whereas with a lot of sporting activities you have to do it at the same pace – like team sport. It is like doing it as a team but doing it

independently at your own time, which is wonderful. It's a real benefit and not having to be around parents all the time. We just tell them to stop at the next gate or at the next point and you know that they are going to do it. As long as you've got kids there it just gives them a huge amount of freedom. It's an asset as far as the community being able to use it. Most of the kids around here have bikes and the pony club have used it several times as well" (Nicola – community leader).

In addition to the safety aspects that Nicola stressed, her comments highlighted other positive aspects of the OCRT such as providing a chance for children to attain a sense of achievement, independence, and to bond with their family.

Overall, study participants indicated that the opportunities afforded for the attainment of their own personal well-being benefits meant that the OCRT was an asset for the residents of local communities. The perceived value of neighbouring recreation opportunities for local populations is evidenced elsewhere, however, how these recreation opportunities were perceived to benefit local people was not addressed (Clements et al., 1993; Moore et al., 1992; Perdue et al., 1987; Stein et al., 1999). In contrast, the above excerpts suggest how local people reportedly benefit from the OCRT by illustrating the opportunities that community stakeholders perceive the trail provides for enhancing personal well-being through commuting to work, health and fitness and mental restoration.

4.5 The Benefit of Positive Attitude Change – A Link Between Themes

Findings of the research provide some support for the idea that the perceived economic and social benefits of the OCRT had changed many study participants' initial attitudes about the trail. A number of interviews revealed that local business people and residents who were pessimistic about the OCRT when it was first proposed were now more supportive and positive due to the community benefits that they attributed to the trail. The claim that, in general, the more experience local people have with a rail trail the more positive they tend to be toward it appears to suggest that a reported attitude change towards the OCRT would be expected (Moore et al, 1992; Parker & Moore, 1998).

Initial negative attitudes expressed by local people were focused on the notion that, at the time of development, the trail seemed like a waste of money. The words of a neighbouring landowner and a community leader typified this attitude.

"Well at the initial stages the amount of money that was being put aside or being used to upgrade it seemed to be a shameful waste because there didn't look to be any reason why there should be potential for usage. But that's wrong and it's grown several times" (Stephen – neighbouring landowner).

“At the start there were a few knockers. Some of us thought it was a waste of money, but these same people are now starting to see benefits – they’re all enthusiastic, the knockers are well gone now” (Peter – community leader).

Another reason for the initial negative attitudes, which were held towards the rail trail, emerged from an interview with Patrick, a local hotel owner. Patrick pointed out the negative ramifications that the loss of the railway had for the Ranfurly community in terms of decreased community morale. Patrick’s perceptions give some insight into how local people might have felt slightly uneasy about the development of the OCRT. He remarked:

“I was a bit sceptical because the way we lost the railway. That was something else lost for Ranfurly. We lost so many things. The railway was another thing lost, the next minute we look out there and the rails and everything are coming up and this made everyone kind of go against it at that stage. Then of course we heard about this rail trail thing and of course everyone listened but didn’t say much, but now it’s a reality that no one thought would happen and no one could envisage what it was going to turn into, absolutely amazing. No one ever thought... A lot of local people are now noticing and are taking notice of it and they kind of look for people on the trail. At one stage we heard that some farmers weren’t going to take the fences down and all that but you don’t hear that any more, you know. Not any more. The only reason they objected was because they lost the railway, that was a bad thing but now that something good has come out of it you don’t hear any complaints. A lot of the farmers are actually meeting the people on the trail on their farms and saying come in and have a meal with us tonight, stay the night” (Patrick).

As Van der Stoep (2000) suggested, in some cases, potential visitor attractions may be the very things that remind local residents of bad times. The comments of Stephen, Peter and Patrick about the provision of recreation resources being a ‘shameful waste of money’ and the reported community apathy shown towards the OCRT in its initial stages due to unpleasant memories indicate why recreation practitioners need to justify the potential benefits associated with recreation. Stephen, Peter and Patrick’s comments also relate attitude change with the notion that people have started to notice trail related benefits. This appears to confirm the suggestion that as time passed and local people started to see tangible and intangible benefits emanating from the OCRT, attitudes towards the trail would become more positive (Graham, 1996).

Peter’s perceptions make this relationship more explicit. When asked about any benefits he could attribute to the rail trail, Peter directly equated positive attitude change with the word ‘benefit’. Peter said:

“A benefit must be that community members have become more positive and supportive of the trail” (Peter – community leader).

Graemes comments put these sentiments into perspective when asked whether he thought the rail trail had provided any benefits to the local community:

“Yes it has. It’s something that I have had to eat humble pie over because I had some misgivings at the start” (Graeme).

The misgivings that Graeme referred to are summarised by Penny, an OCRT Trustee. In addition to introducing some of the worries that local people had prior to the trails development, Penny’s remarks also illustrate the link between positive attitude change and wider economic and social benefits such as potential for business expansion and enhanced community identity. When asked about the benefits she thought the OCRT was providing to local communities, Penny explained that:

“It has happened in different ways. One of them is that when we started there was a whole lot of people who said oh it’ll bring a whole lot of townies into the country, they’re going to light fires, they’re going to bring their dogs, they’re going to upset the rural communities. It got to the stage just before we were opening the last bit where instead of saying why are you doing this to our community, upsetting us and things they were saying why have we gone without it, why haven’t you brought these people and it had been a fairly complete turnaround for the extreme people. If we think of the specific things, something like the Otarehua Tavern; you get 1 year and you get the people in there thinking it would be good to have people coming in having meals at the pub. The next year you have them with a temporary sign sitting over near the trail saying lunch from 11:30 to 2:00, hot pies, whatever it is. By next year they will have a permanent sign up authorised by DOC that will have a picture of spoons and forks and glasses and beds. And you can see it’s sequentially moving between there’s a trail wandering around there and we take no notice of it to we’re actually actively engaging in it, we’re grabbing people on the trail, telling them we’re here, come and have a look. That’s primarily economic, but Lauder would be an example to me of social benefits. The people at Lauder that we went to see recently, they sold their community hall I think or something up there, they used the money to do planting and develop the area around where the station was up there... Not only had they been planting and things but they have been tidying up their farms near the trail so views from the trail are nicer. So, in Lauder it’s brought people together to feel a sense of community. Painting things that you can see from the trail, for example. You know if you have a shed down the back of the property that looks pretty ugly you might paint it. The area has actually been tidied up and the trail has been instrumental in encouraging that, I think” (Penny).

The above excerpt demonstrates a perception that positive attitude changes have come about as local people have realised the potential for local area development, from both an economic and a social perspective. William’s thoughts reinforced Penny’s claims. William said:

“A lot of locals thought it was a waste of time, they laughed at DOC spending the money on these bridges. What a waste, you know, but the same guys stand there with their mouths open watching people pour past every day and can’t believe it.

I've not heard anyone yet say that it wasn't good for the community. Because it's bringing people in they all see benefits. In a lot of cases that'll keep their local pubs open perhaps when the local community couldn't have because of the lack of people and therefore they close.... The pub is their focal point. I mean pubs aren't pubs anymore. It is a pub where you come and have a beer but it's a social club, it's a coffee shop, it's a local dairy, it's your local restaurant, it's a meeting place if you want to come and have afternoon tea".

Positive attitude change can also be tied to social contact between local people and visitors. Interaction between the two groups, as reported in section 4.3, appears to have exceeded local people's expectations of the type of people that they perceived were going to use the OCRT. Hector put it this way:

"Take the pub for instance, a stranger would go in there and the locals would look at you like you're an alien. The locals would take the 'Mickey' out of you – making them feel really embarrassed. The stranger would have their drink and go out. Now, since the rail trail has been here, we're getting a lot more of visitors and locals do have a different attitude towards them now, they do still call some of them tree huggers. Some locals still think anyone that doesn't wear a Stetson hat and boots is sort of a tree hugger. Anyone that doesn't smoke and doesn't drink much and rides a pushbike, they seem to call them tree huggers here, but they're gradually coming out of that as they can see the benefit of having more people coming into the hotel... Even the ones that were very negative towards the rail trail are coming around now and saying they can see the positives from it. That's only really been since December last year, we've seen it just picking up all the time. But since December 2000 it has really come ahead now and we've got like I say different ones, like the (a local businessman) and that he said oh the rail trail will never come to nothing, they've come and said they've changed their tune on it... The whole attitude right through people have seen what the benefit has been as things have been picking up – The whole thing of people being more friendly" (Hector – local campground owner).

Social contact between trail managers and local people has also reportedly facilitated attitude change about the organisation that manages the OCRT, the Department of Conservation (DOC). Reinforcing this assertion are the comments from a DOC employee about the OCRT Trust meetings that are regularly held in neighbouring communities and the relationships forged with community members tied to the organisation of the Duathlon races. The DOC employee, Grant, thinks that some very good relationships have been established and those relationships have probably also helped to break down barriers with other people in local communities as well.

Grant's suggestion is substantiated by comments from Charlie and Bob, two neighbouring landowners who were initially sceptical of DOC's intentions regarding the OCRT. Their scepticism appears to centre around the entrenched attitudes which they held about DOC.

Similar relationships, focused on land issues between DOC and landowners neighbouring a national park, are evidenced elsewhere (Kapelle, 2001). Charlie and Bob offered their opinions about their relationship with DOC in this way:

“Our relationship has been very good with DOC. That’s another misnomer that we used to have. We used to think that DOC were some tree-huggers, office wallowers who hug trees all their lives but I guess I didn’t understand what a greenie was. I guess all farmers are greenies. If they’re not they should be. We have to be easy with our environment. Sure we’ve got different ideas as to how it should be done and who’s right and who’s wrong we’ll never really know I guess. We’ve got a very good working relationship with DOC and so we have with the race (Duathlon). In fact (DOC employee) has been a tower of strength. He’s a real enthusiast for the trail and he does a lot. We’ve had a very good working relationship with them. They always said there would be benefits for the communities through it and we said oh Christ yeah you know. But we said that but we really didn’t believe it would be like this. Now it’s probably endless where it can develop” (Charlie – neighbouring landowner).

“A lot of credit must go to DOC. One in particular: I can’t remember his name. He was very proactive and very helpful. Communicated very well with communities. He got a lot of cooperation because of that. He helped out in all kinds of ways. I thought this was an essential exercise for DOC because initially our communication with DOC has largely been adversarial very often in land issues... They aren’t always the best neighbours. I think that is fairly well documented (laughs). A lot of us had a perspective of DOC that wasn’t particularly nice. They hadn’t been particularly good neighbours. So one wondered what the hell they were going to be like as neighbours if they were taking up the rail trail and the issues of gorse, broom and matagouri, weeds and so on. All this had been there in the past with New Zealand Railways so why was DOC going to be any better. They have been of course; they’ve been totally different. Give them a chance to prove themselves and they have. I give a lot of the credit to liaison by the various DOC agents or representatives that service this region. We’ve had good communication and DOC have been very supportive in operating these rail trail races” (Bob – neighbouring landowner).

The part that the OCRT has played in facilitating communication between DOC and neighbouring landowners and the relationship this has to changing their attitudes about DOC and the OCRT was stressed in the above excerpts. In contrast to the perceptions expressed by Charlie and Bob, the comments of other neighbouring landowners highlight that a proportion of neighbours still harbour resentment toward the OCRT because of perceptions about the way DOC have handled the development and management of the trail. Such resentment appears to focus on communication difficulties. The perceptions that Paul and Graeme had about DOC provide an example.

“DOC have got off side with us, instead of on-side. Even if someone made a decision about what type of fencing had to be put up. I’d hate to do it and find that

I'd wasted my time because some officious little prick had told me to pull it back down... A lot of fishhooks still exist. It will get better but there are problems that need to be faced up to. What worries me as much as anything was that 4 years ago we discussed fencing, but it has not been resolved" (Paul).

"They're (DOC) the poorest neighbours you could get. As an adjacent landowner they're the most terrible neighbours because they are arrogant. They (DOC) seem to make their own rules and then when you ask them to help with something. I wanted to use a bridge there. So we could take our tractor over it rather than go around the road, I've got land both sides and they wouldn't allow it. I said well you're making an enemy. It's a bridge on the trail and we wanted to be able to take our tractor across it. I said well we're landowners on both sides. Don't you want to get on with your neighbours? Oh no we don't care about the neighbours. Yet, we've fixed the fence and they don't do a damn thing. I've had no money for that, so basically as far as I'm concerned what we should do is let the fence fall down and let the cattle roam onto the rail trail. So, they've got to brush up their act a little bit. They just need to be good neighbours for a change instead of being arrogant" (Graeme).

From the preceding excerpts, it appears that lack of and poor communication between DOC and some neighbouring landowners permeates the ill feeling between the two. Paul and Graeme's feelings also reinforce Moore et al.'s (1994a) suggestion that, the greater the trail-related problems, the less likely it is that neighbouring landowner attitudes will be offset by any benefits associated with living near rail trails. Essentially, the different attitudes held toward the rail trail by Charlie, Bob, Paul and Graeme relates to communication. This points to it being particularly important for DOC to emphasise communication with neighbouring landowners because, as demonstrated by Charlie and Bob's comments, a key to changing attitudes about the rail trail lies in social contact and good relations between neighbouring landowners and DOC. As CRESA (1998) and DOC (1998) suggested, in order for DOC to avoid working in isolation from the community, there needs to be a strong emphasis on establishing and maintaining working relations with local populations.

4.6 Chapter Summary

This chapter has explored the benefits that local residents and trail managers reportedly associate with the OCRT. In the context of this study, findings suggest that the presence of the OCRT is highly related to neighbouring community benefits including economic development, community identity and solidarity, social interaction and personal well-being. Community stakeholders reported that with an increased influx of visitors has come increased spending in the local service sector. This perception was balanced by the realistic expectations held by local business people that the OCRT was not a panacea for local businesses.

However, community stakeholders perceived that the OCRT was important for economic development through playing a part in diversifying and thus helping to sustain the farming dominated local economy. The ability of a local transport company to attract staff, for example, was related to the OCRT and its potential contribution towards sustaining the local hotel and shop. In another area, the potential earnings derived from OCRT visitors' was seen as crucial for the survival of the local hotel. It was stated that this particular hotel was an important meeting place for the residents of the local community.

Community interviews revealed that the OCRT had engendered a stronger sense of community identity and pride among local residents through the realisation that a trail running through their communities has an attraction for people visiting from outside the area. This arises partly because visitors arrive very obviously valuing the landscape and place, which helps local people to recognise this value themselves. Attached to this was the increased sense of community worth felt by some study participants and the increased satisfaction that local people have with their communities. An example of community solidarity rested with community based trail restoration projects such as the rejuvenation of the Wedderburn and Lauder railway station areas.

In addition, social interaction with OCRT visitors was reported by local residents to have led to an increased tolerance towards outsiders and as an opportunity to express friendliness and hospitality to trail visitors. Thus, leading to an increased diversity of relationships in their own lives. Personal well-being benefits were focused on the recreation opportunities afforded by the OCRT and the individual and potential wider social and economic benefits associated with this resource such as fitness and health and mental restoration. Finally, the benefit of positive attitude change illustrated the relationship between the perceived attainment of economic and social benefits, and the building of positive feelings toward the OCRT.

A major objective of this thesis focused on community residents' perceptions about the beneficial aspects of the OCRT for their community. However, negative perceptions about the amount and behaviour of visitors and neighbourly relationships with DOC, in particular, were reported. Interviews highlighted that relationships between local people, trail visitors and the land management agency, if not managed through the provision of toilets and water access and good communication between neighbours, could spoil the benefits that local people perceived about the OCRT.

Chapter Five

Visitor Benefits

While the previous chapter addressed community benefits associated with the OCRT, this chapter is focused towards gaining insight into the benefits that visitors reported. Visitors were typically walkers or cyclists from outside the local area who were either day visitors or overnighers. Rather than comparing differences between activity or visitor type, analysis of the data derived from the visitor interviews concentrated on identifying and describing the beneficial outcomes that visitors attributed to their OCRT visit.

Visitors reported many similar responses to questions about how their visit had been beneficial, but findings also suggested that a strength of the OCRT is the range of benefits gained by visitors. Certain benefits consistently emerged in the data analysis process as evidenced elsewhere (Driver et al., 1991). In particular, the main benefits perceived by visitors fell into two major categories: Personal and social well-being and knowledge of railway heritage. These findings are substantiated by other recreation and heritage benefits literature (Beeho & Prentice, 1996, 1997; Behan, Richards & Lee, 2001; Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; McIntosh, 1997, 1999; Stein & Lee, 1995; Walker, Hull & Roggenbuck, 1998). However, while one would expect a visitor to a recreation area to engage in physical activity and/or observe scenic beauty (Stein & Lee, 1995), or a visitor to a heritage attraction to gain historical insight (McIntosh, 1999), the findings of this study suggest that the OCRT offers visitors the chance to be physically active and view scenery as well as to acquire knowledge about the historical attributes of the trail. This finding can be explained by accepting that the OCRT setting has active recreation, scenic and heritage attributes (Connell, 1998).

In comparison to a previous study into the benefits of visiting rail trails (Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001), gaining knowledge of railway heritage, in particular, was reported to be an important benefit of a visit to the OCRT. An explanation of the difference in findings between the two studies is that learning about history was not included as a benefit item in Bichis-Lupas and Moisey's questionnaire. Thus, by exploring OCRT visitor's perceptions as expressed in their own words, the findings of the present study offer greater insight into how visitors personally believe they benefit from a rail trail visit. For example, visitor interviews revealed that trail visitors benefited from aesthetic appreciation through an enhancement in

mood, rather than merely looking at nice scenery. A second insight reported by some OCRT visitors was that, rather than simply being with friends, a perceived benefit of the OCRT involved the strengthening of friendships through meaningful interaction between friends.

5.1 Personal and Social Well-being

A major category of benefits that emerged from the visitor interview data was personal and social well-being. Reported benefits associated with the OCRT that fall into the personal well-being category include physical activity, aesthetic appreciation, sense of achievement and psychological refreshment. As illustrated in Figure 5.1, further analysis of visitor interviews revealed that the benefits visitors initially reported were linked to physical and psychological health, enhanced mood and positive mental state, improved self-confidence and self-esteem and leading a balanced lifestyle. These findings therefore give some support to the contention that a recreation experience, by contributing to the satisfaction of a person's psychological needs, has a positive effect on physical and psychological well-being (health), life satisfaction (quality of life) and personal growth (Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986).

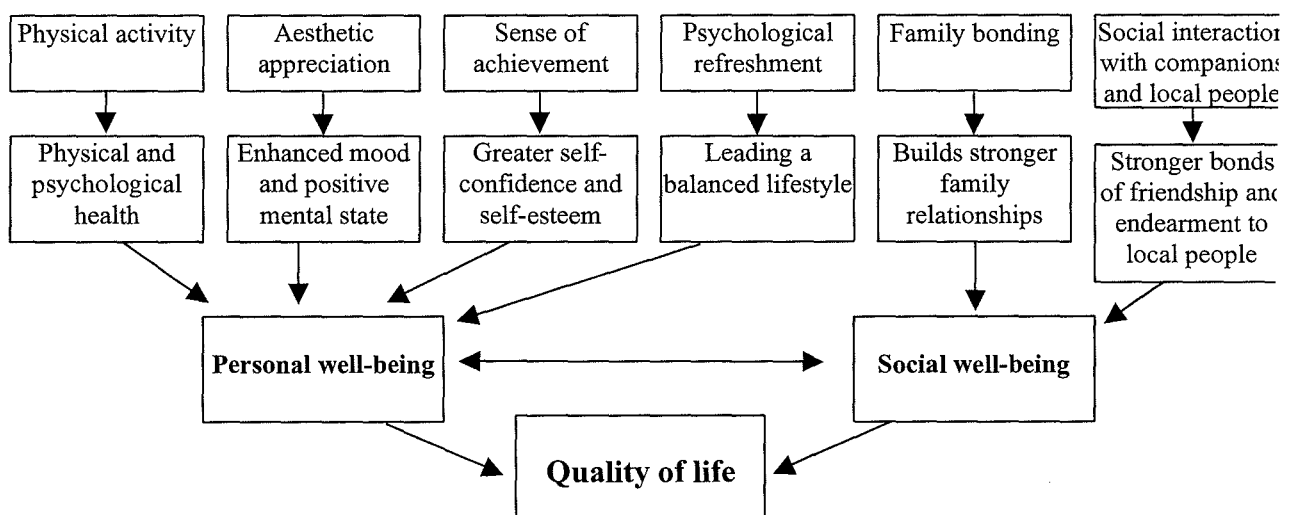


Figure 5.1: Personal and social well-being

In addition, some visitors cited the importance of social contact with family members, their companions, and locals when describing the benefits they received. This appears to suggest that a visit to the OCRT contributes to feelings of enhanced social well-being as evidenced elsewhere (Canadian Parks/Recreation Association, 1998). As illustrated in Figure 5.1, further analysis of how visitors describe the social well-being benefits they associate with their OCRT visit highlighted links with potential off-site benefits such as building stronger family relationships, initiating and adding vitality to friendships and endearing visitors to the local

people of the destination area. In addition, findings also provide support for the contention that personal and social well-being, in turn, positively contribute to quality of life (Marans & Mohai, 1991).

5.1.1 Physical activity

While this study did not set out to calculate the *actual* level of physical fitness gained or the economic magnitude of the physical activity benefits of the OCRT, the perceptions of a large proportion of study participants strongly reiterate the health consequences of physical activity (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1996; National Health Committee, 1998; Physical Activity Taskforce, 1998). A schoolteacher, for example, related sedentary behaviour, ill health and lack of activity when asked to comment on the benefits he believed students had received from their trip to the OCRT:

“Just for them to get out off their butts and get out and do some biking instead of sitting in front of the TV or video screen. Keeping them active and keeping them off the street...sitting at home, it’s just not healthy” (Brendan).

George also makes a strong association with activity and physical health and his visit to the OCRT. When asked about what he had gained from his experience George answered, “exercise”. When probed about why exercise was important, George commented that:

“It reduces risks of heart disease and is a stress relief from work...it refreshes your soul” (George).

Other visitors, Tim and Jenny, when asked to reflect on what they had gained from their experience, responded with similar comments centred on the association they made between physical activity and health:

“A higher level of fitness. We have been trampers and climbers all of our adult lives. Lately our joints aren't doing what you'd want them to do. Cycling seems to free up the joints” (Tim).

“The physical activity is important. I just like being able to achieve it, do it and I think the health all comes with it, I guess it just makes me feel good” (Jenny).

Off-site behaviour, related to physical preparation for the OCRT, also has the potential to contribute to the benefits associated with regular physical activity. For instance, some of the OCRT visitors interviewed mentioned that they had trained to do the rail trail. For Tony and his family, this involved:

“As one of our training runs we went down to Clyde and shot back down the river that way. We’ve been training for it. That’s why we got another bike so the five of

us can go biking. Good family outing with the kids. Doing all this, its good for general fitness as well” (Tony).

For Tom, a man who was involved in organising cycling trips along the OCRT for a local charitable organisation, training for the OCRT was something he recommended:

“Beforehand they go biking, a lot of them train up for it because we warn them. We tell them they’ve got to be fit you know. You can’t hop on a bike and think you’re going to bike 150 kilometres of it” (Tom).

For Bruce, the OCRT was viewed as part of a South Island cycle-touring trip intended as preparatory training for the upcoming triathlon season. When asked about the benefits he believed that this experience had given him, Bruce stated:

“Well, I was a bit underdone last year on the bike, I hadn’t done the miles. So I thought why not combine a holiday in the South Island – I’ve always wanted to come here – with some base work for biking. I’m trying to ride at least 100 kilometres a day, over three weeks that’s going to add up and getting off-road in gravel like this it makes it tougher” (Bruce – triathlete).

Likewise, a cyclist who was interviewed reported that he was using his time on the OCRT as a means to build up fitness for a mountain-climbing expedition in the Himalayas. Henry, another multi-sport athlete who was cycling a part of the OCRT he had run previously, voluntarily spoke about his first experience with the trail; participation in the OCRT Duathlon:

“I achieved a goal. I exercise normally every day. An event like that provides a motivational goal to keep training – an ongoing reason to exercise. This keeps me in good shape. Long-term, having done the race may mean I will do more events. I’ll definitely do it again” (Henry – New Zealand triathlete).

The above excerpts provide an illustration of the potential that the OCRT has for providing an ‘avenue’ that both motivates and offers variety for continued participation in physical activity thus adding to the general physical health benefits that regular exercise can potentially provide.

In addition to physical health benefits, some visitors linked exercising on the OCRT to a perceived psychological benefit. For example, after mentioning that he had gained exercise on the OCRT, Matthew was asked why he believed this was important. Matthew replied:

“For me, it’s that endorphin high, you know, feeling really good. That’s the exercise part of it – your muscles and your brain I guess” (Matthew).

Harry expressed similar thoughts through linking the physical with the mental aspects of exercise. He remarked:

“Being a runner of course and an exercise person I appreciate, I like to run in places that are not only good for me physically but are also good for me mentally. The trail does give me some sort of mental buzz as well, the physical exercise too – they both feed into each other” (Harry).

Harry and Matthew’s perceptions lend support to the contention that a direct effect of physical activity on the quality of life is related to personal well-being including improvements in perceived physical and psychological state (McAuley, 1994). Thus, perceived physical and psychological health benefits seem to be strongly related to study participants’ participation in physical activities on the OCRT. The next section emphasises the contribution that aesthetic appreciation makes to personal well-being and in particular, the effect that scenery and fresh air have on positive mood.

5.1.2 Aesthetic appreciation

Visitors reported that the act of viewing the scenery and appreciating being outdoors in the fresh air were also beneficial aspects of their visit to the OCRT. For many visitors, the chance to be in the outdoors in a unique environment, the peace and quiet, the closeness to nature and the tranquil surroundings were highlighted as beneficial aspects of their experience. For example, when asked which part of the rail trail was most satisfying a woman with a group of work colleagues replied, “the River (Manuherikia) - moving water and vistas of the hills”. When asked why this was important to her, she added that, “it was peaceful – the serenity”. Likewise, a visitor from Dunedin said that the “scenery has a spiritually uplifting aspect”. Both comments describe outcomes that have a more powerful meaning for these individuals than merely looking at a nice view. Likewise, fresh air appears to be valued by visitors more than for the role it plays in respiration. For example, when asked why fresh air benefited George, his reply that “it reinvigorates me, it revitalises me, it stimulates my mind” uncovered a somewhat deeper perspective than just the physical act of breathing in fresh air.

Similarly, Linda offered that it was a combination of the “scenery and being out breathing in the fresh air” that gave her the benefit of an “elevated mood, an all round positive feeling”. The previous comments mirror Latu and Everett’s (2000: p. 23) suggestion that, outdoor recreation can lead to a self-actualising, intensely satisfying experience for the participant characterised by “feeling spiritually uplifted through being close to nature and experiencing breathtaking scenery”. When combined with comments like “the trail permitted us to savour the beauty around us” and “the scenery is stunning – fantastic... Awestruck by the light, the colours”, the above excerpts strongly reflect what Hull (1991) termed ‘mood benefits’.

'Mood' is used here as a term to denote a specific set of feelings, which occur as a consequence of a leisure experience (Hull, 1991) such as feeling 'uplifted', 'awestruck', 'peace', 'tranquillity', 'serenity' and being 'stunned'. That the aesthetic properties of the OCRT induce distinct feelings of enhanced mood and thus heightened personal well-being, was amplified by comments from Natalie and Stan:

"The views, fresh air, beautiful superb bridge, wild Thyme smells, natural beauty of this place and silence... For me, it's just taking in the sights and smells of nature" (Natalie).

"The views have given me a sense of inner peace and tranquillity. It puts human existence into perspective – a great landscape mixed with the historical man-made element... That we are just a small part of the environment and our history" (Stan).

The preceding responses illustrate that viewing natural and historic scenery adds a more insightful dimension to Stan and Marie's experience than what has been demonstrated in other studies of rail trail benefits (e.g. Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Moore et al., 1992). Stan and Marie's experience therefore shows the richer meanings involved in personal interactions with attraction settings, as evidenced elsewhere (e.g. McIntosh, 1999; McIntosh & Prentice, 1999; Schänzel & McIntosh, 2000).

As well as the effects on their mood, Stan and Marie's words illustrate a sense of personal reflection about their place in the natural and built environment. As Schroeder (1996) suggested, a deep and strong attachment to a setting may give rise to a spiritual experience in which people feel a sense of connection with a larger reality that helps give meaning to their lives. The following remarks, from Kathy, Mary and Tony seem to portray the same meaning:

"It just reminds you of things that are really important... such as wide-open spaces and spectacular vistas of hills and farmland... There is a gratitude to those who have contributed to preserving it for of us to use...preserving something instead of destroying" (Kathy).

"Environment of endless skies, three dimensional clouds, the vast silence of the Maniototo, and a feeling of one-ness with our world. We had not known this before" (Mary).

"Its beautiful scenery. I've been on a hill country farm all my life and didn't appreciate the scenery until I got into town and now I've come back out and realise what I've been taking for granted over my life. It's amazing just how beautiful the country is. I've been walking around it all my life but it was just another day out on the hill" (Tony).

Memories of the scenery, both natural and historic, also appear to play a part in beneficial experiences that some participants indicated could be taken off-site. Highlighting this, Greg equated the scenery with memories he had of Grahame Sydney's paintings of the area. When talking about the thoughts and feelings he would most likely take away from the OCRT, Greg put it this way:

“Visions of Grahame Sydney, his art depicting this beautiful scenery, capturing it. It makes me feel good. It makes me feel happy, relaxed” (Greg).

Alistair's response to the same question suggests positive memories about the preservation of the OCRT:

“Reliving memories, an appreciation of what has been done to preserve an important part of this area's heritage - fantastic job and it is open to everybody - anybody of any level can do it; can see what's here. We have all gained something because the railway in a way hasn't been lost” (Alistair).

This section has explored an idea that the OCRT offers the visitor much more than a chance to view the scenery and breathe the fresh air, it also facilitates an experience that enhances mood, promotes pleasant memories and provides a setting from which personal connections can occur with the landscape. As Hull and Michael (1995: p. 2) stated: “Encounters with nature, therefore, evoke good feelings, trigger positive thoughts, and consequently restore the individual to a positive mental state”. The following section introduces sense of achievement as a further benefit that can be associated with a visitor experience on the OCRT.

5.1.3 Sense of Achievement

Gaining a sense of achievement was another highly reported benefit. A conventional meaning of sense of achievement – accomplishment – is typified in the words of Tom and Lisa. Both were asked what benefit they believed they had received on the OCRT:

“You start something and you finish it – the sheer feeling of fitness, the feeling of achievement, the scenery... you feel that good afterwards because you challenge yourself. You can finish it, you can complete it” (Tom).

“It's been an adventure, we're carrying all our gear - we probably didn't need to carry it but we might as well use it. I'm pretty pleased - impressed with myself actually. I didn't know I had the abilities to do what I've done so far. Especially – I've never tried this sort of thing before” (Lisa).

The above excerpts highlight a relationship between gaining a sense of accomplishment from an OCRT experience and meeting a challenge. Pursuit of optimal challenges is psychologically beneficial because it optimises positive states (e.g. perceived competence,

increased self-esteem and self-confidence). This matching of personal skills (abilities) with challenges leads to 'flow' experiences which in turn lead to personal growth and development (Csikszentmihalyi, 1982). Ewert (1989) provided additional support for this idea. His work on outdoor adventure activities found that heightened feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence emanate from the satisfactory completion of an outdoor recreation activity. As a further illustration of this concept, Brendan the schoolteacher talked about the sense of achievement in the form of the 'Mana'⁷ that a holiday school trip reportedly gave to the children:

"Just the Mana because they come away from it. A lot of them, when we first talk about it, they go oh oh 150 k's. I don't think I can do it but when you explain that we've got all day to get to the next destination you've got 8 hours and its amazing to see the delight on their faces and the sense of pride they have when they finish".

When questioned further about why he thought it was important for the children to have gained in this way, Brendan stated:

"Because a lot of them aren't getting it in the classroom because a lot of them are more outdoor-focused kids as opposed to academics and a lot of them are failing in the system, they're not getting the satisfaction from inside the classroom that they deserve and they need... A lot of them who struggle in the classroom and don't have much confidence you get them into the outdoors and they come into their own whether it be setting up tents, fishing, catching fish, basically just being able to look after themselves and just the fact of being able to bike that 150 kilometres. The good thing about the rail trail is that its achievable for anyone because of the layout of it, there's no real challenging hills because trains don't go up any steep hills and also we can travel at the pace of the slowest person".

From Brendan's perspective, participation in outdoor activities that match the skills of the children with the challenge they meet and the sense of achievement this generates contribute to an improvement in their self-confidence. Murray echoes these sentiments by relating increased self-confidence with the sense of achievement that he believed his wife had gained from her trip on the OCRT. Murray shared his thoughts this way:

"My wife has achieved something she was slightly apprehensive about - good for her confidence so hopefully we can look at planning other multi-day expeditions on our bikes in the future".

Implied in this comment is that, by cycling 150 kilometres, the woman's confidence had grown and as a consequence this might possibly provide motivation to pursue other similar activities. Thus, other future recreation benefits could be realised by this couple off-site. The same could also be said about other visitors. Emma, for example, offered her thoughts about

⁷'Mana' is a Maori word which in this context is used to describe prestige (Ryan, 1997).

the benefits she believed that her travelling companions had received from their visit to the OCRT when she remarked that:

“One of our group had never ridden for that long - she was stoked that she did it as she wasn't that fit – that gave her a buzz. Everybody got something out of it as far as achievement I suppose. It introduced Meegs and Jocko to mountain biking. It's good because lots of different people of different levels can do this trip so you can go as a group, no one misses out and you have a fun social time – we'll definitely do something like this together again”.

The above excerpt illustrates a link, shared by some of the people interviewed; between sense of achievement and that the recreation experience on the OCRT was achievable for a range of people with different ability and fitness levels. This link also relates to the degree of challenge that visitors with different skills and abilities reported. For example, the more experienced and skilled mountain bikers reported that the OCRT had not been a “challenging single-track mountain bike ride” whereas less experienced mountain bikers believed that the OCRT had been a good introduction to mountain biking because, while requiring some skill and fitness, it did not push their capabilities too far. For Richard, a father cycling on the trail with his children, this meant that the setting attributes of the rail trail were important because, while pushing the boundaries for his children, it was still within their capabilities:

“The kids could all do it according to their different capabilities... Its important to push boundaries for kids – it broadens their horizons as to what they can accomplish” (Richard).

Another father said that the OCRT had a “good gradient, which is ideal for the kids, this makes it achievable for everyone”. Patricia, when asked to express her thoughts and feelings about the 3 days she had cycling the trail, replied: “that it is achievable for old folks like us”. Patricia was “surprised at how achievable it (the OCRT) is”. The benefits Patricia gained included “a sense of achievement, meeting a challenge”. Similarly, Tom, who was travelling with a large group of older adults, made the following comment when asked about what he had gained from his visit:

“Well, terrific satisfaction at having achieved it for a start if you're not a person that's done much of that sort of thing and the fact that you can do it. You can do anything if you want to do it you can have a crack at it and I think that's one of the beauties of it (the OCRT). I'm far passed middle age now well and truly and it's great to see a lot of older people enjoying it. I think some people who can't walk an awful lot seem to be able to bike because it's not so hard on the joints”.

In addition to Patricia and Tom's thoughts that the OCRT was achievable for older adults, Barbara expressed that the trail was also achievable for her three children aged between 8 and

12. When asked whether the OCRT had met her expectations, Barbara, shared her thoughts this way:

“Yes, because the kids could do it. My husband and I were surprised that they could. The track conditions are better than what we were led to believe. We enjoyed the tunnels – a real challenge with the deep gravel and the dark so an achievement for all of us to get through without stopping”.

Barbara’s journey appeared to be more satisfying for her because of the achievement of the family as a whole to meet the challenge posed by the tunnel and because her expectations were exceeded regarding the trail conditions. The deep gravel and the lack of light in the tunnel (the physical setting) therefore made the OCRT more challenging for her family to meet the task together.

While Barbara was positive in her remarks about the surface conditions of the trail, other study participants mentioned the rough and uneven gravel surface on parts of the OCRT as the setting characteristic that most detracted from the satisfaction of their visit. Concern about the trail conditions of rail trails is evidenced elsewhere. Gobster (1995), for example, suggested that poor surface conditions were a major source of dissatisfaction on the greenways (including rail trails) that he researched. The belief that the design and character of the leisure setting should foster and support the realisation of benefits (Fridgen, 1980), however, is complicated by the differences in perceptions about the trail surface conditions of the OCRT. The reality is that Fridgen’s suggestion is not so easy to accomplish because, for one group of OCRT visitors the difficult surface conditions facilitated a sense of achievement whereas, for others the deep gravel on parts of the trail was perceived as a negative outcome.

5.1.4 Psychological refreshment

Often OCRT visitors spoke about getting away from other aspects of life such as work, or the hustle and bustle of living in an urban environment. Typical comments that illustrate this include, “getting up into the countryside as opposed to staying in town” and “it’s time off work... reinvigorating”. Thus, it appears that, for many visitors, a visit to the OCRT is a means of attaining some degree of psychological refreshment and rejuvenation as opposed to dealing with the stresses and strains of normal daily life. As a consequence, recreation activities on the OCRT serve as a means by which study participants might seek to find a balance in life and thus enhance their life satisfaction. This particular outcome is related to Tinsley and Johnson’s (1984) psychological benefit of catharsis: ‘letting off steam’ and working out emotional feelings through physical activity. The following comments from two

OCRT visitors are indicative of the ‘feelings of escape’, peace, and restoration that emanated from their time on the OCRT:

“Peace – When I get out there on a good day and the sun’s shining you can just breathe through your nose and you can breathe it all in and you don’t have to worry about anything else, it’s great” (Tom).

“You come away with a positive, you know feeling good because you’ve been in the outdoors and I’m out of the hustle and bustle of town – ‘the rat race’ – and the kids are saying the same... It’s good for us” (Tony).

The above quotations draw attention to a connection that Tom and Tony made between having a refreshing time away on the OCRT and the perception that this contributes to restoring a balance to one’s life. Examples of the important part that recreation activities on the OCRT played in providing this balance are provided in the thoughts of Marie and Sue. When asked why getting away from work and seeking recreation in this time was important to them, Marie and Sue stated:

“Getting away from the pressures of work and doing some sort of physical activity is important to me. You know you have done something worthwhile. That keeps you sane. Particularly on long weekends I like making the most of it... It recharges the batteries” (Marie).

“I think it sort of restores you if you’re a townie, it’s sort of a more natural version of life. It gives you back a balance that you’ve never had because if you’re missing some part then your life isn’t working properly” (Sue).

When asked why getting away from the pressures of work was important for her, Marie stated that it “recharges the batteries”. For Marie, this comment insinuated that other aspects of her life utilise emotional and physical energy and that as the stores of this energy dwindle she has a need to seek out a means by which this can be replenished – she can be re-energised. Participation in an activity that is different from her everyday life, in this case riding her mountain bike on the OCRT, provided an opportunity for re-energising thus Marie derived a benefit from her use of the OCRT, which she associates with leading a balanced life.

In addition to personal well-being benefits such as psychological refreshment, analysis of the visitor interviews showed that some visitors to the OCRT believed their visit to be beneficial in the opportunities it provided for promoting positive social contact amongst families, friends and local people, thus contributing to a feeling of enhanced social well-being.

5.1.5 Family togetherness

Some visitors interviewed felt that being together as a family was a benefit that they derived from their visit to the OCRT, thus providing support for the idea that a beneficial recreation experience on the OCRT, for some visitors, involves family togetherness and the belief that this in turn might have the potential to strengthen family relationships (Orthner and Mancini, 1991). For example, Gavin, a father cycling along with his wife and two young children, commented:

“We have enjoyed this experience as it is good for the family. I don't spend a lot of time with the kids and this we thought was a good way to spend time with them” (Gavin).

When asked why he believed being together with his family on the OCRT was important, Gavin added:

“The fact that the family could be together having an adventure in the outdoors. Fresh air for the kids – away from computers. Nowadays kids don't get a lot of physical activity”.

Gavin's words fit nicely with what Csikszentmihalyi and Kleiber (1991: p. 98) suggested:

“When the whole family is together, doing the same thing – especially when it is something novel and demanding – there develops an atmosphere of common purpose and good feeling that is usually absent from everyday life”

Other typical comments expressed by visitors are also suggestive of a positive association that is made with their visit to the OCRT and their family life. These include remarks such as ‘family togetherness’, ‘it has met our expectations – the family are really enjoying their time’, ‘it's important to get quality time in the holidays with the kids away from the city and our jobs’, ‘good family holiday’ and ‘family time which is valuable’. Clearly, the experience of these visitors matches the thoughts of Orthner and Mancini (1991), who advanced recreation experiences as one of many potential factors that influence the strength of a family relationship. For example, when asked about the benefits he believed he was gaining from his visit to the OCRT, Geoff pointed out:

“Catching up with my daughters who are both at Otago University. We can walk in pleasant surroundings, a bit of peace and have a ‘chin wag’. We've always done things like this as a family – recreation – but we don't see them too often now that they're at varsity...a nice time together”.

Helen elaborates further when asked why getting together on the OCRT with her extended family was so important to her.

“It is important because we don't get a lot of time with our families together, apart from Christmas but that is really busy – its too rushed, as we are all over the South Island” (Helen).

Helen adds that it is a, “Good opportunity for quality time together”. Helen later suggested that cycling the OCRT was a “Great way to spend 4 days together as a family where we could all be together, we could all do it”. The value that Helen places on family bonding is stressed in her remark that ‘we could all be together, we could all do it’. Helen reinforces her perceptions about the benefits that recreation opportunities have for family bonding with her suggestion that there needs to be “more information available about connecting roads for shuttle cars and good picnic spots so that they (other relatives travelling in the support van) can meet the trail with picnic lunches”. For Helen, having a ‘picnic’ could be viewed as another means by which her family could have quality time together, to communicate more intimately with each other and possibly strengthen relationships. The words of Richard appear to substantiate the proposition that being together as a family might possibly lead to the benefit of strengthening family relationships.

“It’s important to be together with families and kids bonding with each other. One thing, it teaches the older kids to wait for the younger ones - look after them - we can pretty much leave the kids to go for it themselves” (Richard).

However, possible social well-being benefits linked to the OCRT are not limited to families. There is also the potential for positive social contact amongst the members of non-family groups visiting the OCRT and with residents from the local community.

5.1.6 Social interaction

The interviews conducted showed that many visitors believed that bonding with their friends and/or travelling companions was a further benefit that they derived from their visit to the OCRT. While not as highly mentioned as group bonding, it also appears that a small portion of visitors viewed the hospitality of local people as a positive outcome of their visit.

From gaining an experience with companions, it was felt by visitors that the ‘bonds of friendship had been strengthened’ and thus greater ‘fellowship’ had evolved. As an illustration, when questioned about a highlight of her visit to the OCRT, Emma indicated that she had “fun hanging out with friends”. When asked why this was important, Emma elaborated:

“Social contact with friends in a different place doing a different thing expands what we have done together as friends” (Emma).

The words of other visitors also placed emphasis on the benefit related to getting away with friends and doing something fun and out of the ordinary. For example:

“Good to get away from work together with our workmates and their families... Get to know each other better in a different way, in a different place... The biking has been better than we expected - mainly because of the social aspect”

The preceding comment corresponds with Crandall (1979), who concluded that the best leisure activities seem to be those that involve both friendly interaction and a recreation activity. Similarly, Natalie, a visitor from Christchurch walking on the OCRT with a friend from England, remarked that this shared activity had provided an opportunity for:

“Renewal of friendship. We both live in different parts of the world but having the chance to holiday together and go for walks like this together renews our friendship but also it gives me a chance to show Betty a little bit about what New Zealand has to offer”.

In a similar vein, Max elaborated on the experience that he had on the OCRT with a group of his ‘mates’. Max remarked:

“We have enjoyed our experience because we have been able to stop and have a few beers together – to have a yarn, catch up... good times with your mates” (a 45-60 year old man).

The above excerpts reveal that sharing ‘fun/good times’, different and new experiences with friends and ‘workmates’ on the OCRT has the potential to positively influence the way that these individuals act toward each other. The perceptions of Sue expand this concept further. Sue talks about the experience she had gained from being with her friends on the OCRT as a way of “Spending time with my friends, a good opportunity to do something different”. When asked why this was a benefit for her, Sue remarked:

“Because these days I find that I’m quite busy. Quite often you don’t get a chance to get away and you don’t make the time to catch up with people”

The importance that Sue placed on ‘catching up’ and being with her friends on the OCRT is explained by her remark that:

“Sometimes when you’re away spending time with someone you can get into quite deep conversations – you get beyond normal chit chat – you learn more about them and more about yourself. Imagine going through life and getting to the end – what’s life without friends, it wouldn’t be much... The reason is your life is made up of people you meet along the way. They influence the things you do and the ways you think”.

It appears that a shared recreation experience on the OCRT enhances the way in which travelling companions interact with each other. More specifically, it is not merely being with

‘members of your group’ but sharing meaningful moments with them as well, which produce a sense of group bonding. Highlighting this dynamic are remarks such as ‘get to know each other in a different way’, ‘show my friend what New Zealand has to offer’, ‘expands what we have done together’, ‘to have a yarn, catch up’ and ‘you get beyond normal chit chat’. In a similar light, Tom, who was leading a group of cyclists, links the shared behaviour that occurs amongst group members on an OCRT journey with the ‘fellowship’ he believed they attained. This is emphasised in Tom’s comments that, ‘former strangers become friends’ and ‘having a few beers’. When asked what he believed his group gained from their experience, Tom stated:

“In our group it’s a tremendous fun thing for a start – fellowship and fun. A lot of them are strangers so they meet new people – as they begin to assume names, former strangers become friends... We cook together, we sleep together and at Omakau we sleep on the floor in the football clubrooms and we have a meal at the pub. Sometimes we cook our own meals. It depends on where we are. A pretty good name for that one is the ale trail too as far as having a few beers (laughs)”.

Getting to know others better is an aspect of the OCRT experience that Brendan the schoolteacher also viewed as a benefit. Brendan put it this way:

“Socially it’s great because you really get to know the children well especially for those in year 7 when they come back in year 8 you’ve got a better understanding of them and how they tick and vice versa. A lot of them find because you’ve been camping out with them, cycling with them for the 5 days that they feel as though you’re more approachable as well. So, if they’ve got any problems around the school or any hassles they’ll come up and sort of feel confident and comfortable talking to you” (a 30-45 year old man).

Similar to the group of cyclists, the shared experiences of the school group appear to engender a sense of ‘fellowship’ between the teacher and the students. In addition, the above comment seems to portray the formation of a longer-lasting bond between teacher and student, which the teacher believes is orchestrated by the OCRT visit.

The meaningful social interaction that takes place amongst members of groups on the OCRT probably accounts for a rewarding effect of the OCRT experience being the sense of group bonding it provides. Social bonds forged on-site, in turn, have the potential to extend off-site like renewed and expanded friendships, getting to know ‘workmates’ in a different way and the building of longer lasting relationships between teacher and student. The results of this study, therefore, appear to substantiate that social interaction amongst members of groups might possibly lead to a strengthening of the bonds shared by some OCRT visitors. This, in turn, might initiate or add vitality to friendships and contribute to one’s overall social well-being.

Excerpts from the visitor interviews also suggested that social interaction with local people was a positive outcome of the visit. This is well illustrated by Mary. In reference to an aspect of the OCRT that she enjoyed, Mary remarked:

“I like the fact that you can stop every so often, stop at a pub or a little village or town and the warmth and friendliness of those people and just sitting down and being able to have a beer and dinner there at the pub. The hospitality is what I enjoyed the most” (Mary).

The words of Douglas point to the added personal value that the incorporation of local people ‘as part of the experience’ had for his visit to the OCRT:

“The local people throughout these areas are very hospitable, helpful and friendly – salt of the earth – something that is gradually disappearing in other parts of New Zealand. The people round here, for us, are part of the experience. Here’s a story, the guy at the Omakau garage helped a couple of old folks fix their puncture the other night. He opened up especially to do this and I think he basically only charged them for the tube” (Douglas).

As the last excerpt in particular illustrates, for some individuals local people were admired and respected for their generosity and helpfulness, something that Douglas emphasised ‘is gradually disappearing’. Other visitors remarked that the OCRT had been ‘worthwhile’ because of the friendly atmosphere of the local communities. These patterns begin to suggest visitors’ positive feelings about the hospitality shown to a collection of study participants by local people. In an opposite way, Paula’s ‘disappointment’ with the attitude of a local person also points to the importance visitors’ placed on local hospitality.

“We have met nice local people apart from (an employee of a local pub)... The attitude of the (hotel employee) toward our children running around was disappointing. The pubs are part of the trail experience for us and we were disappointed to be told to keep our kids under control in what we thought was a family bar” (Paula).

Paula’s words emphasise the potential role a friendly and hospitable hotel worker plays in the feelings of ‘endearment’⁸ a visitor has to a destination area; namely the liking a visitor has for the local people in that destination area (Prentice et al., 1994). Furthermore, Prentice et al. (1994) suggested that it is most likely that endearment will only occur in situations where the visitor experience is not perceived as unfriendly and inhospitable. As a consequence, the idea of endearment fits nicely with the general positive feelings about the hospitality and friendliness of local people expressed in the above excerpts.

⁸ Endearment is viewed as a form of benefit people derive from holiday-making characterised by chatting and participation of visitors in the everyday social activities of the community (e.g. having some drinks and a meal at the local pub) (Prentice et al., 1994).

As opposed to gaining a feeling of endearment to local people, little support was found for the idea that meeting and interacting with unfamiliar trail users added to the visitors' experience of the OCRT. The results of this study would therefore suggest that the 'meeting new people' benefit dimension proposed in previous studies of recreation benefits (Driver et al., 1991; Stein and Lee, 1995) provides insufficient insight into social interaction benefits because it does not differentiate between the importance of meeting local people and/or unfamiliar visitors. As an example, visitors' feelings of endearment towards local people would not have been identified if visitors had merely been asked whether 'meeting new people' was considered a benefit of their visit to the OCRT.

5.2 Knowledge of Railway Heritage

In addition, visitors appeared to value the OCRT for the opportunities it afforded for building knowledge and awareness of railway heritage. Specifically, interviews revealed that some visitors felt that visiting the OCRT had provided them with an insight into the lives of railway workers and early settlers of the area and an appreciation of the skills and craftsmanship involved in constructing the railway. Visitor interviews, in turn, suggested that the OCRT offers opportunities for visitors to forge greater personal connections with New Zealand heritage in general. It could be strongly inferred that having realised this connection, visitors might potentially place a greater value on preserving New Zealand's historic and cultural heritage.

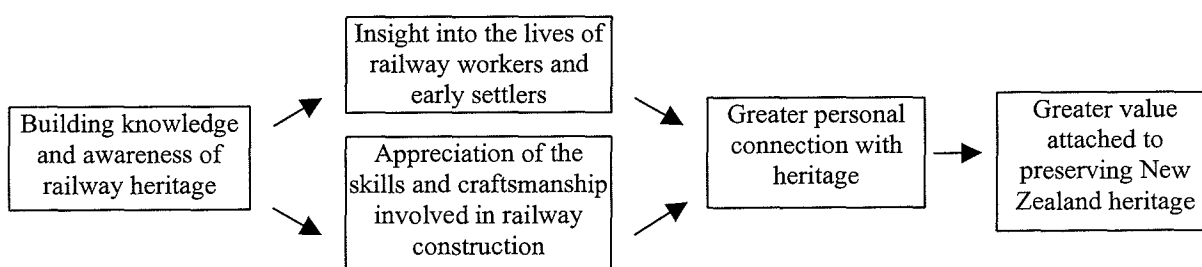


Figure 5.2: Knowledge of railway heritage

The interviews also provided some support for the suggestion that on-site interpretation material in the form of information pamphlets, signs and indoor displays, play a major part in facilitating visitors' connection with the past. Table 5.1 outlines the array of interpretation materials that are provided for the OCRT. The intention of this form of communication is to share knowledge about New Zealand's natural and historic heritage with visitors, deepen their understanding of this heritage and develop an awareness of the need for its conservation (DOC, 1996). Interpretation services on the OCRT, for example, include information which

aims to provide place knowledge and satisfy visitor curiosity, while also advocating conservation by encouraging appropriate visitor behaviour through conveying messages such as the OCRT code of conduct (DOC, 1998).

Table 5.1: OCRT interpretation materials inventory

Type of Interpretation	Description
<i>Information centres and interpretation displays</i>	Comprehensive information about the OCRT is available from DOC Field Centres in Dunedin and Alexandra. Local and regional tourism offices such as those located in Dunedin, Alexandra and Ranfurly also provide information about the OCRT. In addition, the OCRT Trust provides a wall-mounted display in the Middlemarch Railway Station. A similar display has been placed in the Alexandra Visitor Information Centre. The Dunedin office of DOC has a portable display that is available to local service providers and is also used at local events.
<i>Information pamphlets</i>	Seven pamphlets are jointly published by DOC and the OCRT Trust outlining individual sections of the OCRT. Each pamphlet contains general and historical information, points of interest, a map of the particular section, the OCRT code of conduct, what to expect and what to take.
<i>Information kiosks</i>	12 large covered structures (Plate 14) are located at the Middlemarch, Rock and Pillar, Hyde, Waipiata, Ranfurly, Otarehua, Lauder, Omakau, Chatto Creek, Alexandra and Clyde (2) railway station sites. Panels placed in the kiosks commonly provide an OCRT map, distances between settlements and/or attractions, a copy of the OCRT code of conduct and a description of the local area including history, geology, nature and ecology.
<i>Interpretation signs</i>	18 Perspex covered panels (Plate 15) are located at significant points along the trail. The signs consist of photographs or illustrations and an associated description explaining the significance of the point or site of interest e.g. human history
<i>Other information</i>	Local communities and businesses also provide brief Rail Trail information. For example, the Middlemarch and Ranfurly train stations (Plate 13) each have historical and visual presentations of their local area, which incorporate information about the railway. Museums in Clyde and Naseby are another source of historical/cultural insight into the area. The Ophir Post Office and Hayes Engineering Works (Otarehua) are Historic Places Trust properties that have been preserved in their original working order and the historic Gilchrist's store in Otarehua retains much of its original character. All of these places are open to the public. Bicycle shops in Alexandra and Dunedin and hotels, motels and camping grounds located along the trail also provide general information.

As Herbert (1989) claimed, through providing educational messages, interpretation can create valuable outcomes for visitors including greater appreciation, awareness and understanding.

Herbert's (1989) claim is highlighted by Richard's comments about the Ranfurly Railway Station:

"The slide show in the carriage with train noises and all the photos of the old railway and the local areas past; the photos of Central Otago... You never think of how they (the railways) opened up these areas - until now. You just don't realise the engineering feats that were achieved to make these parts of the country accessible... We like having holidays where our children will learn something rather than just taking the kids to a place. To educate the kids about a place so that it has meaning for them".



Plate 13: The Ranfurly Railway Station houses a display centre with information about railway and local history.



Plate 14: An example of an interpretation kiosk located at the former Clyde Dam Railway Station site.



Plate 15: A perspex-covered information panel located at the entrance to Prices Creek (Hyde) tunnel.

While Richard highlights the contribution that the visual and photo displays in the Ranfurly Railway Station make to a greater appreciation, awareness and understanding of railway heritage, Greg, a regular trail visitor, indicates that the information boards also facilitate a greater insight into the historical aspects of the OCRT and the local area with his remark that:

“There’s also that sense of history that I like to read about and increasingly too tourists these days are wanting to be educated and informed. I have talked to people who have been on the trail and of course DOC has been in the process of putting up these wonderful information boards on the trail, which give people a tantalising titbit of the areas that you pass through. For example, you get to learn that the Hyde railway memorial, what that is associated with in terms of the railway disaster, in other places you get to learn about the history of the area... So there’s the link in with the early settlers that you get from the great information boards that DOC and the rail trail trust have put in which gives you that theme back into that little community and why its there and what its about and things like that. It’s more than just recreation for me and I suspect for a lot of other people as well”.

Simon’s comments substantiate Greg’s suggestion that the historical aspects of the trail add more to the recreation experience. When asked why the information he had read about the history of the trail was important to him, Simon remarked:

“Because you get something out of a bike ride other than just exercise – you discover something... Learning about the history of the railway enlightens thoughts about the past and why railways like this were built. It feeds the mind”.

Simon’s perception that a disestablished railway provides evidence of our society’s evolution adds even greater meaning to his educational experience on the OCRT. In addition to his perception that interpretation “feeds the mind”, the information he had read contributed to his feelings that the OCRT could also be viewed as a source of national pride and sense of belonging. Simon added:

“Learning about and seeing what our ancestors did, it gives us an identity. The history of it, its New Zealand’s history isn’t it? it’s us – this makes you sit and think about it”.

These examples illustrate a point suggested in many visitor interviews, that visitors appeared to make a highly personalised or reflective connection between themselves and the information they were interpreting. While not a specific aim of this study, the importance interpretation plays in enhancing the visitor experience therefore suggests that interpretation is an important component of the visit for many people as it enables them to learn about and appreciate the place they have visited (Light, 1995).

Positive comments about the usefulness of the interpretation on the OCRT were not universal, however. For example, in contrast to the thoughts expressed above, Max suggested:

“I don’t like to see too many interpretative signs. It’s OK at the moment but too many signs can block out the views. That detracts from what we are trying to see... I don’t mind pamphlet-type information though”.

The implication in the above excerpt is that for some people saturation of a heritage site with signs can be detrimental to the ‘authenticity’ that the site intrinsically possesses. A question also arises as to who reportedly reads interpretation panels on the OCRT. The following comment illustrates that children, for instance, might not read interpretation materials:

“History appeals and information (pointing at the interpretation panel beside the tunnel) was valuable in this respect. Not for the kids though, they don’t read them, they’re too busy racing off. But they have got a bit of a perspective of how hard life was back then. They’ve seen some of the old stone cottages and we’ve told them about how the kids that lived in them would have had to have walked long distances barefoot to school and the mums would have to have cooked over open fires and how cold it was in winter... Important for kids to know about the hardships of the past as it brings them back down to earth” (Barbara).

Barbara mentioned that rather than gaining knowledge from the information material that is supplied on the OCRT, the children appeared to learn about the historical aspects of the trail less formally. For example, being able to view old stone cottages that were situated near to the OCRT and the corresponding information provided by their parents gave the children a sense of what life was like for children during another time period.

The preceding examples highlight that it is not only interpretation materials, but also physical evidence like old stone cottages, tunnels, station buildings, viaducts or other ‘relics of the railway’ that act as tangible links which enhance visitors knowledge of OCRT history and make the past more meaningful. Patricia, for example, highlighted the value that she attributed to viewing an array of preserved railway memorabilia by noting the lack of such relics on the OCRT.

“It (the OCRT) lacks some nostalgic pieces. It would have been good to see some railway tracks...quite nice seeing old railway sleepers on the bridges... you can better connect with what the trail used to be...these are the things that can make the trip more memorable for someone” (Patricia).

Thus, the knowledge and appreciation that visitors feel about historic heritage does not directly rely on interpretation materials. For example, visiting the OCRT was important to Max because of the opportunity to:

“Reminisce about the past, a sense of nostalgia, a bygone era... It’s great to be able to get up close and really explore the craftsmanship involved in building the viaducts and tunnels. It’s hard to find examples like this anymore”.

In the above excerpt, Max expressed the value of being able to make a closer connection to the craftsmanship shown by the stonemasons. Thus, connections to historical heritage were also reported through ‘getting up close’ to the historical attributes of the trail. Tom, when asked to name an aspect he enjoyed on his trip to the OCRT, for example, emphasised the sense of history he observed in the authentic remains of the railway, rather than in the interpretation material he might have read:

“The sense of history is just terrific as you see all those cuttings and the work that’s been done in the olden days with a pick and shovel a lot of it” (Tom).

In response to the same question, Paula remarked, “Tunnels”. When asked about what thoughts came to mind at this particular aspect Paula replied:

“Impressed by engineering considering when they were made - the foresight of the people who built these railways. The pioneering spirit to build amenities to open up an area such as Central Otago. It would have been an exciting time to live”.

Paula’s belief that “it would have been an exciting time to live” demonstrates that the insight gained by some study participants into the history of the Otago Central Railway involved more than an extension of knowledge and an appreciation of the efforts of pioneer settlers. The thoughts that Paula expressed seem to portray imaginations about the ‘attractions of the past’ and thus signify for her a greater emotional attachment to heritage. Through making such a connection, Paula demonstrates ‘insightfulness’, characterised by a deeper understanding of what railway construction meant to the area and her wish to have been involved in the pioneering endeavours of that era. This finding substantiates evidence presented in the historical heritage studies of McIntosh (1997, 1999).

Another example of the personal connection made with the historical heritage attributes of the OCRT is demonstrated in Gavin’s reflections about the past. Gavin’s thoughts about what railway construction workers from the past would think about the activities occurring on the OCRT in the present were made apparent when he was asked to name a highlight of his trip and why he believed this was important. Gavin explained:

“Historical nature of the trail... I thought about the people who constructed the railway, their lives, and what they would think about what was happening on it now”.

Gavin later commented that these thoughts had given him a greater “perspective on how our society had evolved” thus demonstrating a state of ‘mindfulness’ in his experience of the setting and his reflections about what life was like for railway workers in the past and the comparison he makes with how society is now (Moscardo, 1996). In a similar vein, Simon questioned whether the “expertise of the workers” involved in “constructing the bridges, cuttings, culverts and tunnels... the engineering feats of early last century” could be replicated in today’s society.

“The Poolburn Viaduct is a work of art. It stands as a testament to the workmanship of the guys who built it. Its nice to be able to see it - good that it has been preserved - many of these monuments to the past are not able to be seen as readily” (Simon).

The comments of other study participants allude to equally ‘mindful’ and ‘insightful’ encounters, which related to preserving railway heritage. For example, when asked about a highlight of her trip and why it was so important, Melanie replied:

“I gained a greater knowledge of this area, learnt how railways were built and how this enabled people to travel to many places by train. It’s important to gain a sense of our Whakapapa – a connection to our heritage – family. ‘The trail has arisen like a Phoenix from the ashes’ – I mean its preservation of the past isn’t it? This enables us to look at it as well as use it”.

In addition to uncovering the value she placed on the preservation of the OCRT, exemplified in her statement that the OCRT ‘has arisen like a Phoenix from the ashes’, Melanie’s comments also highlighted the relationship that the historical aspects of train travel in New Zealand had with her personal heritage. Thus the insight that Melanie reportedly gained into the history of travel by rail in New Zealand had opened her mind to a sense of belonging that she identified with her family heritage – her ‘Whakapapa’⁹. In comparison to a previous study of a greenway that featured displays of American Civil War heritage (Frauman & Cunningham, 2001), Melanie’s remarks suggest a relationship between the benefit of gaining an insight into heritage and the establishment of a greater sense of belonging and connection with that heritage.

By making a meaningful connection to the past, Melanie’s remarks also seem to substantiate McKercher’s (2001) claim that heritage attractions reintroduce people to their cultural roots and reinvigorate people’s interest in projects that preserve their history and culture. Donald also appeared to value the important role that he believed the OCRT played in the

⁹ ‘Whakapapa’ is a Maori word which in this context is used to describe cultural identity (Ryan, 1997).

preservation of railway heritage. Donald expressed sadness “that not more of our railway history is preserved”. When asked why he believed this was so important, Donald remarked:

“Rail in New Zealand is important to our history - an aspect that we have lost. The struggles of building, engineering feats and conditions of the past all contribute to making rail an important part of our history. I am always interested in historical aspects, but to be able to learn more, see it and experience it, we need to preserve it”.

Stan’s thoughts also appeared to reinforce the value that preserving railway structures had for some visitors by linking his previous occupation with the skills that were involved in quarrying and crafting the schist blocks which make up the piers on the Poolburn Viaduct.

“I was a bulldozer driver so I know how difficult it is to work with schist, how to get those blocks of schist crafted – shaped considering how schist just fractures... It’s important because this is our engineering heritage. Even the kids were looking at the tunnels – taking an interest in how they were built, that must mean something” (Stan).

Comments such as these seem to suggest that visitors, rather than just learning about a specific object or time period, acquired a deeper appreciation of a past way of life through reflecting on the work and accomplishments of railway workers. Through making more personal connections, the visitors themselves were thus able to gain greater insight into what had gone before them and the history of New Zealand in general. As Tim suggested, “by putting yourself back in time the trail takes on a greater significance”. Thus, the personal insights gained from mindful encounters with the historical elements of the OCRT show how it may be possible for OCRT visitors to use:

“...the power of their intellect and imagination to receive and communicate messages, constructing their own sense of historic places to create their individual journeys of self-discovery” (Nuryanti, 1996: p. 251).

When asked what thoughts and feelings come to mind when he recalled the bridges, gold mining towns and tunnels he indicated were an important part of his visit, Fraser echoed Nuryanti’s words with the remark that, “I didn’t know that these places even existed – it was a voyage of discovery for me, that’s for sure... I mean, look at Ophir, there’s no way I knew there were places like that around”. Other comments made by trail visitors also substantiate Nuryanti’s claim. For example, Brendan offered his comments about the educational aspect that he believed the school students gained from their visit to the OCRT. He remarked:

“A lot of them can’t believe the train actually operated up through that area because why, because as they’re cycling along they see that there’s only the odd farm and things. We stop at the Idaburn Dam and we take them down to the

Oturehua Store and they just can't believe that there's a shop there because there's no one around. That's when you sit down; it's all done informally, just sitting around the campfire or around eating dinner. They don't realise how big the rural sector used to be. They don't realise why there was a need to build those tunnels and spend so long digging through and putting the rail trail through. It gives them a bit of an idea of our history, it does" (Brendan – schoolteacher).

The preceding comments emphasise that historical aspects of the OCRT and the surrounding cultural landscape convey educational messages to visitors. In particular, certain historical aspects that these people knew little about prior to their visit added to what they might possibly have taken away with them in the form of an expanded knowledge of both the area and its history. For instance, the importance the agricultural sector played in the development of the local rural areas through which the OCRT travels and the association that the railway had with the development of this cultural landscape. Janine, a previous resident of the local area, reinforced these sentiments when discussing her perceptions:

"The chance to come back here and soak up the history of this place – that the railway has been preserved in some form for the future. The history of this place is important with the farming, the gold mining and the railway as part of it - links these historical aspects together".

Janine placed particular importance on the preservation of the railway line and the cultural history, in the form of farming and gold mining, connected with the area. Through this connection, the OCRT contributes in some way to preserving her memories of days gone by, thus emphasising the value she attached to preserving what she believed was an important part of the culture and history of the area.

As suggested in the above excerpts, historic and cultural heritage is an attribute of the OCRT setting that plays a part in the attainment of knowledge. Taking into account that cycling was the most popular recreation activity (see Table 3.4) and that knowledge about the former railway line was a highly mentioned benefit, it could therefore be presumed that many of the study participants who were cycling on the OCRT gained some knowledge of railway heritage. In contrast, Tinsley and Kass (1978) found that cycling and learning have a very low correlation. The difference between the two studies is that Tinsley and Kass (1978) did not consider the recreation setting in their research. Thus, while the relationship between cycling and learning was not a specific aim of the present study, comparison with Tinsley and Kass (1978) appears to suggest that the setting in which cycling occurs might influence the knowledge that one gains when participating in that activity. The results of the present study therefore lend support to the contention that the recreation setting is related to the resulting benefits (Driver et al., 1987; Driver, 1994; Manfredo et al., 1983; Stein & Lee, 1995).

5.3 Chapter Summary

Consistent with research on recreation and heritage benefits, for many study participants a visit to the OCRT enhances mood, involves physical activity for health and well-being, contributes to heightened feelings of self-esteem and self-confidence, gives balance and perspective to their lives, strengthens relationships with family and friends, endears visitors to local people and provides insightful and mindful connections with historic and cultural heritage (Ewert, 1989; Hull, 1991; McIntosh, 1999; Moscardo, 1996; National Health Committee, 1998; Nuryanti, 1996; Orthner & Mancini, 1991; Prentice et al., 1994; Schroeder, 1996; Tinsley & Johnson, 1984; Tinsley & Tinsley, 1986). These findings suggest therefore that the perceived benefits of a visit to the OCRT are multidimensional.

One more general insight apparent from this study deals with the complex relationship between the visitors' personal interpretation of the natural and historical setting characteristics of the OCRT and the benefits they perceived. Trail visitor descriptions of perceived benefits often referred to items that were features of the natural, built and cultural heritage of the surroundings. The important point is that recreation is not merely an activity that one pursues in a certain setting but an experience in which the features of the setting are highly instrumental in the realisation of personal and social well-being and the acquisition of knowledge. As an illustration, interpretation panels, indoor displays and information pamphlets, in particular, were mentioned by visitors as important to delivering an informative historical heritage viewing experience. Therefore, although the effectiveness of the interpretation employed on the OCRT was not a specific aim of this study, results suggest that the interpretation employed on site did enhance the participants' knowledge and appreciation of New Zealand railway history and New Zealand history in general. The relationship between mood benefits and the natural setting of the OCRT is also of particular note. This study suggests that aesthetic appreciation of the surrounding landscape, for example, did uplift the participants' mood, which in turn appeared to be tied to enhanced feelings of personal well-being.

Chapter Six

Conclusions

This thesis has sought to identify and describe community and visitor benefits resulting from recreational use of the OCRT. Central to this aim has been the rationale that, in an era of close scrutiny of scarce public funds, the providers of recreation resources are increasingly being asked to justify the need for these opportunities and to better articulate the value that is added to people's lives by their provision. This thesis has therefore advocated that, as a means of substantiating the recreational and heritage preservation value of the OCRT, not just for local people, but also for visitors to the area, research was needed which focused on how communities and visitors benefit from the trail.

This chapter begins by presenting a framework that integrates community and visitor perceptions about the benefits of the OCRT with subsequent benefits that could be potentially realised off-site such as enhanced quality of life, community satisfaction and the increased value placed on preserving historical heritage. This framework is illustrated in Figure 6.1. The proposed framework is then explained in terms of the beneficial opportunities found to be associated with the OCRT and the implications these have for applying BBM practises to the OCRT. Finally, findings are discussed with regard to related recreation resources and avenues for future research.

6.1 OCRT Benefits Framework

Through recognising the close relationship that local residents and visitors have with the recreation resources they live close to and/or visit, the present study argued that insight needed to be gained into the views that both local people and visitors have about the benefits of those resources. By including the views of local residents and visitors, the present study therefore expanded upon previous recreation and heritage studies, which have either addressed visitor benefits (Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; McIntosh, 1997, 1999; Stein & Lee, 1995) or community benefits (Besculides et al., 2002; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1995; Stein et al., 1999), but not both. For example, the findings of the present study have revealed that in addition to the heightened sense of local community identity engendered through residents seeing visitors appreciating the heritage of the local area (e.g. Besculides et al., 2002), OCRT

visitors also reportedly benefited through gaining a greater knowledge of historic railway heritage during their visit to the trail (e.g. McIntosh, 1999) (Figure 6.1).

Local people and visitors are different populations, thus it could be expected that they would have different perspectives about the benefits of the OCRT. It was therefore likely that, due to the OCRT being part of the environment in which local people live and work, local residents views about the benefits of the OCRT would focus on the potential ramifications that the OCRT had for enhancing one's satisfaction with their local community (Allen, 1991). Alternatively, it was also likely that, due to recreationists' desire to have satisfying and beneficial recreation experiences (Driver, 1994), visitors views about the benefits of the OCRT would focus on the potential ramifications that a visit to the OCRT has for enhancing their own quality of life (Marans & Mohai, 1991).

The results of the present study appear to substantiate the suggestion that community and visitor interviews would reveal different perspectives about how local communities and trail visitors reportedly benefit from the OCRT. Local resident and trail manager interview responses focused on collective benefits that accrued to groups of individuals that lived and/or worked within the local area, and the local population in general. For example, although visitor expenditure was perceived to benefit local business people, increased revenue for these businesses was also perceived as a benefit for the wider community because it potentially helped to sustain local businesses and develop the local economy. In comparison, visitor interview responses focused on the personal benefits related to the recreation experience of the individual. For instance, visitor interviews revealed that the OCRT was perceived as a historic place surrounded by open space and scenic views, where an individual is able to be physically active, achieve something, have a break from an otherwise hectic lifestyle, be together with friends and family, gain an insight into railway heritage and be treated in a respectful and friendly manner by local people (Figure 6.1).

By including the views of the local community, the findings of the present study therefore demonstrate that the OCRT is perceived as a recreation area that provides benefits for local residents and the wider community, rather than being viewed as a recreation area that only provides visitors with benefits (e.g. Stein & Lee, 1995). Thus, the range of benefits that were found to be associated with the OCRT highlights the value of exploring trail benefits from both local community and trail visitor perspectives. Through amalgamating neighbouring community benefits with visitor benefits, the present study also offers OCRT managers a

broader perspective on community and visitor needs that could potentially be served by the OCRT (Figure 6.1) (Allen, 1996; Anderson et al., 2000; Bruns, 1998).

The extensive literature on the neighbouring community or visitor benefits associated with the use of outdoor recreation and heritage resources also meant it was likely that study findings would perhaps indicate that the OCRT provided community or visitor benefits (Allen, 1991; Beeho & Prentice, 1996, 1997; Besculides et al., 2002; Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Borrie & Roggenbuck, 1995; Driver et al., 1991; Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; McIntosh, 1997, 1999; Moore et al., 1994b; Stein & Lee, 1995; Stein et al., 1999). The present study therefore looked beyond identifying the benefits of an outdoor recreation and heritage resource through exploring trail managers', local residents' and visitors' personal interpretations and perceptions of how the OCRT benefited neighbouring communities and visitors.

Rather than simply indicating that the neighbouring community benefited through enhanced community identity (e.g. Stein et al., 1999), for example, community interviews revealed how the OCRT helped to build local community identity and solidarity by enhancing the value and pride that local residents attached to their local area. The collaborative actions of the Wedderburn community to resituate the former railway goods shed, a valued part of the historical and cultural heritage of the local area, illustrates how the OCRT has contributed to enhancing the sense of value and identity that local people feel for their local community. Likewise, the work that the Lauder community put into beautifying and tidying the former station site demonstrates how the OCRT has given local people an opportunity to show pride in their local area as well as contributing to community solidarity through local people bonding together to complete a community-based project.

With respect to reported OCRT visitor benefits, one would expect a visitor to a recreation trail to travel for the chance to appreciate scenery and nature, engage in physical activities and to escape from the demands of everyday life (Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Frauman & Cunningham, 2001; Stein & Lee, 1995). However, rather than simply restating these outcomes, the present study has demonstrated empirically how visitors perceived they had benefited from aesthetic appreciation, physical activity, meeting a challenge and having a psychologically refreshing time away from home. For example, through asking visitors to describe, in their own words, how they perceived they had benefited from encounters with the scenery and natural surroundings of the OCRT, it was reported that the trail experience had

evoked good feelings, triggered positive thoughts, and consequently helped restore the individual to a positive mental state (Hull & Michael, 1995).

Greater insight was also gained through asking how visitors perceived they had benefited through being in the presence of or interacting with family and friends on the OCRT. Visitor interviews revealed that, by forging social bonds during their trail visit, rather than simply being with friends or family (e.g. Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001; Stein & Lee, 1995), visitors to the OCRT reportedly renewed and expanded friendships and/or strengthened family relationships.

While findings from the present study provide additional support for previous recreation and heritage research by focusing on community and visitor benefits specific to the OCRT, the present study has also offered greater insight into the reported benefits of a specific rail trail setting. In contrast to a previous study of the community benefits associated with a neighbouring park (Stein et al., 1999), for example, findings of the present study revealed that local residents value the OCRT for the contact it afforded with people who resided outside the local area. Potential explanation for the difference in findings between the two studies could be that social interaction with park visitors was not included as a benefit item in Stein et al.'s questionnaire.

In addition, by exploring how local community members perceived social interaction to be beneficial, the results of the present study revealed that through providing opportunities for local people to communicate with trail visitors, the OCRT had reportedly enabled local people to expand their social horizons. Community interviews revealed that this, in turn, had the potential to reduce the negative perceptions that some local people might have previously held about strangers. This was perceived by community interview participants to be important in helping to increase local residents' tolerance towards and understanding of unfamiliar people as evidenced elsewhere (Besculides et al., 2002).

Furthermore, in contrast to previous studies into the benefits of visiting heritage attractions (Beeho & Prentice, 1996, 1997; McIntosh, 1997, 1999), OCRT visitors reported that physical activity had been an important benefit of their visit. This difference could be attributed to the fact that the heritage attractions studied by Beeho, Prentice and McIntosh involved a passive heritage viewing experience rather than an experience that required longer duration physical activities such as cycling or walking. However, congruent with Beeho and Prentice (1996,

1997) and McIntosh (1997, 1999), visitor interviews revealed that knowledge and mood benefits appear to be highly related to the unique historic heritage and scenic characteristics of the setting. The way that some OCRT visitors connected with past and present lifestyles illustrates the point that recreation is not merely an activity that one pursues in a certain setting but an emotionally charged experience in which the features of the setting are highly instrumental in the realisation of benefits (McIntosh, 1997, 1999).

The results of the present study, therefore, lend support to the contention that the recreation activity, the setting within which that activity occurs, the recreation experience and resultant benefits are inter-related. Thus, gaining knowledge of railway heritage provides a good illustration of the confluence of the four levels of the recreation demand hierarchy (Driver & Brown, 1978). This finding provides support for the claim that the characteristics of the recreational setting have a strong influence on the benefits realised from recreation and highlights the importance of exploring visitor and community benefits in the specific context in which the recreation experience occurs.

While the role that rail trail settings play in providing benefits to visitors (Bichis-Lupas & Moisey, 2001) and economic benefits to communities (Moore et al., 1994b) have been addressed, the personal and social benefits that accrue to local communities have not been fully explored. For example, although economic spin-off effects are likely to be an important by-product of a rail trail (Moore et al., 1994b), the findings of the present study revealed that residents of neighbouring communities also viewed the OCRT as a means of sharing, preserving and enhancing the historic, cultural and natural heritage of the local area.

The findings of the present study also offer additional insight into the potential longer term benefits that visitors might potentially derive from a rail trail visit. In contrast to Bichis-Lupas and Moisey (2001), the results of the present study suggest that an important benefit of an OCRT visit was the acquisition of a greater knowledge about the historical heritage attributes of the trail. This was highlighted by the knowledge that visitors reported they had gained about the lives of railway workers and early settlers of the area and an appreciation of the skills and craftsmanship involved in constructing the railway.

Through forging a more 'mindful' connection with and appreciation of the cultural and historic heritage associated with the development of New Zealand, some visitors revealed that, in turn, they had gained a greater insight into the history of New Zealand in general.

Having gained a greater connection with railway and early New Zealand history, it could be inferred that study participants could potentially place a greater value on preserving New Zealand's historic and cultural heritage. This finding reinforces DOC's belief that outdoor recreation gives people an appreciation of natural and historic resources, and thus assists in building support for safeguarding these resources for future generations (Harper, 1992).

The results of this study also appear to substantiate BBM theory (Driver, 1994; Driver & Bruns, 1999). Based on the suggestion that the core product of recreation is the benefits gained by neighbouring communities and visitors (Allen, 1996; Bruns, 1998), the BBM framework not only recognises the beneficial recreation experiences of visitors as a focus of study, but also directs attention towards interpretations of how the outcomes of recreation may be beneficial to local communities. Through the benefit chain of causality (Bruns et al., 1994; Driver & Bruns, 1999; McIntosh, 1999), BBM broadens the focus of recreation management beyond individuals' psychological on-site experiences by inferring that these same experiences serve as intermediate benefits, which can lead to further on- and off-site benefits for individuals, groups of individuals and communities. As demonstrated in Figure 6.1, the benefit chain of causality provides a useful conceptualisation of the benefits found to be associated with the OCRT and the potential longer-term benefits that could possibly accrue to the local community and trail visitors such as greater value attached to preserving historic and cultural heritage, greater community satisfaction and a better quality of life.

Following BBM theory, Figure 6.1 also includes the potential negative outcomes that can result from the use of recreation and heritage resources (Driver, 1994; Prentice, 1993). While the present study did not directly address the potential negative outcomes of the OCRT, community and trail visitor interviews revealed that social interaction between local people and visitors, in particular, has the potential to negatively influence both local residents and trail visitors' perceptions of the OCRT as evidenced elsewhere (Besculides et al., 2002; Doxey, 1975; Shone, 2001). For instance, findings revealed that the relationships between private providers and visitors might influence the visitor experience, or the numbers and behaviour of visitors to an area might affect the way in which local people perceive visitors. Unfriendly, improper and inhospitable behaviour could therefore undermine reported benefits such as the increased tolerance and understanding shown by local people to strangers and the endearment that some visitors reportedly had to local people.

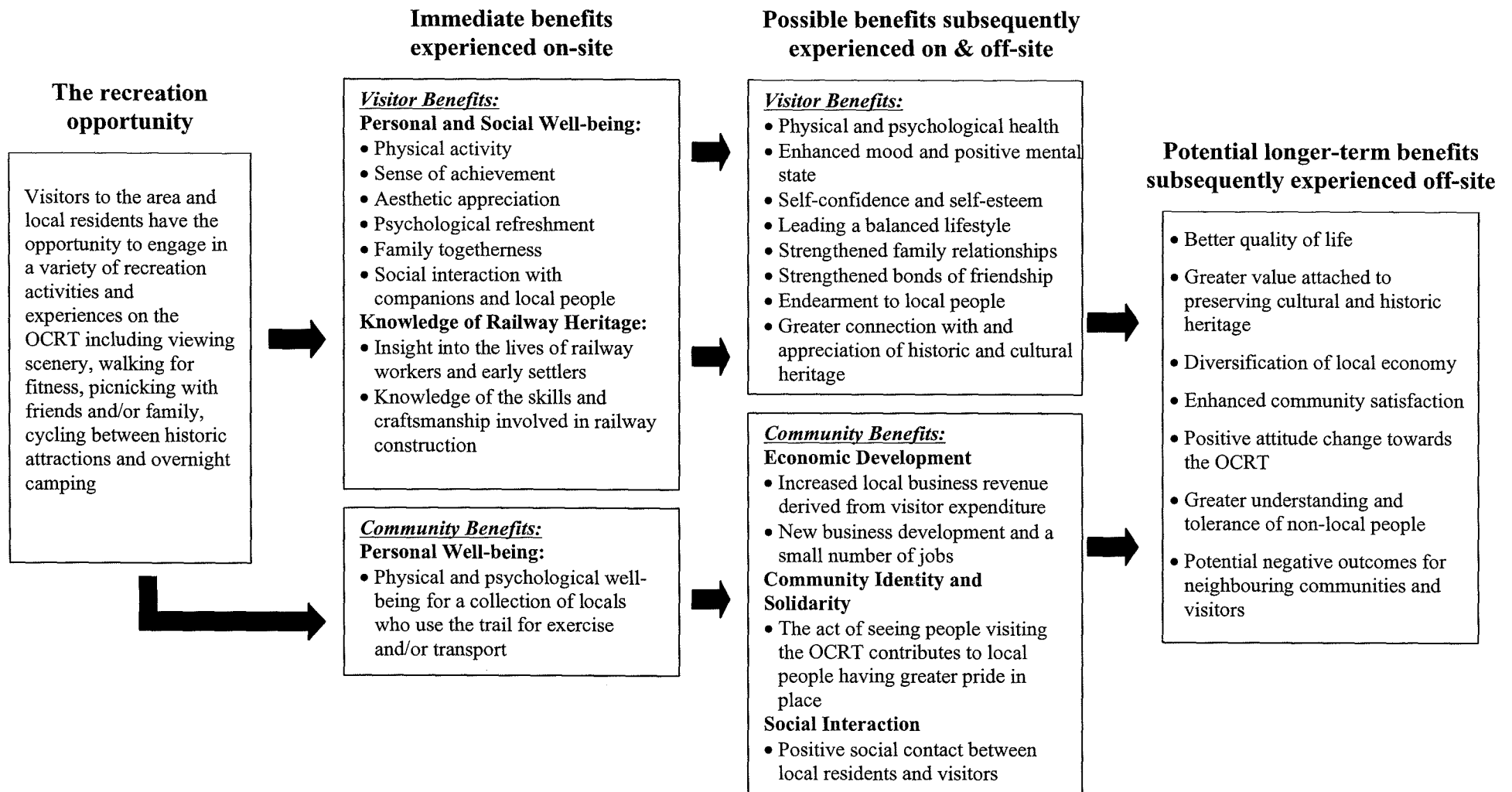


Figure 6.1: OCRT benefits framework

6.2 Benefits Based Management Implications

BBM involves researching individual recreation users and neighbouring communities about the benefits that result from recreation participation, then directly applying these results to management actions. From a recreation management and planning perspective, once policy decisions have allocated public resources to a certain type of recreation use, applied research within a BBM framework improves the ability of recreation planners and managers to define clear management objectives and then to establish standards and guidelines for meeting those objectives (Driver & Bruns, 1999). In light of the applied nature of BBM research, the results of this study are useful to managers of the OCRT for directing future management objectives towards providing opportunities that facilitate beneficial outcomes for neighbouring communities and trail visitors. Consider for example, an OCRT management objective focused on promoting opportunities for realising community pride benefits through emphasising collaboration and partnership with local townspeople to enhance station areas.

An objective focused on community-trail manager partnership would emphasise the continuation of the regular meetings that are held between local businesses and residents, trail management staff, local authority tourism promoters and rail trail trustees. Collaborative arrangements such as this could be useful in facilitating the exchange of ideas, providing feedback, organising events and structuring ongoing co-operative strategies between trail managers and local tourism businesses.

To facilitate positive neighbouring landowner attitudes towards the OCRT, a BBM plan informed by the results of this study could stress that there was a need for more and/or improved communication between some neighbouring landowners and DOC directed at 'ironing out' relevant issues and thus maximising benefits for all of the parties concerned. By incorporating concerns such as being good neighbours, fencing, and farm vehicle access to the trail into the objectives of a BBM plan, recreation opportunities can perhaps be structured to better facilitate and maximise benefit achievement. Likewise, approaching a concern such as the lack of toilet and water facilities in sensitive areas in a more positive way would entail working co-operatively with representatives from these communities in order to reach an amicable resolution of this matter.

What is offered by the rail trail may not appeal to everyone. It is for this reason that these results also have implications for the future marketing of the rail trail. In order to ensure that

visitors to the trail derive satisfaction from their visit more definitive marketing strategies, rather than indiscriminate invitations for all to come, could be employed which seek to 'match up' visitors with their preferences. Information could be included about other attractions in the area, for example, for those that are not interested in a full 150 kilometre excursion of the trail, but still want a long weekend break. Additionally, because the rail trail appears to be achievable for a wide range of people with different skill and fitness levels, the OCRT could be marketed to sports, social and community service clubs as an option for a social trip. Adding to the experience and benefit opportunities this type of trip might provide are the potential benefits that could accrue to the country pubs and historic towns located along the trail.

As a means of facilitating visitor benefits such as sense of achievement, rail trail management staff could indicate milestones on the trail such as the highest point or the 150 kilometre mark. Certificates of achievement, t-shirts and caps could also be made available so that trail visitors have a reminder of their accomplishments on the OCRT. Commercially, these mementos might also provide fundraising opportunities for the OCRT Trust. A benefits-based objective directed at physical activity benefits would suggest the development of a partnership between DOC and the regional sports trust (Sport Otago) oriented towards including the trail in the 'Kiwi Walks' and 'Push Play' physical activity programmes and campaigns.

6.3 Implications for Further Research

This study has made a contribution to applied BBM research. The multitude of benefits identified as important by study participants appears to confirm that visitors and neighbouring communities place a high value on the OCRT. In addition, it has been shown that benefits are highly related to the attributes of the setting, and that these outcomes, in addition to the positive contribution they make to visitors lives, also add value to local communities. This adds another dimension to outdoor recreation planning in New Zealand through advancing the setting and experience-based principles of the ROS to the next level of the recreation demand hierarchy. By including communities in the research mix, BBM therefore moves management thinking beyond the provision of recreation opportunities that aim to satisfy a diversity of individual-focused recreation experiences. The implications the present study has for further research therefore focuses on directing recreation research in New Zealand towards exploring the outcomes that recreation resources also have for communities, rather than just the individual recreationist.

The results of this study demonstrate the effectiveness of including both visitors and the community in research focused on recreation and heritage resources. The approach has revealed richer detail and greater insight to visitors, local residents and trail managers thoughts and feelings about the benefits associated with a recreation and historical heritage resource. There is potential, therefore, for studies similar to this in other recreation and heritage settings in New Zealand. For example, Figure 6.1 could be applied as a preliminary framework for other recreation and heritage attractions looking to direct management toward delivering benefit opportunities to visitors and local communities.

The results of the present study could also form the basis for developing a research instrument for use in regular and ongoing monitoring of the visitor and community benefits associated with the OCRT. This information might give insight into the continued positive outcomes of the OCRT, as well as providing information about whether the OCRT was meeting its benefits-based objectives. At the same time, the possibility exists for further research aimed at advancing the findings of this study through using longitudinal and mixed method research methods (Arnould & Price, 1993; McIntosh, 1998).

Through using survey questionnaires informed by the results of the present study, changes in the degree of benefit reported might also indicate to trail managers that negative consequences might be occurring. For instance, a change in the psychological refreshment benefit might indicate that the trail is becoming crowded thus having ramifications on the ability of visitors to realise psychological restoration from their visit. When looked at in conjunction with local residents perceptions of the level they are benefiting from social interaction with visitors, survey findings might also indicate the same perceptions.

In conclusion, exploring the perceptions of visitors, local community residents and trail managers through a semi-structured interviewing approach offered valuable insight into the benefits that these people associate with the OCRT. Despite these preliminary insights, further efforts are needed to document, uncover and understand visitors' and local residents' perceptions about the benefits associated with similar recreation resources. Such research could help in facilitating public participation in decision making, building partnerships with other recreation providers and community groups, articulating more clearly the value of recreation and justifying the allocation of public funds to recreation resource development.

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Appendices

Appendix I

List of questions: Semi-structured face-to-face community resident and trail manager interview schedule, the Otago Central Rail Trail.

- 1) How would you describe the OCRT to a prospective user? (Why would you describe it in that way...?)
- 2) Do you think the OCRT has provided positive benefits to the local community? What would be some examples? Why is.....important?
- 3) What positive contribution have these gains made to the community? (Why is it important that the community gains....?)
- 4) What is it about the rail trail that makes it beneficial for the community? (Why is that important?) Personally, what satisfaction have you got from the OCRT? (Why is that?) Think about an aspect of the rail trail that benefits you in some way. What benefits does this provide for you? and the community?
- 4a) Do you or have you use/d the OCRT? (Why? Why is that important to you?).
- 5) In your opinion what are the three important aspects of the rail trail for the community? (Why are each important? Can you think of examples to illustrate this importance?)
- 6) In what ways do you feel the rail trail has been developed and managed to assist people in the community to achieve benefits? (Can it be done better? How? What can be done better? What is not being done to promote benefits for instance?)
- 7) What positive experiences do you think the rail trail provides for trail users in general? (Why is it important that users gain...? Do you have any ideas for improving the experience that trail users can have on the trail?)
- 8) What are your thoughts about the future of the rail trail? (Why do you think that....?) Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the OCRT?

Appendix II

List of questions: Semi-structured face-to-face visitor interview schedule, the Otago Central Rail Trail (Adapted from Beeho and Prentice, 1996).

- 1) Could you please explain why you chose to come to the OCRT? (Why is that important to you...?)
- 2) Have you enjoyed your experience? (Why? Which aspects have you liked?)
- 3a) Which part of the rail trail did you find most satisfying? (In what ways was it satisfying? Why is this important to you?)
- 3b) What was the most disappointing aspect of your visit? (Why is that?)
- 4) Reflecting on your visit to the OCRT, what have you gained from your experience? (What does.....give you? Why is it important that you gain...?)
- 5) How have these experiences benefited you? What thoughts and feelings will you take away from this place?)
- 6) Has what you have gained from the OCRT met your expectations? (Why is that?)
- 7) I would like you to think about something you have enjoyed on the OCRT (Name this aspect). Thinking of this, can you please tell me what thoughts/feelings came to mind at this particular aspect of the OCRT? (what benefits have you gained from this...?)
- 8) Is there anything else that you have gained from your visit to the Otago Central Rail Trail? (Why is it important that you gain....?)
- 9) In what ways do you feel the rail trail has been managed to promote an enjoyable and satisfying experience?
- 10) How do you think others in your group have benefited from their activities on the rail trail? (Why is it important to you that they gain..?) What benefits have you gained as a group? (Why is it important to you that your group gains...?)
- 11) What contribution do you think your visit has made to the local communities neighbouring the OCRT? (Why is it important that the community gain...?)
- 12) What are your thoughts about the future of the rail trail? (Why do you think that....?). Do you have any recommendations for the future development of the OCRT? (Why would you suggest this..?). Is there anything else you would like to tell me about the OCRT?

Appendix III

Consent Form – Otago Central Rail Trail Study

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis I agree to participate as a subject in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may at any time withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Appendix IV

Lincoln University

Human Sciences Division

Information Sheet – Otago Central Rail Trail Study

You are invited to participate as a subject in a project entitled “Community and visitor benefits associated with the Otago Central Rail Trail”.

The purpose of this research project is to gather a greater understanding about the benefits for the community and the recreational users of the Otago Central Rail Trail. The aim of this research project is to explore and describe the benefits associated with the recreational usage of the Otago Central Rail Trail as identified by residents of neighbouring communities, trail management and visiting rail trail users.

Your participation in this project will involve answering a number of questions concerning what you believe to be the benefits that the rail trail delivers to trail users and the local community. This will take approximately 15-20 minutes.

The results of the project may be published, but you may be assured of the complete confidentiality of data gathered in this investigation: the identity of participants will not be made public. You may at any time withdraw your participation, including withdrawal of any information you have provided. If you complete an interview, however, it will be understood that you have consented to participate in the project and consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved.

To ensure anonymity and confidentiality your name will not be recorded, the information gathered from this interview will be stored so as access is restricted to the researcher only and will be destroyed at the completion of this research project.

This project is being carried out by Dean Blackwell who can be contacted C/O Human Sciences Division, Lincoln University, PO Box 94, Canterbury. He will be pleased to discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project.

This research project has been reviewed and approved by Lincoln University Human Subjects Ethics Committee.