

PLACE ADVOCACY AT SNOWSHOE MOUNTAIN
RESORT: A CASE STUDY OF A DESTINATION SKI
RESORT

A Dissertation
presented to
the Faculty of the Graduate School
University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

by
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AUGUST 2006

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RESORT: A CASE STUDY OF A DESTINATION SKI
RESORT

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DEDICATION

My grandparents placed great value on education and instilled that value in their children, my parents. My parents then instilled that value in my sister and me. Through those values, I was prepared and encouraged to achieve my goals through university education. I am dedicating this work in the memories of my grandparents:

Mr. Gaylord H. Huffman

Mrs. Janet H. Huffman

and

Mr. Samuel P. Prillaman

Mrs. Annamille L. Prillaman

And in honor of my parents:

Mr. H. Bruce Prillaman

Mrs. Shirley H. Prillaman

There are simply no words to describe my indebtedness to them for their constant love, encouragement and belief in me as I went through this process. I love you and thank you more than you know!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere thanks to all of the people who assisted in the creation of this dissertation. This process was a little different than most because my degree was accomplished largely through the Internet. For the classes that I was able to take online to the many e-mails and phone calls, I want to thank all of my academic advisors for their openness to technology and their dedication to distance learning.

First I would like to thank Dr. Ruth Tofle for her support and input during this process. Our discussions helped me to clarify the purpose and intent of this research.

I would like to thank Dr. Groves for encouraging my exploration of resort design, management, development and marketing in an attempt to narrow my research topic. Through the readings and discussions, I was able to focus on pertinent issues facing resort development.

I would like to thank Dr. Shu Cole for her reading recommendations in the area of tourism authenticity. These readings added greater understanding and context to the discussions regarding place attachment and resort image development.

I would like to thank Dr. Bennyamin Schwarz for all of his input and direction during the writing process, and his patience while teaching me about Grounded Theory Analysis. Together we accomplished a lot in a short period of time.

Most importantly I would like to thank Dr. Ronald Phillips for his unending support, assistance and encouragement throughout my graduate work. Dr. Phillips was a great academic mentor. He allowed me to chart my own path, and make my own mistakes but he was always right behind me, ready to nudge me back onto the right track

whenever necessary. I greatly appreciate the friendship that we developed out of that mutual respect and academic mentorship. Dr. Phillips is a great educator and an inspiring mentor!

I would also like to thank Brian Rowe at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. From our very first conversation, Brian was interested in this research and very helpful in providing all of the necessary background information about Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Additionally, I would like to thank Brian for sharing his survey and results so that this research could be possible. I look forward to presenting the findings of this research to the whole Snowshoe management team.

There are others who helped me through this process and who need to be acknowledged. I would like to thank my supervisor (Mrs. Neva Wood) and colleagues in the Art Department at Central Missouri State University. This group of people was always a great emotional support during the process, but other adjustments to my teaching load, flexibility with scheduling, and other accommodations made this whole process possible. Without those things, I would not have been able to accomplish so much over such a relatively short period of time.

I would like to offer my thanks to all of my family and friends. Their constant encouragement and indulgence of my single minded determination to accomplish this degree were without bounds. I promise to find something else to talk about now!

Finally, I want to thank Kevin Stevenson, my new husband. We met during my coursework and he stuck with me through the rest of the process and still wanted to marry me! His belief in me and respect for my educational goals was immeasurable. During the most frustrating and challenging parts of this degree process, he was a constant positive

force encouraging me to keep moving forward. I will now have a lifetime in which to show him how thankful I am for him and to return, with interest, all that he gave me during this time.

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PLACE ADVOCACY AT SNOWSHOE MOUNTAIN RESORT: A CASE STUDY OF A DESTINATION SKI RESORT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to gain a greater understanding of what is so special about Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Snowshoe Mountain has a unique sense of place that is established through the built, natural, and social environments that exist within the mountain development.

This case study utilized Grounded Theory Analysis. Through the review of qualitative responses to an open ended question about the clients' perceptions of the image of Snowshoe, it became evident that Snowshoe Mountain Resort has a special sense of place. Snowshoe visitors expressed feelings of attachment to the resort along with feelings of restoration. Snowshoe Mountain fulfills all of the characteristics of a restorative environment.

Based on an intimate understanding of the mountain location and the behaviors reported in the responses, a new theory emerged. Place Advocacy theory offers an explanation of the behaviors that result from both the development of place attachment feelings and self restoration feelings. Place advocacy behavior includes behaviors of repeated visitation, making recommendations and referrals to others, and feelings of protection, belongingness and ownership over that environment.

INTRODUCTION

Snowshoe Mountain Resort is a popular and successful four season resort located in the Southeastern United States. Often cited in popular literature as the number one resort in the area, their clientele drive in from approximately fourteen Southeastern and Midwestern states (RSN, 2005). This resort out ranks many southeastern ski areas consistently every year. There must be something special about this resort to make it so popular.

Snowshoe Mountain Resort was founded 33 years ago and has struggled with bankruptcy, management turnovers, development, and skier popularity (Fillmore, 2002). With the ownership and management of Intrawest Corporation, Snowshoe has become both a financially secure and popular four season resort. Intrawest Corporation has added to the mountain top environment and also developed many off-season and non-skier activities.

The researcher grew up skiing at this resort and had long sensed that Snowshoe was a special place. After reading several historical accounts of the resorts, the researcher was even more fascinated by Snowshoe. Here was this place that the men who built and developed it, gave their energy and their financial resources resulting in their own personal bankruptcy. Yet the mountain and the resort continued to appeal to businessmen.

At some level, the researcher believed that it wouldn't matter what the buildings looked like, or how many amenities were available at the location. Snowshoe has an appeal that transcends these things. Perhaps it was the appeal of being able to ski in such a southern location. But it might also be because of the impressive natural beauty of the location. It might also be because the site feels and looks so remote and removed from

the world that it is difficult to believe that it is a four hour drive from one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country.

Even taking into consideration all of the improvements to the mountain and the new activities; this qualitative study was conducted with the belief that Snowshoe Mountain Resort has something even greater to offer than superior lodging, dining, and skiing. The appeal of Snowshoe Resort seems to come from something less tangible. The primary focus of this research was to discover what combination of amenities, services, emotional connections and personal experiences define the image of Snowshoe in the perception of their clients. This search led eventually to the goal of finding out why people like Snowshoe so much and what behaviors these feeling elicit.

Place attachment encompasses the emotional, social and symbolic connections that people develop to particular environments (Stokowski, 2002). Perhaps these are the elements that motivate snow enthusiasts to return year after year. The Snowshoe environment is unique in its climate, design (it is an upside down development with the resort at the top of the mountain rather than at the bottom of the mountain) and in its connection with area snow enthusiasts. Snowshoe has a special sense of place.

Another theoretical area in environment and behavior research that influences the environment at Snowshoe is the theory of restorative environments. The concept of restorative environments (and restorative experiences) is that an environment may have particular characteristics that allow individuals to take a break from the mental fatigue and stress of work and family life (Kaplan R., Kaplan S. & Ryan R.1998). During this retreat from the pressures of the world, people are able to exercise, rest, relax and restore their ability to cope with the stress and pressures of day to day life. Resorts in general and

Snowshoe specifically has the characteristics of this type of environment and offers the experiences needed to restore mental acuity and even restore a sense of self.

This study illustrates all of the aspects of Snowshoe that are notable for the returning visitors. It encompasses their experiences with skiing, with the natural environment, the built environment and with family, friends, and other kindred spirits on the mountain. This research illuminates just how important this environment is to these people.

The research conducted was a qualitative study based on grounded theory analysis. Responses to an open ended question were coded and compiled to generate a greater understanding of the environment at Snowshoe. Grounded theory research results in a theory that is developed directly from the stories, descriptions and emotions that the respondents reported in the survey.

This research includes a thorough description of the whole Snowshoe environment. There is a brief history of the environment, a reporting of all of the facilities, amenities, and activities available on the mountain at this time and a thorough description of the vision that Intrawest has for Snowshoe.

The findings of this study include a thorough description of what the return visitors thought was important to them and the resort. Through a combination of the researchers personal experiences at Snowshoe, the respondents replies to the question and support from Snowshoe's and Intrawest's presence on the internet, the researcher doesn't just describe Snowshoe, but tells the story of Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Through this type of analysis, the researcher was able to gain a greater understanding of the special transcendent qualities that make Snowshoe such a special environment.

The theory that was revealed during this research is that of Place Advocacy. Place advocacy describes the behaviors that are the result of the developing place attachment in this recreation based restorative environment. Through place advocacy, the researcher illustrates how these respondents are reacting to their affection for this special place and demonstrating their gratitude for a place that is so instrumental in restoring their sense of well being.

This study is quite unique. Through the permission of the management at Snowshoe Mountain Resort, this research was made possible. Without their cooperation this study would not have been possible. To date, the research reports that are available to the academic community in these areas do not include resort environments. Additionally there is a scarcity of research reports for ski areas and ski resorts. This may be because resorts are typically owned and operated by large private or publicly held corporations and seem to be restricted from academic research pursuits.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This section provides the background and context for this study of Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Over the last 34 years, Snowshoe has grown from its tumultuous start to a full-scale four season destination resort. There is something special about this place. While he was not able to enjoy the success of Snowshoe, the founder Dr. Thomas H. Brigham recognized its potential from the start. Intrawest also recognized the potential of Snowshoe when they purchased it in 1995.

Snowshoe: Origination of the Name

Snowshoe Mountain Resort was named Snowshoe by Dr. Thomas H. Brigham, the founder of the resort (Fillmore, 2002). Many resorts are named after the geographical area (e.g.: Aspen Mountain, Copper Mountain, Killington, etc.) (Fillmore, 2002). This resort would not have inspired investors or clients if it were named after the mountain, Cheat Mountain, or Cheat Resort (Fillmore, 2002). Brigham recognized this and wanted a name that would describe the area and its long snowy winter season (Fillmore, 2002).

The accidental discovery of a stuffed Snowshoe Hare in a sporting goods store in Elkins, WV; sparked research that uncovered the existence of Snowshoe Hares in the Cheat Mountain area (Fillmore, 2002). Additional research led Brigham to Dr. Maurice Brooks, a Professor of Wildlife Preservation at West Virginia University who was able to confirm that the Snowshoe Hare had a natural habitat on Cheat Mountain. The presence of the Snowshoe Hare in the Cheat Mountain area confirmed for Dr. Brigham that the snow season at Cheat Mountain lasted four to five months in order to support the natural habitat of the Snowshoe Hare (Fillmore, 2002). In the fall of 1973 Dr. Brigham decided on Snowshoe for the name of his resort (Fillmore, 2002)

History of Snowshoe Mountain Resort

In the spring of 1972 Dr. Thomas H. Brigham had the idea to create a four season resort on Cheat Mountain in Pocahontas County in West Virginia (Fillmore, 2002). After studying topographic maps, walking and driving the property, “Doc” Brigham was convinced that a ski resort was a viable option for this mountain with a peak elevation of 4848’, a snowy winter climate, access to water and off the north western slope, and a fall of 1500 feet vertical over the distance of one and one half miles for an expert level ski slope (Fillmore, 2002). Brigham’s original concept was for a four season resort to include a 40 acre lake, snow skiing, tennis and golf (Fillmore, 2002).

“Doc” Brigham, Charlie Bryant, and John Grenier, founders of what was originally referred to as “The Island in the Sky” and later Snowshoe met with Mr. Paywick, President of Mower Lumber Company to discuss the acquisition of 7,000 acres at the top of Cheat Mountain in Pocahontas County in West Virginia to develop a ski area (Fillmore, 2002). The final agreement of this meeting was for the founders to purchase 7,000 acres from the lumber company with an option to purchase an additional 3,000 acres and the ‘right of first refusal’ for an additional 40,000 acres which extended all the way to US 250 highway (Fillmore, 2002).

Brigham and Grenier developed a financial plan for the acquisition of the land and the construction costs for Phase I of the development (Fillmore, 2002). The founders needed \$5,500, 000.00 to get started. Brigham contacted the Economic Development Department for the State of West Virginia for advice on where to start looking for funding (Fillmore, 2002). A meeting between then West Virginia Governor, Arch Moore, Paul Hinkle, President of the Charleston National Bank, John Grenier, and DeWitt

Fillmore both original investors in Snowshoe Company resulted in financing for property acquisition and development to begin (Fillmore, 2002). The property acquired was held and developed by Cheat Mountain Development Company (Fillmore, 2002).

From the very beginning of the development of Snowshoe, Dr. Brigham and Danny Seme (in charge of construction) were interested in protecting the fragile environment at Cheat Mountain. The mountain was forested in native Spruce trees that have a shallow root system and depend upon the collection of many Spruce trees to stand (Fillmore, 2002). The removal of too many trees would make the Spruces vulnerable to the wind and elements and they would die (Fillmore, 2002). Additionally the two men were also interested in keeping the integrity of Shavers Fork River (Fillmore, 2002). The river and the forest were considered to be the prime attraction of the area (Fillmore, 2002)

Originally the grand opening of Snowshoe was scheduled for December, 1974, because of construction and weather delays, the ski area was not able to open until January, 1975 (Fillmore, 2002). While there was still construction being completed on the mountain top, the season began with three lifts, state of the art snowmaking equipment and eight to ten trails including the signature slope, Cupp Run (Fillmore, 2002).

The first building on the property was Shavers Center. The design was to suit the overall concept of the ski area and be quick and easy to build. Shavers Center, the corporate offices and the employee dorm were the only buildings completed at the time of the opening. “The Shavers Center was particularly important since it was the only place within 20 miles where skiers could warm themselves; get a bite to eat, or receive first-aid for any scrapes [or breaks] that occurred,” (Fillmore, 2002, p. 70).

Shavers Center became the center for all activities on the mountain. The first floor included the reception area, cafeteria, real estate office, and a large area for public eating and lounging. The second floor housed the Edelweiss Ski Haus, restrooms and a bar. The lower level included the restrooms, ski rental shop, ski school desk, and the first aid/ski patrol room (Fillmore, 2002).

On January 15, 1975 the Snowshoe Post Office was dedicated with the zip code 26209. This event officially established the community of Snowshoe, West Virginia (Fillmore, 2002). The community still exists today with a population of 163 full time residents. According to U.S. Census data, as of 2000 there are 1,267 housing units, and Snowshoe, WV has a land area of 25.29 miles, a water area of 0.01 miles for a total area of 25.30 miles (HomeTownLocator, 2005).

At the end of February 1975, at a stockholders meeting it was announced that due to mechanics liens being placed against the property that Snowshoe would be filing for bankruptcy under reorganization. Tom Denny, a lawyer in West Virginia was appointed as trustee for Snowshoe. Denny fired most of the management team that had been put in place by Brigham and hired Murray Dearborn manager of state owned Canaan Valley Resort to also manage Snowshoe. Under the trusteeship no real estate sales could be made. That season, the resort lost \$500,000.00 in operations and had only 22,000 skier days (Fillmore, 2002).

In 1976 the trusteeship of Snowshoe was transferred to Miles Dean. For the 1976, 1977 winter season S. Franklin "Frank" Burford leased Snowshoe. Burford was a lawyer and businessman in West Virginia (Fillmore, 2002, Burford, 1992). After selling his interest in a coal mine for a \$4 million dollar profit, he decided he wanted to give

something back to the state of West Virginia (Fillmore, 2002, Burford, 1992). Burford's first winter season netted 59,600 skier days with a profit in operations of \$500,000.00 (Fillmore, 2002, Burford, 1992). At this time with the small number of overnight facilities, Snowshoe could support only about 60,000 skier days (Fillmore, 2002). Consulting with Dr. Brigham, Frank Burford decided to further develop the real estate at Snowshoe (Fillmore, 2002, Burford, 1992). Cost projections were being prepared for Spruce and Timberline Lodges (Fillmore, 2002).

Spruce Lodge (100 rooms) Timberline Lodge (50 rooms) were constructed in 1977 in record time using leased construction equipment. The Timberline lodge was built of modules built in Boones Mill, Virginia and shipped to Snowshoe. Both lodges were constructed by contractors and Snowshoe's crew of employees (Fillmore, 2002).

By August 1977 there were many housing units under construction. At 2:30 am on August 4, 1977 there was a fire in the Shamrock Condominium complex that was under construction. The closest fire station was located in Marlinton, WV fifty miles away. There was no fire suppression equipment on the mountain at this time. The immediate fear was that a fire out of control could destroy not only the buildings but the natural spruce forest. The Marlinton fire truck used a 500 gallon water tank with no apparent retardation of the fire. It was then that Danny Seme, the mountain manager, commandeered a bulldozer and plowed through the units creating a fire break saving the rest of the mountain from the fire (Fillmore, 2002).

Also built during the year of 1977 were two Tree Top townhouses, four Stemwinder Townhouses, Sundown Village, and two Poly-Pod units that were designed and constructed by a firm in Pittsburgh, PA. The Spruce and Timberline Lodges, along

with Tree Top Townhouses, Stemwinder Townhouses and Sundown Village were all designed by architect Ned Gwathmey who was currently employed by Snowshoe as the resident architect. By the start of the 1977 – 1978 ski season there were about 500 beds on top of the mountain. Because skiers could plan multi-day trips to Snowshoe, this would make a real difference in the number of skier days that Snowshoe Resort could support (Fillmore, 2002).

During the summer of 1978 Snowshoe management focused on finishing two housing units, Tree Top (40 units) and Leatherbark (48 units) increasing the overnight capacity to 800 beds (Fillmore, 2002). Additionally plans were put in place to begin marketing Snowshoe as a four season destination resort (Fillmore, 2002). Tennis courts were added, a mountain biking area was developed, Shavers Lake was stocked with Rainbow Trout and advertisements for fall color tour packages were created (Fillmore, 2002) All of these things were designed to help support Snowshoe through the off season. Unfortunately, there was not enough money at this time to develop a golf course which would be a great draw for the off season (Fillmore, 2002).

The winter season of 1978 – 1979 there was a slow to get started with the season opening on December 10th. Unfortunately during the Christmas/New Year Holiday season there was a warming trend and a lot of rain. This forced Snowshoe to close until weather conditions improved. While this particular season had some rough times, the resort counted 130,000 skier days. At the end of this ski season, the resort had cash flow problems again and negotiations were in process for a loan of \$1.2 Million. This loan combined with private investments totaling \$500,000.00 managed to keep Snowshoe viable for another year (Fillmore, 2002).

During the summer of 1979, B.J. (Bobby) Hungate joined the Snowshoe team as the manager of the food and beverage department. Hungate redesigned the restaurant facilities in the Shavers Center and started a successful restaurant there called Good Time Bobby's. Hungate is currently a board member for Snowshoe Mountain Resort (Fillmore, 2002).

There were many attempts to attract investors to Snowshoe. Doc knew the owners of Crested Butte and how they had brought it back from bankruptcy. A deal was made to make Crested Butte and Snowshoe sister resorts and capitalize on the marketing power of the two resorts. After this deal failed to combine the financial interests of Crested Butte and Snowshoe, Doc Brigham resigned as president and CEO of Snowshoe. This left Frank Burford and his brother Joe to manage the resort (Fillmore, 2002).

During Frank Burford's ownership of Snowshoe, there were many developments. Burford believed that development should be a snowball type operation where you build to attract investors to pay to build more buildings. But Burford's development ideas were constantly hampered by environmental problems. Burford paid no attention to any of the covenants or restrictive agreements made with the property owners at Snowshoe. In anger a man who had his house built at the top of Cupp Run cut down a swath of Spruce trees that he felt blocked his view. This action opened up a wind break that made it difficult to keep snow on Cupp Run. In retaliation the mountain manager covered the man's house in artificial snow to the point where you could ski off his roof and onto Cupp Run (Fillmore, 2002).

Development at Snowshoe continued. In 1983 Burford wanted to build an airstrip at Snowshoe. Burford traded a coal seam in the mountain for grading the airstrip. The

coal seam ran out before the airstrip was complete and this left an ugly scar on the mountain. Also Burford never cleared this airstrip or its design with the FAA (Fillmore, 2002).

It was always part of the Snowshoe vision to develop accommodations and a golf course in the valley to be called Hawthorne Valley. During the Burford years, many development projects were started. Not many were completed as they drained the loan money that was to be used to continue operations at Snowshoe. Some things that Burford did complete were: Entrance gates at Hawthorne Valley, an access road, underground utilities, the addition of a ski lift, and ski slopes and a new reception center. Additionally there were several condominium projects under way both on the mountain and in the valley. All of this development and Burford's tangles with the law conspired against Snowshoe. On April 24, 1984 Frank Burford filed for bankruptcy (Fillmore, 2002).

The first ten years of Snowshoe's history was characterized by boom or bust seasons and bankruptcy. Ironically after all that Brigham and Burford invested in the resort property, to their own financial detriment, Snowshoe began to prosper.

The main ingredient in that success was the far-sighted judgment of a Federal Judge and a court-appointed trustee that implemented a change in management concepts. That concept was a simple one that should be the creed of all ski areas: "A resort stands neither on its past reputation nor its potential, but only on its ability to deliver a value-related skiing experience on a day-to-day and season-to-season basis."

(http://www.skisoutheast.com/archived_articles/archives_02232002.htm)

Silver Creek ski area was built lower on the mountain where some acreage had been clear cut and nearly destroyed by a logging company. Silver Creek ski area was an attempt to reclaim the natural beauty that was destroyed in the logging efforts (Fillmore, 2002). Silver Creek was never really able to stand alone as a ski area despite the addition of the lodge which provided both overnight accommodations and a restaurant. In 1992, Silver Creek was purchased by Snowshoe and a shuttle bus system was implemented to move skiers from one area to the other. One lift ticket serves both areas. Now, in 2006 the shuttle bus system is still being used.

(http://www.skisoutheast.com/archived_articles/archives_02232002.htm).

Snowshoe Mountain Resort and Intrawest

In 1995 Intrawest Corporation acquired Snowshoe. Intrawest is “the world’s leading developer of village-centered resorts”. Intrawest owns or controls ten mountain resorts including Whistler Blackcomb, the largest ski area in North America. The company’s headquarters are in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Under Intrawest ownership and management, Snowshoe Mountain Resort has grown to 488,000 (Winter 2002 – 2003) skier visits. There are 57 trails at Snowshoe and Silvercreek combined. The lift system is capable of moving 22,900 people per hour. Additionally they have 100% snow making capabilities “at full capacity, weather permitting, an area equal to four football fields can be covered with one foot of snow in one hour” (At a Glance Resort Information Resource, 2003).

Once Intrawest acquires a property they start a transformation process that is intended to distill the essence of the location and culture and people and recreate it in the pedestrian village that is at the heart of all Intrawest resorts. They use a process they call

“five sensing” to create a village that will create an “authentic village sensory experience”. According to their “At-a-Glance Resort Information Resource 2003-2004” media kit, Intrawest develops each property with an individual and independent vision.

The basic ground rules that dictate the look and feel of each resort are laid down by the location itself through a process Intrawest calls envisioning. Intrawest pursues the process with such intensity that the end product is completely unique. Intrawest knows how to partner with nature. We don’t take an area and make it Intrawest. We take it from within and enhance what’s there. We partner with the resource. That’s why envisioning is such a key part of the village development process. (p. 41)

In an effort to include the local community and generate excitement about their development projects, Intrawest includes people from the community in the envisioning process. At the end of the envisioning process, they create a description of the vision and future developments to distribute through the community.

Intrawest has made a conscious effort to capitalize on the location of Snowshoe as one of the last truly wild areas of the East in West Virginia. “Snowshoe Mountain’s major investment in new facilities and exciting variety of new programs have brought about a new culture – a culture in the heart of a place that will remain ‘forever wild’.”

Snowshoe Mountain Resort Today

Skiing

There are 57 trails and 14 lifts at Snowshoe and Silver Creek combined. Snowshoe receives an average annual snowfall of 180”. The elevation at the summit of Snowshoe is 4,848’ above sea level. Of the 57 slopes 41 % are easiest or green circle

slopes, 36% are more difficult or blue square slopes and 23% are most difficult or black diamond slopes. A map of the ski area is provided in Figure Two. The lift system at snowshoe can move up to 22,900 people per hour. The terrain at Snowshoe is divided up into four distinct areas: The Northern Tract, Snowshoe Basin, Western Territory and Ruckus Ridge.

The Northern Tract, located at the north end of the snowshoe property features long wide gentle sloping beginner slopes. This is a great area to learn to ski. These slopes traverse down 800' vertical. This area includes the following slopes: Yew Pine, Gangway, Skidway, Log Slide, Camp Four, and Powderidge. These trails are all served by the Powderidge Lift.

Snowshoe Basin, the main skiing area at Snowshoe is mostly intermediate terrain but there are some options for the beginning skier and some slopes that are most difficult. The most difficult slopes in this area are: Widowmaker, Choker, and Knot Bumper. There are some nice intermediate slopes: Skip Jack, Spruce Glades, Ballhooter and Gandy Dancer, . This part of the mountain has 32 trails, five lifts including the Ballhooter Lift which is a high speed detachable quad lift. These slopes also traverse down 800' vertical.

The Western Territory is home to Snowshoe's most popular slopes, Cupp Run and Shay's Revenge. These slopes traverse 1500' vertical over a mile and a half. These two trails are served by the Western Express another high speed detachable quad lift.

Ruckus Ridge is the ski area at Silver Creek. Ruckus Ridge has 17 trails, 14 of which are open for night skiing. There are seven lifts in this area two of which are surface tows and one magic carpet. Surface tows are a motorized handle that you grasp while standing on your skis that propel you back up the mountain. A magic carpet lift is a

carpet on a conveyor belt system that skiers stand on while wearing their skis. These are typically used for young beginner skiers as they are the easiest and safest lift to load and unload. Ruckus Ridge also has the Mountaineer Terrain Park which includes a 300' half pipe, rails and kickers for skiers and snowboarders to learn and practice freestyle tricks.

Rentals and Lessons

Snowshoe offers many skiing programs to help their visitors and their children ski better on the mountain. A unique offering at Snowshoe is the Adaptive Skiing Program. The Adaptive Skiing Program works in conjunction with the West Virginia Challenged Athletes to bring people with disabilities to the mountain to enjoy snow skiing. Snowshoe has the rental equipment and PSIA adaptive certified ski instructors to aid the athletes with the ski gear. Snowshoe offers three and four track skiing, mono and bi skiing, skiing for the blind and visually impaired, and skiing for the hearing impaired. Snowshoe is also equipped to assist skiers with developmental disabilities, and other orthopedic and neuromuscular disabilities.

Snowshoe has a children's ski lesson program for children aged two to 12. The ski instructors are certified to work children who have never been on skis to children who already know how to turn. Snowshoe offers half-day lessons, all day lessons and season long lessons. Also for children there is the Snowshoe ski and snowboard team. Children involved in this activity learn to ski gates at speed. They are required to own and use a helmet when participating. Children in upper level divisions are allowed to compete.

Snowshoe also has a strong equipment rental program. There are four rental places spread out on the mountain and two high performance demonstration ski rental

areas. Snowshoe has onsite dealer agreements with Salomon Skis and Burton Snowboards.



Figure 1. Skiing at Snowshoe
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/mountain/photos/index.htm>)



Figure 2. Snowboard Lesson at Snowshoe
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/mountain/photos/index.htm>)



Figure 3. The Northern Tract Slopes
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/mountain/photos/index.htm>)



Figure 4. Cupp Run and Shay's Revenge from Highway 219
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/mountain/photos/index.htm>)

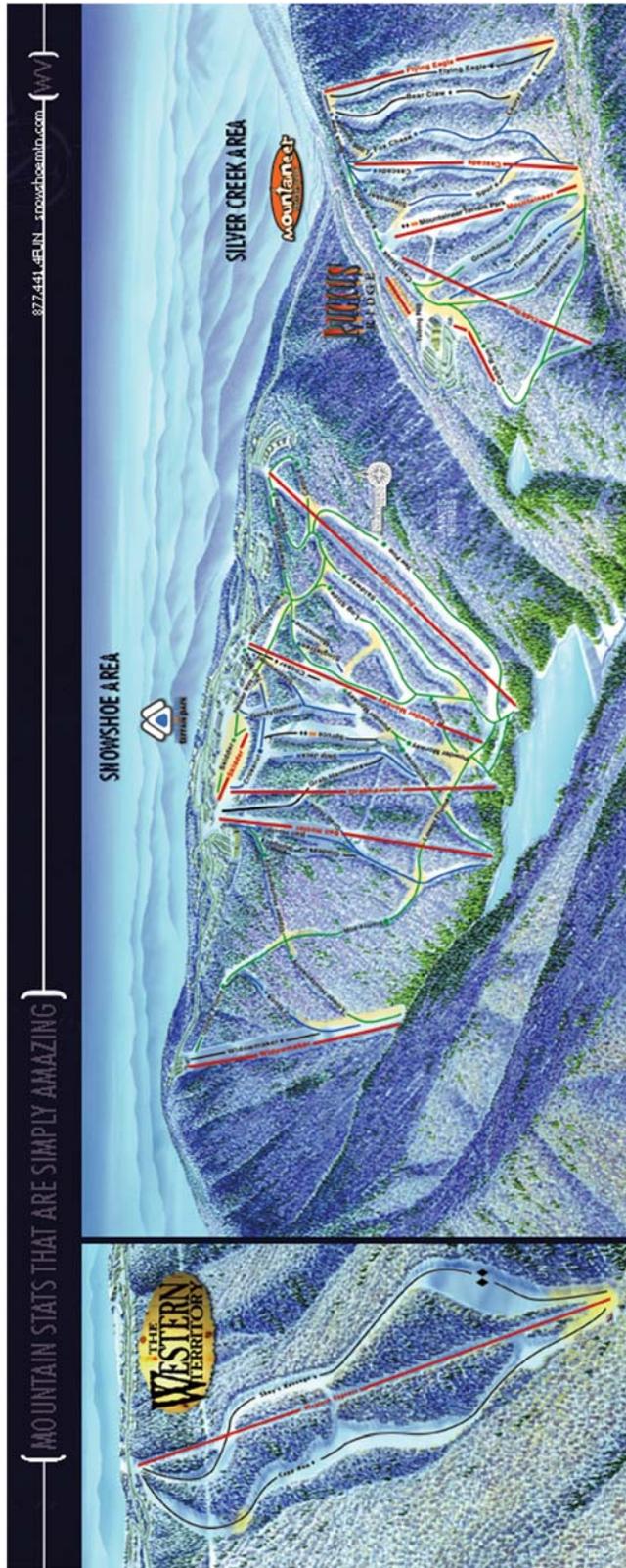


Figure 5. Snowshoe Ski Area Trail Map
 (http://media.intrawest.com/snowshoe/docs/snowshoe_maps.PDF)

Lodging

Snowshoe Mountain is a complex property and offers many different value levels of overnight accommodations. Snowshoe currently has 1800 accommodation units to offer their guests. The lodging, as listed on their web page is broken down by both quality and size of accommodations. The lodging quality levels are defined as:

Platinum: Extraordinary lodging accommodations with superior quality meant to exceed your vacation experience.

Gold: Top Quality accommodations with a mix of convenience and amenities meant to enhance your lodging experience.

Silver: Silver accommodations are designed for comfort and to meet your every lodging need.

Bronze: Bronze accommodations are our most affordable and will fulfill your basic lodging need.

(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/index.htm>)

The unit sizes are described as follows:

Hotel: Unit sleeps up to 2 people and when packaged comes with 2 lift tickets for the length of your stay.

Junior Studio: Unit sleeps up to 4 people and when packaged comes with 2 lift tickets for the length of your stay.

Studio: Unit sleeps up to 4 people and when packaged comes with 2 lift tickets for the length of your stay.

One Bedroom: Unit sleeps up to 4 people and when packaged comes with 2 lift tickets for the length of your stay.

Two Bedroom: Unit sleeps up to 6 people and when packaged comes with 4 lift tickets for the length of your stay.

Three Bedroom: Unit sleeps up to 8 people and when packaged comes with 6 lift tickets for the length of your stay.

Four Bedroom: Unit sleeps up to 10 people and when packaged comes with 8 lift tickets for the length of your stay.

(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/index.htm>)

The lodging for Snowshoe Mountain is located in six different neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are Mountain Base, North Mountain, Silver Creek, South Mountain, Village Central, and West Ridge Homes. Each of these neighborhoods offers different types and qualities of accommodation. For clarity, Figure Two is a resort area map and illustrates all of the properties, the village and the reception area in Hawthorne Valley..

The Mountain Base neighborhood includes Inn at Snowshoe and Overlook Townhomes. These accommodations offer Bronze level quality and amenities.

Because these accommodations are older and still a fifteen minute drive from the largest part of the resort development, they are less expensive accommodations.



Figure 6. Overlook Townhomes, Mountain Base
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/mountain-base/index.htm>)

The North Mountain Neighborhood includes the following lodging options: Camp Four Townhomes, Vantage Inn, Whistlepunk Townhomes, Powderidge Townhomes, Powdermonkey, Stemwinder Townhomes, Land's End Townhomes, Shamrock Condos, Sundown Hutches and Mountain Crest Condos. These lodging options are located on the North end of the mountain and are distanced from the village by a ten minute walk. Because they are not as close to the village they are more secluded and offer more privacy. Also in this area are the spa, Spa Vantage, a restaurant, Red Fox and a pub, Yodeler's Pub. The accommodations available here are rated Bronze, Silver and Gold.



Figure 7. Camp Four Townhomes, North Mountain
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/north-mountain/index.htm>)



Figure 8. Whistlepunk Townhomes, North Mountain
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/north-mountain/index.htm>)

Intrawest combined the Silver Creek ski area with the Snowshoe Ski Area after it's acquisition of the properties. The third neighborhood, Silver Creek is located at the separate ski area Silver Creek about one mile from the Snowshoe Village. The lodging available here includes Silver Creek Lodge and Creekside Townhomes. This neighborhood also includes some dining, shopping and night life options. The Silver Creek Ski Area is smaller than Snowshoe with less challenging slopes and where Snowshoe Resort has located the Ruckus Ridge the

snowboard terrain park, night skiing and the tubing hill. This is a prime location for families with younger children.



Figure 9. Silvercreek Main Lodge, Silver Creek Area
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/silver-creek/index.htm>)

The South Mountain neighborhood is located on the south end of the ridge near the Widowmaker trail and lift area. These accommodations include Loggers Run, the Timbers, Snowcrest Condos, Leatherbark Condos, Wabasso Townhomes, Treetop Townhomes, and Top of the World Condos. This neighborhood is about a ten minute walk to the central village area. These properties range in quality from Bronze to Platinum.



Figure 10. Loggers Run Townhomes, South Mountain
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/south-mountain/index.htm>)



Figure 11. The Timbers, South Mountain
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/south-mountain/index.htm>)



Figure 12. Snowcrest Condos, South Mountain
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/south-mountain/index.htm>)

Village Central is the neighborhood that surrounds the village area. There are seven lodging options for this area ranging in quality from Bronze to Platinum. These accommodations are: Seneca Condos, Allegheny Springs Condo, Highland House Condo, Rimfire Lodge Condos, Expedition Station, Mountain Lodge Condos and Summit Condos. Expedition Station is the newest location, becoming available February 2006. This property replaces the old Spruce Lodge which was razed rather than renovated to suit the Intrawest vision for Snowshoe Resort. Spruce Lodge was still in use at the time this data was collected.



Figure 13. Allegheny Springs Condo, Central Village
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/village-central/index.htm>)



Figure 14. Rimfire Lodge Condos, Central Village
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/village-central/index.htm>)



Figure 15. Mountain Lodge, Central Village
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/village-central/index.htm>)

The final neighborhood is the Westridge Homes neighborhood. These are single family homes that are located on the west side of the mountain across the main road from the village. These homes feature fantastic views of the valley and beautiful sunsets.



Figure 16. Westridge Homes Neighborhood
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/west-ridge-homes/index.htm>)

A final lodging option is the Sunrise Backcountry Hut. This property doubles as a restaurant and very high end lodging. Patrons who stay here have a dedicated staff

member to prepare meals and provide any service necessary. This accommodation is only available on a limited basis.



Figure 17. Sunrise Backcountry Hut
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/lodging/backcountryhut/index.htm>)

Dining

Dining options are located in all of the neighborhood areas and also in the Central Village area. The Snowshoe webpage currently lists 15 dining options within the resort properties. These restaurants vary in style, mood, selection and price. At the base of Cupp Run and Shay's Revenge slopes is a small eatery called Arbuckle's Cabin. The Bear's Den is located in the Silver Creek Lodge. Also at the Silver Creek ski area is the Black Run Sugar House. This restaurant is also slope side (like Arbuckle's Cabin) located at the bottom of the Cascade and Mountaineer lifts. These restaurants are only open during the winter season.

Many restaurants are open year round to enhance the four season quality of the resort. The Boat House restaurant is located at the bottom of the Ballhooter lift and overlooks Shaver's Lake. Brandi's is located at the mountain base in the Inn at Snowshoe. This restaurant is geared toward the budget conscious clients staying at the

base of the mountain. Cheat Mountain Pizza Company is located inside the Highland House Condos at the north end of the village.

Foxfire Grill and the Junction Restaurant are both located in the Central Village and are open for lunch and dinner daily throughout the year. The Junction Restaurant also serves breakfast daily throughout the year. Also in the Central Village is a Starbuck's Coffee and the Village Bistro. The Village Bistro offers international cuisine.

Red Fox Restaurant has been located on the mountain since 1981 and has a loyal following of patrons. It is located in the North Mountain neighborhood and offers dinner only but is open throughout the year. Casual lunch is served at the adjoining Yodellar's Pub. The newest location at Snowshoe is Salsa's this restaurant was added after the survey was conducted. Salsa's offers affordable Mexican cuisine. Salsa's is located in Mountain Lodge. Shaver's Center Food Court offers many dining options for a quick bite before going back to the slopes. Shavers center was the first structure built at the Snowshoe ski area. In the South Mountain neighborhood is The Boiler Room. The Boiler Room is located at the Top of the World Condos and is accessible also by the Widowmaker lift.

Village

Central Village located on the top of the mountain, is the central hub of Snowshoe. Many condominiums and lodges surround the village. This gives the village it's intimate quality, plus it makes it convenient to access. The Central Village at Snowshoe has many dining and entertainment options for the Snowshoe visitor. There are 13 shops in the Village area and they range in products from technical sports gear for the skier and snowboarder. There are apparel stores, stores that feature Snowshoe branded

items and a store with local crafts. The village offers many nightlife options as well through the restaurants and pubs. Central village is a pedestrian village so there are no cars with which to contend. The streets are paved with brick and kept clear of snow in the winter time. Some of the restaurants have heated patio areas for outdoor dining in the middle of winter.

Also located in the village at Snowshoe is Split Rock Pool. This indoor/outdoor heated pool is a fun place for kids and adults alike. The pool area includes water slides, a geyser and a whiskey barrel that continuously fills and dumps. In the outdoor patio area are two hot tubs for relaxing and unwinding after a day on the slopes.



Figure 18. Central Village with Allegheny Springs Condos in the Background
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/mountain/photos/index.htm>)



Figure 19. Central Village. Shopping

(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/mountain/photos/index.htm>)

Amenities outside the Village

Snowshoe offers several amenities and services from places outside the village. There are two groceries at Snowshoe. One is located just south of the village and the other is located in the Silver Creek Lodge area. Wildcat Provisions, a full service market, is stocked with groceries and personal care products. Wildcat Provisions also offers movie rentals and a full deli. The Wildcat Annex at Silver Creek is a scaled down version of Wildcat Provisions.

Vantage Spa and Fitness center is located at the north end of the mountain near the Whistlepunk Trail. They offer full spa services including aroma therapy, massage therapy and herbal body wraps. There is also a fully equipped gym with cardiovascular equipment. There is a heated outdoor pool and hot tub overlooking the Whistlepunk Trail.

Saint Bernard Chapel is located at the very peak of Snowshoe Mountain. The offerings of the chapel are a result of the joint efforts of the Catholic and Episcopal

Churches of West Virginia. They provide both Catholic and non-denominational services each week at Snowshoe.



Figure 20. St. Bernard Chapel
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/mountain/photos/index.htm>)

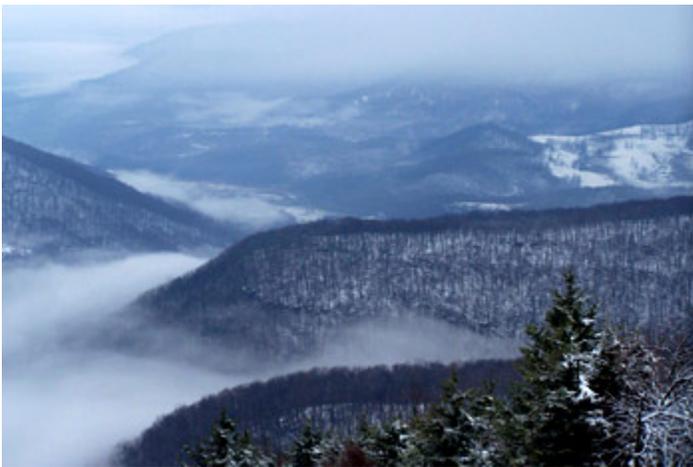


Figure 21. A View from the Top
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/mountain/photos/index.htm>)

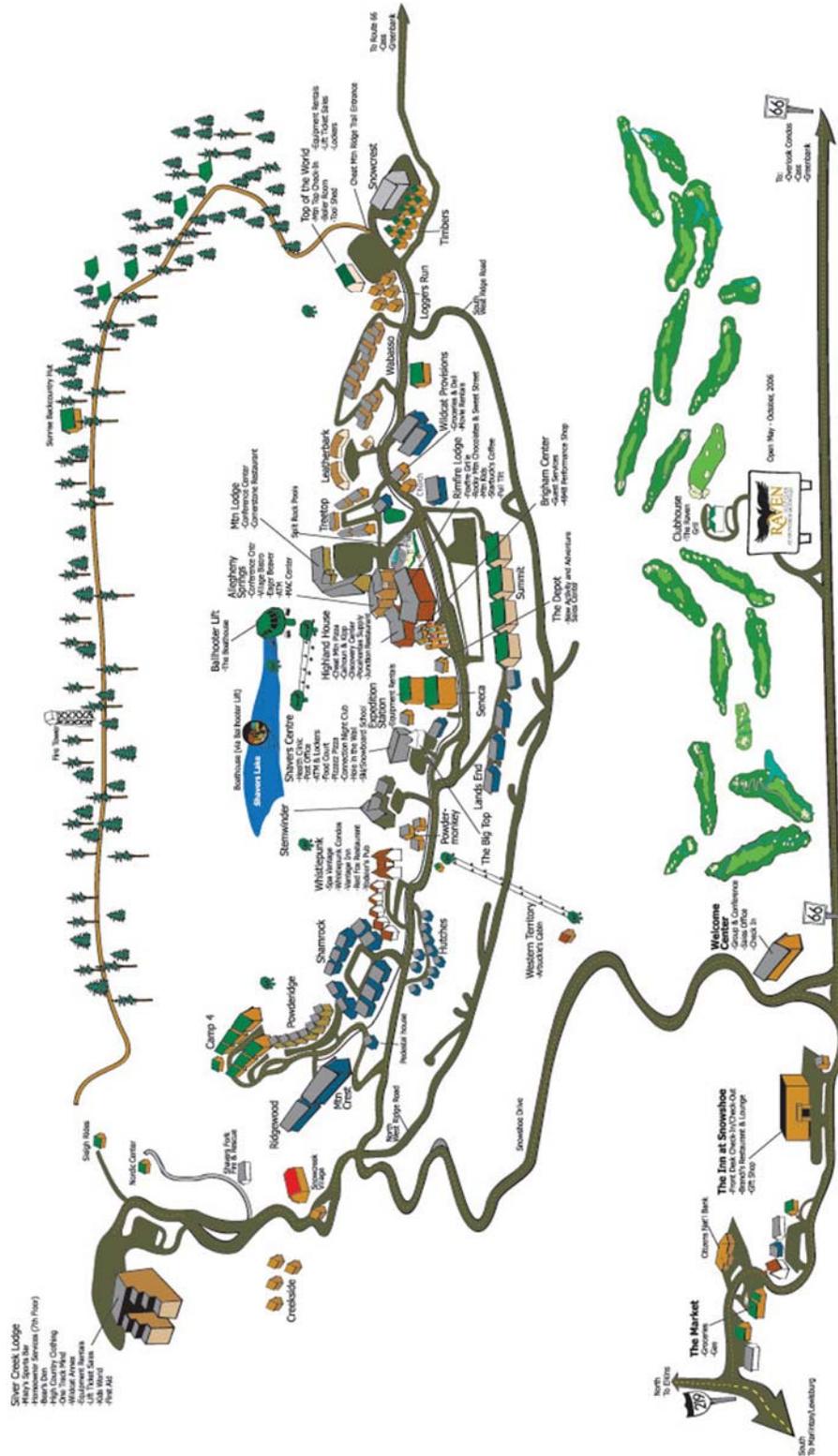


Figure 22. Snowshoe Mountain Resort Area Map
 (http://media.intrawest.com/snowshoe/map_pdfs/winter_05_map.pdf)

Services and Alternative Activities

Snowshoe offers many services and alternative activities. These are designed for skier and non-skier alike. For recreation, there is the Big Top, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, Snow Cat tour and snow tubing. The services that Snowshoe offers are indoor day care, a shuttle bus system that connects all the pieces of the resort, kids night out, and the Sunrise Backcountry Hut

The Big Top, just added in the last year, provides Snowshoe visitors and their family with many forms of entertainment. This 15,000 square foot environment includes a Playstation Gaming Zone, simulators, an arcade, Eurobungy, pool tables, ping pong tables, inflatable play areas, foosball, a video café, live entertainment, theater and carnival like food offerings.

Explore some of the 11,000 acres of back country at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Cross country skis and snowshoes are available for rent and they include a 15 minute lesson to get started. With snowshoes, there are hiking trails that end at Shavers Lake, Sunrise Back Country Hut or the Fire Tower. There is a trail system for cross country skiers as well. These activities are available only on weekends as weather and snowfall permit.

Snowmobiling is catching on quickly at Snowshoe and becoming very popular. Currently there are two tour options. There is a one hour guided tour of the mountain and there is an extended tour that takes visitors all the way to the Sunrise Back Country Hut and to many beautiful spots on Cheat Mountain.

The Snow Cat Tour begins after the lifts have all shut down on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The tour guide directs the visitors in the history and trivia of

Snowshoe, plus there is a snowmaking and snow grooming lesson. There is another tour that offers the same plus a catered five course dinner at the Boathouse Restaurant overlooking Shavers Lake.



Figure 23. Snowcat Tours

(Image included with permission of Snowshoe Mountain Resort)

Snow tubing is offered on Ruckus Ridge at the Silver Creek ski area. There is a six story high track for tubing and a rope tow to take you and your tube back to the top of the mountain. There are five lanes available for snow tubing. Snow tubing is offered daily from 1:00 pm to 9:00 pm.



Figure 24. Snow Tubing at Ruckus Ridge
(Image included with permission of Snowshoe Mountain Resort)

Snowshoe has indoor childcare for children from 12 weeks of age to 10 years of age. Snowshoe also offers a shuttle bus system that takes visitors all over the mountain property. They operate all day and evening until all of the bars are closed. If your lodging is further from the village than you want to walk, catch a shuttle to the village. Most shuttles operate on a thirty minute schedule.

Kids night out is a great activity to entertain the kids while Mom and Dad have an evening out for themselves. Kids snowshoe out into the backcountry to a bonfire where they play games, listen to stories, and roast marshmallows. This activity is offered Wednesday, Friday and Saturday nights during the ski season.

The Sunrise Backcountry Hut is located about two and one half miles out on the Cheat Mountain Ridge Trail. The hut can be rented as accommodations for eight. Or it can be reserved for a special backcountry dining event. The hut is available by reservation only.

Snowshoe Mountain Vision

Intrawest and Snowshoe Mountain Resort have invested a great deal of time and money into the development of the resort since their ownership began in 1995. Snowshoe's original development vision was coined "Forever Wild" this was developed with respect for the natural geographical location but also to compliment the state slogan of "West Virginia, Wild and Wonderful" (Snowshoe, 2002). Cheat Mountain where Snowshoe is located was largely inaccessible until the development of Snowshoe Resort, so inaccessible in fact, that the mountain was named Cheat because it was thought that in order to make it across the mountain you would have to cheat death. Snowshoe's vision statement clarifies their intent to create a destination image. "The allure of snow so far south, and the temptation of the untamable. These are the eternal appeals of Snowshoe, reflected in its names, visible in its architecture, and imbued in its spirit from peak to Valley," (Snowshoe, 2002 p.1). In 2002 a 'clarity session' was held at Snowshoe to reflect on the past endeavors and amend the vision for future development. This resulted in the development of Snowshoe's Second Horizon a conceptual outline for further development in the Mountaintop Village and new expansion into the Hawthorne Valley.

The ongoing vision for Snowshoe includes five key elements:

1. One is the completion and further refinement of the master planned mountaintop village, which has already created a heart for the resort.
2. Two is the further advancement of snowplay in all its forms on and around the mountain

3. Three is the enhancement and extension of wilderness adventure around the mountain and through the National Forest area – one of a number of initiatives positioning Snowshoe as a true year-round resort.
 4. Four is the creation of a new resort community in Hawthorne Valley, complete with a small hamlet that is connected, in spirit, in operations, and in fact (through a lift system), with the mountaintop village.
 5. Five is to increase the level and variety of summer activities, events and programs to ensure that Snowshoe becomes a true year-round resort, one where summer visitation will match, if not exceed, winter attendance.
- (Snowshoe, 2002 p3)

In the development of their new community in Hawthorne Valley, called Anticipation, they have visualized a village peopled with artisans, musicians and story tellers employed to demonstrate and communicate mountain traditions “... for the enjoyment of visitors seeking an *authentic* experience of the West Virginia wilderness highlands” (italics added, Snowshoe, 2002, p. 4).

Another slogan in this vision statement is “access to the inaccessible”. Snowshoe projects that they will make the 11,000 acres under their ownership accessible to their guests in order to “connect with pristine nature” (Snowshoe, 2002, p.4). They also project more hiking and biking trails and more backpacking, camping, fishing, birding, wildlife viewing and nature photography. Further they project an environmental stewardship program that will be associated with the University of West Virginia. One goal of this program is to increase their visibility in the area of ecotourism.

Snowshoe Resort places great emphasis on creating and maintaining a sense of place. This is evident in this quote from the Vice President and General Manager Operations at Snowshoe Mountain.

Snowshoe has this amazing sense of place... Sense of place is something that we instinctively recognize when everything around us has a seemingly perfect balance between nature and built forms, activity and serenity, community and privacy. Everyone at Snowshoe is dedicated to making Snowshoe the finest mountain wilderness resort in America. (Snowshoe, 2002, p.5)

Additionally Snowshoe is interested in creating a restorative environment. This is evidenced in the following quotation from the envisioning team that developed the concept and vision statement for Snowshoe. "the true beauty of Snowshoe is that at Snowshoe there is a time and place for everything. Time for the family--places to connect. Time for yourself--places to retreat. Time for growth and change--places for restoration, inspiration and renewal." (Snowshoe, 2002, p. 7). Snowshoe Resort is within a one day drive for approximately 75 million people.

Context

The context for this study was developed from an interest in people's relationships with recreation environments. Within the literature there were some studies that related restoration and recreation environments to place attachment. Those studies are presented. There were, however, very few studies in the area of ski resort

environments. There has been research in this particular area with other types of recreation environments though. Those studies are also discussed here.

Restoration Environments

There is a strong connection between restorative environments and place attachment. Restorative environments and experiences are the site and setting for “self- and emotion regulation” (Korpela, K. Hartig, T. Kaiser, F. & Fuhrer, U., 2001, p.573), an opportunity for people to get away from the stress and pressures of everyday living and recover energy, attention and a sense of self. Place attachment is the affective or emotional relationship between people and places. It is evident that these two theories share some of the same constructs and thus share an important relationship with one another.

Korpela, et al (2001) observed that research in the areas of place attachment and restoration were being conducted independently and sought, in their research, to examine the relationship between these two theoretical areas. It was their hypothesis that “...place identity, place attachment and restorative experiences can be viewed as nested and reciprocally influential within self- and emotion regulation,” (p.573). This relationship is formed on the basis that favorite places provide the types of experiences that are valued for their restorative qualities and that provide restoration outcomes. Their study supported the hypothesis that there is a reciprocal relationship between place attachment and restoration.

This research continued to build upon earlier research by Korpela and Hartig (1996) in the relationship between favorite places, place attachment, and restoration. In this research it was shown that of the restorative qualities in favorite places that

Compatibility had the highest scores, followed by *Being Away* and then *Fascination* (Korpela & Hartig, 1996). “That favorite place experiences are characterized by high levels of being away, fascination, coherence, and compatibility affirms that it is useful to think of favorite places as sources of restorative experience,” (Korpela & Hartig 1996, p.230).

Place Attachment

Place attachment, the evolving process of developing emotional and affective relationships with specific environments, is influenced by social experiences, experience use history and activity involvement (Kyle, G. Graefe, A. Manning, R. & Bacon, J. 2003, and 2004; Williams, D. Patterson, M. Roggenbuck, J. & Watson, A., 1992; Hammitt, W. Backlund, E. & Bixler, R. 2004). Kyle et. al. (2003 & 2004) studies of place attachment and activity involvement along the Appalachian Trail suggest that use frequency and use intensity were positively related to place attachment. Specifically, “...as the importance and pleasure derived from hiking increased, and the perceived self-expressive value of hiking increased, so too did the respondents’ emotional bond with the Appalachian Trail, (Kyle, G. et. al., 2003, p. 267.) Kyle, Bricker, Graefe and Wickham (2004) also illustrated how activity involvement precedes feelings of place attachment. “This research has shown that specialized recreationists generally have more specific setting preferences than their less-specialized counterparts,” (Kyle, et.al., 2004)

Authenticity

Measuring authenticity proves to be a difficult task. Cohen (1988) made the argument that authenticity exists in the perception of the tourist. Most tourists are not looking for the level of authenticity that MacCannell (1989) calls for in his definition.

Authenticity is defined as the degree to which a tourist attraction reflects the true existence of a society or culture. Snowshoe Resort is a totally invented town. Prior to the development of the resort, this area was largely inaccessible. The year round community at Snowshoe exists in support of the resort. Therefore, MacCannell (1989) would see Snowshoe as the wintertime counterpart to Disney World.

Place Image Development

Place image development includes, in part, the marketing and promotional activities employed by a destination in an effort to create a unique and competitive place identity (Dredge, D. & Jenkins, J., 2003). Echtner and Ritchie (1993), in their study of destination image propose that destination image is constructed of two main components: variables that are attribute based and variables that are holistic. Furthermore, these components should take into account both functional and psychological characteristics. People's perception of destination image can range from more common aspects of the destination, such as food, lodging and services to more distinctive or unique features. The model that they present in their study offers destination image as the intersection of three different continuums. The primary continuum is from functional characteristics to psychological characteristics. The second continuum is from attribute based perception to holistic perception. The third continuum sets the range between common qualities of the destination to the unique qualities of the destination (Echtner, C., & Ritchie, J. 1993).

In a study on sporting events as part of destination image, Chalip, Green and Hill (2003) utilized a 40 item instrument designed to measure nine dimensions of destination image. These nine dimensions are: developed environment, natural environment, value,

sightseeing opportunities, safety, novelty, climate, convenience and family environment. This study lacks the affective component suggested by Echtner and Ritchie.

A study that relates to destination image, Measuring Destination Attractiveness (Hu Y. & Ritchie, J., 1993) highlights the idea that familiarity with the destination influences perceptions of destination attractiveness. In this study, one of the points made by the authors was that "...there are some touristic attributes whose importance in contributing to touristic attractiveness still depend on the type of destination and the vacation experience sought," (p.26).

There is currently a scarcity of research utilizing the place attachment theoretical concept that deals with ski resort areas or skiers. Within the research area of outdoor recreation and leisure studies several studies have dealt with the place attachment theory. Stedman's (2003) research mentioned above is a quantitative study that is situated in northern Wisconsin in the lake area. His research examines place attachment and resort community development that surrounds a recreational lake area of great natural beauty.

Eisenhauer et al (2000) found in their research that "...special places are not dependent on recreation or leisure points alone, but could include scenery, areas of cultural importance, areas of economic importance, or other attributes" (p. 424). This research was conducted in national park areas in southern Utah that are used for hunting, hiking, camping and other outdoor recreational activities but this area is not a ski resort area (Eisenhauer et al, 2000). Listed below in the order of importance are the issues and characteristics of developing place attachment in the national park area of southern Utah.

1. Family/friend related issues
2. Environmental features and characteristics

3. Convenience/ownership
4. Site for recreational activities
5. Personal fulfillment/relaxation
6. Economic consumptive issues
7. Miscellaneous (Eisenhauer et al, 2000, p.430)

The published research includes both quantitative and qualitative studies of outdoor recreational areas, where the population is engaged in various leisure activities. There is a dearth of research that deals specifically with skiers or ski resort areas.

Meaning

Hershberger (1974) relates a theory about architectural and environmental meaning. He defines two different types of meaning that are related to the built environment that of representational meaning and that of responsive meaning. Representational meaning refers to the actual meaning of the elements of the environment. He uses the example of a seven foot tall wooden rectangle being understood as a door. Responsive meaning encompasses the affective and evaluative response to the environment. This would include feelings or thoughts about the environment. The responsive meaning of the environment is dependent on the representational meaning of the environment (Hershberger, 1974).

The dependent relationship of these meanings is important to the architect and planner because of its predictive nature. First there needs to be an understanding as to what representations the user will form in the space. Then it must be learned how the users will react to the space. Utilizing both of these types of meaning, care can be taken

in the planning stage to predict how the users will behave in the environment and how the environment will make them feel (Hershberger, 1974).

Loyalty and Satisfaction Literature

Loyalty is a behavior that is exhibited through behaviors such as repeat visits and promotion of the business through word of mouth to others. Satisfaction, being pleased with the level of service, the return on investment and having, on the whole, a positive experience; is a factor that is instrumental in establishing loyalty behavior.

Loyalty and satisfaction literature in the areas of tourism and leisure studies deal with resort choices but not specifically with skier loyalty and satisfaction. Pullman and Gross (2004) look at loyalty behavior in circus attendees that are admitted to a VIP backstage tent where they can feel what it would be like to be backstage, get to meet the performers while receiving top notch service from waiters. This type of special treatment is referred to as service design. Service design was defined as the creation of an encompassing service experience for the customer with the end result being the building of not only customer satisfaction but customer loyalty (Pullman and Gross, 2004). This experience design allows the guest to determine for his or herself whether he/she will actively participate or be more passive in the environment (Pullman and Gross, 2004). Their research determined that when customers feel like they can build a more intimate relationship with their service provider (ex. resort employee) they experience increased feelings of connection, satisfaction and loyalty (Pullman and Gross, 2004).

There is very little published in the area of ski resort satisfaction. In her unpublished dissertation, Kwak (1999) looked at individuals' satisfaction levels with six ski resort areas in the Republic of Korea. In her dissertation she collected data on demographics, satisfaction levels and then compared the demographic characteristics

with the satisfaction levels. Her results indicated that advanced level skiers were more concerned with the quality of the ski slopes and facilities and that the important variables to novice and intermediate skiers were employees and peripheral services. This finding would make sense as the novice or intermediate skier would more likely require the support of rental equipment and ski lessons. The more advanced skier would either own their own equipment or feel confident of what equipment they were renting. The advanced skiers can focus more on experiencing the slopes whereas the intermediate and novice skier are focused more on learning skills, improving skills and getting used to equipment and slopes.

In her conclusion (Kwak, 1999, 55-56), suggested that in order to increase both new business and repeat business the ski resorts could implement the following changes:

1. In order to extend the opportunities to visit the ski resorts, programs for all seasons should be developed.
2. The resort managers should help the participants identify the points that need their attention in recognizing quality of service.
3. Asking participants to complete a questionnaire about the quality of service before they leave the resort should be a continuous procedure to evaluate the quality of service.
4. The programs, which accommodate the participants with different ages, should be provided to promote the family-oriented participation.
5. To be successful, comprehensive winter ski resorts need to develop entertainment programs for the non-skier group as well

and the programs for the advanced, intermediate and beginner skier groups.

6. The unique characteristics of ski resorts such as promotion of special events are important to attract participants.
7. Programs attracting international tourists should be developed with the collaboration of travel agencies.
8. A study of market segmentation of the comprehensive ski resort participants should be conducted in order to improve satisfaction levels of the participants and develop new programs.
9. Additional research on other factors which could affect satisfaction levels of the participants should be conducted to improve services and facilities provided by the comprehensive ski resorts.
10. There is a need to examine whether the study on the satisfaction levels of the participants with the facilities and services should affect practice of the management at comprehensive ski resorts.

(Kwak, 1999, 55-56)

Place attachment, satisfaction and loyalty are all factors that influence people's decision to return to a particular leisure activity site. These three constructs are related to each other through the lasting connection that is built between the client and the resort area. Satisfaction is a factor in developing loyalty and loyalty is a result of place attachment (Stedman, 2003)

The purpose of this study was to explore the emotions and experiences of repeat visitors at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. An additional purpose of this research was to develop an understanding of what makes Snowshoe such a popular wintertime destination.

Research Questions

What are the perceptions of Snowshoe Mountain repeat visitors?

What are the valuable assets and attributes of Snowshoe Mountain Resort?

What are the detractors from Snowshoe Mountain Resort?

What differences exist between the Snowshoe Mountain Vision Statement and the perceptions of the Snowshoe Mountain clientele?

METHODS

This chapter presents the design of the study and outlines the procedures for obtaining, coding and analyzing the data for this case study of Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Generally, in qualitative research, there is not an emphasis on the quantities of people contacted or interviewed. In this study, due to the privacy agreement between Snowshoe and its clients, I was not able to do interviews; but I was given the opportunity to work with the data that Snowshoe generated for their own use. In this case, the quantity of responses compensates for the inaccessibility of the population.

Design

The design of this research included the qualitative analysis of qualitative data. The marketing manager at Snowshoe Mountain Resort created the survey that was utilized to collect categorical data about resort qualities and the demographics of the respondents. Included in the survey was one item that asked the respondent to describe the Snowshoe image in their own words. This question elicited a free response from the respondents; therefore, the statements they made represent what was most important in their perception of Snowshoe at that time.

Sample

The sample frame utilized the population of Snowshoe clientele. The customers selected were from those who had stayed at Snowshoe and utilized the online reservation and confirmation service during the previous ski season (2003-2004). This delivery limited the population to those who have an email address and internet access.

Data Collection

The instrument, the Snowshoe Mountain Resort Enhancement Survey (SMRES), was developed and administered by the marketing manager of Snowshoe Mountain Resort. The SMRES was administered via an emailed invitation to participate in the survey. A hotlink to Zoomerang® an online survey tool was provided. The resort offered a Snowshoe Mountain \$10.00 gift card as an incentive to respond to the survey. The survey was emailed to 10,000 visitors to Snowshoe Mountain Resort who used the online lodging system at Snowshoe in late October of 2004. The survey link was emailed only once with no follow up emails sent. The survey was returned by 2499 respondents over a fifteen day period from October 13, 2004 to October 28, 2004 for a response rate just short of 25 percent. The majority of the respondents, 76.3 percent (n=1906) completed the survey within the first three days of receiving the email invitation. On the second day of the survey the most surveys were completed, 68.2 percent (n=1154). More information about the daily response rate is described in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Date of Response

Date of Response	Percent	Frequency
10/13/2004	22.0	550
10/14/2004	46.2	1154
10/15/2004	8.1	202
10/16/2004	4.2	106
10/17/2004	3.9	97
10/18/2004	4.4	109
10/19/2004	3.3	83
10/20/2004	1.4	34
10/21/2004	1.3	33
10/22/2004	.8	20
10/23/2004	1.0	24
10/24/2004	.9	23
10/25/2004	1.2	29
10/26/2004	.6	14
10/27/2004	.8	20
10/28/2004	.0	1
Total	100.0	2499

Respondents

Participants in this study were lodging clients of Snowshoe Mountain Resort who utilized the electronic check in service provided by the resort. The majority of the respondents, 47.5 percent (n=1178) reported being married with children. The second largest group, 24.6 percent (n=611), were respondents that reported being single with no children. Smaller groups were single with children, married with no children and married empty nest. The two largest age groups represented by the respondents were the 40-44 age group, comprised of 17.9 percent (n=441) of the population, and 45-49 age group comprised of 17.4 percent (n=430) of the population. Income levels ranged from under \$25,000.00 per year to over \$250,000.00 per year. The largest income group, nearly 24 percent (n=551), represented in the survey fell into the \$100,000.00 – \$149,999.00. The second largest group, nearly 21 percent (n=479) represented in the income category were those who reported an income in the range of \$75,000.00 - \$99,999.00.

To further describe the respondents as they relate to ski resorts and snow related activities, there was a survey item that allowed the respondents to describe themselves as a particular type of “snow person”. The majority of the respondents indicated that they went skiing, on average, once or twice a year. This group accounted for 35.3 percent (n=882) of the population. The second largest group, 26.9 percent (n=673) of the population in this category were individuals or families who went skiing, on average, three or four times a year.

Finally, occupation was another area of interest in describing the individuals and families who vacation at Snowshoe Mountain Resort. The majority of the respondents, 26 percent (n= 634) categorized themselves as professionals. The second largest group, 22.4

percent (n=544) of the population in the occupation category was employed in managerial careers.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Marital Status, Age and Income

Sample Characteristics	Percent	Frequency
Marital Status		
Single with no children	24.6	611
Single with children	6.0	150
Married with no children	12.9	320
Married with children	47.5	1178
Married, empty nest	8.9	221
Age		
Under 19	.3	7
19-24	10.0	246
25-29	13.4	330
30-34	12.7	314
35-39	12.0	295
40-44	17.9	441
45-49	17.4	430
50-54	8.7	215
55-59	4.5	112
60-64	2.2	53
65-69	.6	15
70 or older	.3	7

Table 2. Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Marital Status, Age and Income Continued

Sample Characteristics	Percent	Frequency
Income		
Under \$25,000.00	5.5	128
\$25,000-\$49,999	13.7	316
\$50,000-\$74,999	18.9	436
\$75,000-\$99,999	20.8	479
\$100,000-\$149,999	23.9	551
\$150,000-\$199,999	8.4	193
\$200,000-\$249,999	4.4	102
Over \$250,000	4.4	102

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Occupation and Type of Snow Person

Sample Characteristics	Percent	Frequency
Occupation		
Managerial	22.4	544
Professional	25.4	634
Sales	7.1	178
Education	6.1	149
Administrative	5.5	134
Agricultural	.4	10
Blue Collar	5.5	134
Self Employed	10.1	246
Student	7.8	190
Homemaker	3.7	90
Military	2.5	60
Retired	2.3	56
Unemployed	.3	8

Table 3. Frequency and Percentage Distribution for Occupation and Type of Snow Person

Sample Characteristics	Percent	Frequency
Type of Snow Person		
First time skier/snowboarder	1.6	39
Rarely less than once a year	5.1	127
Once or twice every year	35.6	882
3 or 4 times a year	27.1	673
5-9 times a year	17.3	430
10 or more times a year	13.3	330

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis was chosen because of the qualitative nature of the responses. The analysis procedure was inspired by grounded theory analysis. The purpose behind grounded theory analysis is to develop theory through the systematic discovery of concepts and relationships from the raw data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). There are many methods of analysis that can be utilized to help the researcher distill the data into those meaningful categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Grounded theory analysis requires the systematic gathering of data while simultaneously interpreting the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process allows the researcher to repeatedly return to the subjects or field for more information as more questions arise. "In this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another." (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 p. 12) The advantage of grounded theory is that it is derived from the data and as such is "likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action." (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 p. 12)

In this study, the precise process of grounded theory could not be followed due to the privacy agreement between the resort and its clients. This study, however, benefited from the simultaneous examination of the raw data, the context for the behavior (access to both the Snowshoe and Intrawest web pages and numerous site visits) and the researchers personal experiences at the site.

Qualitative research that relies this heavily on personal experiences and interpretations should be handled with both objectivity and sensitivity (Strauss & Corbin,

1998). In this case the researcher is the instrument of analysis therefore it is important that the researcher “maintain a balance between the qualities of objectivity and sensitivity when doing analysis.” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 p. 53)

Objectivity enables the researcher to have confidence that his or her findings are a reasonable, impartial representation of a problem under investigation, whereas sensitivity enables creativity and the discovery of new theory from the data. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 p.53)

Rationale for Using Existing Data Set

Robert Hershberger (1975), in his article, “The representation and evaluation of environments”, discusses how designers, architects and planners can utilize environmental meaning to design for social change. One of the important points that he makes is that “people are really quite good at expressing their internal representations, feelings and evaluations in words” (p.114). Hershberger (1975) also points out that “...it is possible to make direct comparisons between the representational and the affective and evaluative aspects of architectural meaning using such statistical procedures as factor analysis and analysis of variance,” (p. 114). This type of statistical comparison would not be possible using picture identification, direct observation, or even interviews (Hershberger, 1975). His work in architectural meaning provides evidence that the qualitative responses provided by the survey respondents in this case will be both reliable and valid as the respondents are reporting, in their own words, their feelings and responses to the environment at Snowshoe.

Coding Criterion

Open coding technique was utilized to distill the raw data and discover the themes that eventually led to the development of theory. Berg (1989) relates four guidelines, interpreted from Strauss, to observe when utilizing open coding during analysis. When coding, examine the data while keeping in mind a specific and consistent set of questions (Berg, 1989). Second the researcher should employ line by line analysis or microanalysis of the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 and Berg, 1989). While coding, the researcher should take time frequently to step to the side and write theoretical notes (Berg, 1989). The researcher should not make assumptions about the respondents along traditional variables such as age, sex or income, etc. (Berg, 1989). These guidelines were followed as closely as possible during the analysis of the raw data.

Responses to the open ended question were printed in a spreadsheet with an open field down the right margin of the page. The open field allowed the researcher to make notations both about the specific words utilized in the response, thus being the microanalysis of the data. The researcher then returned to the data reading each response to make notes about the holistic meaning of each response. Through these evaluations of the data, several themes that related to the environment and behaviors within the environment were identified.

While all 2,499 responses were read in this process; saturation was reached after coding 500 responses. Next the researcher reviewed all of the notes in the margin to establish what themes were evident from the review of the responses. Nine themes were identified from the analysis of the data. The themes were: *The Skiing Experience*, *The Natural Environment*, *The Built Environment*, *Interactions with Snowshoe Mountain*

Resort, Convenience and Value, Relaxing and Replenishing, Individual Response to the Environment, Brand Awareness and Reputation and finally *Overall Atmosphere*. The themes and their subcategories are presented in Table Four.

Table 4. Proposed Themes and Subcategories for Raw Data

Theme Name	Subcategories
The Skiing Experience	Natural Beauty of Trails, Variety of Trails, Quantity of Trails, Population of Trails, The Western Territory, Conditions of Trails Chair Lifts.
The Natural Environment	Climate, Beauty, Fresh Air
The Built Environment	Lodging, Dining, Village
Interactions with Snowshoe	Alternative activities, Services, Resort Staff, Quality of Service
Convenience and Value	Driving Distance, Value, Special Rate Packages
Relaxing and Replenishing	Relaxation, Getting Away from it All, Compatibility, Extent, Fun
Individual Response to the Environment	Emotions, Memories, Belongingness, Ownership, Stories, Negative Emotions
Brand Awareness and Reputation	Reputation, Brand Awareness,
Overall Atmosphere	Family Oriented, Party Oriented, Various Atmosphere Comments

In order to create order out of 500 quotations, for each theme a document search was conducted for key words and expressions that related to that theme. The document search was conducted both through visual inspection (reading) and through the *Find* function in the Microsoft Word 2003 software. These quotations were then copied to another document where they could be reviewed together. This allowed the researcher to read all of the quotations that related to that particular theme together.

The researcher was then able to outline and organize the presentation of the findings utilizing the subcategories in the proposed themes. The description of the data in the findings was then built from the researcher's experiences at Snowshoe, quotations from the respondents and verification through information collected from the Snowshoe and Intrawest web pages along with documents and photographs collected from the site.

After reading and coding the data, the researcher took time out to reflect on the information included in the data. The intention of this reflection was to examine alternate ideas about what was happening at this place. What is the connection between these people and this place? What relationship do they have with Snowshoe? Stream of consciousness writing was utilized to pull together every idea that came up about the place and the people and the nature of their relationship. It was through these exercises that new theory was generated.

FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the analysis. What follows is a presentation of the Snowshoe Mountain image as it was reported by the respondents to the survey. This information combined with my own experiences at Snowshoe, gives a broad and descriptive image of Snowshoe Mountain Resort.

As the analysis of the data progressed, there were nine themes that became evident. These themes were utilized to organize and present the findings from the analysis. The themes were: *The Skiing Experience*, *The Natural Environment*, *The Built Environment*, *Interactions with Snowshoe Mountain Resort*, *Convenience and Value*, *Relaxing and Replenishing*, *Individual Response to the Environment*, *Brand Awareness and Reputation* and finally *Overall Atmosphere*.

The Skiing Experience

Between the Silver Creek Ski Area and the Snowshoe Ski Area (both areas are part of the Snowshoe Mountain Resort) there are 57 trails and slopes for skiers to enjoy. Trails range from easier, denoted by a green circle symbol, to more difficult, denoted with a blue square symbol and most difficult denoted by a black diamond symbol. These symbols are a U.S. standard designation; all ski resorts in the U.S. use these symbols to mark trails. Snowshoe gets an average of 180" of snowfall per year. Because of the southeastern location of the mountain the resort cannot depend solely on natural snow therefore, they must make artificial snow to keep the trails in good condition. Snowshoe boasts 100% snowmaking capabilities. With the appropriate weather, at full capacity Snowshoe can make enough snow to cover four football fields with one foot of snow in one hour.

Natural Beauty

The views from the top of the slope are breathtaking. During the ski season, looking either east or west, there is the rhythm of ridge line and valley stretching to the horizon in beautiful hues of blue, brown and white. Snowshoe has both wide open trails and some narrow trails that all wind their way through snow covered Spruce trees down the mountain faces.

I enjoy skiing at Snowshoe because of the entire skiing experience. The view from the summit is spectacular and the trails through the woods, are also quite nice. Snowshoe has a good selection of ski trails, so it's hard to get bored. The snow conditions are usually the best in our region which may be the most important thing when planning a vacation in advance.

Another respondent had this to say about the spectacular beauty of the slopes at Snowshoe: "When I am standing at the beginning of the cup run and enjoying the beautiful vista, things just seem right in the world...." Many other respondents noted the natural beauty of the slopes referring to Snowshoe as a "Winter Wonderland".

The real reason that you go to Snowshoe though is because you are a skier, or you want to become a skier, and you want to slide down a snow covered hill. You want to feel the crispness of the winter air against your face and in your lungs and experience a sense of exhilaration (or fear) as you generate speed going down the face. You may have come to exist in communion with the mountain, or tackle a slope that has foiled you in the past. Some days you want to sit in the back seat and ride down the slope, other days you want your most aggressive stance and your most technical skills for an attack on the mountain.

Whatever your skiing desires are, the variety, quantity and condition of the slopes, is a very important factor in enjoying your experience.

Variety

At Snowshoe there are slopes for all experience levels. The mountain consists of 41 percent easier slopes, 36 percent more difficult and 23 percent most difficult. In the words of one respondent Snowshoe is “Alpine skiing the way it was meant to be, varied, challenging, and fun.” From another respondent: “Greatest skiing in the south with the largest number of slopes and variety of terrain.”

Having a wide range of different trail difficulty to choose from is especially important when groups (family or friends) come to ski together. “Variety of slopes is important. We enjoy skiing with our grandkids that range from two to twelve.” For this family, the difference in skill level is presumably quite wide. The two year old is certainly still enrolling in ski school while the twelve year old is probably quite adept at least on the green and blue level slopes. “The scenery was beautiful and the variety of slopes were great. My husband and I are different skill levels of skiing and there were enough intermediate slopes that both of us could do together.” For this couple the intermediate slopes allow them mutual territory in which to ski together. Perhaps they spend part of the day skiing different terrain and then part of the day together. While this couple enjoyed the opportunity to ski together, this family enjoyed the opportunity for everyone to have a different skiing experience: “It is a great place to take my 3 teenage sons where they can have a challenging ski experience, definite snow, and have variety in their experience.”

“The ski slopes are perfect for both our children, who are just learning to ski, & for my husband & I who are experienced skiers.” Again, the variety of slopes offered at Snowshoe allows families and friends to ski at their comfort levels. If the slopes are too steep, or too narrow, it can be very frustrating and even dangerous for the beginning skier, but a mountain of wide gentle slopes would be quite boring for a more experienced skier.

For skiers in this area, the challenge of the slopes at Snowshoe offer an alternative to traveling farther distances (North Eastern, Rocky Mountain or Canadian ski resorts). “I feel like I can travel to Snowshoe and get a real challenge in skiing. The only other exception would be to travel to Canada or the West Coast.” For many people who live in the Southeastern United States, Snowshoe offers the most challenging terrain without getting on an airplane, so proximity combined with slope challenge is important to these respondents. “Nice and challenging mountain resort close to home--no need to go all the way to VT [Vermont]. Good "blues" skiing only 5 hr drive!”

Many of the respondents have had the opportunity to ski in other locations throughout the Southeast, Northeast and the Rocky Mountains. For these respondents, Snowshoe compares favorably even with resorts in Utah. “We have skied in Utah and Snowshoe rates better than that. The variety of slopes/runs and climate is awesome and it is closer to home. We have been to Snowshoe now three times and look forward to coming again this winter. We never tire of our trip to Snowshoe.”

This couple also moved to the area from Utah and was pleasantly surprised by the variety of terrain, even called it ‘big’, a skiing term that refers specifically to the challenge of the slopes. “I moved out to Raleigh, NC from Salt Lake City, Utah. So, I

had low expectations for any type of ski resort out here in the East. I was pleasantly surprised by the ski resort feel of Snowshoe. The resort was much bigger than I anticipated, the terrain was pretty big, and the quality of the snow was good.”

My experience skiing at Snowshoe is quite similar to this respondent: “Snowshoe is where I learned to ski. I like the variety and number of slopes. The mountain and views are beautiful.” I learned to ski at Snowshoe and Silver Creek too. In my experience, these ski areas combined to give me many opportunities to move up to more challenging slopes as my skills improved with the aid of both lessons and practice.

These respondents’ observations provide an excellent view of the challenge of the trails at Snowshoe: “somewhat rugged and wild, but fully accessible, lots of challenging and fun slopes,” and “Snowshoe provides ... a good number of quality slopes in all "experience" levels, including beginner, which ensures a challenging and exciting ski vacation in a beautiful "Winter wonderland" setting.”

Quantity

The quantity of slopes is also important to a great skiing experience. No one wants to ski the same hill all day long. Every slope offers a different set of challenges, obstacles and opportunities to just fly down the hill. When there is a great quantity of slopes, there is a great quantity of different experiences available. Many respondents described Snowshoe as having “tons of slopes” and a “large number of slopes for an Atlantic coast resort”.

In the discussion of slope challenge, families were happy that there was terrain where they could ski together; this family enjoys the quantity of slopes so that the family can spread out a little and each experience a bit of independence and freedom while out

skiing. “Beautiful mountaintop fresh air experience with slopes so numerous I rarely saw the teenagers even when I went out on the slopes. It gave them the feeling of independence and me a sense of freedom without much worry for them since we all had walkie talkies to communicate with.”

Slope Population

With a mountain this popular and it’s proximity to so many people, sometimes the slopes get a crowded. This is especially true on weekends and holidays. Many of the lifts form lines behind them and even with the high speed quad chairs they have added, you can still have as much as a thirty minute wait to get on the chair. This respondent notes “[h]owever, the lift lines are too long during peak times.”

Crowding can be especially problematic on the slopes. When the slopes are crowded with people, it gets harder and more dangerous to ski. Along the slopes there are fewer places to go to avoid running into people. Skiers who are out of control create dangerous situations for everyone on the same trail. “Fun and friendly (although starting to get crowded and less fun and because of that you need more ski patrol)” Having more ski patrol would definitely help and reduce some of the danger on crowded days.

On crowded days there are more skiers everywhere on the mountain and the Western Territory is no exception. Often skiers get over on this side of the mountain and don’t have the experience level to handle the slope. This creates a danger for everyone. “Very beautiful location, lots of intermediate slopes, loved the western territories although on the crowded weekend there were skiers in this area who did not belong there & were hazards to more experienced skiers.”

With all of the expansion in lodging facilities there does seem to be a need to create more terrain to spread out the population somewhat. Several respondents made suggestions to improve dangerous situations on the mountain caused by crowding.

The mountain has made some great improvements, but the trail capacity has increased little, in relation to the increase in resort capacity...which is leading to dangerous situations, which weekend 'courtesy' patrol fails to handle. Snowshoe is experiencing the growing pains that are probably impossible to avoid, and I'll continue buying season passes, primarily because of the resort's proximity to Charleston, WV (home). If I had one wish, I'd ask that the mountain immediately MANDATE helmets for children under 16, and GIVE THEM AWAY FREE with room rental. The image Snowshoe DOESN'T want to portray is one of overcrowded slopes where kids get hurt (and that's where it's headed). Intrawest should step up and set an example on the mountain...mandate kids in helmets...and 'rent' them out free with each room. Safety should be Intrawest's primary concern on this increasingly crowded mountain.

This respondent also offered some suggestions for solving the crowding problems and reducing the danger on the slopes.

I think the image is getting better, but still has a ways to go. The shops and restaurants are certainly great, but I think that most would say they would like to see more of the money put into 3 things: 1. More and wider terrain. 2. More lifts, faster lift lines. 3. More accessible parking.

Midweek skiing at Snowshoe, however, is not at all crowded and is a great time to be at Snowshoe. Many times during the week there will be no line at the lifts so you can ride up and ski down as much as you want. “Beautiful scenery, has snowed every time we've been there. Not too crowded on the slopes. Always has a lot of slopes open. Great experience every time.”

This trip, during a quiet time on the mountain, was a great success for these first time visitors. It left them excited to return for another visit.

2004 was our first visit. I was in awe as we approached the mountain-- beautiful--I was pleased with the variety of slopes, the lifts were accessible with short/no waits, and the ski out direct from the lodge was so convenient. All of us, including my teenage sons and their friends who came with us, are already talking about coming back this spring break.

These regular visitors to Snowshoe also have a great mid-week experience. Sometimes during mid-week visits, people can become spread out enough that you feel like you are the only ones out skiing that day. “I love the variety of trails, conditions and that it is normally not that crowded during mid-week. We normally stay at Whistlepunk Condos and have for the last 5 years. It's a great family get away.” And “To me Snowshoe means a great day on the slopes... Week days you can be spoiled by skiing right into a waiting chairlift.”

The Silver Creek area, because its terrain is not as challenging, is a great place for beginning skiers. Additionally it does not get as crowded or as chaotic as the Snowshoe area. “[W]e always enjoyed the slopes because they are not too crowded in Silver Creek and great for beginners.”

The Western Territory

The Western Territory is located on the West face of Cheat Mountain and is accessed by skiers crossing the resort access road. The western territory name came from the loggers that used to harvest lumber off of Cheat Mountain. They did not like to work the western territory because of its steep and rugged conditions. Although the area was not named The Western Territory until the addition of the slope, Shay's Revenge, the face was first opened up by 'Doc' Brigham, the first developer of Snowshoe back in 1974. Getting Cupp run opened was a priority for Snowshoe because at 1500' vertical and one and one half miles long, it would be the longest ski slope south of Vermont. From the very first vision of Snowshoe, Cupp run has been the signature slope.

Cupp was designed by Olympic Gold Medalist Jean Claude Kily and Kily had an endorsement contract with Snowshoe for several years starting in 1974. In February, 1975 Kily ran a loose slalom course down Cupp Run setting a challenge time for other skiers to attempt to beat. The Kily Cupp Challenge became an annual event. For the first two years, no one was able to beat Kily's time.

While the Kily Cupp Challenge (by that name) only lasted for several years, Snowshoe Mountain Resort hosts the Cupp Run Challenge a giant slalom ski race for professionals and amateurs alike. During the 2005-2006 ski year this race celebrated its 32nd anniversary.

Designed by Olympic gold medalist Jean Claude Killy in 1973, the 1500 vertical feet, black diamond Cupp Run has given many skiers the run of their life. Twenty-five years ago, during Cupp Run's and Snowshoe Mountain's inaugural year, a race unlike any other was born. "You've got

to be in shape to be able to handle the top to bottom run during the race," says Bob Koontz, Snowshoe's Director of Skier Services. "Your legs are burning when you cross the finish line on Cupp's lower steep." This giant slalom course has become the largest, most challenging downhill race in the region, featuring more than 1000 vertical feet in just over a mile and a quarter. (<http://www.iplayoutside.com/Events/1999/01/0335.html>)

Cupp Run boasts quite the challenge to any skier and is perhaps the most renowned slope in the Southeastern United States. My own experience with Cupp Run goes back to when I was learning to ski at Snowshoe. As a beginning skier, Cupp run was the reason to practice, it was the goal I had in mind. My dad and I took on learning to ski as something that we could experience together. And together we laid out the goal that if we could learn to ski well enough to ski Cupp Run, then we would be ready to take on the more difficult skiing offered in the Rocky Mountains. For us, Cupp Run *was* Snowshoe. Standing at the top of Cupp Run, the view of the Allegheny Mountains is amazing but if it is your first time to Cupp Run, I don't think you notice it. Looking down Cupp Run for the first time makes your throat dry and your hands sweaty. That first time, I'm sure we fell all the way down the one and one half miles of that slope!

Our usual course was to start the day at Silver Creek ski area and get warmed up. Then between 10:00 and 11:00 am, my dad and I would catch the shuttle bus up to the Snowshoe area and get off at the Cupp Run stop. We would get our gear together and ski down the path that led to the top of Cupp Run.

Generally we would ski there until about 1:30 and then go to the Yodeler's Pub for lunch where we would recount our runs, consult each other on technique and rest from our adventure. Most of the time we would leave the restaurant and head back over to Cupp to have one or two last shots at skiing it well.

As time passed and my dad and I had more experiences and more practice we got better and better. And Cupp Run was still a challenge. My dad and I have shared many celebratory beers in Yodeler's Pub after a good day skiing on Cupp. We can now ski it top to bottom and there are now slopes out west that make my throat dry and my palms sweaty. But Cupp Run still presents a challenge when it hasn't been groomed or conditions are icy and my dad and I still look eagerly toward Cupp Run as we drive up highway 219 to Snowshoe.

Reading through the responses, I couldn't help but notice that other people had strong feelings for Cupp Run as well. One response is simply: "My image is Cupp Run." Just as my Dad and I associated Cupp Run and Snowshoe, so did this respondent. This respondent gets a lump in his throat rather than the cotton mouth that I suffered from. "Snowshoe has the best of everything. The green & blue slopes offer fun for all types of skiers and the Cup & Shay's Revenge give the best skiers a lump in their throat the first few times. All I can say about Snowshoe is 'wow!'" With my experience level now I can agree more with this respondent's feeling about the top of Cupp Run. "When I am standing at the beginning of the cup run and enjoying the beautiful vista, things just seem right in the world....."

I can also agree with this respondent's assessment of Snowshoe and Cupp Run. "FUN for ALL ability levels!! - beginner to advanced skier.....(Cup Run is my personal favorite).... Snow conditions are super- not ALL moguls removed-THANKS!!" And this respondent also recognizes the value of the Western Territory: "It skis like a big mountain resort. I loved the night skiing and also, hang on to Cup Run and Shay's Revenge, these runs were awesome."

While the initial goal at Snowshoe was to include a ski run that would compare to those of ski resorts and areas in the Northeast, this respondent eagerly announces that even Vermont doesn't have a slope area like the Western Territory. "Best ski resort in Mid-Atlantic. Cupp and Shay's Revenge spans Killington (Vermont)." Another respondent reemphasized the treasure that the Western Territory is to Snowshoe. "A great location with the best slopes available within any reasonable drive... How can you beat the vert (vertical drop) of Cupp and Shay's Revenge without going to Vermont or out west?"

This respondent's image of Snowshoe is, I am sure, shared by many who have skied Cupp Run.

"Going down the long runs or either Shays Revenge or Cupp Run with a snow covered forest background and getting to the bottom to see lots of people enjoying a warm cup of hot chocolate in the small shop at the bottom of the hill."

Arbuckle's Cabin, the small shop they refer to, at the bottom of the hill is warm and inviting and quite often a welcome break for cold and tired skiers.

Trail Conditions

Having well designed slopes and trails is only one part of the skiing experience. The relative difficulty of any trail is ultimately determined by the condition of the snow that covers it. Steep slopes well covered in powder ski slowly because your skis are pushing at the powder, but it can be difficult to turn in and quite tiring to ski. Powder, incidentally, is the softest cushion for falls. Groomed slopes, which have been “combed” by a large machine called a Snow Cat are the easiest conditions on which to ski. The skis move faster on groomed trails than un-groomed, but turning is quite a bit easier and ultimately the best way to keep your speed down. Groomed slopes are quite often referred to as “corduroy” because the slope takes on the texture of corduroy fabric.

Moguls are large lumps of packed snow that are created by the skiers’ rhythm of turns down a slope, pushing the snow into piles. These piles become heavy and solid with the natural freeze and thaw of the snow. Snow Cats can push these moguls flat and redistribute the collected snow across the whole slope.

At Snowshoe all the trails are groomed except Shay’s Revenge. Cupp Run doesn’t get groomed as often as the more difficult and easiest slopes so often there will be some moguls to ski down the side of Cupp. Lower Shay’s Revenge, because it is very seldom groomed grows very large moguls (like the size and shape of skiing around a Volkswagen Bug!)

The difficulty of having a ski area this far south is that snow and weather is unpredictable and thus ski conditions are unpredictable. With 100 percent snowmaking capability, though, Snowshoe is able to recover from January thaws quicker than any other Southeastern ski resort. Outside air temperature and humidity determine whether or

not artificial snow can be made, but as soon as the weather is right, Snowshoe begins replenishing the base on its slopes.

Snowshoe has developed a reputation for consistent snow in the Southeast.

“Surprising. I consider it Mother Nature's little surprise for us. No snow on the drive but when we arrive there is lots of it. In all the years we have been coming to Snowshoe we have not been disappointed in the snow.” For another family, they can plan their trip in advance with the relative assurance that Snowshoe will have good snow. “In our family its become a tradition. My husband and I have been skiing here for many years and now we bring the kids. Snow conditions (the fact that you have a reliable source of snow) and scenery (including in that the sense that the area isn't over-developed) are probably two key factors that have kept us returning each year.” “Always great ski conditions - snow and slopes. Kids have a blast and many of our friends vacation here as well.” When your vacation goal is to ski, knowing that there will be plenty of snow is crucial to the success of the vacation.

Because of Snowshoe's location in the Southeast, the snow will melt on warmer days and refreeze overnight causing a condition called “loose granular” and with a lot of traffic and some solar energy, loose granular quickly becomes ice. Ice can be a very treacherous surface on which to ski. Rain and ice storms on the mountain can also temporarily affect the snow conditions and the ski-ability of the slopes. This too is illustrated by the respondents' replies. “[S]now conditions are unpredictable (lots of ice, rain)”

Lift Systems

The lift system on any mountain is important to get the skiers back up the mountain so they can ski again. Lifts should be in convenient places and never uphill from the trails. A resort should have enough lifts that lift lines, if they develop, should be short and move quickly. At Snowshoe where the runs on the east face of the mountain are pretty short, people don't want to spend more time in line than they are skiing.

It has a good variety of trails and is short distance to all of them. Lifts are in good locations within each other. It is not a bad drive (coming from Louisville) to really enjoy the a good long trail, the village and the staff. It is a good place for my family to enjoy either a long or short vacation.

All of the easiest and more difficult slopes are spread out on the East face of the mountain, this is nice because people of different abilities can pick different slopes to ski down and then meet up and ride the lift back up to the top together. "The snow conditions are always great and I love the idea of everyone riding the same chair lifts, no matter which trails you chose to ski down."

Just the year before this survey was conducted, Snowshoe added two high speed quad lift chairs to the mountain lift system to help alleviate crowding and lift lines. Also these chairs, because they detach from the system when they are in the loading and unloading areas, are much easier to load and unload. While these lifts offer more speed and thus more capacity they also exhibit Snowshoe's commitment to safety. "Deluxe resort with best ski conditions, most trails, and most lifts including most high speed quad lifts in the Southeast!"

Ballhooter lift is the high speed quad on the East face of the mountain and is the primary lift serving that area. This is a popular lift to ski to because it is a high speed lift and you get back up the mountain faster. Because Ballhooter lift goes all the way to the Mountain Lodge area (the bald top of the mountain) it's exposure to cold and wind is legendary among Snowshoe skiers. "The slopes midweek are never overly crowded so the lift lines move fast. And no one has experienced cold until they have arrived at the top of the ballhooter lift."

The lifts at any ski resort are a very social place and Snowshoe's lifts are no exception. Quite often skiers will find themselves riding the lift with total strangers. Maybe it is because you are forced to ride with strangers in order to fill each chair to capacity, but most people like to visit and chat on the lifts. The first thing I want to know about my co-lift riders is where they are from. Usually conversation turns to the weather or the skiing conditions because you know right off that you have skiing in common with these strangers. Sometimes though you meet someone who is from your home town, or you meet someone who is from far away. These lift conversations are a nice addition to the friendly atmosphere at Snowshoe. "Friendly place where people love to chat on the lifts"

There is the occasion where you ride the lift with a braggart. Sometimes it is someone who over talks their prowess on the mountain and others:

Snowshoe is a growing mountain resort, torn between it's early WV roots and trying to accommodate a wide spectrum (culturally) of visitors from the DC/Maryland/Eastern Region ranging from the once per five year visitor from SC, to the every-other-weekend DC sales guy with family

who always insists on sitting beside me on the lift and telling me about his new Hummer H2.

One respondent wrote a particularly descriptive account of skiing at Snowshoe. It includes everything from the anticipation of skiing to the lift experience and the feelings you have at the end of the day. In many ways, this response speaks to all skiers and definitely sums up the skiing experience at Snowshoe.

The view of the Cupp as you rise out of the valley, knowing the challenge it will present as the day wears on. The view of the valley as you crest the ridge. The crispness of the air as you exit your car, knowing that the coolness will offer good skiing conditions. The expanse of the buildings as you view the total facility. The excitement builds as you stand at the top of the first slope, knowing that you have many options to choose from.

Which one first, easy or hard. But they all have their character and each one it's challenge. Enjoying each one and choosing the next challenge as it fits your ability or your whim. Watching people as they await their ride to the top. Finding someone who lives close to you or very far away. The speed of the lift as it gets you to your next destination, be it a slope or the comfort of the lodge. That last run of the day and the thrill or sadness, knowing it will be the beginning of an enjoyable evening with family around the fire, or the long drive home. But the day was worth it, whether if for a weekend or a day trip. The body is tired, but the memories pleasant. They revive your spirit and keep alive the expectation of that

next journey down 219 and the next view of the Cupp which will begin again that "Snowshoe Experience."

The Natural Environment

Snowshoe, located in a rugged mountainous area of West Virginia has a natural appeal to the skier. Snowshoe has a long winter season for the Southeastern United States and gets a lot of natural snow. The weather is cold, snowy and often "blizzardy" but the Allegheny mountains and the sparseness of population create beautiful vistas. Snowshoe's mountain top location takes advantage of the breathtaking, seemingly endless views. With no large metropolitan areas nearby, the air at Snowshoe is clean, crisp and invigorating.

Climate

The Snowshoe winter season typically opens in late November over Thanksgiving weekend. At this time they will not have every slope on the mountain open, but they will have had both natural snowfall and time to make artificial snow. Snowshoe Mountain is just less than one mile in elevation. In the winter the mountain top is "windy" and "cold". "The weather is a little brutal, with the village at the top, but worth it for the better snow and larger mountain." For this respondent, just the thought of Snowshoe reminds her of being in the village at the top of the mountain. "I get cold thinking about Snowshoe. The top of the mountain setting is nice, but is very cold and windy."

For skiers cold is good, because it helps maintain the conditions on the mountain. But snow fall is the best because it means powder on the slopes, the best quality skiing conditions. "Good "ski town" feel, typically really cold and snowy (which is good)." In my experience, the best possible weather is when it snows all night, clears up in the

morning and then the sun shines all day with a high temperature of 28 degrees Fahrenheit. Here are some of the respondents' stories about the snow fall.

[Snowshoe] was beautiful. We arrived there when it was 12 below and snowing hard. It made for a beautiful site outside our balcony at Allegheny Springs resort. We were facing the mountains and the town. With the slopes to the right of us.”

Another family describes their snowy ski vacation and their delight in being able to ski in powder conditions.

Snowshoe Mountain was very beautiful! Our family especially enjoyed the fact that it snowed there daily which made the skiing/snowboarding experience so much better due to the amount and fluffiness of the snow.

This family has been lucky enough to experience really consistent snow fall during their visits. “Beautiful scenery, has snowed every time we've been there. Not too crowded on the slopes. Always has a lot of slopes open. Great experience every time.”

The weather is not always so cooperative though. Sometimes there is fog, rain, and even ice storms. One respondent was “[d]isappointed that it rained” and another respondent: “I just wish it wasn't so often foggy up there!” And this assessment of the weather: “The weather doesn't always cooperate but the slopes are usually in good condition.”

Ice storms, while they create very dangerous conditions outside and on the slopes, create a beautiful scene on the mountain top. “The skiing is awesome! I have never been there when conditions have been bad. Last year we were there when you had the ice

storm, and even though we could not ski for a day, the experience to see it was awesome!”

Snowshoe has according to this respondent, “[t]he best the southeast has to offer in skiing, slopes & weather.” Snowshoe, with the best winter weather of any Southeastern ski resort, is also situated in the beautiful Allegheny Mountains. At nearly mile high elevation and the highest point for miles, the natural beauty of this area is “breathtaking” “When the weather is good, Snowshoe Mountain is gorgeous.”

Natural Beauty

Snowshoe is a “beautiful” “scenic” environment. There are vistas on a grand scale that reach as far as you can see. And there are beautiful intimate places on the mountain as well. “I enjoy skiing at Snowshoe because of the entire skiing experience. The view from the summit is spectacular and the trails through the woods are also quite nice.”

The “spectacular” “breathtaking” “awesome” views surround the visitor to Snowshoe. To the west, the view is layer after layer of mountain ridges. Sometimes fog settles in the valley making the mountains appear as if they are floating above a river of clouds. To the east, look down the slopes toward Shavers Lake or look out across the horizon to more mountainous ridge lines. There is a sense that Snowshoe is a “winter oasis” and that you are miles from civilization. “The remoteness and beauty of the area and facilities is amazing and that plays into the over all experience on the Mountain.”

At Snowshoe there are intimate interactions with nature which add to its natural beauty. The respondents painted word pictures of the “snowy white trees”, “snow crested trees” and “trails sheltered by Spruce forests”. One of my favorite scenes of Snowshoe was actually at the top of Flying Eagle lift at the very top of the Silver Creek ski area.

Many times we would crest the top of the hill on the lift and just over to the right of the lift at the end of a stand of trees, in a small clearing, were several deer pushing through the snow to graze on the grass beneath.

Apparently, this is not the only sighting of deer at the Snowshoe property. “Snowshoe Mountain was very beautiful! There is nothing more beautiful than looking outside at the mountains and seeing all the deer nearby. Our children enjoyed feeding them daily!” Another respondent wrote about seeing the deer. This family “love[s] seeing the deer outside [their] rental unit.” There was one respondent who noticed the deer, as we did, at the top of the lift at Silver Creek. “Getting off the ski lift at Silver Creek and seeing deer at the top of the mountain.”

The mountains are heavily forested with windblown spruce trees. With the steep western face of the mountain, I understand why respondents referred to Snowshoe as “rugged” and “wild”. This respondent feels that Snowshoe’s tag line is the most appropriate description of Snowshoe. “‘Forever Wild’ is what I believed always described Snowshoe. We have always loved the relaxed environment and most of all the beauty of the location.”

The local roads around Snowshoe are just a warm up for the spectacular beauty of being on top of the mountain. These respondents tell what it is like to first see Snowshoe. “Like another world when you climb the mountain.” And “2004 was our first visit. I was in awe as we approached the mountain—beautiful.” This is another respondent’s comment on reaching the top of the mountain. “A beautiful destination tucked away in the mountains. Once you reach the top, it is like the world opens up to a beautiful resort full of winter activities.”

Several respondents noted how different the scenery at Snowshoe is from any where else in the world. “After moving to Myrtle Beach five years ago. A trip to Snowshoe is something I look forward to. I am guaranteed to see and play in snow and the mountain is a beautiful winter scene for me. I look forward to the trip again this year!” The mountains and fertile valleys are rich and beautiful and quite different from arid Colorado and humid, tropical Florida. “Overall the scenery is wonderful - not quite Colorado but a nice diversion from flat Florida” For this respondent, Snowshoe’s natural beauty exceeds the scenery of other vacations. “Snowshoe is by far the best skiing experience in West Virginia -- the quality of the slopes, lodging, amenities, and scenery FAR exceed the vacations I've had at other resorts.”

This beautiful scenery was frequently cited as being one of the main reasons people liked skiing at Snowshoe. “The things that I think about most when thinking about snowshoe is the condition of the slopes, the fun atmosphere in the village, the spectacular views from the top of the mountain, and the great employees of Snowshoe that we have dealt with.” This respondent lists scenery as one of the main reasons they return to Snowshoe every year. “Snow conditions (the fact that you have a reliable source of snow) and scenery (including in that the sense that the area isn't over-developed) are probably two key factors that have kept us returning each year.”

Summing up Snowshoe’s natural beauty is easy for these respondents. “Snowshoe is a beautiful winter getaway”. It is “Breathtaking! The Total Package!!! Heaven!” Snowshoe represents “rustic West Virginia beauty”. “The mountain and views are beautiful.” Snowshoe has “beautiful slopes and wilderness.” “The scenery is spectacular! Beautiful!” And Snowshoe’s real beauty is that it is “still wilderness, but close to home.”

Fresh Air

There are no major sources of pollution near Snowshoe, so skiers can take deep breaths of the fresh crisp air. This clean cold air feels great and invigorating when you breathe it in. Several respondents commented on the clean air at Snowshoe. Snowshoe is a “[b]eautiful mountaintop fresh air experience with slopes so numerous I rarely saw the teenagers even when I went out on the slopes.” I can really sense the cold crisp air the respondent describes in this statement. “I love it. The slopes are great, the scenery is beautiful, and the clean, fresh air invigorates me. I wish I could go there more than one week a year!”

Other respondents also chose to write about the air quality at Snowshoe.

“Snowshoe Mountain is a very nice place. The view is great and the air is clear.” One doesn’t have to be at Snowshoe very long before they are struck by how “Snowy, cold, frosty, crisp and clean [the air is].” What a refreshing and invigorating feeling it is to take great big gulps of this air while getting a work out on the slopes.

The Built Environment

One of the first things that a person notices at Snowshoe is that the mountain is upside down. All of the resort facilities are located at the top of the mountain. Another element of this environment is how it has been developed much differently than other Eastern ski areas. The development process has created several different neighborhoods that all have some relationship to the resort as a whole and the Central Village. This section deals primarily with the built environment at Snowshoe; the lodging, dining and village facilities. The built environment, in this case, refers to all of the buildings owned and operated by the resort property. This includes all of the lodging facilities, dining

facilities, the village and all of the physical amenities offered by Snowshoe Mountain Resort. The following is based both on the data and my personal observations.

Lodging

There are many different lodging options at Snowshoe each with their own unique design and amenities. The different accommodations suit many different price levels from a room with few amenities to a suite of rooms tastefully decorated and appointed with many little luxuries. The respondents to the survey felt that this variety of accommodations to suit many different budgets was important to the accessibility of the resort. Additionally the “[v]ery homey, comfy small town lodge atmosphere” seemed to be the very essence of the lodge experience at Snowshoe.

Spruce Lodge was one of the first accommodations on the mountain, built in 1977 from a modular system that was transported piece by piece to the top of Snowshoe Mountain. At the time of this survey, Spruce Lodge was 26 years old and had housed nearly one million skiers through the years. Obviously this property (built as a part of a rehabilitation program during one of Snowshoe’s bouts with bankruptcy) was aged, worn and tired looking. “The Lodge we stayed in (Spruce Lodge) was way below expectations.....I wasn't expecting a luxury place, but I was expecting clean and warm.” But, one man’s trash is another man’s treasure.

If you’re an old time Snowshoe skier, Spruce Lodge was a link to the history of Snowshoe Mountain. It was a link to the pioneer ski fanatics that opened up Cheat Mountain to skiers in the south. “Spruce Lodge, a room with 4 bunks. Me and the boys, great snow and usually a blizzard on the drive in. Hop in behind a snow plow so we can drive to the top on Friday, and ski like maniac's all week end. Pizza and beer!!! See ya in

February.” Another person wrote about the down and dirty guys weekend ski trip and staying in the shabby Spruce Lodge as if the faded glory of the room added some crucial element to the boys’ ski weekend. “Higher end lodging to....The Lodge. Kind of a running joke among skiers and boarders. Going with the guys on a two day package, go the Lodge. Going longer and bringing the spouses, get a condo.” There is a suggestion here that the accommodations at Spruce Lodge were not appropriate for a family weekend! Young snow boarders enjoyed being able to come to Snowshoe and stay on the mountain to enjoy the slopes and the night life. These guys obviously weren’t planning on spending much time in their room. “I enjoyed the value of staying at Spruce since we are either boarding or out eating and visiting.” Spruce Lodge was razed in April 2005 to make way for Expedition Station which was completed and placed in service during the Summer of 2006.

Another lodge that seemed to get a lot of attention by the respondents was Mountain Lodge. Mountain Lodge is located at the top of the Ballhooter lift and is a ski-in/ski-out condominium. For Snowshoe this lodge is considered a Silver level accommodation. The condos in this lodge include a full kitchen. There are coin operated laundry facilities on each floor and there is limited daily maid service.

The last time I was in Mountain Lodge I was struck by the age and condition of this facility. The hallways are poorly illuminated and there was a somewhat stale smell in the hallway on the ground floor. With that said why is Mountain Lodge the name that is mentioned more than any other accommodation in this survey? The lobby at Mountain Lodge features a large fireplace that encourages people to sit down, warm up and rest for

a minute. “We enjoy our lodge with the huge lobby area with the fireplace.” This family not only enjoys the fireplace, they also illustrate possessiveness for *their* lodge.

Mountain Lodge also features its own private parking area. Space is limited on top of Snowshoe Mountain and parking is a commodity. Being able to park close to your lodge with all that luggage and equipment is quite the amenity. It is a necessity when you have a large family and your only alternative is to ride the shuttle bus. “The biggest issue for us is to stay at the Mountain Lodge - due to the size of our family riding the bus is an adventure to say the least.”

What is great about this lodge is location. Mountain Lodge is the closest lodge to the Ballhooter Lift, the only high speed quad on this side of the mountain. Leave your condo, lock on your skis and ski. “[We like] the fact that as soon as we stepped out of the lodge we could ski immediately” Additionally Mountain Lodge has balconies and beautiful views of the Allegheny Mountains. “We love to stay at Mountain Lodge with the great view and the ski in / ski out feature.”

Mountain Lodge is also very close to the new Split Rock Pool area and a very short walk to the Central Village. “All of the restaurants, shops and the pool are an easy walk from the Mountain Lodge where we like to stay. The Mountain Lodge is great for children - the game room, the movies, etc.” For at least one family Mountain Lodge is more than a large fireplace, convenient parking and great location. Mountain Lodge feels like home and is close enough to the village and the skiing to offer the children a sense of independence. “Mt. Lodge is our home away from home - we love its casualness and feeling of spaciousness because the kids can come and go as they please.”

Snowshoe seems to be a combination of older accommodations in need of renovation and brand new state of the art top notch lodges. “but my lodge was not the greatest (the one that is at the check-in area). It was on the slope though and we could ski down and lift up to the main shopping and restaurant area.” While the amenities offered by this type of lodging don’t seem to match the cost of the room, at some level this accommodation still has the important ski-in/ski-out feature and meets the needs of this visitor.

The following comment illustrates the lodging conditions at Snowshoe. “The new is really new, and the old is like a ghost town. I often wonder about the vacant property and the people who put money into those facilities, ... and what has become of them. Silver Creek specifically seems to be starting to go down like Snow Crest (?) Top of the World, etc. Very sad. The NEW areas are excellent, Rim Fire, Allegheny, we always request those suites.”

This lodging situation creates a problem for the Snowshoe management. The decision was made to tear down Spruce Lodge; will Snowshoe tear down these older properties to make room for new more expensive lodging? This travel agent offers a compelling argument to consider the possibility of renovation instead. “I’m a travel agent and I recommend Snowshoe on a regular basis, especially for those who don’t want to travel out west. I’ve been going to Snowshoe for many years and have seen an amazing metamorphosis of the entire area! It is truly beautiful and fun. Love the new resort hotels; my only concern is that there will be no ‘budget’ properties left for us cheap ‘ski bums!’”

Dining

My favorite restaurant at Snowshoe has always been Yodeler's Pub. To be honest though, I never knew it had a name. It was just the bar above the Red Fox Restaurant. Yodeler's Pub is, in fact, associated with the Red Fox restaurant and is located in the North Mountain neighborhood just across the street from Cupp Run. I have many happy memories of trekking up the steep wooden stairs in my ski boots to this second floor bar and squeezing between people hoping to stake out a table for a beer and a quick lunch. The food was always hearty and usually pretty good. I guess we went there because it was out of the way and not nearly as crowded and chaotic as Shaver's Center. I loved it because it was right there at the top of Cupp Run and that is where my dad and I skied at Snowshoe. Red Fox restaurant and Yodeler's pub predate Intrawest ownership and the construction of the Central Village. Even with all of the new dining facilities on the mountain, Red Fox is still one of the most popular restaurants on site. Evidently others like it too. "I would like there to be more restaurants like the Fox." "[I]t's great to go to ...the Red Fox for dinner (our absolute favorite dining experience)" I couldn't agree more.

Another restaurant that received acclaim is the Junction Restaurant. "The Junction Restaurant is our favorite place to enjoy dinner." And it is this person's favorite place for a family brunch. "[I]t's great to go to the Junction for brunch." The Junction Restaurant has a great location. It is on the corner where the ski slopes intersect with the Central Village.

In general though, the restaurants at Snowshoe are "one-of-a-kind", in "great locations", and serve "[d]elicious food". One respondent felt that "[t]here [was]

something in every price range whether it be accommodations, dining options, or extracurricular activities.” The restaurants at Snowshoe are sprinkled liberally through all of the neighborhoods, on the slopes and in the village. So the “restaurants are convenient” and easy to access from the slope or from the lodges. Another respondent gave Snowshoe the highest compliment on both accommodations and dining. “The accommodations are those of a first class experience and we have never been disappointed with the dining or extra activities!”

While most respondents felt that there were plenty of dining options for many budgets, this was not true for everyone. With the dining options at this time there were not nearly enough family dining options. Our “[o]nly disappointment was the lack of family dining options. Most restaurants are too long of wait for families. Need more casual quick dining options.” I’ve skied many times with my niece and nephew and agree that all resorts should offer less expensive, quick, nutritious food for young families. Waiting for food is frustrating for more than just the young families: “My only complaints are that snowshoe does not have enough restaurants or sandwich shops. The wait is too long to get food.” When you are really tired from a day of activity and exposure, waiting for a table and waiting on slow service can be irritating and exacerbate the feeling of exhaustion.

Again the issues of expense and budget appear within the responses. “The dining has been getting better and more varied but I do think you need more options - such as keeping Shaver open for dinner - for us Cheapies.” Skiing is an expensive sport and when you add to the equipment costs, the lift tickets, accommodations and then resort prices for

meals; it is understandable where there would be an interest in having less expensive dining options.

While many of the respondents seemed quite satisfied with the dining options at Snowshoe, there are some valid areas for improvement. As Snowshoe makes plans for further expansion or the renovation of existing dining areas, these are things they may want to consider.

Village

The Central Village at Snowshoe is the hub of activity both day and night at Snowshoe. The brick paved streets in this pedestrian village are kept free and clear of snow for safety but the snow still clings to the roofs, overhangs and landscaping. The buildings that surround the streets are detailed with board and batten siding and have the appearance of West Virginia vernacular architecture. One person describes the village as a “[s]mall, quaint, friendly, ski town nestled away on the top of a mountain”.

During the day skiers relax on heated outdoor patios while eating hearty meals replenishing their energy to go back out on the mountain. People taking a day off from skiing stroll leisurely through the village visiting the shops and purchasing gifts and souvenirs. Non-skiing family members enjoy the shopping and just getting out among other people. One respondent wrote about his non-skiing wife: “My wife doesn't ski and she liked the pool and hot tubs and shopping of course.” This asset of the resort makes it possible for many families to vacation at Snowshoe regardless of their ability or desire to ski. The village and non-skiing activities are central to Snowshoe’s success beyond being simply a ski area. It is, in large part, the presence of the Village that makes Snowshoe a resort.

In the evening the village is bustling with people visiting, partying, shopping and relaxing after the day on the slopes. One person's vision of the Central Village occurs at dusk: "Snow falling as dusk approaches, groomed slopes, chair lifts running, people walking on the cobblestones through the village"

The Village, compact in its layout, makes it seem close, intimate and comfortable. "[q]uaint village-not too big or overwhelming" was a comment made by one of the respondents. Another comment that illustrates this feeling of intimacy is: "A mountain-top resort village small enough to provide an intimate feel, yet large enough to provide a wealth of options for food, nightlife," The village, though small, is packed with shopping and dining options.

With the village as the central feature surrounded by the lodges, hotels and condominiums, it is very convenient to get from your accommodations to the village. The area is well illuminated at night and is safe and easy to access. This is great for families. Parents can allow their children a bit of freedom to access the Split Rock Pool and the bonfire in the village. "The village experience is the perfect family atmosphere. All of the restaurants, shops and the pool are an easy walk from the Mountain Lodge where we like to stay."

Split Rock Pool is an indoor/outdoor heated pool. The pool incorporates some fun interactive water features like water slides, geysers and waterfalls. The outdoor patio includes the outdoor portion of the pool and several hot tubs. "Making Split rock Pool was a huge improvement!!! What a wonderful relaxing place in the afternoon to go for a swim, and whirlpool break."

“Every day at Snowshoe feels like Christmas as a child. The anticipation and excitement of the whole experience brings my family together as we share the adventure of the Mountain and village. We make a trip once each month in the winter and each trip seems to get better.” This comment by one of the respondents shows vividly the central importance of the village to the resort atmosphere as a whole. Additionally it illustrates how deeply this environment affects the psyche of some of its visitors.

Interactions with Snowshoe Mountain Resort

This theme, Interactions with Snowshoe Mountain Resort, examines the interactions that guests have with the resort community. This will include the alternative activities offered outside of skiing, the services that are available at the resort, interactions with the Snowshoe Mountain staff and finally the quality of service experienced by the visitors to Snowshoe.

Alternative Activities

While skiing is the reason most people visit Snowshoe in the winter; Snowshoe Mountain Resort offers many alternative activities and entertainment besides skiing. “Once you reach the top, it is like the world opens up to a beautiful resort full of winter activities.”

There are many recreational offerings like snowmobiling, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, tubing, and NASTAR amateur ski racing. “Snowshoe is a place to go where there is a great variety of things to or not to do depending on your tastes, with very nice people to help all along the way.” “there is so much to do there like snowmobiling, tubing, shopping, etc.” On the slopes during the day there are fun games in which to

participate; there are great ski and snowboard races, freestyle competitions and exhibitions.

In the village there is an arcade and movie room that also doubles as a dinner theater. The Split Rock Pool in the village also offers child and adult both opportunities for exercise and relaxation. “Then at night we went to the pool at the center village which my kids just loved” It is evident from these comments that Snowshoe “is a fun resort with a variety of activities for all ability levels and ages.”

There are also many opportunities for entertainment. Some of the lodges offer movie nights, there are seasonal parties (Christmas, New Year, President’s Day and Valentine’s Day, winter break and spring break), horse drawn sleigh rides to a back country cabin where they serve candle lit dinners and live entertainment in Central Village. One person lamented not getting the opportunity to go on the horse drawn sleigh ride. There are “plenty of fun things to do with the family at night”

Many college students enjoy coming to Snowshoe either for a weekend or over winter or spring break. Snowshoe has a college break week in December with many activities, silly games and parties to entertain the college students. Even when it isn’t college week, Snowshoe has excellent opportunities to experience the night life. According to one respondent, Snowshoe has “[g]reat clubs at night filled with sexy snow bunnies!” Another young adult offers this about the night life at Snowshoe: “great nightlife. I have been to Snowshoe every year for the past 5 years and always had a blast! For the 21-25 age group range I would recommend Snowshoe as a relaxing, fun, exciting weekend adventure with friends!”

While Snowshoe offers many different opportunities for their visitors to engage with the outdoors, spend time with family and make new friends some visitors feel that there are “limited activities outside of skiing” and that Snowshoe “could offer more non-skiing activities.” Because they didn’t offer suggestions, it is difficult to discern what activities they would enjoy.

I believe that Snowshoe offers a wealth of opportunities for fun, relaxation and recreation. Snowshoe also publishes a weekly newspaper that includes all of the weeks’ activities along with the expense of participation and logistical information for how to get involved.

Services

Snowshoe offers many services to their visitors. There are equipment rental shops, the adaptive ski program, ski and snowboard schools and indoor day care. These services allow visitors to improve their skills, assist them with their children and generally make their stay more comfortable and relaxing.

Skiing equipment can be quite expensive (\$400.00 - \$2,000.00+). If you are skiing one week a year it is hardly worth the expense of buying equipment. Therefore, Snowshoe offers equipment rentals. For about \$30.00 a day you can rent boots skis and poles. Setting up skis for rental requires space to modify the ski bindings to fit the boot, space for boot fitting, a lot of information from the customer and a personal injury release form. Snowshoe maintains a good stock of rental skis and performance skis. “The only thing I think needs improvement is the lines and crowded conditions in getting rental equipment.” On busy days the rental room can get a bit crowded. Additionally one weekend a year they have Demo Days where the ski manufacturer representatives bring

the new skis to the mountain and for a small fee, you can take out a demo ski and try it on the mountain. “We are also impressed with the rental equipment. It is much better than that which we have rented at other ski resorts.”

People with disabilities have a unique opportunity at Snowshoe. Snowshoe offers an adaptive ski program so that people with many different disabilities can learn how to ski.

At Snowshoe, we offer several different programs and instruction for just about every disability group including 3 and 4 Track Skiing, Mono and Bi-Ski, Blind-Visual Impaired, Hearing Impaired, Developmental Disabilities and other Orthopedic and Neuromuscular Disabilities.

Equipment rentals are available and PSIA certified adaptive instructors will provide athletes of all abilities the opportunity to enjoy the thrill of snow sliding. (<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/rentals-and-lessons/adaptive/wv-challenged.htm>)

From my trips to Snowshoe I can remember seeing someone skiing down the hill in a ski chair and also a blind skier with a guide. First, I am excited that they have the opportunity to know what it is like to go careening down a snow blanketed mountain. And then I am awed by the strength and courage it would take to be in their place. From just seeing these individuals out on the slope having a great time, I know that Snowshoe has a very special program. This person illustrates what a great affect the program has for his family: “but the reason I am so loyal in my snowboarding vacation started with my sister participating in your OUTSTANDING adaptive skiing program. Thank you, thank you, thank you.” Another family also wrote about the adaptive ski program and what it

means for their family. “Place for family fun. Offering opportunities to children with disabilities and their families. Your adaptive ski program brought us to Snow Shoe, but you fail to mention it in this survey.”

The ski school at Snowshoe employs trained, compassionate, “professional and NICE” ski instructors. The accolades keep coming: “Very nice and helpful ski instructors” Skiing can be very difficult and frustrating to learn on your own. The first several times on skis, you spend more time in the snow than on it. Balance, turns, controlling speed, stopping and falling are all skills one must learn in order to have a safe fun time on the mountain. Ski lessons and practice are the fastest way for a never ever skier to get comfortable on skis. For Snowshoe, they want all of their skiers to be able to ski responsibly and maintain safety for all the skiers on the mountain. An irresponsible skier is a danger to himself and every one around him.

Ski school is also a great help for parents. While the children are in ski school the parents have the freedom to explore and ski the mountain. When ski school is over there is still time at the end of the day for one more run. The kids get to show their parents what they learned while skiing together as a family. Children can start learning to ski about the time that they are out of diapers. That means children as young as three years old can be enrolled in ski school. “[W]e preferred silver creek for ski school and ski area for our 3 and 5 year old.”

The ski school has a very visible presence on the mountain. While parents cannot ski along with their child in ski school, they may see their child’s ski lesson out on the slopes. This visibility and reputation of the ski school means that people are able to trust that their child is safe and having fun. “Ski school was right where we could see our kids

while we skied.” “Also, I like this place because of the ski school for my children. I feel pretty safe when I drop off my kids there.” The ski school had a great impact on this family from Florida:

“I have a grandson who is 12 years old who lives in Florida and had never seen snow. In order to be assured that he would witness snow, I booked a vacation to Snowshoe. I booked ski lessons for 5 children, including one with special needs. It was a great experience for all 11 of us in the family!”

If your child is too young to ski, or you are not ready to have them start lessons, snowshoe also offers inside child care. Their child care service is for children from 12 weeks old to 10 years old. For a fee they will engage your child in stimulating and entertaining activities and prepare them lunch. When your ski day is over, you pick up your child and head back to the lodge. “I really liked the day care option.”

This is a great option for parents: “inside child care is superior. You can put your mind at ease with leaving the little ones.”

Snowshoe Mountain Staff

In my experiences, I have always felt that Snowshoe was a friendly place to go skiing. The people that live and work there are typically friendly and helpful. I am not alone in my perception. Many of the respondents either commented on the friendly staff or they referred to specific occurrences with staff on the mountain. “Everyone on top of the mountain is extremely friendly.” “The staff is family oriented and friendly.” “Everyone (staff) we have dealt with has always been helpful, as well as friendly.”

“The things that I think about most when thinking about snowshoe is ...the great employees of Snowshoe that we have dealt with. All of the feedback regarding the staff illustrates how important good customer service is to the resort. In my experience the lift operators are some of the nicest people on the mountain. It is their job to make sure that people get onto and off of the ski lifts safely. On the older style lifts the chairs swing around the terminus pole with a lot of speed. The lift operator bumps the chair to slow it down a bit, keeping it from colliding with the backside of your knee. But more than that, the lift operators talk to you and help you if you drop gear while getting onto the chair. “The mountain staff (i.e. lift operators, "Bucky", and the ski instructors and patrol) are always extremely friendly and courteous!”

Several staff were mentioned by name. Bill Hungate, who currently serves on the Snowshoe Foundation and maybe the same “B.J. Hungate that in the early years was a food service manager and later a manager of Snowshoe Resort prior to the Intrawest acquisition. “Staff friendly and helpful (especially Bill Hungate).” “Bill Hungate helped me one time, Good man!” Additionally “Stacy in group sales knocked herself out to help us.” It is very nice when the visitors to Snowshoe can make a personal connection with someone on the resort staff. Often this connection can lead to customer loyalty.

Perhaps my favorite response from a visitor to Snowshoe is from this first time skier: “I had never been skiing before so I didn't know what to expect. I was very impressed, though, with how beautiful the resort was. I had a lot of help, when falling down the slope, by the employees.” I hope they were helping this person to stand rather than to fall!

Snowshoe Mountain participates in an international hiring group: “Each Winter, Snowshoe Mountain boasts International Staff from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Jamaica, New Zealand, Peru and South Korea.”
(<http://www.snowshoemtn.com/jobs/international/index.htm>) These staff members, usually students are employed throughout the property and live on-site in community with other international staff members.” Some of the visitors like getting to interact with the international staff: “I liked the international flavor of meeting the students from various countries.” And some respondents did not: “rude foreign staff”

Quality of Service

Customer service is very important in the resort industry. It is not enough to just have a friendly and knowledgeable staff. They must be helpful as well. Sometimes in a resort good service is invisible. The trip is worry free, the guests were able to relax and enjoy the mountain however they desired, they never noticed all the people working behind the scenes to help them forget all the worries and stresses at home. For example, there were no responses that indicated that the maid did an exceptionally good job keeping the suite clean and beds made. If the beds were not made or the towels not changed, that is when people notice customer service. Service is something that you don't notice until it is either poor or non-existent.

Some of the respondents, however, did mention the good service in overarching comments. Snowshoe is a “Winter Wonderland with top flight service and amenities for every skier.” Snowshoe, for the most part, has “[g]reat service. Ya'll rock. keep it up!!”

Unfortunately not everyone is pleased with the service all of the time. There are occasions of misunderstanding and miscommunication. At times the check in counter

becomes quite busy and people and gear line up and wait for their turn. I've stood in this line to buy lift tickets before and it can move quite slowly. "lackluster service personnel, long wait times (for check-ins). "The only problem that we had was that the service was very poor. The people working at the check-in desk were not able to give us proper directions to our cabin and they had poor attitudes. Other than this problem our vacation was wonderful and we will definitely return again." Fortunately these small events are not enough to make visitors not want to return.

Returning to the idea that customer service is most noticed in a bad situation, this is a respondent's story about bad service fixed by good service. Even with a bad situation, this person is likely to come back for another visit.

"The mountain and snow conditions were excellent. I am a new skier and I really enjoyed the experience. The Lodge we stayed in (Spruce Lodge) was way below expectations.....I wasn't expecting a luxury place, but I was expecting clean and warm. However, I would like to note that the Snowshoe staff was quick to fix my disappointment by reimbursing part of my lodging charges for the bad experience. I really value customer service, and I was very impressed with the personal attention, and quick turn around regarding this issue."

The bad situation of having a room well below expectations was repaired by a quick and helpful response. Any business of this size is going to have some bad situations; customer service is how they go about making the situation right for the customer.

This respondent felt that the restaurants and the maid service were poor, but it was still a great vacation. “Service at restaurants was poor and maid service at Rimfire lodge was awful. Otherwise great vacation” What is not obvious is if they did anything about it while they were on site. Sometimes customers will suffer quietly through a bad situation and never give the staff an opportunity to help. From the “great vacation” comment, maybe it wasn’t so bad and they will give Snowshoe another chance.

Here is another story that doesn’t have quite as happy an ending:

“The 4 room condo we received was not fit for prison inmates. The phone didn't work, the TV didn't work, it was dirty, and my brothers truck was robbed. We complained to one of the staff managers about our service. He listened to our complaints, but didn't do anything he said he was going to do. I've got it on my video tape if you want to see for your self. Given the choice I would go somewhere else, but it's just too easy to drive to Snowshoe. So call me stupid!”

This is obviously a situation of failed customer service. Unfortunately we cannot go back and find out if the visitor was making reasonable requests or yelling at the manager. From the last comment I have to guess that even with this bad situation, the robbed truck and the video tape that this respondent is still skiing at Snowshoe!

In summary, Snowshoe offers their visitors many opportunities to get out and spend time with family or to fellowship with existing friends and make new friends. There are a great number of services offered. From childcare, to ski lessons, to ski patrol keeping the mountain safe for everyone; visitors should leave the resort knowing that most all of their vacation needs were met. The Snowshoe staff members are friendly and

helpful. They encourage their guests to have a good time, relax and party safely. Service on the mountain is great. Guests feel welcome and important at Snowshoe.

Convenience and Value

Snowshoe is conveniently located in Eastern West Virginia. In these times of expensive fuel and expensive airline travel, many families can save valuable money by driving to their vacation instead of flying. Most people do not fly to Snowshoe as there are no close airports (national, regional or private). The only way to get to Snowshoe is in your car.

For many respondents, Snowshoe is a good value vacation that offers a lot of activities and amenities for the price. The popularity of the resort and the crowds on the weekend illustrate that many people feel that they are getting their money's worth out of their vacation.

Driving Distance

Snowshoe, located in the Eastern part of the state of West Virginia, is relatively close to the major metropolitan areas of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (four hour drive) Washington D.C. (four hour drive), Baltimore, Maryland (five hour drive) and Richmond, Virginia (three hour drive). But Snowshoe's clients come from all over the Southeastern U.S. and the Midwest. While many of their clients can be there within a relatively short drive, some visitors are making up to fourteen hour road trips to come to Snowshoe.

In the data, I read over and over again how close Snowshoe is to peoples' homes. Snowshoe is "nice, affordable, close to where we live." Another describes Snowshoe as a "[c]onvenient driving distance from our home." Being able to drive to Snowshoe

reinforces the perception that a vacation at Snowshoe is affordable. “Better snow than North Carolina. Affordable because I can drive there.” And: “The collection of entertainment and slopes is very impressive, the proximity to North Carolina makes Snowshoe possible for vacation, I am always VERY excited to plan my vacation at Snowshoe.” These respondents from North Carolina both take advantage of the proximity of Snowshoe for their winter vacation.

Young people can make driving to Snowshoe a fun road trip and families know that it is cheaper to drive than to pay for multiple plane tickets. “Snowshoe is the only place I have ever been to to ski. We live in Florida and need a location that we can drive to as there are four of us.” Perhaps one of the greatest values of Snowshoe is that “[i]t has the big resort feel, of Park City or Vail, with the accessibility of West Virginia” and it is a “[p]remier resort within reasonable driving distance.” These respondents feel as if they are getting the same prestige and amenities as these Western resorts or a “premiere resort” without having to pay for plane tickets.

" For east and Southeast, compared to jumping a plane again for another \$1000.00 per couple, we love the fact we can drive up to West "by God" Virginia, and have good slope, good snow, and Great Lodging and Great Service. Ya'll rock. keep it up!!" Again it is evident that the proximity of the resort saves plane fare, and the client doesn't feel as if they have given anything up in the trade. In summary, Snowshoe, for many people, is “easy to get to” and “close to home” and “within driving distance”.

While this respondent felt that it was an asset to have Snowshoe so close, did not particularly feel that it was such a great *value*. I think this person is pointing out that they pay top dollar for a top dollar experience that happens to be close to home. “We go to

Snowshoe because it has the best terrain and snow conditions closest to home. It is NOT the cheapest, but provides the best overall experience closest to home.” From this statement, it might be thought that this family is passing up options that are less expensive and maybe even closer to home in order to vacation at Snowshoe. While this is not about value it is about the convenient location and the quality of their vacation time at Snowshoe.

From my experience, Snowshoe was a three and one half hour drive from home. We often started before the sun came up so that we could be there and ready to ski as the lifts were first opened. My dad and I passed several other ski areas on our travels to Snowshoe. We have actually been to most of the ski areas that are within driving distance of my parents’ home. Snowshoe was worth the drive. Their slopes were longer and more challenging and we could count on Snowshoe having the most trails open of any other local resort.

Many of these respondents are doing the same. They are passing up more local ski areas in order to ski at Snowshoe. We were willing to drive three and one half hours, many of these people cited their driving time to Snowshoe. The greatest of these was a 14 hour drive. “Close to home (4 hrs in good weather), Beautiful, Good Snow, Challenging Trails, Fun Night Life, Great Staff, User-Friendly (planning, navigating resort, finding everything you want), I LOVE THIS PLACE :)” Another respondent felt that being so close to home, four and one half hours away meant that if necessary (or in an emergency) he could be home more quickly than if he went skiing somewhere further from home. Snowshoe is a wonderful place that I can get away and still be able to get home in 4 1/2 hours if needed.” “Snowshoe is within driving distance for me (6 hrs), has a good variety

of slopes; has specials that entice me and friends to come several times a year; ... Great place to visit and ski though!"

These respondents felt that an eight to nine hour drive was an acceptable driving distance for a ski vacation at Snowshoe. "I love it. ... Everyone (staff) we have dealt with has always been helpful, as well as friendly. It is also within driving distance (8 to 9 hours). We have been coming to Snowshoe for 25 years and have watched it develop into a first class resort!" Snowshoe is a "[f]amily oriented, reasonably priced location within driving distance of home (9 hours) that suits both the inexperienced and experienced skier/snowboarder." Even the respondent driving 14 hours to get to Snowshoe felt that the experience was worth the drive "Snowshoe Mountain is a fun, family oriented, friendly resort. Snowshoe is the only "east coast" ski resort that I will go. I drive 14 hours every year to go to Snowshoe, and I plan to continue!"

Some respondents listed from where they drove to get to Snowshoe. There were people from all over the east coast and Midwest. Places that were mentioned specifically were: Virginia Beach, Virginia; Charleston, West Virginia, Washington D.C. Richmond, Virginia; North Carolina; and Tampa, Florida. Probably all of these respondents drive past other ski areas on their way to Snowshoe.

Certainly not all of the respondents were so excited by the drive to Snowshoe. With four family members in the car and a fourteen hour road trip, I can understand why. For some it is just "a long drive" or "a bit far though" to travel.

Highway 219 the primary road into Snowshoe crosses several mountains. It is a curving two lane road. Sometimes there are locals who pass in limited passing areas to get around slower moving resort traffic. Because of the local logging industry, resort

vehicles can get packed up behind a slow moving load of lumber. But for most, I would imagine that the scariest part of driving to Snowshoe occurs when there is snow, ice or rain with which to contend. Perhaps these things inspired this response: “Don't like driving to the slope.” This respondent tells us that the snowy roads are the primary problem with a secondary problem of getting all the way to the resort and staying at the bottom of the mountain at the resort entrance. I understand the frustration of driving all that way, to get stuck, unable to ski just ten minutes drive from the resort. It is a “long drive (especially stressful in bad snowy conditions), a little overpriced at top of mountain (staying at bottom risky alternative due to weather),...”

There is a certain selfishness that captivates skiers when conditions on the mountain are excellent. There is the mindset that you have the resort to yourself, you get to be the “first tracks” in freshly fallen snow. Perhaps this is why this respondent is happy that Snowshoe is a difficult trek. Snowshoe is “cold, good western territory with the best terrain in the south. Hard to get to which is occasionally a plus. Reliable consistent southern snowfall.”

For this family with children, the drive from Florida is not only a long drive but it is also a hassle for them to get the children out of school, plan the drive time and still have a relaxing long weekend at Snowshoe.

Since we live in Florida and have to worry about the kids missing school it is unfortunately hard to get up there any other time than a long holiday weekend As it is we have to take the kids out of school for one day and they are out on the day that we travel back. It is a 13 hr drive for us. We usually come up on Presidents Day weekend because the Snow is usually

more dependable. We end up spending quite a bit for just a long weekend. We choose to spend a little more for the convenience of where the condo is. My parents usually go along with us so it is important that they have a nice place to stay and roam around. We enjoy staying around the Center of the Village the best or Silver Creek. I am single and I take my Niece and Nephew up each year. Taught them to ski. Without flying out West to ski in my mind Snowshoe is the best on the East Coast.

Even with the hassle, Snowshoe is still their best option without flying out west.

Value

I have always perceived *value* to mean that the customer felt like they received more in quality than they paid for in quantity of dollars spent. At the end of the trip did you get less than you paid for, equal to what you paid for or more than what you paid for? In this case the money exchanged for a ski vacation at Snowshoe; many respondents felt that their vacation at Snowshoe was “affordable”, “cost effective” and “a fair value for the dollar”.

For this respondent Snowshoe was “[a] good value. Excellent snow conditions. A drive to location. No midweek crowds. Varied terrain.” Another respondent felt strongly that Snowshoe offered options to skiers as far as value was concerned.

Good variety of terrain, excellent snow-making and grooming, reasonable rates for ski/lodging packages. One of the few ski resorts that still caters to “purists” like me who are there for the skiing, not the nightlife, gourmet dining or 5-star accommodations (although those all exist for those who are interested). Best value for my (limited) skiing dollars.”

This respondent felt that everything was priced very reasonably and met their vacation expectations “Our trip to Snowshoe was wonderful. The snow conditions were perfect and the scenery is gorgeous. Our cabin was perfect for the accommodations we needed and everything was at a great price.”

Many respondents felt that Snowshoe was a great value when they compared it against going other comparable places to ski like the Northeastern ski areas, but they also felt that Snowshoe was expensive for weekend visits. “The best East Coast skiing I've experienced, including New England. Great value midweek in high season. A bit expensive on the weekends.” Another respondent points out the relative value of a midweek trip over a weekend trip.

The resort is the best in the south. It's a great beginner mountain to spend a few days at because of the variety of the terrain. I (and a lot of folks) would only go midweek because it gets way too crowded on weekends. Too much emphasis has been spent on increasing the accommodations rather than terrain, therefore making the resort an overpriced experience to have for say, a week trip. I'd rather go to Copper or even Jackson Hole for the same money.

For many people weekends are the only opportunity they have to go to Snowshoe. With weekend prices being higher and more people on the mountain, it is not a surprise to read that people felt that they were not getting a good value for their money. While the mountain is still convenient for weekend travel Snowshoe is considered a “[c]onvenient snow experience but an expensive one.”

For others, they just wanted a more economical mini vacation ski trip so that they could enjoy Snowshoe more than once per season.

I am very impressed with the quality and number of slopes and lifts. I am also impressed with having lodging facilities so that you can walk to the slopes. However, I wish the skiing experience was more economical so that we could do it more than just once during the season.

This respondent doesn't want to look at his time at Snowshoe as a vacation so much as it is his opportunity to participate in a recreational activity that he enjoys.

A more economical option at Snowshoe would suit his mini vacation desires.

“Not a vacation but a sport I can do in winter. Don't lose the ability, thru high prices, to go several times during a month. Don't want a vacation, want several mini vacations, mid-week couple of times a month.”

Some respondents expressed concern that Snowshoe was getting a reputation for being “pricy” and that their image was becoming somewhat exclusive. “Snowshoe's image was that of an affordable resort that working class could enjoy but as of late, the resort has become more and more less affordable and geared more towards wealthier families.” This exclusivity has other respondents concerned as well. “Snowshoe is a resort of prestige for the east coast considering that the competition can't compare to Snowshoe. Snowshoe sadly also has the image of being pricy and not having very many options on the resort to eat inexpensively.”

This respondent has skied at Snowshoe for many years and she and her family are really feeling the pinch of higher prices that came along with all of the improvements on the mountain.

I love Snowshoe. It's like my second home and its a beautiful place. I've been traveling there almost every weekend of my entire life. Although it used to be a lot better though. The prices used to be a whole lot better and it wasn't so crowded. My boyfriend and I just went ahead and invested in our own camper and just stay a few miles from Snowshoe now b/c your prices are outrageous. Our income isn't low either and for people who come there so often and keep season passes every year, you'd think they would have a deal or two for. Anyways, we finally decided to buy our own camper and stay in it and drive up and down the mountain and also eat in our camper b/c the prices of lunch at the shaver's center is out of control. I just don't understand why the prices are so horrible and then, we used to get a discount with our season passes and now that has also been taken away and my godfather is also a retired man who lives at Snowshoe and actually works on the mountain and the prices have become so high that he has to pack a lunch or go home himself and cook on his lunch break.

As a long time Snowshoe skier myself, I understand her concern and can certainly empathize. I would love to see Snowshoe remain an affordable Southeast location for skiing, but Snowshoe and Intrawest have a business to operate and all the new terrain, new high speed lifts, and other amenities on the mountain are the result of a significant investment on their part. Ultimately neither she nor I want to see Snowshoe founder and return to its bankruptcy days.

One way that Snowshoe tries to meet all of their clientele's financial needs and concerns is to offer less expensive package deals that serve to fill empty rooms during midweek times and early and late season times. Many respondents mentioned these deals as the very best way to vacation at Snowshoe. "Specials make the trip well worth the time and money involved."

These respondents have the luxury of being able to schedule their vacation around the early season prices. In the southeast, even at Snowshoe, this can be a bit risky, especially if you are booking your trip during the summer months. But, with Snowshoe's snowmaking abilities, Snowshoe is their most consistent option for good snow on their early season ski trip. Their response illustrates that this tactic has been successful for their family. "We've never been disappointed with the conditions at Snowshoe. We usually take advantage of the early season discounts to maximize the value of the vacation."

Often Snowshoe will utilize email, regional businesses, and newspapers to advertise vacation deals to fill empty lodges during slow periods. "Snowshoe is within driving distance for me (6 hrs), has a good variety of slopes; has specials that entice me and friends to come several times a year;... Great place to visit and ski though." Because of these specials, people are enticed to come for several vacations throughout the winter season.

One specific deal that was available during the 2003-2004 season was the \$99.00 deal. This deal included midweek accommodations for two nights and two days of lift tickets. "Best in the area. \$99.00 two day deal is great." Another comment on the \$99.00 special was: "a great place-I like your \$99 midweek deals. please have a deal for singles

(most deals require 2 persons)” The suggestion that Snowshoe create a deal for singles is a good one I think. I spent several years as a single skier and feel that singles specials and singles events on the mountain could create an interesting marketing opportunity for Snowshoe. One last comment on the \$99.00 midweek deal was:

A good value with the \$99 value at the Inn @ Snowshoe. Not worth the trip at regular lodging prices. I can fly to Reno, stay in a 4 star casino, and ride the bus to Squaw or Heavenly and ski for the same amount at regular prices. The value at Snowshoe allows me to bring all my children (non-skiers as well as skiers).”

This respondent is probably not alone in having researched what it might cost to travel to other locations. Take note that the trip to Reno and Tahoe did not include being able to bring the whole family. Snowshoe does offer many different value priced packages for those that can wait to make reservations and for those that have the flexibility to come during off peak times for the resort.

Relaxing and Replenishing

The Snowshoe Mountain Resort environment offers more than just a place to go skiing. Many of the respondents developed a more personal response about how a vacation at Snowshoe allows them to relax and get away from the stresses of home and work. They can drop their guard and take time to enjoy nature, blow off some steam and have a little fun.

I know from my personal experiences skiing at Snowshoe that skiing is relaxing and energizing at the same time. When I ski, it is as if that’s all there is; me and the mountain. When you are skiing there are so many things that you need to concentrate on.

I concentrate on technique, control and speed, the conditions of the slope, the people around me, and the beautiful natural scenery. With all of that in my head, I cannot be also thinking about stresses at work. For many years I had a very stressful job and skiing was the one activity where there was so much else to think about that I couldn't think about work. So skiing is, for me, a mental vacation.

There is also a nice communion with nature while you are skiing. I really enjoy all of the snow covered trees, the undulations of the ground under my skis, the sense that I am somewhere that would be impossible to get to any other way. I am at play in nature. I feel like I am harmonious, breathing with the mountain.

Skiing is also something that I share with my dad. Ski trips to Snowshoe are a great time to reconnect with my dad. On the drive there, we get to visit and discuss the things that are going on in our lives. While skiing we have opportunities to talk on the lift and meet new people. Often we will critique each others techniques and practice different skills together. When we ski together, my dad and I are building our relationship and exploring our friendship outside of the father/daughter relationship. This too is very relaxing, enjoyable and fulfilling.

The physical activity that skiing requires allows me to use my body. Skiing allows me to use muscle groups that feel compacted by stress. I can stretch and lean, feel the movement in my body that breaks the tension of the lack of movement that I experience at a desk. It really feels great to move. This physical exertion though is very relaxing. At the end of the day you are physically tired and sleep soundly in your bed and wake up excited to go again. Skiing at Snowshoe restores me.

Relaxation

I was not surprised to see how many of the respondents wrote about similar feelings and experiences. There were many descriptions of Snowshoe that included some reference to relaxation. Snowshoe is “[b]eautiful, peaceful, relaxing, family fun.” Snowshoe is also “[b]eautiful, exciting, fun, welcoming and relaxing.” Or Snowshoe can be “[a]dventurous and fun in a relaxing and comfortable way.”

Snowshoe has “[b]eautiful mountains, slopes and views. [Snowshoe is a] great place to relax, unwind and let off some steam (literally!)” This release of pent up energy is very relaxing and healing both physically and mentally. “I love it. The slopes are great, the scenery is beautiful, and the clean, fresh air invigorates me. I wish I could go there more than one week a year! We have been coming to Snowshoe for 25 years and have watched it develop into a first class resort!” This respondent realizes just how healing Snowshoe can be. They are invigorated and ready to go again and they wish they could return at will during the season to have that sense of recovery more often.

Vacations at Snowshoe are a “[b]eautiful time to get away with the family and just relax and not think about the stresses of work and home life.” This family can use their vacation at Snowshoe as a way to reconnect with family. Yet another respondent recognizes that there is a great opportunity at Snowshoe to connect with friends “I think the image is very positive. I have been to Snowshoe every year for the past 5 years and always had a blast! For the 21-25 age group range I would recommend Snowshoe as a relaxing, fun, exciting weekend adventure with friends!”

Snowshoe is “[r]elaxing - Time to reflect on what is important” Once all of the stuff of life is taking a back seat, this person has the opportunity to reconnect with

himself and reset his moral compass. He has the time and opportunity and the peacefulness of the occasion to re evaluate what is important in his life. Another respondent is also aware of how this time away is important. Snowshoe is “[a] place to get away from everyday work and life; a relaxing, scenic, enjoyable experience.”

This respondent has found that their special place is at the pool after skiing. The immersion into a heated pool or a hot tub feels great on tired muscles, but again there is something more to it. I get the sense that this is not just about physical relaxation; it may also be about mental relaxation. “We have ALWAYS been very pleased with our "Snowshoe" experience. Making Split rock Pool was a huge improvement!!! What a wonderful relaxing place in the afternoon to go for a swim, and whirlpool break.”

Getting Away from it All

Snowshoe is also a great place to go to just get away. It is “a nice quiet peaceful place to get away from it all.” Snowshoe is “very peaceful, and even my non-skiing husband just likes being up there.” Snowshoe is also a “[f]un environment to get away from the everyday stress and have a good time.”

This is more evidence that Snowshoe offers something more than just a place for skiing, Snowshoe offers escape. “I love snowshoe. It's an escape from the drones of the world. It's a place where someone can go to relax in a beautiful atmosphere.” There is a great opportunity at Snowshoe to experience nature and that too can be very healing. “Snowshoe Mountain is Heavenly - a great place to unwind and be closer to nature or winter wonderland.” And Snowshoe is a “[b]eautiful setting, very elegant, trendy, [I] feel very close the wonders of the World. [I have a] sense of freedom from everyday hassles.”

This family put the family vacation decision in the hand of their children, with the option of Disney World or Snowshoe, they chose Snowshoe. “A great family get away. We have been coming to Snowshoe for 8 years (since the children were 5 & 6). We gave them the choice of going back to Disney World or Snowshoe; they said they would much rather go back to Snowshoe. We love our yearly vacations there.”

For this person Snowshoe offers an opportunity to get away to something totally different from their home near the beach. “I’m from West Virginia originally. I’m now in South Carolina. My Husband and I just love the atmosphere of the mountain and all the activities. It’s a big change from the sand at the beach.”

This comment from a respondent summarizes well the sense of being away at Snowshoe. “Snowshoe is a beautiful winter getaway. The overall atmosphere is friendly and peaceful, like everyone is family.”

Compatibility

Many respondents wrote about how Snowshoe works for them. The respondents come to Snowshoe with a purpose and Snowshoe is the appropriate place for their needs. This respondent feels that Snowshoe is a great place to go away to and that they are working to make sure that they provide an environment that is supportive to his and other snow enthusiasts needs. “Being from the south Snowshoe is a nice getaway, since I usually only have 3 or 4 days to do a snowboarding trip. I think their heart is truly with the outdoor winter enthusiasts.”

Some respondents utilize Snowshoe as a warm up opportunity to prepare for the steeper and more challenging trails out west. This offers a great opportunity for these skiers to make sure that their gear still fits and works, also there is the opportunity to

brush up on techniques that haven't been utilized for nine months. "It's the best in the area for our tune up before we go out west to ski." This respondent utilizes Snowshoe for both warm up before going out west and as a cool down at the end of the season. Snowshoe is "convenient, dependable, relaxing, and good warm up and cool down session for the winter season."

This respondent also communicates his "use" for Snowshoe. He likes the most difficult slopes and it's a necessity for him. "It is an "at least once a year 'must have' trip." It has become a tradition for me. I come to ski the hard parts of the mountain and then enjoy the great dining at night."

"I enjoy skiing at Snowshoe because of the entire skiing experience. The view from the summit is spectacular and the trails through the woods, are also quite nice. Snowshoe has a good selection of ski trails, so it's hard to get bored. The snow conditions are usually the best in our region which may be the most important thing when planning a vacation in advance." For this respondent, the climate and snow consistency suit his purposes. It is nice when planning a trip in July to feel that you have a good chance of getting to ski in some good conditions. This is a concern for anyone planning a ski vacation. Even if the vacation is going to be in the Rocky Mountains where natural snow and cold temperatures are more predictable, there can still be warmer than average temperatures or unseasonably dry winters.

As a more advanced skier, myself, I still love to go to Snowshoe and work on different techniques to improve my balance and control. Snowshoe is a great warm up location for the ski season. For me Snowshoe is also something that my dad and I can do

together on just a day's notice while I am home visiting. It is an opportunity to go have an adventure and make up for lost time with my dad.

These responses illustrate that Snowshoe can be more than just a vacation; it can serve a purpose for its visitors. Because Snowshoe offers so many activities and events, they are able to meet many people's needs. But it is interesting to see that these respondents have created their own Snowshoe vacation purpose and that their purpose is fulfilled somewhere in that environment.

Extent

I always felt that being at Snowshoe was like being in a whole different world. In some respects, Snowshoe is a whole different world. The town that is Snowshoe was built entirely to support the skiers and their vacation. Snowshoe is located in a rural area, and once you are settled at Snowshoe, there is no reason to leave. They have every thing you need. Snowshoe is “[a] self-sustaining, mountain-top village, isolated from our crazy world!” Also when you look out toward the horizon there are very few houses that are visible and certainly no towns. In short, visitors to Snowshoe are experiencing a “winter oasis” in the middle of nowhere.

People visiting Snowshoe feel as if they have found a whole other world where even cell phones cannot penetrate. “It truly was like we were in another world, no phones, beautiful scenery.” And “relaxing getaway, I even like the fact that my cell phone does not work there” There were many references to Snowshoe being so separate from their work day lives that it was “[I]like another world when you climb the mountain” Even though you are at a resort and you can choose to participate in all the fun, you can still have a sense of peace and solitude. “I like the relative solitude you can find even

though it is a resort area.” The Snowshoe environment beckons to people who need a break It is “[a] peaceful, inviting Mountain that lures you to stay there and not go back to the "real world"!”

Many respondents felt that their time at Snowshoe was an opportunity to feel close to nature. “The Snowshoe mountain image would be described as laid-back, scenic, friendly, close to nature and yet amenities at reach, and most of all a fresh change of atmosphere.” And “Beautiful setting, very elegant, trendy, feel very close the wonders of the World. Sense of freedom from everyday hassles.”

These examples represent just how separate Snowshoe can feel. The views spread as far as the eye can see. The horizon is miles away and the crush and chaos of the big Eastern metropolises cannot be seen, heard or felt from Snowshoe. When you visit Snowshoe, you are transported to another world.

Fun

Solitude is important to some but for others, they want Snowshoe to support their need to let their hair down and drop their cares and have fun. So many respondents referred to Snowshoe as “fun” that I had to look it up in the dictionary. Fun is defined as “what provides amusement or enjoyment; specifically: playful often boisterous action or speech.” (<http://www.merriamwebster.com/cgi-bin/dictionary>). So these respondents enjoy playing at Snowshoe. Snowshoe is “family fun” for one person and “great fun and lots to do” for another and “fun, excitement, thrills value and awesome” for yet another.

Fun at Snowshoe can be about sharing with family and friends, like these respondents. Snowshoe has “snow covered slopes and wonderful accommodations where we can have fun with family and friends.” For another respondent Snowshoe provides

“good snow, good slopes, good lodging, and fun times every year with friends.” This respondent’s joy is in seeing the kids have fun and their fellowship with friends. “Kids have a blast and many of our friends vacation here as well.”

I really enjoyed this respondents struggle to put into words the image that he has of Snowshoe. “It’s very hard to describe Snowshoe! Its overwhelming, pristine a little bit preppy and a whole lot of fun! Snowshoe is it’s own experience! FUN!!!”

In my experience Snowshoe is a great place to have fun. There are so many opportunities for fun on this mountain. There is certainly a fun time to be had skiing, but there are also many opportunities for fun built into the activities and entertainment that is offered on the mountain. Whatever your idea of fun is, Snowshoe offers many venues and opportunities for fun to break out.

Individual Response to the Environment

Snowshoe is consistently voted the number one ski resort in the Southeast. In my experiences, Snowshoe was the resort we went to the most. Therefore, I have many feelings about Snowshoe. It is the best place to ski in the Southeast. I have many memories of ski trips to Snowshoe. I’ve made trips to Snowshoe with both family and friends. We have stories about Snowshoe. In this, the respondents and I have something in common.

Many respondents expressed that Snowshoe was their favorite place to ski. Better than all the rest. “I love this place it is my favorite mountain!” “We love Snowshoe, it is our favorite place” You can hear the exuberance in their responses as they heap accolades on this environment. “Wonderful! The mountain is spectacular and we loved every

minute of our trip.” And “Best damn ski spot south of New England and East of the Mississippi!”

Here is a respondent who emphasizes the consistency of their great experiences at Snowshoe “We have ALWAYS been very pleased with our "Snowshoe" experience. Our kids love all the activities available to them, and we love being able to ski in and out of our condo. Making Split rock Pool was a huge improvement!!! What a wonderful relaxing place in the afternoon to go for a swim, and whirlpool break.”

These respondents who listed the reasons that they love to come to Snowshoe followed up with an exuberant exclamation of love. “Close to home (4 hrs in good weather), Beautiful, Good Snow, Challenging Trails, Fun Night Life, Great Staff, User-Friendly (planning, navigating resort, finding everything you want), I LOVE THIS PLACE :)”

“The mountain is great. The improvements over the past few years have given Snowshoe the upper hand in the ski resort industry. WE LOVE IT UP THERE.”

Snowshoe is the total experience for this family. For them, there is nothing better than having the freedom to forget their car and fly off down a ski slope right out of their condominium door! “Snowshoe has it all. Beautiful scenery, great ski conditions, and great location. We prefer Snowshoe over other locations because we prefer the setup where everything you need is at the top of the mountain. You drive to the top of the mountain the day you arrive, you park your vehicle and everything you need or want to do is pretty much within walking distance. And in the morning you leave your room and ski down the mountain!!!! There's nothing better than that!”

Time and time again, the refrain is that Snowshoe is the best. “Snowshoe is by far the best skiing experience in West Virginia -- the quality of the slopes, lodging, amenities, and scenery FAR exceed the vacations I've had at other resorts. Snowshoe is the total winter package. I won't ever plan a trip to any other resort.” This respondent has been to other resorts and snowshoe isn't just better than they are it surpasses them by far.

This respondent gives Snowshoe the highest possible honors from their perspective. “Beautiful, picturesque, unbelievable skiing, the best in the world.” It is evident that many people share the idea that Snowshoe is the best skiing, lodging, recreation, get away location in the Southeastern United States.

One of the results of thinking that Snowshoe is the best place to go for a winter vacation is returning to visit many times. I too have returned to Snowshoe many times over the years. Many respondents shared either the number of years that they have been coming to Snowshoe. Others talked about how they had recommended Snowshoe to all of their friends. Not only have I recommended Snowshoe to others, I've actually brought them with me. It is exciting to have a special vacation time and place to look forward to every year. The connection that people feel to Snowshoe will be evident in these responses.

This response shows where that attraction to Snowshoe can start. The 2004 season was the season to which the survey referred. So, at the time of this response this family had only been to Snowshoe once. “2004 was our first visit. I was in awe as we approached the mountain--beautiful--I was pleased with the variety of slopes, the lifts were accessible with short/no waits, and the ski out direct from the lodge was so convenient. All of us, including my teenage sons and their friends who came with us, are

already talking about coming back this spring break.” It’s exciting to see people connect to Snowshoe so quickly and with such enthusiasm.

“Snowshoe is the only place I have ever been to to ski. We live in Florida and need a location that we can drive to as there are four of us.” These respondents all pass by ski resorts and other winter time vacation possibilities on their way to Snowshoe. The first response above indicates that they have never been anywhere else to ski. This respondent expresses that they will only go to Snowshoe plus they have to drive 14 hours to get there. “Snowshoe Mountain, is a fun, family oriented, friendly resort. Snowshoe is the only "east coast" ski resort that I will go. I drive 14hours every year to go to Snowshoe, and I plan to continue!”

This individual who, based on the referral of friends, bypasses the closer resorts of North Carolina to have a vacation at Snowshoe. “I am from NC & have never visited the NC Mts. to ski based on what I've heard about them in comparison to Snowshoe. We really stay at Silver Creek & prefer that ski area & lodging. We recommend it to everyone & each year we have been able to increase our group. Everyone we take wants to come back. It's wonderful!” Here is yet another respondent driving past the more local resorts to visit Snowshoe. “We truly love the Snowshoe experience. The variety of slopes and lodging. It is an 8hr. drive for us and worth the extra travel time. We would rather travel to Snowshoe than ski resorts that are closer to us. The improvements over the last few years have made the whole experience more enjoyable.”

Some Snowshoe veterans shared their desire to return to Snowshoe. Snowshoe is ‘[a] great family get away. We have been coming to Snowshoe for 8 years (since the children were 5 & 6). We gave them the choice of going back to Disney World or

Snowshoe; they said they would much rather go back to Snowshoe. We love our yearly vacations there. For this family Snowshoe is more fun than Disney World! “Snowshoe is the greatest place on the east coast. It is close, and the quality is great. Everyone on top of the mountain is extremely friendly. I've been to Snowshoe every year for the past 5 years and I plan on making this year number 6.” This five year veteran is eagerly anticipating planning year six at Snowshoe.

“We have skied in Utah and Snowshoe rates better than that. The variety of slopes/runs and climate is awesome and it is closer to home. The staff is family oriented and friendly. We have been to Snowshoe now three times and look forward to coming again this winter. We never tire of our trip to Snowshoe.” This family perceives Snowshoe as an even better vacation than going out west. It would appear that while proximity is important the family-like connection that they experience at Snowshoe is what made them really want to return to Snowshoe. The previous respondent never tires of Snowshoe and this respondent is very excited to plan his next trip. “The collection of entertainment and slopes is very impressive, the proximity to North Carolina makes Snowshoe possible for vacation, I am always VERY excited to plan my vacation at Snowshoe.”

These Snowshoe veterans give us a real example of their personal connection and desire to return to Snowshoe. This first response expresses some concern about the pattern of growth at other resorts and how Snowshoe will handle their own growth.

"Forever Wild" is what I believed always described Snowshoe. We have always loved the relaxed environment and most of all the beauty of the location. We have been traveling to Snowshoe (winter and summer) for

the past 24 years, so you know we have seen quite a few changes on the mountain. The changes are good....although (like Jackson Hole) my fear is that the desire and push for growth is going to take away from what was the natural charm of the mountain.

This respondent, a 25 year veteran of Snowshoe, has been there through the changes and appreciates the direction of growth and change at Snowshoe and definitely expresses a personal connection to Snowshoe.

I love it. The slopes are great, the scenery is beautiful, and the clean, fresh air invigorates me. I wish I could go there more than one week a year! Everyone (staff) we have dealt with has always been helpful, as well as friendly. It is also within driving distance (8 to 9 hours). We have been coming to Snowshoe for 25 years and have watched it develop into a first class resort!

Not all veterans were all that happy about the changes at Snowshoe. Even more so in this respondent's criticism we see the strong emotional connection that this person feels to the Snowshoe environment. It is possible to feel their concern at being left out of the process.

I first visited Snowshoe in 1988, so I have seen it change. Some things [have changed] for the better and some for the worse. Don't forget the people who have bought lift ticket over the years, who can't afford to stay in a slope side condo. Daily parking has become a nightmare. Having to park and ride a bus to the slope isn't fun. Bring back close daily parking!!!!

Snowshoe is a great place to have memorable experiences. Many respondents mentioned the importance of memories at Snowshoe for their families. Snowshoe is a “safe place to take our kids! beautiful sights! fantastic memories!!!” “A great place to build lasting memories with family.” Additionally Snowshoe has “[g]reat conditions, slopes for everyone, plenty of fun things to do with the family at night. A place to make great memories.” Another respondent mentions the photographs that have become souvenirs of memories at Snowshoe. “The scenery including the Village was beautiful. We have beautiful photos of family fun, scenery, and wildlife.” Here is another Snowshoe veteran: “Have been going to Snowshoe since the mid 70s and love the memories.”

The memories and stories that people told about Snowshoe were some of my favorite responses. In these glimpses I am able to mentally be a part of their experiences. Here are the stories elicited from great Snowshoe moments.

Our image of Snowshoe stays with us all year. It has been some of the best "family time" we have ever spent with our two teenage boys.

Beautiful scenery as we ski & snowboard; We love staying at Allegheny Springs overlooking the slope; the staff are courteous and helpful; it's great to go to the Junction for brunch and the Red Fox for dinner (our absolute favorite dining experience)

In this response we can see where Snowshoe is an important backdrop to some of their best family moments.

I choose to take 3 other families to snow shoe because I used to ski there in college and hadn't been back since. I love the fact that everything is at

the top of the mountain and you ski down. I was a little disappointed in the pricing because of school we came over President's weekend and it was very expensive. I'd like to come back if I can find a better deal.

There is a reminiscent quality to this response where this person must have had fond college memories in order to bring three other families to the resort with him. And this response is reminiscent of visits during high school. Again there is the passing on of those memories and feelings about Snowshoe to others. "I have visited Snowshoe since high school and love it. I bring a boy scout group so that they can experience how different skiing is at Perfect North or Paoli vs. Snowshoe."

Because skiing is a comparably difficult and frustrating sport to try to learn, where you learn how to ski is important. This is the place where you fell down until you were black and blue, where you tumbled in the snow and got cold and wet, and ultimately the place where you got down your first hill without falling. A cause for great celebration! This "young" family has memories of the children learning to ski at Snowshoe. "A 'young' family friendly place. We love the skiing and snow tubing. Our children learned to ski at Snowshoe when they were 3 and 4 1/2." This individual also has those sorts of memories: "Snowshoe is where I learned to ski. I like the variety and number of slopes. The mountain and views are beautiful. The accommodations are nice and affordable."

This story about getting to see snow and learning to ski for a Christmas present illustrates what an exciting and fun place this can be encouraging families to create memories together. I think this was a very memorable Christmas for this family.

The initial phone contact last year with knowledgeable vacation planners was a godsend. We wanted to give the children something special for Christmas - snow! She set them up for all the right schools and events. The room at Silver Creek was perfect. The tubing hill was a primary reason for bringing our 11 yr old grandson and 13 yr old daughter. I was very impressed with the schools as well. Snowshoe was family friendly, first timer perfect and well run and organized.

For this family, trips to Snowshoe have become a family tradition. This family has memories of Snowshoe as a couple and now they are sharing this special place and activity with their children.

In our family it's become a tradition. My husband and I have been skiing here for many years and now we bring the kids. Snow conditions (the fact that you have a reliable source of snow) and scenery (including in that the sense that the area isn't over-developed) are probably two key factors that have kept us returning each year. The convenience and variety of lodging on the mountain is also important. And we live only 5-6 hours away. And another important factor is that the lines are not long -- midweek is a true delight. But then, we generally come either before Christmas or in the spring to avoid the crowds, the cold, and, mostly 'cause we're cheap ;-).

This response is so close to my own Snowshoe experience that my dad could have been the author. My family too goes many other places for skiing but we still go to Snowshoe and still have fond memories of our visits there.

We love Snowshoe. We have been visiting annually for just about 20 years. Snowshoe is the best skiing we can get to by car and we have always enjoyed our trips. Crowds are only a problem when there are limited slopes open due to conditions. Snowshoe is very special to our family. Our kids have grown up to be skiers and snowboarders and it's thanks to Snowshoe. We do go out West once a year now for the past five years but we still love Snowshoe.

This last story is a bit reminiscent of college days. Jumping in the car on a whim and racing to Snowshoe for a weekend of skiing and parties.

Spruce Lodge, a room with 4 bunks. Me and the boys, great snow and usually a blizzard on the drive in. Hop in behind a snow plow so we can drive to the top on Friday, and ski like maniacs all week end. Pizza and beer!!! See ya in February.

Another personal response to the environment is to feel so comfortable there that when you go there you feel as if you are coming home. I have long thought of Snowshoe as my home resort. It was the place that I could get to the easiest and always felt the most comfortable. This sense of home is evident in many of the responses. Snowshoe is, after all, in “wild wonderful West Virginia, I love it, awesome skiing and close-knit homey feel.” Snowshoe is “a home away from home. [Where I] feel like part of the family.” “To me it is a clean humble, makes you feel at home type of resort.”

There were many expressions of home within the responses. This respondent used to live in West Virginia, so his trips to Snowshoe allow him to also visit the state of his childhood memories. “When I go to Snowshoe, I feel like I'm going home. I grew up in

WV and now I'm a flatlander so the mountains will always hold that special feeling for me.” Another expression of Snowshoe as a second home comes from this respondent: “I love Snowshoe. It's like my second home and it's a beautiful place. I've been traveling there almost every weekend of my entire life.” That is a lot of trips to Snowshoe!

This family is able to construct a sense of home in their favorite lodge.

Overall the scenery is wonderful - not quite Colorado but a nice diversion from flat Florida. Mt. Lodge is our home away from home - we love its casualness and feeling of spaciousness because the kids can come and go as they please - the staff is super friendly and helpful.

This person has had so many great times at Snowshoe that returning after being away for the summer is like a homecoming.

I come to Snowshoe with Ski World from Virginia Beach about nine times a season and on my own overnight a couple of additional times because, for me, it is the best skiing within driving distance of my home. The scenery is beautiful, the people are friendly and helpful, the grooming is great and the terrain is varied and challenging. When I come back after being away for the summer, it feels like coming home.

These expressions of Snowshoe as a second home or visits to Snowshoe feeling like a homecoming show both a sense of belongingness and care for the Snowshoe environment.

In the same vein of feeling as if you have a home at Snowshoe is also having a sense of ownership at Snowshoe. Snowshoe is “upside down; fun; our mountain.” Because condominiums can be purchased as well as rented, it makes sense that many

people feel as if they own a part of Snowshoe. After falling several hundred times on a ski slope I quite often feel like I own a piece of the mountain!

Snowshoe, “[i]t’s just a great place to spend time with family and friends.” Many people wrote about how they have referred people to Snowshoe, or brought friends or family members to enjoy Snowshoe. “I have been skiing at Snowshoe since it opened and have always had a pleasant experience. This is something I have shared with my 3 children.”

After our friends and family come to visit Snowshoe, they want to come again and again, after several years it becomes a tradition for that group. Repeated experiences bring with them familiarity with the resort.

From where I live in Tampa, FL, Snowshoe is the closest, worthwhile ski resort which I can drive to. It has become a tradition for my friends and me as a yearly trip. We are familiar with the mountain and village areas, so it almost has a local feel.

Another group of friends are able to enjoy the fellowship and camaraderie of enjoying Snowshoe together. “Great snow, ten second lift lines, variety of trails and at the end of the day in the hot tub with six friends swapping stories.” Snowshoe is “[e]xciting, refreshing and memorable times with friends.” And yet another group of friends, this comment isn’t very complimentary of the lodging, but very complimentary of the experience of togetherness at Snowshoe.

My group likes the price I arrange for them but wish I could offer them something better than Shamrock. Overall, we have a great time of skiing and fellowship and the perceived shortcomings of the resort fade quickly when we hit the slopes.

Families also enjoy the opportunities that Snowshoe offers them to share memories, recreation and fun times with each other.

Every day at Snowshoe feels like Christmas as a child. The anticipation and excitement of the whole experience brings my family together as we share the adventure of the Mountain and village. We make a trip once each month in the winter and each trip seems to get better.

Here is another response from a family who likes to share their experiences at Snowshoe.

“We love this place, our kids and family enjoy alot of time together, I am excited to return - our image is one of great fun and lots to do.”

Some people even share an acquaintance with a stranger while riding on the lift.

“We’ve found that Snowshoe is a friendly place where people love to chat on the lifts.”

There are many opportunities to take part in sharing the experience of Snowshoe, even with a stranger on the lift.

Unfortunately not all emotion in the responses was about loving Snowshoe. Some responses were quite disappointed or even angry. These responses, even though they are negative, exhibit their author’s emotional response to Snowshoe. Here is the response of one person who feels that Snowshoe has moved away from catering to day only skiers.

Snowshoe has forgotten about the WV resident who wants to day ski.

Have made great strides in improvements on the mountain, but the parking is terrible. Snowshoe doesn't care about day trippers or WV residents.

You just want the DC / big city peeps.

Another disappointed Snowshoe visitor had a terrible time on his trip, was not satisfied with his treatment, and feels like a captive audience to Snowshoe.

Stock yard sale. Location, Location, Location... You use that against your customers. I've experienced your overcharged resort for the past three years. It amazes me that you can charge what you want, provide sub standard properties, and people still pay for it. We paid over \$3500.00 for a trip during Christmas a few years ago. The 4 room condo we received was not fit for prison inmates. The phone didn't work, the TV didn't work, it was dirty, and my brother's truck was robbed. We complained to one of the staff managers about our service. He listened to our complaints, but didn't do anything he said he was going to do. I've got it on my video tape if you want to see for your self. Given the choice I would go somewhere else, but it's just too easy to drive to Snowshoe. So call me stupid!

Both respondents in this case seem angry because they care. They feel as Snowshoe has done them a disservice.

Snowshoe is a special place that elicits both positive and negative emotional reactions from its visitors. People visit and share many of their experiences with friends and families. As they have more experiences at Snowshoe, they feel more at home there often developing a feeling of ownership. These responses illustrate a deeper relationship than those responses that simply laud the skiing at Snowshoe.

Brand Awareness and Reputation

I grew up hearing about Snowshoe. Even before I was very interested in skiing I had heard of Snowshoe. For the area that I lived, Snowshoe was the resort to go to. My dad and I didn't start skiing together until I graduated from college and Snowshoe is the

resort we went to the most. We did go to other ski areas, but Snowshoe held our attention for a great number of years.

Reputation

Some people knew about Snowshoe Mountain Resort by its reputation. Others were familiar with the old tag line of “Island in the Sky” and some were aware of the tag line under Intrawest operation, “Forever Wild”. Many knew that Intrawest was the parent company of Snowshoe and were familiar with the Intrawest brand.

Two respondents specifically referred to the Snowshoe reputation. One was quite satisfied with Snowshoe and enjoyed the referral.

I am from NC & have never visited the NC Mts. to ski based on what I've heard about them in comparison to Snowshoe. We really stay at Silver Creek & prefer that ski area & lodging. We recommend it to everyone & each year have been able to increase our group. Everyone we take wants to come back. It's wonderful!” Not only did they agree with Snowshoe’s reputation they are actively recruiting for Snowshoe. They recommend it to everyone and all the people they have brought with them also want to return.

This Snowshoe referral was not as satisfied. While it would appear that they enjoyed the skiing, they were not very happy with staying in the older lodge.

I heard you were the best central eastern sea board resort. The slopes were good but my lodge was not the greatest (the one that is at the check in area). It was on the slope though and we could ski down and lift up to the main shopping and restaurant area. The room had an old feel.

It is hard to know where these respondents heard of Snowshoe's reputation. It could have been through word or mouth through friends or acquaintances or they may have heard about Snowshoe on the internet or through ski magazines.

Brand Awareness

Intrawest owns and operates Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Many of Snowshoe's veteran clients remember Snowshoe prior to the Intrawest acquisition. These respondents recognize what Intrawest has tried to do for Snowshoe. Snowshoe has developed "excellent facilities since Intrawest began operations" and it is now the "best terrain in the south east. Intrawest!!!"

Intrawest has been great for Snowshoe. The addition of high speed Quad lifts and adding a second run on the West side of the mountain are most noticeable. Lower Shay's is a great run; however it typically has too much ice to be enjoyable by all (March'04 being the exception for good conditions). Snowshoe will continue to be my preferred destination as practice for late season Rocky Mountain adventures. Copper (Colorado) is our preferred destination.

Another respondent also probably a veteran Snowshoe skier is concerned about the changes that are occurring at Snowshoe.

I have always thought it was a cool, laid back place to go on the east coast, I enjoyed the value of staying at Spruce since we are either boarding or out eating and visiting. I hope Intrawest doesn't steal an image from snowshoe that so many have come to recognize and appreciate.

Intrawest is one of the ski resort developers that create a village atmosphere to support the lodging and activities at all of their properties. This respondent doesn't want Snowshoe to lose its original flavor to become just another Intrawest resort property. Another respondent, familiar with the current Snowshoe tag line, "Forever Wild" illustrates why he thinks that is an appropriate description of the experience at Snowshoe.

"Forever Wild" is what I believed always described Snowshoe. We have always loved the relaxed environment and most of all the beauty of the location. We have been traveling to Snowshoe (winter and summer) for the past 24 years, so you know we have seen quite a few changes on the mountain. The changes are good....although (like Jackson Hole) my fear is that the desire and push for growth is going to take away from what was the natural charm of the mountain.

This respondent also communicates some concern about the rate and direction of development at Snowshoe through the Intrawest direction. They are concerned about losing the charm of Snowshoe.

West Virginia, where Snowshoe is located, is also cited as one of the reasons people go to Snowshoe. "I love West Virginia, it is in West Virginia." West Virginia has the tag line of Wild and Wonderful" that shows up in their advertising. "The epitome of "wild and wonderful" - rugged and modern - a great destination for any age - scenery is beautiful, restaurants are one-of-a-kind, people are friendly - what more could you ask for?" Snowshoe, with its 11,000 acres, and endless views does appear to be a wild and wonderful location. "Wild wonderful West Virginia, I love it, awesome skiing and close-knit homey feel." West Virginia does have a reputation for being a place of warm

hospitality. Snowshoe is a "a world-class resort that's close to home and frosted with West Virginia hospitality" And finally we read that Snowshoe has "rustic West Virginia beauty". Speaking of beauty, this respondent also referred to the impact of West Virginia's reputation. "I know the Beauty of WV and I was sure to have a good time skiing." There is one last reference to the hospitality of this particular region. "A beautiful mountaintop resort nestled in the warm embrace of Appalachia."

Uniqueness

There are aspects about Snowshoe that are truly unique ("unique, scenic, exhilarating") that allow it to stand out from among other area resorts. The most unique feature of Snowshoe is the upside down nature of Snowshoe's development. Most all western resorts have the development at the base of the mountain. Many of the respondents referred to the upside down nature of the mountain. "Intriguing....ski from the top instead of the bottom...."

Some respondents felt that the upside down mountain was more convenient while others found it a little bit difficult to get used to. "The upside down mountain is great and convenient with children." "It was nice - small - busy on the slopes - difficult to get used to everything being at the top of the mountain instead of at the bottom as out in the West! Family friendly - close to lodging at all times."

Similarity to Western Resorts

Perhaps because Snowshoe is the best skiing in the area by far, many respondents compared Snowshoe to the western Rocky Mountain ski resort areas. For many, this comparison was a compliment, “western skiing quality resort at an eastern location” although for others the comparison is not so complimentary. “Trying to be like the western resorts.” This comment just doesn’t seem to be very positive.

Respondents felt that Snowshoe’s image was “[g]etting Better. {Snowshoe} feels more like a western resort.” They also described Snowshoe as “almost Colorado”. Many like Snowshoe because “It has the big resort feel, of Park City or Vail, with the accessibility of West Virginia”. Another compared Snowshoe to being at Aspen, Colorado.

A city on top of the mountain. The Aspen of the east coast is how I describe it to people who have never been. A city that is still forever wild with beautiful scenery. A destination for singles or family alike. I have been coming since I was single and a freshman in college and now I have a family that I bring to enjoy the mountain as I have in the past.

Another comparison to skiing out west comes from a respondent who used to live in Utah and ski there. This respondent feels that Snowshoe can compete on the same level.

We have skied in Utah and Snowshoe rates better than that. The variety of slopes/runs and climate is awesome and it is closer to home. The staff is family oriented and friendly. We have been to Snowshoe now three times and look forward to coming again this winter. We never tire of our trip to Snowshoe.

Snowshoe is an “upscale” resort of “prestige” for the Southeast. Respondents seemed to like that they could have a western skiing experience without having to fly all the way out west. “Without flying out West to ski in my mind Snowshoe is the best on the East Coast.”

We feel that Snowshoe is as close to skiing out west as possible on the East Coast in terms of the "village", the trails, the lifts, the accommodations, and the whole experience in general.

These respondents are not comparing the skiing quality so much as they are comparing the look and feel of the Snowshoe development and how it compares to western resorts. “Upscale resort similar to resorts out west. Family friendly and a great place for kids to learn. Nice trails and a good family atmosphere.” And “The image has become excellent and has gained the appearance of a western resort. Snow grooming is excellent and the people who work there are always pleasant and helpful.”

This last comment on Snowshoe’s comparison to western resorts comes from a West Virginia local. “I grew up in Richwood and I have seen Snowshoe's growth through time and it has been very positive. The resort has a Rockies feel to it now which is very pleasant and comfortable...”

Destination Resort

Many respondents wrote comments about Snowshoe as a resort property. These comments ranged from compliments on things that Snowshoe does very well and others offered suggestions for improvement. Snowshoe was described as

“classy”, “prestigious” and “premier” by some and as “homey”, “laid back” and “casual” by others.

These respondents felt that the resort at Snowshoe had a good “ski town” feel. “Good "ski town" feel, typically really cold and snowy (which is good).” And “I was pleasantly surprised by the ski resort feel of Snowshoe. The resort was much bigger than I anticipated, the terrain was pretty big, and the quality of the snow was good.”

“Snowshoe has definitely moved from a ski mountain to a destination resort.” “It's the total package!” Snowshoe is an “[i]nclusive resort with everything you need at your fingertips. Some amenities are expensive - such as groceries.” Snowshoe is a “[b]eautiful resort, well planned, quality and good variety of accommodations, complete resort.” These respondents all point out what a comprehensive resort property Snowshoe has become.

Commercialization

Not everyone is pleased with all of the development at Snowshoe. Snowshoe is described by one respondent as “the Disneyworld of ski vacations.” Some feel that the mountain is becoming over developed and is losing the feel of the original Snowshoe ski area. Snowshoe development is “professional, however the new construction although tastefully done, negates the nostalgic feel I use to love. ie Spruce Lodge.” Two respondents expressed concern at the commercialization of Snowshoe. Snowshoe is in danger of becoming “more crowded, commercialized, shopping friendly and skier unfriendly, need to put your money into expanding terrain and not getting more expensive accommodations on the mountain that is making it too crowded . . .” And “Pleasant, good scenery, but way too commercial.”

As a long time snowshoe skier, I was a bit surprised to find a Starbucks Coffee Shop and a Rocky Mountain Chocolate store. So in some ways I agree with the negative aspects of commercialism at Snowshoe. Intrawest and Snowshoe are torn between trying to keep the “feeling” of the original Snowshoe, but also trying to provide amenities to suit a wide range of customers. As destination resorts and cruises become more popular as vacation destinations, it is important for Snowshoe to be able to compete in that market.

Overall Atmosphere

Snowshoe’s clients have many different opinions about the atmosphere at Snowshoe. For many years, I felt that Snowshoe had a reputation as a party place. From these responses, it is evident that many people feel as if Snowshoe is more family oriented than anything else.

Family Oriented

Snowshoe was most often described by the respondents as placing an emphasis on family fun. Many of the alternative activities are geared toward families. The addition of Split Rock pool also helped to develop the family friendly image. Snowshoe has a “[g]reat variety of slopes, [it is a] family friendly, fun place to go!” Snowshoe is described as “family oriented”, “very kid friendly” and “a family atmosphere”

One respondent is willing to drive 14 hours for the family atmosphere at Snowshoe.

Snowshoe Mountain is a fun, family oriented, friendly resort. Snowshoe is the only "east coast" ski resort that I will go to. I drive 14hours every year to go to Snowshoe, and I plan to continue!

This respondent felt that Snowshoe was family oriented because it was a good location for kids to learn how to ski. “Upscale resort similar to resorts out west. Family friendly and a great place for kids to learn. Nice trails and a good family atmosphere.” Another respondent felt that snowshoe was family oriented because of the range of prices available and the range of slopes.

Family oriented, reasonably priced location within driving distance of home (9 hours) that suits both the inexperienced and experienced skier/snowboarder. There is something in every price range whether it is accommodations, dining options, or extracurricular activities.

Another respondent felt that the size of Snowshoe, its compact quality, made it a great place for families. “It was very family oriented. It was not too big of a resort which I liked.”

Several respondents felt that Snowshoe was family friendly because there are such a variety of slopes for people to ski. Snowshoe slopes can suit everyone from beginner to expert. “Very family oriented. Lots of great skiing, fun blue runs, crowded green runs, very quaint beautiful village.” This response sums up the family oriented features of Snowshoe Mountain Resort:

The ski slopes are perfect for both our children, who are just learning to ski, & for my husband & I who are experienced skiers. The village experience is the perfect family atmosphere. All of the restaurants, shops and the pool are an easy walk from the Mountain Lodge where we like to stay. The Mountain Lodge is great for children - the game room, the movies, etc. The week we spend at Snowshoe each year flies by to fast!

Party Oriented

Apparently I wasn't the only person who thought that Snowshoe had a party image. Perhaps over the years Snowshoe has changed courses to become more family oriented, there are still some people who come here to enjoy the party scene.

Nice family resort but also a place where the "guys" can go out and party as well. It's a place where you can take the family or a place where you can go to party. Not too many places like it.

So perhaps Snowshoe can be both a family oriented ski area and a cool party place. Snowshoe has non-crowded slopes, ski in ski out lodging, [and a] big college party scene." These guys are definitely finding the party scene at Snowshoe.

Spruce Lodge, a room with 4 bunks. Me and the boys, great snow and usually a blizzard on the drive in. Hop in behind a snow plow so we can drive to the top on Friday, and ski like maniac's all week end. Pizza and beer!!! See ya in February.

These are the accounts of two other respondents who have been able to locate the parties at Snowshoe. "Its great, just some hotels are a little pricey for me. I stay at the cheapest thing you have at the time because I am either skiing or clubbing.." and "Great clubs at night filled with sexy snow bunnies!"

Various Atmosphere

There were general accounts of Snowshoe's atmosphere. Several just thought that Snowshoe had a good or great atmosphere and didn't offer much else. "Good snow and good atmosphere" This respondent from Washington D.C. also felt that Snowshoe had a good atmosphere. "Great atmosphere, snow, best place to be in the D.C area for skiing."

Some respondents felt that Snowshoe had the atmosphere of a little town. And others felt that the village itself imparted an atmosphere to Snowshoe. Snowshoe is “wonderful, like a little town on it's own. Excellent slopes, and atmosphere, and lots of other fun things to do.....oh, and EXCELLENT restaurants!” Snowshoe has “[d]eluxe accommodations; lots to do in between skiing, shops, restaurants, coffee shop, love the village atmosphere, everyone is so nice too” Another respondent enjoys the fun atmosphere of the village.

The things that I think about most when thinking about snowshoe is the condition of the slopes, the fun atmosphere in the village, the spectacular views from the top of the mountain, and the great employees of Snowshoe that we have dealt with.

And finally this summation of the village atmosphere at Snowshoe. “The scenery is Spectacular! Beautiful! with the Village and overall atmosphere being just as one would hope for.”

Snowshoe is in a beautiful location and some respondents felt that Snowshoe had a mountainous atmosphere. “I'm from West Virginia originally, now in South Carolina. My Husband and I just love the Atmosphere of the mountain and all the activities. It's a big change from the sand at the beach.” And this respondent simply enjoys the beauty of the atmosphere. “I love snowshoe. It's an escape from the drones of the world. It's a place where someone can go to relax in a beautiful atmosphere.”

Snowshoe is also a very comfortable place and a nice change of atmosphere for some. Snowshoe's atmosphere is described as friendly, cozy and laid back. Snowshoe

offers “[t]he most perfect family vacation. Slopes for all levels, friendly staff and a very cozy atmosphere!”

Snowshoe is a beautiful winter getaway. It offers a great variety fo slopes so that novice can ski with advanced. There are many non-ski activities as well. The overall atmosphere is friendly and peaceful, like everyone is family.

“The Snowshoe mountain image would be described as laid-back, scenic, friendly, close to nature and yet amenities at reach, and most of all a fresh change of atmosphere.”

Snowshoe would appear to have many different personalities depending on who you are and what you want to do while you are there. If you want a family oriented vacation, Snowshoe has a great atmosphere for families. If you are looking for a good time and a great party location, Snowshoe has that as well. When you want a quiet, cozy friendly atmosphere, you can visit Snowshoe. And you can always enjoy the beauty of the atmosphere at Snowshoe. With all of these facets, it is not surprising to see that there are some that think Snowshoe is going through some growing pains and that the atmosphere can be a little bit snobbish.

These comments are illustrative of some of the concerns that respondents had about the identity crisis that Snowshoe has.

Snowshoe is a growing mountain resort, torn between it's early WV roots and trying to accomodate a wide spectrum (culturally) of visitors from the DC/Maryland/Eastern Region ranging from the once per five year visitor from SC, to the every-other-weekend DC sales guy with family who always insists on sitting beside me on the lift and telling me about his new

Hummer H2. The mountain has made some great improvements, but the trail capacity has increased little, in relation to the increase in resort capacity...which is leading to dangerous situations, which weekend 'courtesy' patrol fails to handle

This respondent is not alone in his concern about some of the types of people that Snowshoe is beginning to attract.

There is a bit of an elitist Bubba flavor to the village, too many large SUVs, Southern Baptists who don't know how to ski or drink (and try to do both - often at the same time). And the Inn, where we po' folks stay is a bit on the college dorm side, with some of the accompanying smells along with the noise. But all in all, we like it.

Conclusion

These nine themes encompass all of the elements of Snowshoe that were elevated in the responses to the open ended question about Snowshoe's image. The nine themes represent a holistic view of the resort, from the built and natural environment to the social environment at Snowshoe. All of these areas are crucial to the overall image of Snowshoe Mountain Resort.

DISCUSSION

Snowshoe Mountain Resort is an invented community. Snowshoe didn't grow from a mining town; it didn't develop through rich sociological or geological roots. It is not at the confluence of two rivers, it wasn't a safe place to stop during the westward expansion of the United States. From the very first day of its existence, Snowshoe, West Virginia was a place for people to come play.

Originally snowshoe was referred to as the "Island in the Sky" It is in a rural part of West Virginia where there are very limited options for lodging, dining and shopping. For Snowshoe to be viable, even as a ski area, the developers had to provide visitors with the amenities that the local area lacked. They had to build a community and it had to be conveniently accessed from the ski area. Now Snowshoe has the appearance, through its wilderness surroundings, of being completely independent from our daily world.

The central research question for this study was: What are the perceptions of Snowshoe Mountain Resort repeat visitors? Many themes that applied to this question were presented and discussed in Chapter Four. The essence of the experience at Snowshoe, however, lies not in the constructed environment itself, but in the sense of place that Snowshoe has created.

Many of the respondents in this survey illustrated that they connected to this particular environment because it offered them a retreat environment to which they could escape the stress and pressure of their work and home lives. Their vacations to Snowshoe restored their mind and bodies so that they could return refreshed to their hectic lives. From the analysis of these responses it appears that there is a reciprocal relationship between sense of place and restoration. That is to say that these respondents have

developed affection for Snowshoe because their experiences in that environment positively affected their own sense of well being. Additionally as they develop affection for Snowshoe their sense of restoration is positively impacted. Sense of place positively affects feelings of restoration and feelings of restoration continue to develop the perception of sense of place.

Sense of place refers to “an individual’s ability to develop feelings of attachment to particular settings based on combinations of use, attentiveness, and emotion.”

(Stokowski, 2002) Sense of place is the socially constructed meaning of a place that takes into account both the affective and cognitive components of an environment (Stokowski, 2002, Stedman, 2003 and (Farnum, Hall and Krueger, 2005). The study of sense of place makes the assumption “that places are composed of individualized and unique qualities that, when evaluated holistically – including the relationships people have in and with places – hold potentially deep meanings and values for their users.” (Farnum, et. al. p.1)

Sense of place and place attachment are sometimes used interchangeably in the literature. This is misleading because, while they are both about the meanings and value of place, place attachment indicates a deeper human association with place.

Place attachment typically refers to a social psychology construct of the human process of imbuing a place with emotional attachment (Stedman, 2003, Stokowski, 2002 and Eisenhauer, Krannich & Blahna, 2000) The process of place attachment has to do with the person feeling grounded in the place through social interaction, memory and story telling (Marcus,1992 and Stokowski, 2002). Outdoor recreation literature also includes the geographic value of place in their definitions of place attachment. “Physical features do not produce sense of place directly, but influence the symbolic meanings of

the landscape, which are in turn associated with evaluations such as place attachment. (Stedman, 2003, p. 674) Stedman (2003) goes on to state that the natural environment is part of the symbolic underpinning of place attachment.

Psychological factors are the most prevalent indicators utilized in the research of place attachment (Low & Altman, 1992). The psychological affect of the environment is found primarily in the study of individuals' emotional attachments to places. Places and things are the tangible symbol of a memory, an important human relationship or meaningful experience from the past. These environmental experiences are utilized throughout an individual's life in determining the meaning of life events and how they shape our individual concept of self-identity.

In Schachtel's theory as explained by Chawla (1992), there are two ways of connecting to the environment. The first is *autocentric* which is self-centered perception of the environment and *allocentric* which is other-centered perception. In autocentric perception the environment or object is understood in its use or value as it relates directly to the individual. In allocentric the environment or object is appreciated for its own unique identity. While these ideas seem to be opposites, they can be complimentary.

A place can be valued precisely because it is so familiar that we don't need to think about it, because our sensations have fused into a general sense of comfort and utility. Alternatively, we can value the excitement of discovery that a place affords. Even in optimal development we move back and forth between these two forms of experience as we move between changing places or moods. (Chawla, 1992, p.71)

Another psychological theory about the human relationship to the environment is from Searles, again explained by Chawla (1992). This relationship is one of complete physical dependence on the earth.

In this study, it was found that Snowshoe has a special quality to which the visitors are attracted. It is the composition of the natural environment, the built environment, and the social environment of Snowshoe that, experienced together create the sense of place for Snowshoe. Often sense of place is created through unique features of the place. For some in this study, it was the unique quality of having the majority of the development on the top of the mountain. For others the sense of place was embodied in the Western Territory skiing.

When studying both sense of place and place attachment it is important to understand that these are process based ideas. A person and a place do not arrive at place attachment. There is a sense, over time, of becoming more (or less) attached to a place. Over time people change and they are changed by their life experiences. Places change and are changed through development and decay. This was also evident in this study. Many of the respondents noted that they had been skiing at Snowshoe for ten plus years. Some were happy with the changes at Snowshoe and others were not. The problem with the older lodging indicates the decay that can happen to place that affects people's response and attachment to the environment.

People do associate memories with specific places and objects in the process of becoming attached to place. This was evident in the analysis of the data. These markers, large or small are meaningful to people as they trigger memory recall and are associated

with the memory itself. This is similar to the research of Rubenstein and Parmelee (1992) with the elderly and aging.

In their study, Rubenstein and Parmelee (1992) discuss the importance of place attachment in the elderly and aging. They theorize that during the course of a lifetime, people use places and objects to remind them of significant events and people that define their existence. When an elderly individual is moved to a nursing home, he loses the environmental setting of home, many of the memory keeping objects and thus the context of his life. This can be very disruptive from both an emotional and physical health standpoint.

The psychological impact of place attachment is held in the affections for spaces as they symbolize memories and important relationships. These memories and relationships as they are related to places are important for the individual in the definition of his self-identity (Chawla, 1992 Marcus, 1992, Rubenstein & Parmelee, 1992). Place attachment occurs as individuals interpret their environments as extensions of their identity. “Attachment to place develops most directly from life experiences and associated notions of what has been important in one’s life and who one is in the world,” (Rubenstein & Parmelee, 1992, p.148.)

Just as environments can hold special meanings for people in terms of memories and emotions, environments can also hold special meaning for people through their restorative qualities. There are certain kinds of environments where people feel that they are safe to retreat from the stressors of every day life and through rest and recreation heal tired psyches. These are restorative environments.

During the course of their work day lives, people become mentally exhausted from processing all of the information that is required by their careers and home life (Kaplan, S. 1995 and Kaplan R., Kaplan S. & Ryan R.1998). Often individuals, couples or families will take a vacation in order to restore a productive mental state. This need for relief comes out in the expression “I just need to get away” (Kaplan R. et al, 1998). When a person is on vacation then, they are probably looking for release, some different experience in which to be engrossed and mental restoration. Skiing and ski resorts can offer this type of escape and restoration.

Before discussing the qualities and effectiveness of restorative environments it is important to understand the causes and the need for mental restoration. Directed attention is the type of attention required for effective problem solving (Kaplan, S. 1995). An individual solving a problem must choose from so much information as to what is important and what is not important in understanding and solving the problem. This filtration process requires directed attention. “In problem-solving, where routine, associatively-based attention can not be counted on, an attentional capacity under voluntary control is particularly important (Kaplan, S. 1995 p 171.)” The mental fatigue that is associated with directed attention is the type of fatigue that one might suffer after any prolonged mental effort, even if the effort is something enjoyable (Kaplan, S. 1995).

When the capacity for directed attention is stressed to the point of fatigue, there are several consequences to the individual. Perception can be affected as with this fatigue the individual is easily distracted. This can result in errors of perception or understanding. Directed attention is required for an individual to be able to take a larger big picture look at a particular problem. Without the voluntary control of directed attention, the individual

will be more reactionary to problem solving. Additionally actions are affected by directed attention fatigue. The individual will be more focused on the short term and less able to take a step back and consider the consequences to their actions. Finally, the individual becomes irritable and withdraws from social contact. These effects of directed attention fatigue make it quite clear that the individual under this type of stress is more likely to experience frustration, irritability and human error (Kaplan, S. 1995).

When an individual is experiencing these symptoms of directed attention fatigue, they are in need of a particular environment to which they can escape. Removing oneself physically from stress and the ability to redirect attention will allow the necessary healing to occur. The type of environment, a restorative environment, which will provide the appropriate surroundings, includes four specific characteristics.

Restorative environments have four characteristics: being away, extent, fascination and compatibility (Kaplan R. et al, 1998). These four characteristics are important to restoration as they allow the individual to remove themselves from the atmosphere of fatigue and to have their attention redirected for a period of time. Additionally these characteristics involve both the physical environment and the mental environment (Kaplan R et al, 1998).

The first element of restorative environments is that of being away. In order for an individual to recover from mental fatigue they must physically remove themselves from the environment that is associated with the fatigue. While mentally, an individual can imagine themselves in a different physical location, a restorative environment will allow them to physically remove themselves from the place of fatigue. Often people will talk

about their desire to get away from it all. A restorative environment will have the characteristic of being away (Kaplan R. et al, 1998).

Extent is the environmental quality of seeming boundless. It is not enough for the restorative environment to be away from the source of the fatigue. The environment needs to be large enough to be perceived as a whole different world. Boundaries should not be evident and the environment should have its own rules of behavior and properties (Kaplan R. et al, 1998). Many natural settings provide this sense of expansiveness.

Fascination is the involuntary activity of being immersed in some thought or activity. It is a state much deeper than concentration. The experience of fascination is crucial to recovering from directed attention fatigue. Fascination is the involuntary involvement of the mind. "Fascination derives not only from interesting things or places, but also from processes such as thinking, doing, and wondering (Kaplan R. et al, 1998, p 20). These activities gain the undivided attention of the individual through the challenge of uncertainty. With the challenge of uncertainty the individual is absorbed in the environment and trying to anticipate what will happen next (Kaplan R. et al, 1998).

While being away, extent and fascination seem to be all that is necessary to restoring mental acuity, this last element of compatibility is crucial. The environment must support the process of restoration. This final characteristic is also important to the restorative environment. The environment should be supportive of the individual's needs and desires. The individual needs to feel that they belong in the environment and the environment offers something of interest to them. Instances of incompatibility can cause the individual further mental fatigue. An example of this would be someone wanting to work a puzzle only to find that some of the pieces are missing.

The literature in this particular area is predominately concerned with the need for natural retreats within an urban setting. Although most all of the places that have been evaluated as restorative environments are within the urban context; there is no reason why a resort could not also be a restorative environment. Resorts are not as easily accessible as urban natural retreat areas, but they are certainly places that are utilized for mental restoration. Snowshoe Mountain Resort has the potential to fulfill all of the characteristics of a restorative environment.

For most of their clients, Snowshoe is a drive-to (four hours from Washington, D.C.) location but away from the urban areas and pressures. As a ski resort with several thousand acres of property, located in a rural area of West Virginia, it has the perceived extent of being boundless. The vistas from the mountain top reinforce this concept of having no perceivable boundaries.

For the skier and non-skier retreating to Snowshoe, there are many activities from which to choose. Snowshoe's clients have many opportunities to become fascinated by the process of learning to ski or improving techniques. For the non-skier, there are many ways to experience the atmosphere of the mountain top location. Snowshoe offers snowmobile tours and candle-light horse drawn sleigh rides to a secluded restaurant for dinner. These activities and facilities support their clients need to become fascinated by something. These opportunities also add to the atmosphere of compatibility. Skier and non-skier alike can rest and relax without the hassles of work and home.

Many of the respondents wrote about their feelings of restoration after visiting Snowshoe. There were numerous descriptions of the endlessness and other-worldliness of the Snowshoe environment. Many people were fascinated by the contact with the

wilderness and others spoke of losing themselves in their skiing. There is no doubt that for these people Snowshoe is a compatible restorative environment.

Restoration and recreation have some elements in common. There are overlapping areas between the theoretical area of restoration and recreation. The most obvious overlap is in the element of fascination. Many people become fascinated while pursuing physical recreation.

The relationship between recreation behavior and restorative environments occurs in the overlap of behavioral intentions and motivations. Recreation is traditionally defined as an activity that is voluntarily carried out during one's free time, is enjoyable and meaningful to the individual and has socially redeeming qualities (Edginton, C., Jordan, D. De Graaf, D & Edginton, S. 2002; Cordes, K. and Ibrahim, H. 2003; Kraus, R. 2001). The word recreation comes from the Latin words *recreatio* and *recreare*, meaning that which refreshes or restores (McLean, D., Hurd, A. Rogers, N. 2005; Edginton, et al. 2002, Kraus, R. 2001). These definitions fall short of the reality and complexity of recreation. Kraus (2001) proposes a more thorough definition of recreation:

Recreation consists of human activities or experiences that occur in leisure time. Usually they are voluntarily chosen for intrinsic purposes and are pleasurable, although they may involve a degree of compulsion, extrinsic purpose, and discomfort, or even pain or danger. Recreation may also be regarded as the emotional state resulting from participation or as a social institution, a professional career field or a business. When provided as part of organized community or voluntary-agency programs, recreation should

be socially constructive and morally acceptable in terms of prevailing community standards and values (p. 45).

In the late 1970's Crandall (1980) and others set out to integrate the studies being conducted in the area of leisure motivations. This consisted of reviewing the literature in the area and meeting together and conferring to create a consensus of leisure motivations. The result of these efforts was this, now accepted, list of behavioral motivations for leisure involvement (Table 5).

Kaplan (et al., 1998) defines some physical characteristics of natural environments that can be utilized as constructs for the study of restorative environments. The constructs that could be measured through visual inspection of the environment are introduced in pattern languages within the text, *With people in mind: Design and management of everyday nature* (Kaplan, et al., 1998). Fascination is found in natural settings like an open wooded area with comfortable places to stop and enjoy nature. Extent is the sense that the setting is set apart, a world in itself. Circuitous paths can provide the individual with a sense of extent by making the environment seem to go on and on. The third construct is separation from distraction which can be achieved through either small room like openings in nature that feel secluded or in large natural settings the presence of a scenic vista. These physical characteristics can remove a person physically and mentally away from even near by distractions. The fourth pattern deals with the choice of materials utilized or present in the environment. The materials utilized within the setting should not distract from the setting and should enhance the natural environment. The use of wood and stone for benches, bridges and structures integrates nicely with the environment. The fifth and final pattern deals with the view from the

window. Not everyone in the environment can or wants to be physically in the natural setting. In structures, the view from the window should be of a natural area to provide the inhabitant with a place to allow their mind to wander. Kaplan's text has developed even more patterns into smaller and more specific details of each environmental characteristic mentioned above.

Evidence that the restorative environment is meeting the needs of the user was found in their descriptions of the environment. An example of a statement that is related to restoration is: "we come here to relax" or "we come here to get away". Through both visual inspection and user responses there can be several layers of evidence that indicate the success of the environment as a restorative environment.

Crandall's (1980) recreation motivation table (Table 5) provides the type of statements that indicate the behavioral motivations for participating in recreation and the motivation that they indicate. In this research evidence of recreation motivation was found in the open-ended question that refers to the image of the resort environment.

Table 5. Motivational Categories and Items (For engaging in leisure activities)

1. Enjoying Nature, Escaping Civilization <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To get away from civilization for awhile ▪To be close to nature 	10. Recognition, Status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To show others I could do it ▪So others would think highly of me for doing it
2. Escape From Routine and Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Change from my daily routine ▪To get away from the responsibilities of my everyday life 	11. Social Power <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To have control over others ▪To be in a position of authority
3. Physical Exercise <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪For the exercise ▪To help keep me in shape 	12. Altruism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To help others
4. Creativity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To be creative 	13. Stimulus Seeking <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪For the excitement ▪Because of the risks involved
5. Relaxation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To relax physically ▪So my mind can slow down for awhile 	14. Self-Actualization (Feedback, Self-Improvement, Ability Utilization) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪Seeing the results of your efforts ▪Using a variety of skills and talents
6. Social Contact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪So I could do things with my companions ▪To get away from other people 	15. Achievement, Challenge, Competition <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To develop my skills and ability ▪Because of the competition ▪To learn what I am capable of
7. Meeting New People <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To talk to new and varied people ▪To meet people of the opposite sex 	16. Killing Time, Avoiding Boredom <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To keep busy ▪To avoid boredom
8. Heterosexual Contact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To be with people of the opposite sex ▪To meet people of the opposite sex 	17. Intellectual Aestheticism <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To use my mind ▪To think about my personal values
9. Family Contact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪To be away from the family for awhile ▪To help bring the family together more 	

Note: From "Motivations for Leisure" by R. Crandall, 1980, *Journal of Leisure Research*, 12(1), p 49. Copyright 1980 by the National Recreation and Park Association. Included with permission of the author.

The first and second recreation motivation items of interest are enjoying nature, escaping civilization and escape from routine and responsibility. These are at the heart of the restoration environment theory and compare with the environmental qualities of being away and extent. While the link between the two recreation items and the quality of being away is self evident, the quality of extent supports these two recreational motivations in the idea that the environment in which the individual escapes routine, responsibility and civilization must be expansive enough to be perceived as a place wholly removed from these stressors.

The following three recreation motivations: relaxation, stimulus seeking, and intellectual aestheticism can be supported by the restorative environment in the environmental quality of fascination. An environment that holds fascination for an individual is one that allows one to think, do, and wonder. These features of the environment support the motivation of relaxation through allowing the individual's mind to wander. This environmental quality may also support the stimulus seeking motivation through the opportunities the environment holds for doing, discovering and wondering. Finally, the environmental quality of fascination may also support the motivation of intellectual aestheticism through offering the individual opportunities to expand thinking or reflect on personal values.

Kaplan (et al., 1998) defines some physical characteristics of natural environments that can be utilized as constructs for the study of restorative environments. The constructs that could be measured through visual inspection of the environment are introduced in pattern languages within the text, *With people in mind: Design and management of everyday nature* (Kaplan, et al., 1998).

Fascination is found in natural settings like an open wooded area with comfortable places to stop and enjoy nature. Extent is the sense that the setting is set apart, a world in itself. Circuitous paths can provide the individual with a sense of extent by making the environment seem to go on and on. The third construct is separation from distraction which can be achieved through either small room like openings in nature that feel secluded or in large natural settings the presence of a scenic vista.

These physical characteristics can remove a person physically and mentally away from even nearby distractions. The fourth pattern deals with the choice of materials utilized or present in the environment. The materials utilized within the setting should not distract from the setting and should enhance the natural environment. The use of wood and stone for benches, bridges and structures integrates nicely with the environment. The fifth and final pattern deals with the view from the window. Not everyone in the environment can or wants to be active in physically participating in the natural setting. In structures, the view from the window can provide a more passive interaction with a natural setting to provide the inhabitant with a place to allow their mind to wander. Kaplan's text has developed even more patterns into smaller and more specific details of each environmental characteristic mentioned above.

Snowshoe is a wilderness environment. There is little evidence of civilization as you gaze at the vistas. Snowshoe as a ski area is not so much a walking environment, but the ski trails wind down through the trees, again creating that sense of being in another world. Separation from distraction at Snowshoe is achieved several ways. First, there is no cellular phone service at Snowshoe due both to its rural location and the nearby presence of radio telescopes. The service at Snowshoe, effective and quietly working in

the background, allows visitors to concentrate on their deeper personal needs. Finally, there are benches, and cabins to utilize for rest located throughout the environment. Furthermore, all of the newer development on the mountain utilizes either a rustic design or a local vernacular expression. In these ways, the physical environment contains the elements that the Kaplans suggest are most conducive to creating a restorative environment.

Evidence that the restorative environment was meeting the needs of the user was found in their descriptions of the environment. An example of a statement that is related to restoration is: “we come here to relax” or “we come here to get away”. Through both personal experiences and user responses there were several layers of evidence that indicated the success of the Snowshoe Mountain environment as a restorative environment.

Crandall’s (1980) recreation motivation table (Table 5) provides the type of statements that indicate the behavioral motivations for participating in recreation and the motivation that they indicate. In this research evidence of recreation motivation was found in the open-ended question that referred to the image of the resort environment.

During the analysis of the data and the discussion of themes, it became evident that the Snowshoe environment is greater than its physical attributes. This is not to discount the importance of these facilities. All of the themes that developed during analysis are important pieces of the whole, although some responses showed a deeper level of meaning.

Through the discussion on the theme, *Individual Response to the Environment*, one can see the evidence that there is indeed a rich and meaningful sense of place at

Snowshoe. The responses indicated the presence of strong emotional reactions to Snowshoe and family memories created in this place. The responses also indicated for some, a sense of belongingness at the resort and for others a sense of ownership of Snowshoe. The people in this population group have developed place meanings at Snowshoe and some exhibited evidence of developing place attachment to Snowshoe.

The theme of *Relaxing and Replenishing* found in the responses indicated the uses of the Snowshoe environment to restore individual mental health, to develop deeper family connections and the compatibility of the environment to these purposes. Many comments were made indicating that being at Snowshoe was like being in a whole different world, allowing for complete separation from home and work based stressors.

While the data for these two sections were discussed as individual themes, it became obvious during the discussion that expressions of emotion and attachment were almost inseparable from the expressions of release and restoration. It is evident that where there is restoration there is also an emotional connection. And quite often, where there was evidence of emotional connection, there was also evidence of restoration. For example: Snowshoe is “[e]xciting, refreshing and memorable times with friends.”

These observations coupled with my personal experiences, illustrate the reciprocal relationship that exists between these two processes. Snowshoe has a unique micro climate and geography that makes it particularly suitable for skiing. Snowshoe has a unique design with the development located on top of the mountain. Snowshoe has a unique pioneering history. But it is not these elements apart from each other that fulfill visitors’ needs for a meaningful restorative environment, it is the environment valued as a whole.

As the visitors to Snowshoe are relaxing and unwinding from their worldly cares, some are freed up to explore deeper relationships with friends and family, creating place based memories thus attaching these special times with family and friends to the Snowshoe environment. In that lies the essence of the relationship between the two theories. When these respondents recall stories of their vacation after returning home, they will not be able to separate the memory and the feelings from the environment in which they occurred.

Ultimately this research has led me to a theory. My theory is that people exist in a dynamic relationship with their environment that exists in symbiosis. There are special types of environments, recreation environments, which are able to provide the context through which visitors experience both restoration of self and restoration of important relationships with other people. In response, visitors become emotionally invested in that environment and return to it feelings of affection, meaning, gratitude and personal attachment. This investment of personal responses may lead to leisure place advocacy

Leisure place advocates return to the recreation environment with which they have developed this relationship to relive an experience, or they return eager for new experiences. They may return once a year or once a month. Additionally, leisure place advocates may plan longer stays. Through their advocacy, people may construct, for even a short visit, a sense of home away from home. In the relationship of leisure place advocacy people lift up that recreation environment over many other similar types of recreation environments.

Once they develop this relationship of leisure place advocacy with the recreation environment, people express concern about many dimensions of that environment. Some

leisure place advocates express concern about further development that would change the sense of place. Some express concern when the environment falls into disrepair. Others express their advocacy for their special place through creating for themselves a sense of ownership over the environment, where the intention is to protect and preserve that location for future visits.

Finally leisure place advocacy behavior can take the form of referring and sharing that special recreation place with friends and family. Leisure place advocacy may be expressed through bringing family members to experience the special recreation place together. It may also be evidenced through offering recommendations to friends to experience that special recreation place. Most commonly, though, leisure place advocacy is evidenced through superlative statements about that recreation environment for which they are advocating. Leisure place advocacy is the symbiotic relationship that forms between people and those special recreation places that provide the context for restorative experiences.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This section includes an assessment of the limitations of this study. There is a discussion on the implications of this research for theoretical development and also the implications for Snowshoe Mountain Resort. Finally there is a concluding statement about the research that was conducted.

Limitations

The limitations of this research include the following considerations. Probably the greatest limitation of this research was that I could not go back to the original population to get more clarity from the responses. There were times when it would have been more informative to have the respondent expound on their original response to the question. Additionally there are now more questions that I would like to ask in order to develop a greater understanding of my emergent theory.

Another limitation of this study was that it was internet based. Unfortunately the internet delivery could only go to people who utilized the electronic check in procedure because that was how Snowshoe amassed the email addresses they utilized to deliver the notification of the survey.

Some respondents offered long and detailed descriptions of their experiences at Snowshoe; while others simply listed key words that felt conveyed their meaning. These simple descriptive responses along with the very simple one word responses did not provide as much useful information as it would had they written more. Perhaps they assumed that they didn't have a very large field in which to type their response. Perhaps they were uncomfortable with the speed and accuracy with which they were able to type.

Some respondents did not understand the question. This was apparent through responses like “I don’t know what you mean.” Others for whatever reason did not respond to the question at all. There is no way of knowing what input these respondents may have had and the impact their responses might have had on the present study. This returns to the first limitation of not being able to reconnect with the respondents after the survey.

Finally, this research was conducted as a case study and as such should not be generalized to other people at other places. This is a reporting of what is happening at Snowshoe with the people who return to Snowshoe for more than one vacation. Even though this case study cannot be used to generalize to other areas, it does add a detailed description of a successful ski resort area from which other ski resorts may learn and interpret for their own location.

Theoretical Implications

This research adds to theory and literature in the areas of sense of place and restoration environments. This recreation based destination resort has a special sense of place developed through the combination of the built environment, the natural environment and the social interactions experienced there. Return visitors show that they are developing an attachment to Snowshoe. The descriptive nature of this study adds to the literature in the area of sense of place.

Snowshoe is a restoration environment, providing all of the necessary functions needed to restore directed attention. Previously the research in the area of restoration environments applied largely to urban retreat settings. This research demonstrated that restoration environments can vary from small accessible urban green spaces to large self-

sustaining environments that encourage a longer stay. With all of the alternative activities, entertainment and amenities, you don't even have to be a skier to benefit from the Snowshoe environment.

The leisure place advocacy theory that has been developed through this research draws on the literature in the areas of sense of place and place attachment, Kaplans' (1998) theory of restorative environments and Crandall's (1980) motivations for leisure involvement. Some of the motivations for engaging in leisure behavior are based on the individual's physical and emotional need for a restorative experience. Individuals may develop feelings of attachment for places that are ideally located and supportive of their leisure motivations and restoration needs. It is this relationship that predicates the behaviors that are indicative of leisure place advocacy.

Through a greater understanding of both the positive and the negative effects of leisure place advocacy, it may become desirable to understand how to measure, predict and influence leisure place advocacy behaviors. Through the intentional shaping of the environment and understanding these theories, testing is made possible. An illustration of relationships among these theories is presented in Figure 25.

The development of my leisure place advocacy theory for recreation environments provides an idea about the behavioral reaction of people who have connected with recreation environments with a sense of place that also provide restoration experiences. Hopefully, this new theory will initiate an academic discourse about how place advocacy works both with place attachment and restoration environments.

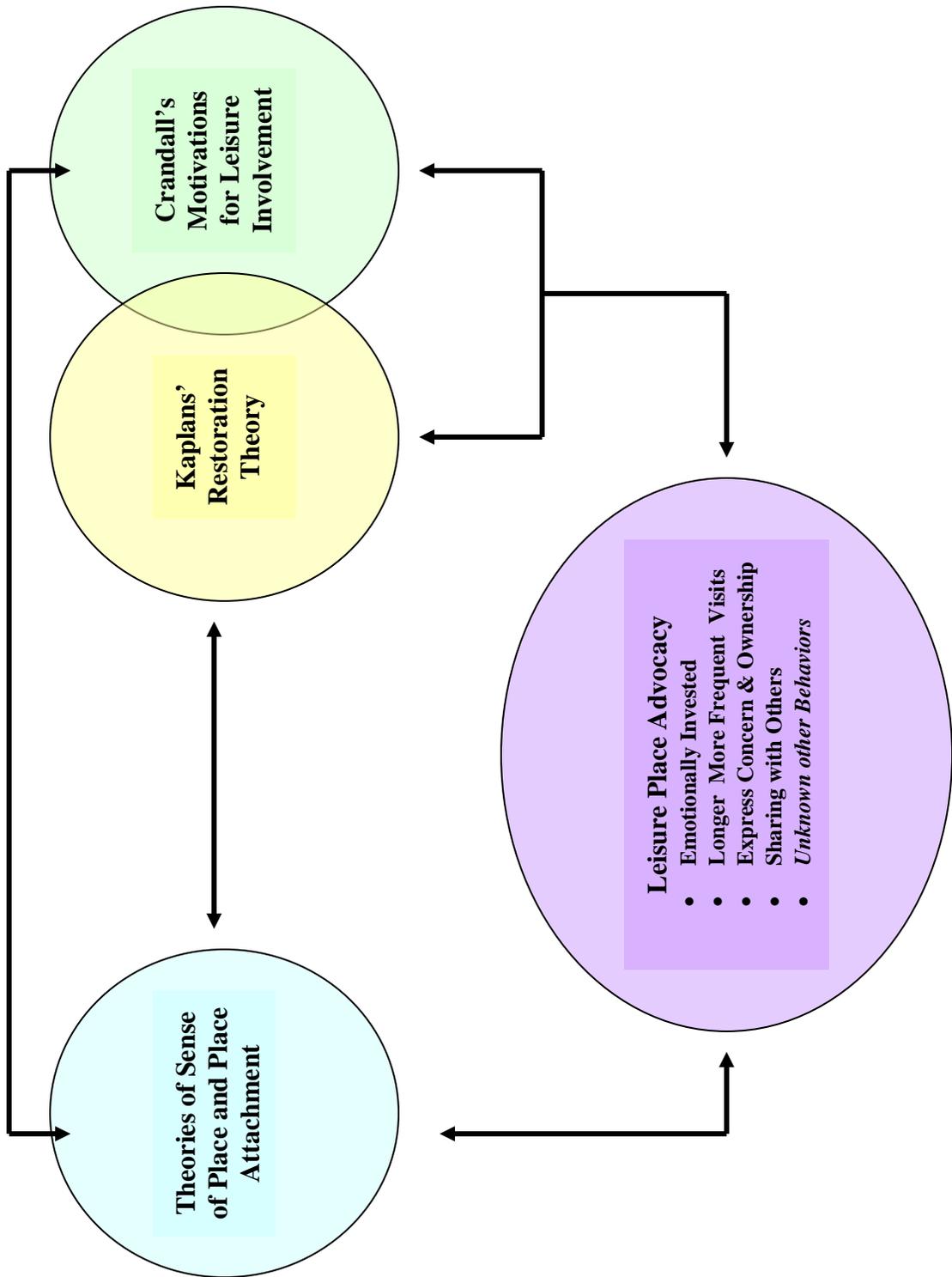


Figure 25. A Mini Theory of Strengthening Leisure Place Advocacy

There is an effort in the management of public lands to gain a greater understanding of sense of place and place attachment in order to “incorporate considerations of social factors into the management of public lands. Such connections with places can be a source of heightened levels of concern about management practices.” (Eisenhauer, et.al., 2000 p.421 Abstract) There are some similarities between these protected wilderness areas and the type of environment that is Snowshoe. Additionally, many of the Rocky Mountain ski areas are located and operate within the National Forest system. If place advocacy behavior exists in national public land areas, this theory may help in understanding the origination of these “heightened levels of concern for management practices”. Over time and testing, this theory could provide the background for measurement and prediction of such behaviors.

Implications for Snowshoe

Snowshoe’s vision statement was to create an environment that provides restoration and a sense of place. Indeed the responses supported these ideals. Snowshoe is a restoration environment with a special sense of place. This research provides a rich description though of what is important to return visitors to Snowshoe. The responses covered the whole environment of Snowshoe and as such provide complete accountings of what are Snowshoe’s assets and what are Snowshoe’s detractors. Again, while this research cannot be used to generalize to other recreation areas, other recreation areas may learn from this accounting what is working at Snowshoe.

To remain a viable restoration environment, Snowshoe should continue to develop a hassle free environment for their clients. Intrawest and Snowshoe will need to continue to provide a high quality atmosphere for their clients. This will allow them to

continue being the most popular resort in the Southeast. What follows is a list of suggestions that emerged from the analysis of the data.

Keep assets (lodging, dining and village) in excellent repair

Remodel or update older properties that are out of style and worn looking

Continue offering an interesting mix of entertainment and alternative activities

Consider developing some organized daytime activities for non-skiers

Offer more quick, light dining options

Improve and expand day ski parking

Limit hassles to customers at check-in

Control crowds and increase safety on the slopes.

Questions for Further Research

Often in research you start with one or two questions to which you seek an answer. Through the research process though, more questions will emerge. Here are some of those questions.

Does leisure place advocacy exist in other types of recreation based environments?

In what ways does leisure place advocacy manifest itself in other types of recreation based environments?

What additional behaviors might be associated with leisure place advocacy?

How can leisure place advocacy be an asset to recreation based environments?

What are the consequences of leisure place advocacy behavior?

Conclusions

It is evident that Snowshoe's intention to create a sense of place is being satisfied. It is not yet clear as to whether or not place attachment is occurring because or in spite of these efforts. There are also some encouraging parallels between Snowshoe's vision for the destination image and the respondents' perception of the Snowshoe image. The respondents, without prompting, brought forward in their responses many of the same feelings about Snowshoe that the resort is attempting to communicate in much of their marketing efforts.

Place attachment is a complex phenomenon. It is a dynamic process that continues throughout time and it is affected positively by multiple experiences in the same location. This dynamic process can be affected by many variables including the individual's personal development and change, change in physical settings, demographic changes, and even economic, political or social change. With so many variables influencing this phenomenon, further research is suggested in order to gain a clearer and more comprehensive understanding of place attachment, both at Snowshoe and other recreation based restoration environments.

This study presented evidence that a recreation destination like Snowshoe has all of the physical elements necessary to be a restoration environment. Additionally, through the responses it became evident that Snowshoe is a restoration environment. Typically research in the area of restoration environments examines urban retreat areas that can be accessed immediately and for short periods of time while Snowshoe, as a destination resort, is less accessible and necessitates a longer break from the world. Snowshoe is nonetheless, a restoration environment.

The interaction of sense of place and the restoration experiences at Snowshoe developed sufficient evidence of the presence of a particular combination of behaviors. This behavior set theorized as Place Advocacy, includes behaviors of more and extended stays at Snowshoe and feelings of belongingness or ownership. Additionally place advocacy includes feelings and actions intended to protect and improve the recreation environment. Place advocacy includes also the behaviors of referring and even bringing other people to experience the environment first hand.

Appendix A

Snowshoe Mountain Resort Enhancement Survey

WINTER VACATION PLANNING HABITS

This first series of questions deal with you vacation planning habits as well as the characteristics that are of most importance to you when choosing a resort destination. Your answers to these questions will help us make available to you effective marketing and pricing options.

1. Of the following information sources listed below, please rate their level of importance to you when researching and planning a winter ski and snow board vacation.

1	2	3	4
Of greatest importance			Little or no importance

Internet – Resort / Travel Website

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Email Newsletter

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Resort Brochure

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Magazine Article / Advertisement

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Newspaper Article / Advertisement

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Radio Commercial

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

TV Feature

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Other Resort Marketing

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Ski / Travel Show

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Variety, Quality and Value of Shopping Options
1 2 3 4

Variety of Nightlife
1 2 3 4

Non-Ski Adult and Family Amenities and Activities
1 2 3 4

Non-Ski Teen Activities
1 2 3 4

Non-Ski Children's Activities
1 2 3 4

Affordability of Vacation Offering
1 2 3 4

Overall Value Received for Dollar Spent
1 2 3 4

Service and Hospitality of Staff
1 2 3 4

Scenery / Climate
1 2 3 4

Proximity
1 2 3 4

3. What other types of winter vacations (non ski or snowboard) have you also enjoyed over the past five years? Please mark all that apply.

Cruise

Theme Park (Disney, Universal, etc)

Florida or other warm weather US destination

Caribbean / Mexican / Hawaii Vacation

European Vacation (non ski or snowboard)

Other, Please Specify

--

4. What is your most difficult challenge in planning a vacation – summer or winter?
Please mark your top three factors.

Time to Get Away
Work Load
Children's Activities / School
Family Obligations
Pets
Vacation Planning Process
Financial Constraints
Other, Please Specify

YOUR SNOWSHOE MOUNTAIN VACATION

The next series of questions specifically relate to your vacation experiences at Snowshoe Mountain. Your answers to these questions will help us gain a better understanding of what is of most importance to our guests from a marketing, amenity, services and capital improvement perspective.

5. What was the primary reason for choosing Snowshoe Mountain as your winter vacation destination?

Reliability of Snow Conditions
Climate
Number of Slopes
Variety of Terrain
Challenge of Terrain
Scenery
Location (Drive to Vacation Destination)
Lodging Variety
Perceived Value / Price Offering
Friends / Family Visited Here
Special Event
Have a Season Pass
Offering of Children's Programs
Offering of Ski and Snowboard Programs
Slopes Not Crowded
Owner Property Here or in Area

6. When planning a winter ski and snowboard vacation to Snowshoe, how far in advance do you typically plan?

Less than 7 Days in Advance
7 – 14 Days in Advance
15 – 30 Days in Advance
31 – 60 Days in Advance
61 – 90 Days in Advance
Greater than 90 Days in Advance

7. When have you traditionally visited Snowshoe Mountain?

Early Season (Prior to the Christmas Holidays)
Holiday Season (Christmas – New Years)
Peak Season (January – Early March)
Other Holiday Weekends (MLK, President’s Weekend)
Spring Season (Mid March – April)

8. What days of the week do you traditionally visit Snowshoe Mountain?

Midweek
Weekend
Both

9. When taking a winter ski and snowboard vacation to Snowshoe, how much do you typically spend on the trip?

Less than \$400.00
\$400.00 - \$699.00
\$700.00 - \$999.00
\$1000.00 - \$1299.00
\$1300.00 - \$1599.00
\$1600.00 - \$1899.00
\$1900.00 - \$2100.00
\$2200.00 - \$2499.00
\$2500.00 - \$2799.00
\$2800.00 - \$3099.00
\$3100.00 - \$3399.00
\$3400.00 - \$3699.00
\$3700.00 - \$3999.00
Greater than \$4000.00

10. Please describe in your own words, the Snowshoe Mountain image.

11. Did your last experience at Snowshoe differ from what you expected? Please list any additional comments you may have about your last experience at Snowshoe

Yes
No

Additional Comments

12. What **one recommendation** could you give us for improving the winter vacation experience at Snowshoe Mountain for visitors like yourself

13. Are there other recommendations you could give us to help us improve Snowshoe? Please list.

Competitive Influences

The next series of questions will help us gain a better understanding as to how Snowshoe Mountain stacks up against other regional and destination resorts and attractions.

14. Of the regional resorts listed below, please indicate all that you have visited during the winter months in the past five years and the number of times that you have visited.

1 1-2 Visits	2 3-4 Visits	3 5 or more visits	N/A
-----------------	-----------------	-----------------------	-----

Canaan Valley, WV

1	2	3	N/A
---	---	---	-----

Timberline Resort, WV

1	2	3	N/A
---	---	---	-----

Winterplace Resort, WV

1	2	3	N/A
Beech Mountain, NC			
1	2	3	N/A
Sugar Mountain, NC			
1	2	3	N/A
Appalachian Resort, NC			
1	2	3	N/A
Wintergreen Resort, VA			
1	2	3	N/A
Massanutten Resort, VA			
1	2	3	N/A
Wisp, MD			
1	2	3	N/A
Seven Springs, PA			
1	2	3	N/A
Whitetail / Liberty / Roundtop, PA			
1	2	3	N/A

15. In your own words, what distinguishes Snowshoe Mountain from other regional resorts that you have visited

16. How often do you visit more distant destination winter resorts – Western US, New England, Canadian, European, etc.?

- Never Travel to Distant Destination Resorts
- Rarely Go – Go less than once every year, tend to skip a year or two
- Go Once A Year, Every Year
- Go At Least Twice a Year Every Year or More Every Year

Summer Vacation Planning

The next series of questions deal with your summer vacation planning habits. Your answers will allow us to gain a better understanding of how summer at Snowshoe could be part of your future vacation plans.

17. Where have you typically taken your summer vacations over the past 5 years?
Please mark all that apply.

US Beaches or other warm weather US Destination

Mountains

Theme Parks

Cruise

Caribbean / Mexico / Hawaii Beaches

Canada

European Vacation

_____ Other, Please Specify

18. On average, how many summer vacations (defined as 4 or more days) do you typically take each year?

1

2

3

4

5

6 or more

19. Have you ever considered a summer vacation to Snowshoe Mountain?

Yes

No

20. What would you look for in considering Snowshoe as a summer vacation destination?

About Yourself

The next series of questions will allow us to gain a better understanding of who our guest truly is. Your answers will help us better target our marketing and tailor our pricing strategy. Please understand that these questions will be kept strictly confidential.

21. Was your visit during the 2003 / 2004 winter season your first visit to Snowshoe Mountain?

Yes

No

22. If you have visited the resort prior to the 2003 / 2004 winter season, how many times have you visited in the past five years?

1 – 2

3 – 4

5 – 7

8 – 10

11 or more

23. Marital Status – Please select the choice that best fits your marital / family status.

Single – No Children

Single – With Children

Married – No Children

Married – With children Living at Home

Married – With Children Having Left Home

24. Your Age

Under 19

19 – 24

25 – 29

30 – 34

35 – 39

40 – 44

45 – 49

50 – 54

55 – 59

60 – 64

65 – 69

70 or Older

25. What is your occupation?

- Managerial (Business, etc.)
- Professional (Doctor, Lawyer, etc.)
- Sales
- Education / Teacher
- Administrative
- Agricultural
- Blue Collar
- Self Employed
- Student
- Homemaker
- Military
- Retired
- Unemployed

26. What is your approximate annual household income?

- Under \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$74,999
- \$75,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 - \$149,000
- \$150,000 - \$199,999
- \$200,000 - \$249,000
- Over \$250,000

27. Which of the following best describes the type of snow enthusiast you are?

- First Time Skier / Snowboarder
- Ski or Snowboard Rarely (Go less than once a year, tend to skip some years)
- Ski or Snowboard Occasionally (Go once or twice, every year)
- Ski or Snowboard Regularly (3 or 4 times a year)
- Ski or Snowboard Enthusiastically (5 – 9 times a year)
- Real Die Hard (10 or more times a year)

To receive your free Snowshoe Mountain \$10 Gift Card, please provide us with your email address. Your gift card will be emailed to you upon completion of the survey. Thanks again for your participation as your responses will prove valuable as we continue to strive to improve the guest experience offered at Snowshoe Mountain

28. Please provide us with your email address

Appendix B

Permission to Utilize Recreation Table

In an email dated September 16, 2005 the researcher requested permission to include Table 1 in this document.

Dr. Crandall,

I am currently a graduate student at the University of Missouri in Columbia and am working on my PhD in the area of Environment and Behavior. While researching for my dissertation and comprehensive exam I came across your article "Motivations for Leisure" in the Journal of Leisure Research. I would like to have your permission to include your table of Motivational Categories and Items in both my comprehensive exam and my dissertation. In my dissertation I am utilizing both recreational/leisure theory and restorative environment theory in an evaluation of Snowshoe Ski Resort in West Virginia. Your work would be cited in APA format.

So, would you be willing to grant me permission to reproduce your table?

I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to utilize this information as I near completion of my studies!

Respectfully,
Susan C. Prillaman

In an email dated September 16, 2005 Dr. Crandall replied:

Susan,

Sure, you can use my table with attribution. In return, I'd like to receive an abstract, or other summary, of your dissertation.

Rick Crandall, Ph.D.

In an email dated September 16, 2005 the researcher replied:

With pride. As I mentioned I am early in the process. Attached is the abstract that went out to my committee members for the request for comp questions. I expect over time I will modify this. When I am finished, I will send the final draft.

Thank you so much!
Susan

Appendix C

Permission to Utilize Snowshoe Mountain Resort Resources

In an email dated April 12, 2005, the researcher requested permission to work with Snowshoe for the creation of this dissertation.

-----Original Message-----

From: Susan Prillaman [mailto:prillaman@cmsu1.cmsu.edu]

Sent: Friday, April 08, 2005 10:44 AM

To: browe@snowshoemtn.com

Subject: Research on Snowshoe

Brian,

I am finally getting back into my pilot study and starting to think about my dissertation. After looking over your surveys I am most interested in the data that you collected from the demographic focused survey.

I would like to work with the basic demographics (who your client is) with the answers that you received from the open ended question (I can't remember if it was #11 or #15) about their perception of the identity of Snowshoe Resort. This I would be categorizing and correlating for my dissertation. Would you still be interested in sharing the raw data with me for this purpose?

I want to thank you again for your interest in and support for my doctoral project thus far. I look forward to answering any questions you may have about my project.

Sincerely,

Susan

Hi Susan -

No problem on sharing that raw data with you. I'll download and send over to you in an email.

As for the direction you are heading, it also sounds good with me. It would be some useful information for us. I don't have a problem helping you out in any way. I'll go ahead and send the raw data on to you. After you look over it, let me know if you have any questions. Then, maybe we can schedule a call to get into more specifics.

Brian

Several attempts were made to obtain permission to utilize photographic images, the resort map and the trail map. Attempts were made on July 7, 2006 and July 17, 2006

In a message dated July 7, 2006:

Brian,

I am finishing up the last pieces of my dissertation. I wanted to write and ask permission to use the Snowshoe area map, the Snowshoe trail map and pictures from your online gallery in order to better illustrate my dissertation. Would that be okay?

Thank you,
Susan

In a message dated July 17, 2006:

Brian,

I know you are busy (maybe you even went on vacation) but I was wondering if I could use pictures, the resort map and the slope map images in my dissertation. Some of the pictures are from the gallery and some are from the webpage itself (pictures of the lodges, etc.). May I please?

If you could just write back a little note indicating, I hope, that this would be okay, I need to include your permission as an addendum to my study. Which is great and it's almost finished!!!!

Thanks so much for all that you have shared with me and your interest in what I am doing!

Susan

All of the images were collected from the Snowshoe Mountain Resort

Internet web page at: <http://www.snowshoemtn.com/index.htm>

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