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Garden Tourism in Ireland

An Exploration of Product Group Co-operation, Links and Relationships

Catherine E. Gorman

PhD

2010

Garden Tourism in Ireland

An Exploration of Product Group Co-operation, Links and Relationships

A thesis presented to Dublin University by

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In fulfilment of the Requirement of PhD

Submitted to Department of Geography,

Dublin University,

Trinity College

Supervisor: Prof. Desmond A. Gillmor

2010

Declaration

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Date: May 2010

Summary

This thesis explores the use of co-operative approaches, links and relationships that exist (or not) in the garden tourism sector, and whether the sector constitutes sustainable tourism provision. A brief history of gardens and garden tourism contextualises the research. A broad range of literature was consulted and reviewed with pertinent material sourced from a number of disciplines using a geographical framework and including garden history, geography, business, tourism, marketing and sociology. From this review a number of key constructs were identified which formed the basis of a conceptual framework and input to a theme-based approach which was used in the primary research.

The research methodology consisted primarily of a semi-structured interview guided by a qualitative philosophy. The epistemology stemmed from a phenomenological viewpoint, and as the researcher has prior significant involvement and experience in the garden tourism sector, an interpretivistic approach was considered most appropriate for the research process. The interviews were undertaken in five stages and addressed to key informants, gardens owners/managers from Ireland, garden group coordinators, network coordinators and to a CEO of a destination area. The main themes of than interviews focused on; the garden tourism product, perceived importance of the garden tourism product, embedded issues and the exploration of co-operation, links and relationships undertaken by those interviewed. Characteristics essential for co-operative success, barriers to success and the use of communication and marketing tools were also addressed.

Analysis was initially undertaken using lexicographical association and frequencies, and the findings which are documented in order of the themes of the interviews were tabulated in order to manage the information. As the focus of the research was on garden tourism, those that had the most significant input into the sector were documented together in the findings chapter; the key informants; gardens owners/managers and garden group coordinators.

In order to explore a more recent development in co-operation and networks initiated by Fáilte Ireland, two network co-ordinators were interviewed, though as these were not directly involved in the garden tourism sector, the findings were used in terms of

discussion. A series of propositional statements emanating from the findings formed the basis of a discussion interview with the final participant of the research.

Using the findings from all five stages of participation, further analysis was undertaken using the key constructs as a basis for discussion and from this a number of issues emerged pertinent to the research.

Although the participants had a reasonable understanding of the co-operative process, and the characteristics required to ensure success, there was limited evidence to suggest any great degree of horizontal linkage. The support bodies and organisations were the most common link cited by participants. An evaluation of website information supported this conclusion. It was concluded that Garden Owners/Managers have to cope with a multiplicity of identities in negotiating the co-operative process. The identities that influence the process include history and social systems; qualifications and experience; ownership and conflicting objectives and spatiality. Geographical proximity, though important in the literature did not seem to have a significant influence.

The concluding chapter considers the pertinent constructs identified in the literature that relate to the findings in the light of multiplicity of identities. A number of pragmatic recommendations address the issue of sustainability within the garden tourism sector. Finally, consideration is given to the benefits of the work and further areas of research.

Acknowledgements and Dedication

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and in memory of Dr. G.F and Prof. M.J

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Abbreviations

Ac.	Acre
AGM	Annual General Meeting
AMA	American Marketing Association
BF	Bord Fáilte (National Tourism Development Authority prior to 2003)
BMW	Border Midlands West (region)
BSA	British Sociological Society
CBTLN	County Based Tourism Learning Networks
CEB	County Enterprise Board
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CRM	Customer Relationship Management
CTC	Canadian Tourism Commission
DAST	Department of Arts Sports and Tourism
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DBIS	Department of Business Innovation and Skills (UK)
ETUP	European Tourism Universities Partnership
EU	European Union
FÁS	Foras Áiseanna Saothair (National Training and Employment Authority)
FI	Fáilte Ireland (National Tourism Development Authority post 2003)
FIT	Fully Independent Traveller
FMCG	Fast Moving Consumer Goods
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GGRS	Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme
HRDS	Human Resource Development Strategy

HCGI	Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland
ha	Hectare
ICH	Irish Country Holidays
ICMSA	Irish Creamery and Milk Suppliers Association
ICOS	Irish Co-operative Society
IDS	Irish Dendrological Society
IFA	Irish Farmers Association
IFH	Irish Farmhouse Holidays
IGPS	Irish Garden Plant Society
IHF	Irish Hotel Federation
IMC	Integrated Marketing Communications
IT/ICT	Information (Communications) Technology
ITB	Irish Tourist Board
ITIC	Irish Tourist Industry Confederation
ITOA	Irish Tour operators Association
km	Kilometre
LEADER	Liaisons Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale
MIS	Management Information Systems
NCCPG	National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens
NDP	National Development Programme
NITB	Northern Ireland Tourist Board
NT	National Trust
OPW	Office of Public Works
PCN	Personal Communication Network
PMG	Product Marketing Group

RGS	Royal Geographical Society
RHS	Royal Horticultural Society
RHSI	Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland
RM	Relationship Marketing
RTA	Regional Tourism Authority
SE	South East (region)
SME	Small and Medium Enterprises
SMTE	Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises
TAPIG	Tourism Action Plan Implementation Group
TRG	Tourism Renewal Group
TCE	Transaction Cost Economics
T&CH	Town and County Homes Association
TIL	Tourism Ireland Limited
TIO	Tourist Information Office
TLN	Tourism Learning Networks
TSIG	Tourism Strategy Implementation Group
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States (of America)
WOM	Word of Mouth
WTO	World Tourism Organisation

Chapter 1

Introduction

‘For many, the garden is personal expression. In making gardens, we express our personal values and our inner feelings. We use gardens to communicate to others, to show the public world how we feel about ourselves and the larger world around us. Through our gardens we reveal to ourselves and others our own sense of our status, personality, aesthetics, environmental values and social ideology.

Source: Mark Francis 1990:206

1.1 Introduction

Gardens have always been a source of interest and fascination to people. The plant life, floral displays, and structured or unstructured landscaping become places of leisure and recreation, of relaxation and reflection. *‘In a garden, physical work, mental reasoning and spiritual appreciation are synthesized. This synthesis is a prerequisite to partnership with nature’* (Cox 1990: 25). Gardens draw us closer to nature and the passive activity of garden visiting helps to create a connection between humankind and the earth. Garden tourism, or the visiting of garden by tourists and visitors is a niche product segment in the tourism industry. The provision of gardens as a tourism resource spans continents from the grand gardens of France and Italy, to the religious gardens of India and Japan. However, in commodifying a garden to become a tourist attraction, there is a shift in focus from the garden to the visitor. Aspects of being a tourism attraction such as the consumer (visitor), product development, marketing, viability and sustainability need consideration. Relationship building, co-operation and networking is required with a myriad of stakeholders. This thesis explores the relationships gardens are involved in, and whether they co-operate and network with each other and other stakeholders.

This chapter describes the rationale and research objectives for the thesis. It introduces the tourism industry and garden tourism in order to contextualise the research, and concludes with subsequent chapter descriptions.

1.2 Rationale for the Study and Research Objectives

The seed of this research was germinated in 1995 when the author sat as the regional representative on the board of Gardens of Ireland, prior to their joining with Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland (HCGI). The objective of the group was to market the gardens of Ireland, particularly at that time in the nineteen-nineties to overseas visitors. Prior knowledge, operation and history of many of the gardens through the authors’

employment in the National Botanic Gardens (1983-1990), and also her involvement with the Irish Garden Plant Society (IGPS), led to the question of whether the gardens in the context of tourism provision were operating in a co-operative manner. Furthermore, the author was interested in exploring whether relationships were being developed and whether networking was evident. The question related specifically to gardens and garden owners. Each of the Garden-Owners/Managers interviewed for this thesis had opened their garden to the public. HCGI (www.castlesgardensireland.com) attracts between 30 and 50 gardens to its membership every year. The members are gardens located both in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland, some of which are operated by the National Trust (www.nationaltrust.org.uk). The focus of this thesis is the garden and the relationships the owners have with the myriad of stakeholders in terms of tourism provision. However, in order to get a holistic view of garden tourism, a number of other people and groups were interviewed. This brings greater depth of understanding to the area of research.

In order for a business to remain competitive, co-operation is required with a range of stakeholders (Li and Nicholls 2000). *'Tourism is a networked industry where loose clusters of organisations within a destination – as well as networks or co-operative and competitive organisations linking destinations – cooperate and compete in dynamic evolution'* (Scott 2008:3). Sustaining competitive advantage increasingly requires co-operation because a single organisation cannot execute its strategy without drawing from skills and resources of another organisation. According to Buhalis and Cooper (1998), small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTE) lack competitiveness. Many SMTEs are fragmented and lack structure, either of the organisation or in the way business is undertaken. Since the 1980s in Ireland, many SMTEs have become involved to a lesser or greater degree with co-operative marketing bodies. Some work, some do not work. Some of these bodies were funding-led rather than marketing-led, others focused on market segmentation and targeting. Many of the co-operative bodies, both in the past and currently, are involved in relationship management, which also encapsulates relationship marketing. Further research and development of relationship marketing was advocated by Saren and Tzokas (1998), who saw it at the time as a paradigm shift in terms of marketing and management, and Hoffman and Schlosser (2001) stated that *'there was a strong need for collaboration research tailored to SME's which represent 90% of all European companies'*

A strategy which involves relationship development and co-operation can be undertaken either in an overt or covert manner and results in the creation of bonds and links between

the group members and the various stakeholders. Strong bonds (Berry 1995), common vision (Jamel and Getz 1995), group identification (Stoel 2002) and other variables are considered important to efficient co-operation and networking. In evaluating relationship marketing (RM) and the networking approach to marketing, Mattesson (1997:458) surmised that as *'RM means true interaction between parties over time...RM and networking have much to gain from more research interaction, giving the example of the need to focus more on embeddedness of actors and relationships'*.

In the mid-1980s, an initiative involving horizontal co-operation between tourism suppliers was catalysed by the national tourism development authority Bord Fáilte, now Fáilte Ireland/Tourism Ireland Limited. These were called tourism product marketing groups (PMGs). It was during a time that preceded the rapid growth in overseas tourist numbers to Ireland This co-operative marketing approach was part of an overall marketing strategy undertaken by the national tourism board at the time to encourage tourism suppliers of a required quality to work together to increase tourist numbers to their businesses. The PMGs focused on bringing together a number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in a niche segment of the tourism industry to work together as a group, supported by an executive in Bord Fáilte. This segmentation of the tourism industry into different activities identified the need to cater for the specific needs of visitors in pursuing these activities, created a capacity of product which could act as a referral system for visitors and brought together people who, in operating and offering a related tourism product, had to deal with similar product issues. Another objective of the PMGs was to create better efficiencies in dealing with the support systems in place. Boards were set up on which sat a Bord Fáilte representative and these met to discuss issues relating to the group. However, the main purpose of the PMGs was to create economic efficiencies in terms of marketing. The annual subscription was used to market the product in question: in some cases a marketing executive was employed; there was attendance at both consumer and trade shows; familiarisations with relevant journalists were undertaken; and more recently in those PMGs that still exist, a common website was developed and maintained. In Ireland, angling, golf, gardens, heritage, sailing, and equestrian PMGs were developed.

Internationally, similar groups were formed and many of them had similar objectives. Throughout the 1990s and 2000s, some of these co-operative marketing groups survived; others did not, for a myriad of reasons. By serving the visitor better and by 'co-operating to compete', it was hoped that an increase in visitor numbers and revenue would help to increase sustainability of the tourism product.

Co-operatives have been very much in prevalence in the agricultural sector in Ireland for many years, stemming from the Irish Rural Co-operative Movement initiated by Horace Plunkett in the early 20th Century. Although not involved in marketing, farm, milk (Irish Creamery and Milk Suppliers Association - ICMSA) and beef co-operatives exist and are stalwart lobbyists on their members' behalf, both at national and international levels. In tourism, co-operative destination and product marketing was, and still is, a common practice undertaken both internationally and in Ireland. In the accommodation sector, common product groups had been in operation since the mid-1960s in Ireland when Irish Farmhouse Holidays (IFH) was set up to promote farmhouse accommodation to the visitor. The formation of co-operatives and networks has played an increasingly important role in Fáilte Ireland's strategy to the present day. In January 2006, Fáilte Ireland part-funded and facilitated the formation of county network groups with a view to strengthening the links between product providers at county level. The Dublin Institute of Technology (Tourism Research Centre) was involved in organising networks and delivering mentoring and training under this initiative to providers in Counties Meath, Dublin, Wicklow and Kildare. These subsequently became the Tourism Learning Networks which are still in operation today (2009).

As part of their evaluation of competitor destinations, Fáilte Ireland, in preparation of the National Development Programme Submission 2007-2013, identified the importance of new product and geographic partnerships as a characteristic that facilitates success in tourism (Fáilte Ireland 2006a). Although many of the original PMGs have ceased to exist or have changed over the years, both geographic and product partnerships are still viewed as important to the development and marketing of tourism. Equestrian Holidays of Ireland (www.ehi.ie), Learning English in Ireland (www.mei.ie), Sailing Holidays in Ireland (www.sailingireland.com), and Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland (www.castlesgardensireland.com) are all examples of product marketing groups that operate in the tourism sector. Consequently, as part of proposed action to build capacity and quality management within the tourism product in Ireland over the period 2007-2013, an approach involving the introduction of learning networks has been based on both existing networks and around individual products.

Overseas, the Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) has been very active in encouraging similar product groups to work together in order to create a dynamic and an impetus to provide tourism clusters. Product providers have been encouraged through the provision of grants to work together developing tourism products under headings and themes. This

was with a view to becoming self-sustaining after a three year period. Once these product development groups were in place, they could partner with the CTC and, as part of an integrated marketing approach, become involved in marketing campaigns forming a strong link with the CTC www.canadatourism.com/productclubs. These have, however, had limited success.

The exploration of the degree and manner in which people co-operate and work together became of particular interest when the researcher sat as a regional representative on the board of a PMG (gardens) during the 1990s. The idiosyncrasies associated with the way people relate to one another seemed to impact on the operation and achievement of objectives. It was hoped in undertaking the research that a greater understanding of the process of co-operation could be achieved and that both good practice and deficits in the process be uncovered. This was with a view to seeking greater efficacy in the provision of gardens as a tourism attraction. Recommendations have been developed incorporating these efficacies which seek to increase competitive advantage for SMTEs operating in garden tourism and other tourism product sectors.

1.3 Research Aims and Objectives

The aim of the research was to explore the variables that affect the relationships, in terms of co-operative marketing and networking, and assess their contribution to operational sustainability. As it was both previous knowledge and experience in the garden sector that prompted the question, garden tourism was chosen as the medium in which to investigate these issues. As this is an exploratory piece of work, an initial guiding statement, which was based on both the literature and previous experience within the field, gave structure and direction to the work:

'to explore, and seek an understanding of co-operation, links and relationships that exist (or not) in a tourism product group in the garden tourism sector in Ireland'

A number of related objectives were developed in order to give direction to the explorative approach and these are as follows:

1. Exploration of the relevant literature in the fields of tourism, geography, garden tourism, tourism marketing, marketing, organisational behaviour and social sciences, with a view to identification of the key constructs for developing relationships for co-operation, linkages and networking;
2. Evaluation of relationship marketing as a marketing tool for co-operation and networking;

3. Exploration of the type and extent of co-operation and relationships being undertaken by members of a product marketing group;
4. Exploration of the use of relationships and interaction as an approach to providing a tourism experience;
5. Examination of the marketing strategy and tactics used by members of the product marketing group and evaluation of these tools in relation to developing and maintaining relationships;
6. Consideration of the importance of value as a construct in developing co-operation and links;
7. Evaluation of the impact of location, experience, qualifications, history and other embedded issues on the development and maintenance of relationships;
8. Identification of the positive and negative characteristics associated with effective co-operation;
9. Assessment of whether the approaches used contribute to sustainable tourism provision.

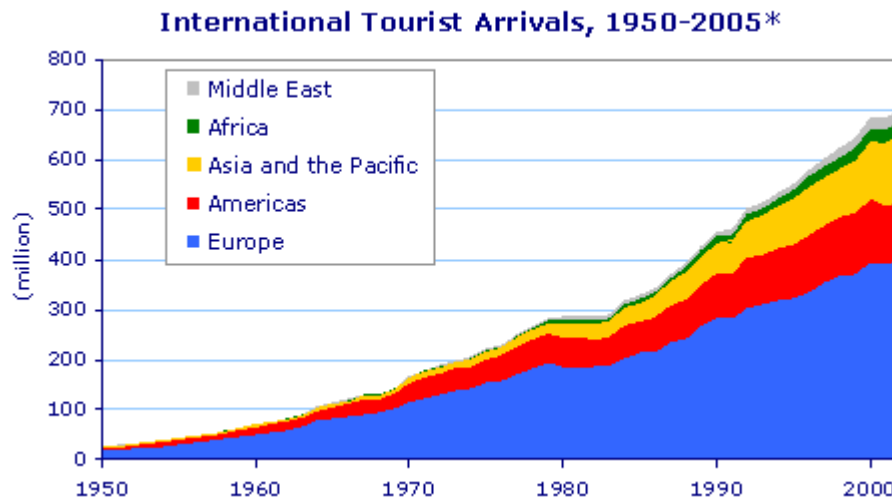
1.4 An Introduction to Tourism

'Tourism can be seen as a more static spatial semiosis marking out places and objects for special attention, defining sites to be seen and making sights out of sites' (Cragg 1999:240).

The last fifty years have seen an exponential increase in people travelling abroad to holiday annually (Figure 1.1). With an annual average growth of 6.5%, international arrivals have grown from 25 million in 1950 to 903 million in 2007 (www.unwto-org/facts). However, the data emerging from EU countries is problematic due to the issue of capturing the exactness of tourist mobilities.

The historic growth of tourism has been very positive and, despite issues such as oil availability and threat of terrorism, it is expected that tourism arrivals will continue to grow, particularly as developing countries become more affluent and globalised. According to the World Tourism Organisation (WTO), it is expected that world travel will almost double by 2020 (WTO 2009), with international arrivals reaching 1.6 billion. Travel to Northern Europe is expected to grow by 3.8% per annum over the period and therefore, if Ireland is to retain its market share in Europe, inbound tourism needs to grow by a minimum average of 3.8% per annum (Fáilte Ireland 2007a:12). However, current development and forecasts predict a softening due to uncertainty of the global economy and the subsequent impact on travel (www.unwto-org/facts).

Figure 1.1 International Tourist Arrivals 1950-2005



Source: www.unwto.org/statistics/index.htm.

As world economies strengthen, tourism movement increases. Tourism in turn contributes to world economies. According to the WTO (2009):

'the growth of international tourism arrivals significantly outpaces growth of economic output as measured in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In years when world economic growth exceeds 4 per cent, the growth of tourism volume tends to be higher. When GDP growth falls below 2 per cent, tourism growth tends to be even lower. In the period 1975-2000 tourism increased at an average rate of 4.6 per cent a year and GDP at 3.5 per cent, i.e. tourism grew on average 1.3 times faster than GDP'.

It must be noted that since 2007 in Ireland as well as in many global destinations, a downturn in tourism numbers and revenue has been experienced as international economies have been weakened due to problems in the financial sector. The Tourism Barometer June Wave 2009 (FI 2009), indicates that performance across the tourism sector is down on 2008 and expectations for future performance are also negative.

This indicates the volatility of the tourism business and a number of extraneous variables lead to this volatility. Economic growth is linked to an increase in tourist arrivals. Figure 1.2 indicates the historical link between international tourism arrivals and economic growth.

Figure 1.2 Economic Growth (GDP) and International Tourist Arrivals



Source: World Tourism Organisation ; International Monetary Fund (2009)

It had been expected in Ireland that overseas visitor numbers would grow to 10 million by 2010, that is 2.5 times the resident population of the country, however, numbers peaked in 2007 and subsequently fell in 2008. There was a 4% decrease of visitors in 2008 and this does not compare favourably to the World Tourism Organisation figure of a 2% increase in that year in tourist numbers globally.

Tourism in Ireland has seen a considerable increase in visitors in the recent past exceeding that of all other European, and most world destinations. In the period 1990-2008, as illustrated in Table 1.1, there was more than a doubling of overseas visitors to the country and more than a trebling in total foreign revenue generated from tourism.

Table 1.1 Overseas Visitor Numbers and Total Foreign Revenue (Ireland)

Year	No. Overseas Visitors (millions)	Total Foreign Revenue (billions €)
1990	3.1	1.446
2005	6.8	4.275
2007	7.7	4.902
2008	7.4	4.781

Source: Fáilte Ireland June (2006, 2009)

In Ireland in 2008, €6.3 billion was attributed to tourism with total tourism revenue from out-of-state and domestic tourism accounting for 4% of GNP. Some 200,000 persons were directly employed in the sector with 133,000 of these citing it as their main employment. Tourism numbers to Ireland comprised of 7.4 million overseas visitors, with a further 591,000 coming from Northern Ireland and 8.34 million domestic visitors (Fáilte Ireland

2009). With the maturing of Ireland as a destination, and the challenging times that lie ahead, issues that need consideration in the future have been identified by Fáilte Ireland. These include changing consumer expectations, the increasing global nature of tourism, marketing and increasing competition. Fáilte Ireland, in its submission to the National Development Programme 2007-2013, said that there was a need for a paradigm shift in Ireland's product offerings that required greater integration in order to provide experiences tailored to the needs of future consumers. They also anticipate that the use of a variety of delivery channels, organisation and supply of the tourism product would see major changes (Fáilte Ireland 2006a). Co-operation, links through such structures as clusters and networks, and the necessary development and maintenance of relationships will have a major role to play in the sustaining of Ireland as both a domestic and international tourism destination

1.5 Introduction to Garden Tourism

'Gardens are widely regarded as sources of freedom and play, havens of pleasure away from the world of control and constraint' (Bale 1999:56). Gardens have been places of visitation and refuge for centuries. They are created to encapsulate a sensual haven of visual and hedonic beauty, an escape from everyday living. In Ireland, there are well over four hundred gardens open to the public. The vast majority of these gardens are open only on a few days each year, for charity or by appointment. However, a limited number of gardens operate as tourist attractions with extended opening hours allowing access for visitors. In the 1980's, Bord Fáilte invited a number of the more successful gardens to become members of a group using the name 'Only the Best'. It was this group that formed the original membership of the Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland, the group chosen to be a focus of this research. The gardens range in size considerably, from less than one hectare, to as in the case of formal landscapes, several hundred hectares. Gardens can be defined as cultivated and managed landscapes. Originally a raw physical environment, a garden is a space which has been developed for the purposes of consumption, *'not primarily for production, but for appropriation'* (Urry 1999:35). The three other ways, according to Urry (ibid), in which society may interact with a physical environment, are through stewardship (caring for), exploitation and scientisation. Garden tourism can be viewed as a mix of these and in striving to be sustainable, it creates equilibrium between provider, visitor and nature (environment).

Due to changes in compilation of statistics, it is difficult to get a comparative picture of visitor numbers to gardens in Ireland over a long period of time. Post-2005, gardens have

been considered part of the overall heritage and culture product in Ireland and counted as such, whereas previously they were assessed as a product in their own right. An attempt to give a reasonable picture of overseas visitor numbers to gardens between 1999 and 2004 is shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2 Overseas Visitor Numbers to Gardens in Ireland 1999-2007

Year	Overseas Visitors (000's)
1999	638,000
2000	657,000
2001	467,000
2002	376,000
2003	384,000
2004	501,000
2005	419,000
2006	619,000
2007	768,000

Source: Fáilte Ireland Garden's (2005, 2006b, 2007b, 2008)

A dramatic decrease in visitor numbers can be observed between 2000 and 2001 and between 2001 and 2002. Two global incidences contributed to the dramatic drop in numbers. In 2000, Foot and Mouth disease affected Great Britain, with one incident in the Republic of Ireland in the border county of Louth. Due to severe restrictions and measures imposed by the Department of Agriculture in order to contain the spread of the disease, much of the countryside did not accept visitors and many rural properties experienced a serious decline in visitor numbers.

In 2001, the terrorism act in which the Twin Towers in New York were destroyed had implications on visitor numbers the following year. Airline transport suffered a decline and, since a large majority of visitors arrive to Ireland through the airports, visitor numbers to the country also declined. Subsequently, between 2002 and 2004, as can be seen from Table 1.2, visitor numbers to gardens have increased. There was a decrease between 2004 and 2005 and a significant rise between 2005 and 2007. This latter rise in numbers was due to the consolidation of garden visitor numbers with the heritage house sector.

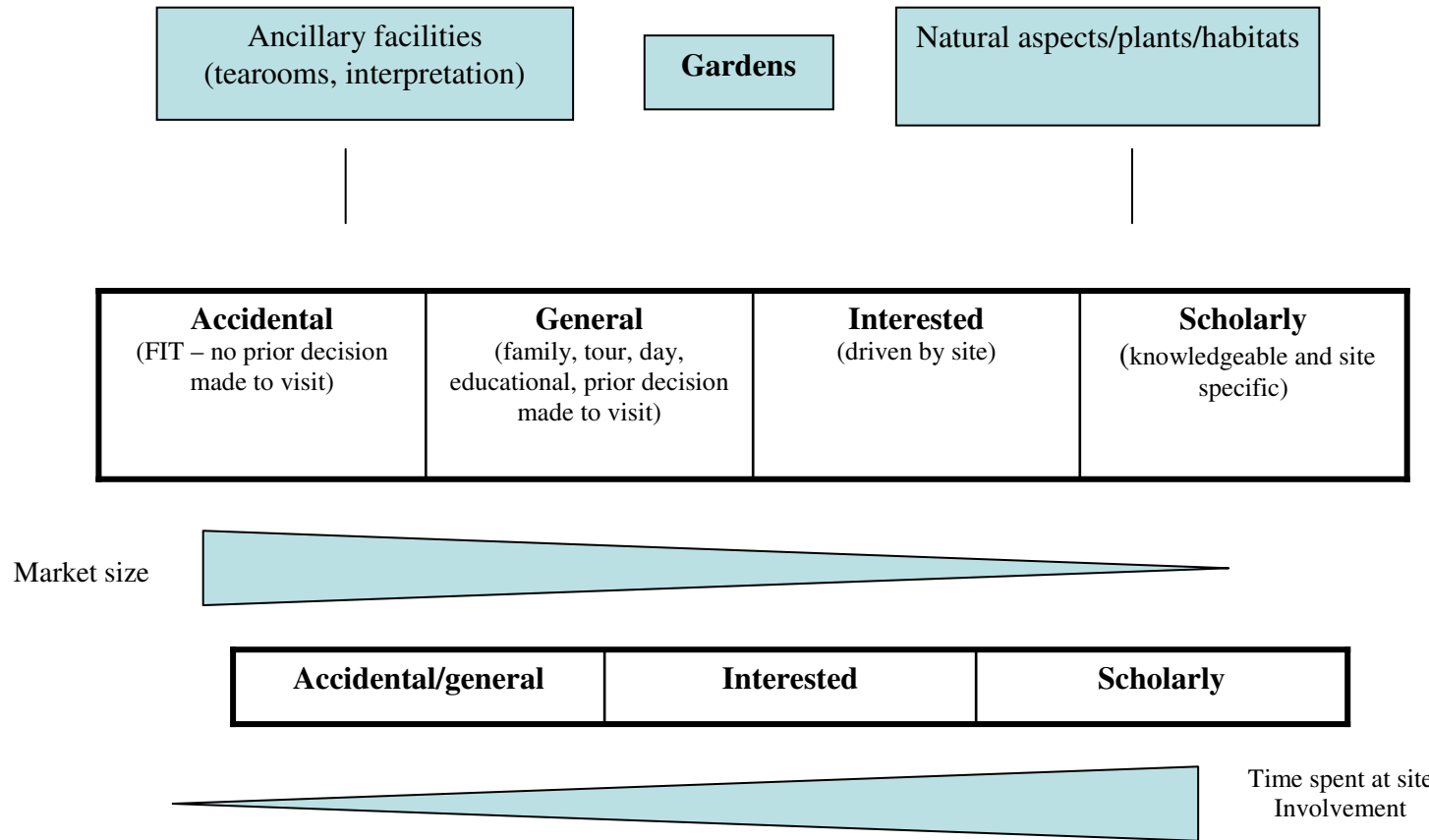
From the late 1980s to the late 1990s, gardens open to the public in Ireland were considered a separate tourism product. In 1997, gardens became integrated as part of the

heritage product and joined forces with the 'Big House', due to the similarity of the markets that were attracted to them. Dooley (2003) found that in 'real terms', when interviewing historic houses, tourist numbers had declined to these attractions. This was due to the fact that Ireland does not have the indigenous population to support such attraction and the increase in the number of properties open to the public. The government subsequently commissioned a report by Indecon (2004), and this resulted in the formation of the Irish Heritage Trust in 2006 (www.irishheritagetrust.ie). However, only one property has been purchased to date.

Gardens are considered as part of built heritage together with castles, heritage houses and heritage towns. Market segments attracted to this product varies: visitors from the local community; day attraction visitors seeking a 'something to do' experience; tourists visiting in the area; specialised individuals and groups of gardeners/horticulturalists/plants-people with the motivation to visit the garden central to the decision-making process. The size of each of these segments visiting a garden depends on the location and type of garden, for example whether it is close to an urban area, is located in a tourist area or has a specialised collection of plants. Based on a paper by the researcher which considered segmentation in niche tourism (Gorman 2007a), the market segments adapted to the garden sector may be viewed as those shown in Figure 1.3. These segments differentiate between those visitors who are accidental, for example come across the garden directed by signposting or seek a day out, and those that are attracted specifically to a garden due to its landscaping or planting (Appendix I). Each market segment has a certain expectation and potential for involvement.

The level of expectation may be low (or unknown) in the case of the accidental visitor and high in the case of the specialist. Time spent specifically at the garden may also be affected due to the level of involvement, though extension of the experience and indeed involvement can be enhanced through the provision of related facilities.

Figure 1.3 Market Segmentation of Garden Tourism



Source: Author for the purpose of the research

The need to invest in gardens and their importance as a tourism resource was recognised in the early 1990s. Through implementation of the Operational Programme for Tourism 1994-2000, many of the gardens availed of substantial funding through the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme (GGRS), which was administered through the programme between 1996 and 2001 (Gorman and Reid 2000). A dedicated manager was responsible for the management of this scheme and during this time some 20 gardens availed of the funding.

More recently, Ireland has lost European Objective 1 status because of its enhanced economy and there has been a sharp decline in grant aid available for the development of products within the tourism sector. Investment in gardens is not seen as a priority, although there is still funding available but to a lesser degree than before. As part of tourism product development and outlined in the Fáilte Ireland NDP Submission 2007-2013), the development of a gardens festival of international repute was seen as a way of establishing the country as a prime garden visitor destination (Fáilte Ireland 2006). This has manifested as Bloom which has taken place in the Phoenix Park, Dublin for the past three years. Many of the gardens may, however, benefit from their association with the 'Big House'. Increasingly, integrated tourism developments have been planned for some of these larger houses and estates, for example Kilronan Castle in Roscommon, Lissadell House in Sligo and Farnham Castle in Cavan. However, this is sometimes disputed by such watchdog groups as An Taisce which are unhappy with the change in use of some of the houses and gardens (Lumley 2007). The establishment of an Irish Heritage Trust in 2006 hope to provide support to some of these estates and gardens. Dr. Terence Dooley, Head of the Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses and Estates, in an interview with Stephen Wynne Jones (Wynne-Jones 2006), concluded that there was a need to develop a complete package which could include a heritage trail that should be marketed by the tourism bodies. While this has some merit, providers often participate wholly only if they feel as though they have had their say in the development of such an approach. A number of tourist trails linking houses and gardens do exist, although these are often locally based and information for the tourist is available only once they are in the local/county area. There are many groups that are involved in both the development and marketing of gardens. The national group in Ireland, Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland (HCGI), provides a co-operative marketing body that focuses on both the international and domestic markets, mainly representing a mix of privately and publically owned gardens (www.castlesgardensireland.com). The Office of Public Works (OPW), the government body owns a number of parks and gardens on behalf of the Irish public, also separately

markets its own premises to mainly the domestic market (www.opw.ie). The National Trust manages and operates a number of properties and gardens in Great Britain and Northern Ireland under charity status (www.nationaltrust.org.uk). Interviews with Key Informants and Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators help to give a more holistic view of the approaches to co-operation being undertaken in the sector. The extent of co-operation, the links and relationships developed, the perception of both the gardens and tourism, and the positives and negatives associated with their operation are the subjects that are explored over the course of the next six chapters.

1.6 Chapter Descriptions

The thesis is structured in the following manner;

Chapter 1 Introduction: this chapter has introduced the rationale for the research, citing the guiding statement and the research objectives. Background information on the tourism industry and garden tourism has set the study in context. This chapter concludes with a brief description of the other chapters.

Chapter 2 Research Background and Literature Review: this chapter is comprised of three parts:

Part A: The first part gives a brief chronological history of gardening, gardens and garden visiting. It also considers the present issues that need to be addressed in terms of operating a garden as a tourist product today

Part B: This part evaluates the secondary academic material that is pertinent to the guiding statement and the research objectives. In order to get a sufficient overview of the subject, it was necessary to explore literature in a number of areas: organisational behaviour; geography; marketing/tourism marketing; social science and networking/relationship development.

Part C: The third part of the chapter develops a conceptual framework drawn from the literature review. It is this model that forms the basis for the questions that were the guiding force for the interviews utilised in the research.

Chapter 3 Research Methodology: chapter three describes and justifies the methodological approach to the research. In a search for the most appropriate method, the researcher used her experience working in the field of tourism marketing and with the garden tourism product providers. Issues such as motivation to participate, interest and the depth of response required were addressed in order to gain sufficient information on which to base any findings. The chapter considers the philosophy of the research approach and the main

issues that have impacted the choice of methodology, the results and interpretation. A summary of the questions used in the interview process is included. Validity and reliability are discussed briefly and limitations to the research are also considered.

Chapter 4 Findings: these are set out in descriptive and graphical form (as applicable). As the majority of responses were qualitative in nature, analyses were undertaken manually using themes, lexicographical association, and incidences of similar words/expressions. Direct quotations are used to illustrate particular findings.

Chapter 5 Analysis and Discussion: this chapter brings together the main concepts based on the conceptual framework and the main findings from the primary research with a view to synthesising responses to the research objectives.

Chapter 6 Conclusion and Recommendations: the concluding comments of the research suggest a number of recommendations in relation to the outcome and its applicability in the garden tourism sector. Both the benefits and the limitations of the research are considered and a number of possible areas of future research are suggested.

1.7 Conclusion

The introductory chapter to this thesis has outlined the research questions that guide the study and sets out the rationale for the work. A brief overview of national and international tourism and more specifically garden tourism, contextualises the research. The chapter outline gives structure to the document.

Chapter 2

Research Background and Literature Review

2.1 Introduction and Contextualisation of the Research

The research addresses the need to look further than the economic and financial benefits of tourism. The discipline of geography provides the framework within which this can be achieved. As this research wished to explore more than the economic aspects of garden tourism provision, it was deemed at the outset, that a geographical focus was essential in understanding the complexities of the issues of co-operation, links and relationships. Therefore, this thesis is guided by the discipline of geography. As Hall and Page (2009:3) noted, 'geography has as its central concerns a focus of place, space and environment'. Geography considers the economic, social, human and physical aspects of space and place. This thesis considers space (the created garden), place (the garden as a tourist destination) and the environment (the stakeholders including visitors), and its influence on the co-operative approaches, links and relationships amongst suppliers (garden owners and garden group co-ordinators).

There has been much discussion as to the role of geography within tourism. The contribution of geographers to tourism has been documented by a number of well-known geographers such as Echtner and Jamel (2007), Franklin and Crang (2001), Butler (2004), Cole (2004), Gibson (2008), and most recently Hall and Page (2009). Cole (2004) considered the paradigmatic shift and nature of the sub-discipline of tourism and its position within geography. He suggested that that the concepts of space and place applied to tourism did not always consider the detail and 'complexity of the process and mechanisms involved' (p.140), and therefore a full understanding was not achieved. Exploring the co-operation, links and relationships among the chosen garden tourism product group, considers both the complexity of the process of supply and experience provision, and seeks to understand further the mechanisms involved with the view to creating further knowledge within the framework of a geographic paradigm.

Butler (2004) noted that geographers have contributed to tourism in terms of cultural heritage, urban regeneration, mobility and movement, regional development, carrying capacity and limits, and resources, planning and sustainability. Gardens open to visitors in

Ireland are deemed part of the cultural and heritage product (Failte Ireland 2009), and have both niche and general appeal. Swarbrooke (2002:6) identified four categories of visitor attractions. As part of this categorisation, historic gardens are considered to be human-made, however are not originally designed to attract visitors. Therefore, a shift in purpose or indeed objective, occurs as they become commodified for tourist provision. However, little research to date has focused on gardens in the context of tourism provision from a geographical perspective. Benfield (2001, 2008) has researched garden tourism considering aspects of sustainability and management, and Connell (2004, 2005) is cited by Hall and Page (2009) as a contributor in terms of garden visiting, although a marketing and management perspective dominates her work. Hall and Page (ibid) also considered the contribution of cultural geographies to tourism with Crang (1997), and Crouch (1999) of noted significance. Crouch (1999) evaluated the perception and involvement of allotment owners with their allotments (creation and management of a natural space), and is of particular pertinence to this work as this research considers the relationship and involvement that garden owners and managers have with the garden.

In relation to tourism, McCannell (1992:1) suggested that '[it] is not just an aggregate of merely commercial activities; it is a ideological framing of history, nature and tradition; a framing that has the power to reshape culture and nature of its own needs' This research looks outside the purely business and commercial aspects of tourism provision in order to understand the underlying approaches to operation. A garden embodies and reflects its creator, sometimes explicitly (as in the case of the Japanese Gardens in County Kildare), or in a historical context as in many of the Anglo-influenced demesne gardens whose owners/managers were interviewed for this work. Gardens are constructed spaces reflecting nature, history and tradition. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, garden-visiting in its purest form attracts an older profile of visitor who has an interest and, sometimes a passion for gardens and plants. However, gardens as they expand their facilities and other associated activities have broadened their attractiveness and this is described in greater depth in section 1.5.

According to Gibson (2008: 407) tourism is at an 'important intersection within geography and its capacity to gel critical, integrative and imperative research appears to be increasingly realised'. Echterner and Jamal (1997) identified the key dimensions of tourism studies to include: the generation of a theoretical body of knowledge; holistic and integrative research; an interdisciplinary approach; the use of diverse methodologies and clearly explicated theory and methodologies.

Hall and Page (2009) recognised the link between cultural geography and social theories, however realise that some geographers only consider the embedded nature of businesses. This thesis brings together a literature which considers geography (including issues of an embedded nature), garden tourism, tourism marketing, marketing, organizational behaviour and social sciences and develops an interdisciplinary and holistic framework on which to evaluate the research question. This research mirrors the post-modern provision of tourism as it encapsulates the multivariate considerations that play a role in tourism provision. Gardens as attractions and being open to the visitors are part of that provision.

Chapter two consists of three parts. The first part, Part A, documents a background history of gardens, garden tourism and gardening visiting. It highlights the role that the garden has played in society, some examples of well-known gardens open to the public, and also considers some of the issues facing gardens at present. Part B discusses the academic literature on co-operation, relationship development and networks. It considers the common and unique constructs and identifies those that are of importance to this research work. Part C uses the identified constructs to create a conceptual framework which underpins the question construction used as part of the interview process in the primary work.

Part A A Short History of Gardens and Gardening

‘What was paradise but a garden, an orchard of trees and herbs full of pleasure, and nothing there but delights?’

W Lawson (taken from the brochure of Kilmokea Country Manor and Gardens, Wexford)

2.2 Gardens and Gardening

Gardens, in one form or another and however broadly defined, have been a part of human existence for a very long time and doubtless always will be (Doolittle 2004). As gardens are ephemeral, they are created, change and disappear over time, so often it may be a reference in a book or document or even oral history that allows them to live on. According to Doolittle (2004:402), gardens *‘truly transcend time, culture, environment/nature, gender and thought’* and are mirrors of the human condition. While this perception of gardens is thought provoking, the creation and maintenance of gardens have relied on many factors including the required time, financial resources, knowledge and appreciation of the natural world. According to Fox and Edwards (2008), gardens open to the public have developed in five different ways; as an output of a great culture; those that complement a domestic property; those that housed scientific collections,

gardens and parks created as municipal recreational spaces and those created complementary to a visitor attractions.

Horticulture, *'the cultivation of gardens'* is derived from the Latin word *hortus*. A garden is considered by some as the place *'where God first created order out of chaos'* and the creation of a garden it is one way to reconnect with the Garden of Eden or oasis of Shambhala (Cooper-Marcus 1990:26). Apart from religious association, the earliest gardens are mentioned in Greek and Italian literature and depict places where groves of trees and landscapes were dedicated to gods and temples in order to please them. Most famous was a park dedicated to Artemis at Scillus (Greece), which Xenophon created after his return from a Persian expedition. He had seen the fantastic gardens of the oriental kings, *the pairidaeza*, and wished to replicate them. *Pairidaeza* is the word from which paradise is derived. It was the Sumerians who developed hunting parks, combining the pursuit of leisure with the obtaining of food, and therefore the landscape reflected this way of life with the use of planted and managed trees and shrubs. Paintings and drawings on pottery, friezes and ornaments have depicted gardens through various civilisations, in the form of markings on pieces of pottery and ornaments (Hobhouse 2002) and have displayed the Egyptian gardens and a considered wonder of the ancient world, the Hanging Garden of Babylon which date back to 700BC.

The earliest evidence of botanical science, or the study of plants, dates back to 300BC when Theophrastus described and classified 450 plants. He was specifically interested in their medicinal properties. Pliny, both the older and younger, had an interest in plants and classified many of them during the first century. Evidence of techniques to cultivate the soil have been unearthed through archaeological excavation, and, in Peru there is evidence of sophisticated use of both irrigation and horticultural techniques dating from 500AD. The art of gardening in Ireland arrived with Christianity during this same period and the Roman-educated followers brought knowledge and skills from abroad to both Great Britain and Ireland. *'Ecclesiastics were not only the rulers and the lawyers, the arbiters, the almoners, the architects, musicians, painters of the nation; they were the farmers and the gardeners also. They dug and drained, they planted and sowed, they made the desert smile'* (Hole 1899:39). The history of gardening in Ireland and mention of a number of participating gardens has been documented by several authors including Pim (1979) and Lamb and Bowe (1995).

The use of plants in medicines and as cures was commonplace over the following centuries. A Treatise of Medicine and Botany was written in 1432 by Donal Og O'

Herlihy. A copy of this can be viewed in the Royal Irish Academy in Dublin. The interest in medicinal plants, herbs and flowers was embraced by the Christian Church around the world and included the Abbey of Cassino which was created in Italy in 1070AD. This was viewed by many as a piece of paradise influenced by Roman fashion. A mix of vegetables for culinary use and flowers for pleasure were cultivated alongside each other in this abbey garden, and this approach to mixed gardening, now termed 'potager', was echoed in many monasteries throughout Europe.

One of the first books which addressed garden design was written by Leon Battista Alberti, 'De re aedificatoria' which, although it was considered a classical architectural treatise, viewed ornament and garden design as a part of design and building. It was printed in 1485. Prior to this, it was the theory of propagation and geometry that was a prelude to garden design and very much the influence of the Italian renaissance villas which were built by the de Medici family in Italy. Of note are Villa Cassello (1537) and Boboli gardens (1550).

During the 17th century, some classification of plants was undertaken, though it was not until the 18th century that Linnaeus, a Swede born in 1707, undertook substantial work on plant classification and on whom we rely greatly today in relation to plant names. He became Professor of Botany at Uppsala University and not only was interested in and classified plants, but also insects, shells, minerals and mammals. Linnaeus' work in nomenclature, specifically the use of binomial nomenclature whereby each plant is denoted by two names, the genus being the substantive and the species an adjective, is still used today (Lindsey 1923).

A number of factors influence the 'art of gardening'. The geomorphology, habitat and diversity of climates and habitats throughout Europe have resulted in over 11,000 native species of flowering plants. Countries with the greatest diversity of climate, such as France, are home to 4,000 species and the range of climate allows the growth of thousands of exotics (Taylor 1998). Ireland, which is separated from mainland Europe, is a far smaller country (83,000 km sq.) and is home to only 1,200 species and Great Britain is home to 2,500 species of plants. During the 18th century, it was the landscapes of France which were an influence on subsequent gardens in Ireland (and Great Britain) and a more formal approach to gardening was adopted. Two different traditions emerged – the 17th century baroque gardens and the municipal gardens. The formal gardens of Versailles, which are one of the best known gardens in the world, attract millions of visitors each year. The 17th century French influence can be seen at Killruddery in County Wicklow, which is

one of the most intact early gardens in Ireland. In the late 18th century, an increasing Anglo-Italianate influence in France saw huge increase in the number of public parks. This Italian and English influence also impacted on trends in gardening throughout the rest of Europe.

The first recorded example of a formal garden in Ireland is that of the Great Earl of Cork, The College, Youghal in Co. Cork, and this was described in 1681. The garden belonging to the Earl of Cork in Glanmire, County Cork was created in 1620 and this is the only Jacobean Garden to survive in its original form today. Also during this period, in 1682, Lord Granard of Castleforbes in County Longford created one of the first documented gardens. This garden and demesne are still in the family, though are not open to the public.

The British landscape movement (1700s) introduced a new formal approach to garden design. It was in the mid-18th century that Capability Brown, and later his successor Humphrey Repton, introduced the picturesque elements and flowerbeds to gardens whose main focus had previously been on the parkland aspect. Capability Brown is considered one of the last great landscape designers in Great Britain. However, in the mid-19th century, the tide and fashion again changed, from a more formal approach of planting to one which respected the natural habitats of plants.

In Ireland, the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin was founded in 1795. The Belfast Botanic Garden was founded in 1828 by Thomas Drummond. The glass house there was built by Turner, who is also responsible for the curvilinear glasshouse range in the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin. The glasshouse was used to house the exotic collections of those plants which had been collected from throughout the New World and required humid and often tropical climates to survive. Orangeries (glasshouses) were commonly used to house citrus fruits during the cooler, winter months in the larger estate houses and a fine example can be seen at Kilruddery in County Wicklow.

In America, in the mid 19th century in New York, Frederick Olmsted built Central Park and made a call to preserve wilderness areas. Continuing the trend on wilderness gardening, in 1870 in Britain, the Irish landscape gardener, William Robinson published the 'Wild Garden' and pioneered a more ecological approach to gardening, which up until then had been quite formal in both planting and appearance. The sweep of planting and the wildness of native habitats were allowed to make an appearance and this characterises many of the gardens open to the public in Ireland today, such as Mount Usher in County Wicklow.

Plant hunting and the search for the unusual and exotic was the driver to create Rowallane Gardens, County Down in 1873. The links with plant hunters and explorers furnished the garden with a wide variety of plants. In 1954, the UK Government, through the National Trust of Northern Ireland, purchased an additional land to make the garden what it is today. It is the National Trust which currently manages this property and gardens (Lamb and Bowe 1995).

During the 18th century, due to severe restrictions, European collectors had difficulty accessing plants globally, particularly from Japan and China which were sources much sought after by gardens in Western Europe. There was excitement in the botanical world in the late 1870s, when Japan opened its doors to both foreigners and explorers, and a feast of plants previously unknown in the Western world were exported to the West, creating huge interest to the public. These plants started to make an appearance in Irish gardens and further exploration and plant hunting in China, such as that undertaken by Augustine Henry in the late 19th and early 20th century, led to the introduction of many species, some of which are named after the western plant hunters, for example *Parthenocissus henryii* (after Augustine Henry) and *Davidia involucrata* (the paper handkerchief tree) which was named after Pere David, a French explorer. The search for the exotic and unusual meant that plants of note were plundered during the Victorian times. In Ireland, the Killarney Fern (*Trichomanes speciosum*) was often taken from the wild for fern gardens, a speciality of the time. Today, plant hunting still continues though to a lesser degree than in former times. The National Botanic Gardens has led a number of expeditions to Asia and to Central and South America and some private individuals, such as the Guinness family who own Lodge Park in Straffan, also undertake botanical expeditions. The climate is benign and is dictated by a south westerly influence, humid temperate conditions and the warming effect of the North Atlantic Drift. This has allowed many of these non-native plants to thrive in Irish gardens and indeed at times, become alien invasives, for example *Rhododendron ponticum* (in Kerry) and *Gunnera tinctoria* (on Clare Island).

During the early 20th century, the partnership between Gertrude Jekyll and Edward Lutychens set a trend in terms of both architectural and planting style and their use of compartments within a garden had an influence on garden design in Ireland. An example of this can be seen in Heywood Gardens, County Laois. Dating from this period also and typical of its time, Mount Stewart in County Down is set on 32.4 ha (80 acres) and the lime free soil makes it suitable for ericaceous plants such as heathers and rhododendrons. The

garden was created by Lady Londonderry and comprises of Italianate, Spanish and sunken gardens.

Regarded as an iconic garden of the 20th century, Vita Sackville West created Sissinghurst in 1932, This garden has had lasting influence on the design of many of the more recent gardens such as Butterstream located in Trim, County Meath. However the late 20th century has seen modernist designers with no one specific style. A mix of formal, cottage (informal) and modern may exist together. The increase in close-proximity housing with small urban gardens, less time due to work commitments and post-modern influences have led to the demand for ‘instant’ low maintenance gardens and the use of hard structure such as decking, paths and pergolas vying for importance in the garden space. There is an emphasis in bringing the indoors outside and creating another ‘outside’ room. Gardens have become an extension of the house and part of lifestyle living (Taylor 2002). The emphasis on instant gardens, created within a day/weekend are very much the theme on which a number of television garden programmes have been based, for example Home Front and Ground Force, ‘*where the promise is to have paradise without the hassle of exerting physical energy*’ (Hewer 2003:330). However, since 2007, there has been a reversion back to a more traditional approach to gardening and this is becoming more evident through the increased emphasis on ‘growing your own’ [vegetables] and eco- and nature-oriented media programmes. While there has always been a plethora of gardening magazines in Great Britain, there is also an increased number of Irish magazine publications devoted to gardening, with ‘An Irish Garden’ and ‘Garden Heaven’ holding their own within the marketplace. Books on both gardening and gardens are published in increasing numbers, many with large, glossy pictures and emphasis on the beauty rather than the reality of gardens and gardening.

There is also an increasing number of websites dedicated to garden blogs and messaging. Chat rooms dedicated to issues relating to gardening and gardens, and virtual garden visits form part of the garden product today. In Ireland in 2008, www.garden.ie was launched and this site attracts members from all over the country. It lists gardens to visit as well as information on gardening-related topics and advice. Although a screen and picture is a poor substitute for a tourism product that requires all the senses, potential visitors can become familiar with a vast amount of information about a garden (much of it referral) prior to their visit. Media influences the expectations of the visitor. This expectation from the visitor creates a pressure on both the garden and the owner/manager. The garden-owner strives to live up to this expected image, in deference to the seasonal and climatic

changes that occur naturally in the horticultural world. In some cases, this may provide for a less than satisfying garden visit experience for some of the more amateur gardeners. This image or expectation may also influence how the garden/manager perceives the garden. Consideration of external value prior to the garden being open to the public required exploration. Many gardeners have become media celebrities and garden festivals (Bloom in Dublin, Royal Horticultural Society Tatton Park in the UK) and festivals within gardens (popular and classical concerts, food, garden themed etc.) have been increasing each year. Are these added values and links with related lifestyle products a way to create greater sustainability in garden tourism in the future? Or are the gardens losing sight of their core meaning?

2.3 The Visiting of Country Houses and Gardens

According to Connell (2005), the visiting of country houses and gardens in Great Britain has been documented by several authors (Girouard 1978; Hoskins 1988; Mandler 1997; Towner 1996). Fox and Edwards (2008) more recently have evaluated visitors to a number of gardens in southern England in the context of gardens providing social and natural spaces. However, the visiting of gardens became important in the Victorian era. It was driven by the growth in leisure pursuits and was stimulated by transport improvements, the desire to escape urban life, more disposable income, an increase in leisure time and changing attitudes to rural life (Connell 2005). Johnson (2007) remarks that a visit by a lady named Anne Plumptre to Ireland in 1814 noted that the Irish gardens were larger than expected and well laid out, though the collections of exotics and conservatories were not as good as those seen at Kew in London. However, in Victorian times, Ireland had much smaller middle and upper-class societies than in Great Britain, so garden and country house visiting were not as prevalent. Those involved with botany, however, did visit each others gardens. David Moore, curator at the National Botanic Gardens, is documented as having invited W.W of RBG, Kew to spend some time visiting '*interesting gardens*' in Ireland in the early part of the 20th century (W.W. 1906). Up until the 1990s, when the Office of Public Works took over its management from the Department of Agriculture, the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin were not considered specifically a tourist attraction, whereas its counterpart in Kew, London has been attracting visitors for over two centuries. However, local visits have always been made by Dublin people and indeed even during the Easter Rising of 1916, it was noted that there were many visitors to the gardens and that the Rising itself had very little effect on the place (Nelson and McCracken 1987).

Societies such as the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) in Great Britain, founded in 1804, the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland (RHSI), founded in 1816, the International Dendrological Society (IDS), founded in 1952, and the Irish Garden Plant Society (IGPS), founded in 1983, as well as many local groups, have provided an interest in plants, gardens and garden visiting over the last couple of centuries to the present day.

There are both private and public gardens open to the public in Ireland and Great Britain. Some of the better known gardens are owned by the state and operated by the Office of Public Works in Ireland and the National Trust in Great Britain. Their focus is on conservation as well as tourism. These gardens include some significant and historic gardens, such as the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin and Sissinghurst in the UK.

2.4 Issues Facing Gardens and Garden Tourism

A number of issues face gardens today. There is increasing number pressures on the development and maintenance of both gardens and historic houses. Land, especially in the Dublin area, had increased in value exponentially from the early 1990's and this resulted in the demise of some gardens. Others are on the urban fringes and await the day when they too will succumb to building. The cost and availability of staff is another issue. Dooley (2003) who evaluated fifty historic houses in Ireland, identified that privately owned houses in particular, were of specific importance to visitors as they were largely unaltered. These houses (and gardens) faced huge costs, lacked funding and resources to keep them operational. Many of the gardens have looked towards tourism as a panacea to the ills and cost of upkeep.

Prideaux 2003), however, identified four factors critical to the success of attractions in peripheral areas: access and location, community support, the economics of the operation and supporting tourism infrastructure. Due to the transient nature of gardens and its reliance on weather, their development and maintenance are fraught with barriers to the creation of a tourism product that can sustain itself. The climatic conditions and indeed the global location of Ireland contribute to the very seasonal nature of the product and their potential viability. Some gardens are linked to other facilities and attractions which can include accommodation, conference facilities, events, exhibition areas, coffee shops and play areas. They have sought to increase the attractiveness of their gardens by developing facilities which appeal to a wider range of markets. However, some of the older and privately-owned gardens are reluctant to follow this route and many are operating at a loss. Some private individuals have had the recent ability to restore gardens and houses, either as sole provider of the financial resources required or with the help of funding. An example

of this is Ardbraccan House in Liscarton, County Meath. This former Bishop's Palace is one of the finest residences in County Meath and has been restored sympathetically by its present owner and attracted an award for its conservation from An Taisce – the National Trust of Ireland. Lissadell, County Sligo is another historic property and garden which has been restored by its owners and gardens such as those at Kylemore Abbey, County Galway have also been restored to their former glory with the help of the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme.

Tourism has acted as a catalyst, in the recognition of gardens as an important resource to both local people and visitors alike. However, gardens may be seen by many as a loss-making resource and, therefore, a burden rather than a bonus to the tourist destination. Some garden attractions have been more successful than others such as in the case of Alnwick Garden in Northumberland, England during a period when other similar places were experiencing difficulties. Sharpley (2007), on examination of the success of Alnwick Gardens identified a number of contributing factors. These included the differentiated nature of the attraction and its potential to attract a broad market, embeddedness in the context of the regional tourism experience, its contribution to a critical mass of attractions and development within the existing resource capability together with a need for integrated planning and control.

However, gardens in Ireland and elsewhere due to their history are also embedded part of the landscape and part of the heritage of a tourist destination. Heritage and cultural tourism attracts significant numbers of visitors to Ireland each year. Increased co-operation, the development of valued relationships, links and networks may help to offset some of these losses, creating an awareness of the value of gardens and providing a positive dynamic towards their continued operation and marketing. Doolittle (2004:402) advocates that gardens are 'geographical manifestations of the human-environment interactions that have attracted some scholarly attention but nowhere near as much as they deserve'. A brief profile of the participating gardens can be found in Appendix II.

Part B Review of Literature

2.5 Introduction

Co-operation has been evident throughout the world since time began. It is common belief that 'no man is an island' and, in order to survive, working and living together provides overall benefit. Co-operation is strongly evident in both the plant and animal kingdoms, and 'symbiotic' co-operation is commonly found in the algae and moss families. Gardens

can be viewed as suggested by Cooper Marcus (1990:28) as *the symbiotic relationship of people, plants, earth, the weather and seasons*.

Komppula (2000) defined co-operation in tourism to include co-operative marketing initiatives, intergovernmental coalitions, public/private partnerships and inter/intra sector planning that include a multitude of actors with different aims and means. The actors may form a network where a common vision of an issue is identified and activities are often based on co-operative relationships. The interest of an organisation's commitment to network can be seen by its interest in the network's long-term goals and willingness actively to work towards the achievement of these goals. In terms of marketing, Gummesson (2002a) suggested that new marketing theory should recognise relationships, networks and interactions as core values of marketing of a business and should focus on the value of the total offering [not just the product in question].

In order to explore the type and level of co-operation, networking and partnership that were being undertaken within the garden tourism sector, it was necessary to consider the circumstances and elements of importance to these complex processes. Relevant secondary literature was explored and this exploration continued through the primary research process and was selected to elicit the maximum of information on the chosen thesis. It was necessary, due to the breadth of the area of interest, that the literature of a number of academic areas be explored. These included: geographical literature, organisational theory incorporating network/co-operative/alliance/collaborative theory, relationship marketing and networking and co-operative theory focusing specifically on the small and medium enterprise (SME) tourism sector.

2.6 Co-operation and Networking in Business

Co-operation and networking are used in business throughout the world on a daily basis. Humankind is essentially individualistic and competitive and therefore drives a relationship forward. The increased number of women involved in business who exhibit different characteristics to men, such as empathy and resolving conflict through reconciliation, have led to increased co-operation and networking (Palmer 2001).

Examples of co-operation can be seen in the agricultural sector. Farming co-operatives have been in existence for centuries, allowing the sole provider to input and work with similar providers in supplying demand and gaining the maximum price for produce. These co-operatives initially were organised by, and for, local communities and in the past two centuries a more structured and organised approach has given small providers within the

agricultural sector a lobby group and voice which is well heard. In Ireland, the Irish Co-operative Society (ICOS) (www.icos.ie) was initiated in 1889 with a view to '*organising agricultural co-operatives and representing them through a central body*' as the objective. The organisation grew to 1114 co-operatives by 1920 and represented the agricultural sector mainly in terms of dairying, processing and later livestock marts. These co-operatives arose at a time when history was changing in the country and a voice was given to those who, up to then, had been suppressed within Irish society. Today, part of their remit is a focus on rural tourism co-operation and the organisation encourages farmers to work together in terms of rural tourism provision. At a global level, the ICOS is a member of the European Association of Agriculture and Fishing Co-operatives, which gives it a voice internationally.

Whether at a local, county, regional or national level, benefits, including the sharing of input costs such as labour and machinery costs, distribution and the gain through lobby power have created a positive view of co-operation in the agricultural sector. However, food provision is part of an essential industry and embedded for centuries within society – not so tourism.

2.7 A Competitive Environment for Small and Medium Tourism Enterprises

As globalisation occurs, the numbers of emerging destinations and tourism products create a more competitive environment, each vying with others for business. In evaluating key contributors to the success of high-profile destinations comparable to Ireland, it was found that relationships and partnering featured strongly as a key contributor to the success of high-profile destinations. These relationships and partnerships were mainly found to be between public and private bodies and between new products and geographic areas. Other factors contributing to success included vision, leadership and innovation in new product development (Fáilte Ireland 2007a). On the supply side, and on a larger scale, such as in the airline industry, Domke-Damonte (2000) found that co-operative relationships were strengthened and improved in terms of performance only during periods of sectoral volatility. In an industry as highly competitive and volatile as the airline industry, co-operative actions provided the companies with an ability to reduce unexpected behaviour by other firms by increasing perceived interdependence. Working together was used as a strategic tool for competitive advantage.

Networking is a tool used for marketing by many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Gilmore et al. 2001). Over 99% of known tourism businesses in Europe employ fewer

than 250 people, with 92% qualifying as micro operators having fewer than 5 employees (Middleton 1998). A sense of isolation often means that SMEs seek to work with another similar business and may either develop or become part of a network. Almost all of tourism businesses in Ireland are SMEs, as defined by Clarke (2004) who takes the definition from the Department of Trade and Industry in the United Kingdom. Businesses are defined as 'medium in size' if they employ between 50 and 249 people and 'small in size' as employing fewer than 50 people, with micro businesses employing less than 5 people (Dept of Trade and Industry 1999). More recently the Department of Business Innovation and Skills in the UK termed small business as 'those that have fewer than 20 full-time equivalents', though noted that this is not the limit and depends on the business under consideration (DBIS 2009). There is a range of definitions internationally in relation to what qualifies as small or micro business, though turnover rather than employee number may also be a consideration for eligibility (ITC 2007)

Co-operation, links and relationships in SME networking tend to be informal in nature, unstructured, spontaneous, often reactive, generally conforming to what is expected in the industry in which it operates. This creates difficulties in terms of undertaking research due to the disparate nature of the interaction. Evidence of this stems from experience working with the tourism sector in Ireland where providers can range from the very structured (local authority with hierarchies) to highly commercial business operations and small family oriented providers. The Tourism Implementation Strategy Group in Ireland (TSIG) identified that effective implementation of workplace partnerships remained a challenge across the economy and especially in the SME sector which constitutes the majority of tourism enterprises (TSIG 2008). The fragmented nature of the tourism business at the destination and as perceived by the consumer leads to competition at one level and co-operation at another (Clarke 2004). Small businesses in a destination are often poorly organised politically, while available market intelligence is often inadequate and businesses find it difficult to understand the needs of their consumers and break into new markets (Buhalis and Cooper 1998).

There are many examples of both informal and formal co-operation in the tourism sector in Ireland. Much informal networking is evident, especially at the small enterprise business level, such as in Ireland in the bed and breakfast sector. The Town and Country Homes Association (T&CH) has been operating and marketing in a co-operative manner for the past 35 years (www.townandcountry.ie). The Farmhouse Association (www.irishfarmholidays.com) focuses on rural accommodation and has similar objectives

in terms of a co-operative approach to marketing. In the early 1960s, farmhouse accommodation units were encouraged by Bord Fáilte (the national tourism development authority) to form a co-operative whose main objective would be to market the farmhouse accommodation sector to holidaymakers. Irish Farmhouse Holidays (IFH) has been in operation for 43 years. As with the Town and Country Homes Association, the organisation depends greatly on voluntary input from its members, as well as from the paid staff. All accommodation is approved fulfilling minimum criteria for visitor accommodation. These two organisations are now merging to create better efficiencies in terms of marketing. They also have been working together in the pilot testing of a voluntary classification system and have pursued joint funding for regional assistance. Irish Country Holidays (ICH) (www.country-holidays.ie) was founded in 1990 as the National Rural Tourism Society. In 2004, there were 18 groups consisting of self-catering product providers and some bed and breakfast providers offering a rural tourism experience located around both the Republic and part of Northern Ireland. A central reservations office was located in County Tipperary and a reservations officer took phone calls and enquiries about the properties. Managers/facilitators from each of the groups around the country were involved in co-operative marketing activities.

At a national level, organisations such as the Irish Rural Tourism Federation, which represented 20 different rural tourism organisations, came together with a view to undertaking co-operative networking across the sector. However, this objective was difficult to achieve and did not continue after three years in operation. A more successful operation, The Irish Hotel Federation (IHF) operates their website www.irelandhotels.com using co-operative networking and best practise models using e-marketing techniques. The IHF, through this website have established strategic partnerships and bookings have been increasing year on year.

2.8 International Tourism Policy in terms of Co-operation and Networking

Co-operation and networking at every level in tourism is a strategy that has been endorsed by many tourism organisations internationally (e.g. Canada, England, Scotland and the European Union), and it is viewed as a tool used to create competitive advantage. This is particularly the case for small and medium tourism enterprises (SMTE). The World Tourism Organisation (WTO), operating from Madrid, acts as an umbrella organisation, and has a remit to oversee and organise tourism throughout the globe (www.unwto.org). With the WTO acting as catalyst, a number of networks have been formed internationally

focusing on different tourism destination or products. One such network is the International Network for the Sustainable Development of Coastal Tourism Destinations, which fosters co-operation of the participating destinations addressing common issues amongst its members in a co-operative manner (www.omt.uned.es).

In recognition of the importance of co-operation and partnerships in tourism, the WTO published a document entitled '*Co-operation and Partnerships in Tourism, A Global Perspective*' in 2003. This document recognised the increasing use of co-operative structures throughout the tourism sector. Work primarily undertaken in Canada contributed to guidance objectives and suggested an approach to the management of co-operation and partnerships. It also examined a number of global case studies. Thirty-one different objectives required for creating successful partnership were listed by the WTO. These are set out under the different categories of: product, research and technology; human resources; marketing and sales; and infrastructure and financing. Many of these objectives are commonly examined and discussed throughout the academic literature.

The Canadian Tourism Commission (CTC) initiated the formation of 'products clubs' in 1996. As part of 'Building Canadian Tourism through Partnership', the product clubs encouraged small and medium size enterprises to partner together with the CTC to '*create, enhance and package their exciting products*' (www.canadatourism.com/productclubs). They recognised the need to encourage people to work together and this was done through incentivising the process by partnering and offering support to each of the product clubs. A number of these clubs emerged during the late 1990s, examples being the Canadian Sport Tourism Alliance, Northern Wilderness Product Club and Agri-tourism Product Club. Funding was put in place for a period of three years with a view to self-sustainability after this period. However, issues such as motivating continued involvement and reducing the barriers to involvement have had to be addressed.

The Australian Government also encourages the formation of networks. The focus of these networks to date has been on information dissemination and the identification of emerging opportunities provided by these new networks. The Government sought to encourage co-operation within the industry through industry associations and improving the operation of existing networks (Hall 2004). Co-operation and networking have been and are recognised as a competitive way of doing business in the SME tourism sector.

Since its inception, the EU has had co-operation and networking at the core of its policy objectives. The EU was formed on the basic premise that countries belonging to the

European Union would work together towards breaking down the barriers that had existed to trade between member states. Throughout the tourism sector there has been encouragement from both statutory and non-statutory bodies, such as LEADER (www.ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index) and INTERREG (www.interreg3c.net), to form destination-specific or product-specific networks (Hall 2004). INTERREG programmes in particular have focused on the elimination of barriers to ‘working together’ and hundreds of projects have been progressed throughout Europe over the last two decades. Some of the projects involving co-operation relate to product development, while others relate to education and training (in the case of European Tourism Universities Partnership (ETUP) and others still to marketing, in tandem with development (for example the Agri-tourism Grant Scheme).

2.8.1 Irish Tourism Policy in terms of Co-operation and Networking

Co-operation and collaboration have increasingly become significant in their role as part of policy in Irish tourism. Product marketing groups (PMGs), which were initiated in the late 1980s by Bord Fáilte, were similar to those in operation previously in the accommodation sector. The tourist board encouraged product providers from one product area, such as equestrian schools, angling or golfing, to come together to market their product in a co-operative manner. Since 1989, both co-operation and networking have been a theme evident throughout the various National Development Plans and Operational Programmes for Tourism in Ireland. These plans have been largely influenced by funding, which during the period 1989-2006 was forthcoming from the EU due to the designated Objective 1 status of Ireland based on its economic performance.

1989-1993: The Operational Programme for Tourism and Developing the Product (Bord Fáilte 1989) focused on developing the tourism product in Ireland with a major programme in public and private investment in culture and heritage attractions. Overall investment in tourism during the period was estimated at €557m (1994 values).

1994-1999: The Operational Programme for Tourism and Management for Sustainability (Bord Fáilte 1994) saw further growth in the product-development sector, with an increased focus on partnership between the public and private sectors. There was also substantial expansion in marketing activity. It was during this period that Irish gardens were considered an important tourism resource under Sub-programme 2, Measure 4, 5.43, ‘the restoration of 18th and 19th century gardens attached to houses to include the provision and upgrading of visitor facilities at these gardens of visitor merit’ was

incorporated into the programme. Investment during the period 1994-1999 reached €625m (1999 values), with both tourist facilities and product provision benefiting most. During this period there was an average annual visitor growth rate of 10% and overseas visitor numbers over the 12 year period between 1987 and 1999 grew from 2.1 million to 6.1 million per annum.

2000-2006: *Sustaining Progress* (Bord Fáilte 2000) focused on improving visitor yield and increasing foreign exchange earnings. There was also a marked emphasis on environmental issues and on encouraging increased marketing activity. A new tourism structure emerged in Ireland during this time which encompassed the island of Ireland, with Tourism Ireland Limited operating as the international marketing board for both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Fáilte Ireland (previously Bord Fáilte) became more involved in training as well as continuing in its role in product development and latterly servicing both the tourism provider and the visitor through the integration of the Regional Tourism Authorities. As GDP increased and the country became economically more stable, marked differences were evident geographically and hence a geographical division emerged in terms of eligibility for EU funding. As part of the National Development Plan, €183m (£IEP144m) was allocated to the Border Midlands West region (BMW) and the South East region (SE). However, as both Dublin and South West regions of the country were deemed mature in terms of tourism product, eligibility for funding was curtailed significantly.

In 2003, the Government appointed the Tourism Policy Review Group which completed a document entitled '*New Horizons for Irish Tourism – an agenda for action*' (www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie/pdfs/TourismReviewReport03.pdf). This report encompassed a detailed examination of the tourism industry and, under the theme 'Information and Communication Technologies', recommended the increased use of customer relationship management (CRM) using information technology (IT) (p. 674 and 102) and networking (p.74) as an approach to developing and managing the tourism experience further. Recognition was given to the use of co-operation in several places (pages 95, 98,122) and in relation to marketing, '*a need to build on co-operative marketing in the future*' and especially a '*need for individual firms to build their own marketing and sales capabilities*' (DAST: 96). A special purpose body the Tourism Action Plan Implementation Group (TAPIG) was also established in 2003 to monitor and promote the implementation of the New Horizons document.

In 2004, Fáilte Ireland launched its strategy 'competing through People: a Human Resource Development Strategy 2005-2010 (HRDS) of Irish Tourism (Fáilte Ireland 2004). Within this document there are emphases on the importance of continued and increased support for the SME's in the tourism sector. An identified need for greater links to be forged between the support bodies, third-level colleges and other educational institutions and the SME tourism sector is also advocated.

However, it was becoming evident during the first decade of the 2000's, that the competitiveness of Ireland as a tourism destination was becoming an issue. This was due to a number of factors: including an economic and property boom in Ireland and increasing capital and salary costs, inflation and the emergence of numerous global destinations. Deregulation of the airline industry and cost cutting within this sector had led to record low fares and easy access to many destinations previously considered difficult to reach. Short breaks and late booking dominated the market. The Irish Tourist Industry Confederation (ITIC) published '*Ireland Competitive Position in Tourism*'; a document commissioned to CHL Consulting in June 2006 (www.itic.ie) and was updated in 2007. This document evaluated in detail both the tourism product and operations in terms of marketing and delivery. Recommendations, some of which built on the *New Horizons* document, included the need to put greater emphasis on the natural and built environment and the need to encourage greater information sharing. In relation to co-operation, greater emphasis was recommended on the study of best practice management, the development of opportunities amongst networks at both local and regional levels and the need to facilitate co-operative action in areas of product development, training and procurement. It specifically recommended that horizontal local linkages between products be established in order to create a richer experience for the visitor (ITIC and CHL 2007: 53).

2007-2013: The present *Tourism Product Development Strategy* (Fáilte Ireland 2007a) was launched by the Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism in February 2007. It correlates with the National Development Plan 2007-2013 under which €800m has been allocated to the broad tourism area, which is a three-fold increase in investment in product development compared to previous plans. The focus is on the development of activities, environmental issues, the improvement of standards and quality, marketing and festivals, human resource management, training and information technology. In terms of the garden product, the Tourism Product Development Strategy identified that although the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme helped to provide a good network of gardens throughout Ireland, that gaps still exist (p.36). The plan proposes (p.53) that there is a need

to invest to create attractions of international standing and €6 million has been allocated to funding a number of Great Gardens. Three specific actions have been listed in terms of networking and co-operation in the Tourism Product Development Strategy 2007-2013. Under Human Resource Development, support is to be given to workplace-focused learning including action learning (learning on-the-job) and networks. These were to enable providers to take advantage of the County Based Tourism Learning Networks (CBTLN). The second action is under the heading of Quality Management where it is proposed to introduce and support a series of action learning networks in the non-accommodation sectors aimed at clusters of tourism products. It is considered that these networks will help to support continuous improvement in all elements of the business process. The third action is listed under Marketing Communications whereby it is proposed to set up co-operative forums to ensure that local relevant bodies work together. The overall aim of the strategy for this period is to provide a top-class product for the estimated 10 million overseas visitors that are predicted to arrive by 2010.

In June 2008, the Tourism Strategy Implementation Group (TSIG) reported on its deliberations in relation to implementation of the New Horizons document. This group was established by the Government in 2006 to implement the action plan of the New Horizons document. The group reported back on a number of key issues including transport and access, investment plans, product development, fiscal incentives, the environment and consideration of future tourism policy. A number of recommendations were made in relation to SMTEs. These included the development of initiatives to train SMTEs in IT, e-marketing and website development (p.37), the need to focus on competitiveness and value for money through such approaches as capability building (p.30), and the use of an on-site mentoring unit (p. 46) to give additional support to SMTEs. The most recent policy document was launched in October 2009. The Report of the Tourism Renewal Group (TRG) undertakes a mid-term review of the *New Horizons for Irish Tourism* and focuses on the road to recovery for the industry (DAST 2009)

At a regional level of tourism, Regional Tourism Authorities (RTA) in the past, amongst other responsibilities, have developed strategic planning and marketing documents every five years and these fed into the national tourism strategy (as specified above). Annually, the RTAs outlined the specific actions and tactics which were to be used in achieving these strategic goals. These tourism authorities existed as separate companies operating as a regional part of Bord Fáilte/Fáilte Ireland between 1964 and 2006, when significant re-organisation led to the incorporation of these bodies under the Fáilte Ireland banner and the

links between the organisations have become more integrated. Although their function has changed little, their responsibilities such as funding ability have increased. The overarching regional committee, which previously managed regional tourism, is constituted of trade members and local-representation, which has been streamlined, leading to greater efficiencies in terms the management of regional tourism.

Increasingly at county level, the county councils have played a greater role in the development and delivery of tourism. Many county councils employ tourism officers to aid with the organisation and marketing of tourism at a county and local level. Some of these counties have specific tourism objectives and strategies that guide their function, for example County Meath (www.meathtourism.ie), which produces a plan every 3-5 years. An annual tactical plan outlines how the identified goals are to be achieved.

At a local and individual level, planning and policy issues are not particularly evident. Many product providers produce business and/or marketing plans, often as a requirement to access funding from either a lending institution or from a grant aiding body. Anecdotal evidence has shown that in many cases, once the money has been sourced, the plan is shelved. If there has been a change in staff, the document may be either lost or left to languish, gathering dust on a shelf!

2.9 Why Work Together?

According to Hall (1999) there are four basic reasons for contact between organisations:

1. Adhoc: there is no pattern, may be for a special once-off reason;
2. Exchange: there is voluntary contact between two organisations that will help them realise goals, for example local area organisations;
3. Formalised agreements: a contract is drawn up and interdependency exists between organisations with a high frequency of contact;
4. Mandateness: this is based on government or legal requirements, for example registration and recognition of standards by Fáilte Ireland in order to work with overseas tour operators.

In the case of mandateness, the need to co-operate is forced in some circumstances (Timothy 1998). This was demonstrated by the requirement for the new gardens which received funding under the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme, to become members of the Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland Marketing Co-operative (PMG).

This mandated approach may affect the attitude the garden-owner has to the organisation involved in co-operatively marketing the gardens.

In tourism in Ireland, contact may be stimulated by one or a number of reasons: the availability of a grant to work together (financially motivated); access to distribution channels (promotion through the Tourism Ireland international offices); access to information and support (through Fáilte Ireland); image and association (to be seen to be working with aspirational organisations/products); and seeking of information and requirement (in order to become approved by the tourist board). The level of involvement and interaction may vary depending on the reason for participation and the value the organisation puts on being part of the group. However, not all those involved in tourism supply are involved in marketing organisations. Research on the Irish tourist attraction sector (which included gardens) undertaken by Tourism Development International in 2003 revealed that only 38% of fee paying and non-fee paying attractions were members of a marketing organisation (Fáilte Ireland: Visitor Attraction Survey 2003). The majority (62%), were either not members or did not reply to the survey. So it would seem that many go it alone for one reason or another. In terms of the research for this thesis, it was important to access a group of providers who had experience or at least had the opportunity of belonging to a co-operative marketing group.

More recently, networks and networking has been incorporated as a part of both tourism development and marketing strategy (CBTLN). According to Child and Faulkner (1998), networks arise for a number of reasons. These include the need to reduce uncertainty by contacting and accessing information from similar providers. Efficient networks provide flexibility, capacity, speed, access to resources and information. Networks are seen as a method of increasing competitive advantage and value for the organisation. They are a method of doing business and can help the company to avail of opportunities that might not otherwise exist.

Networks are also seen as a means of attracting wealth and prosperity to a tourism destination. In a study of SMTEs in the Greek Aegean Islands, Buhalis and Cooper (1998:344) concluded that *'the establishment of powerful networks among small businesses at a destination level will allow the creation of wealth on the supply side and the delivery of total tourist satisfaction on the demand side. Failure to do so would result in isolation and problems with prosperity'*. Importantly, they also recommended the development of a supporting agency to strengthen the management and marketing functions of SMTEs, to attract assistance for them and to establish and reward good

practices. Management and support were seen as essential to the future of the destination. In order for a network to be initiated and maintained, co-operative action is required through links and the development of relationships between stakeholders.

2.10 Towards a Definition

Working together, collaboration, networking and co-operation are terms that are used to indicate that a specific approach is being taken by two or more individuals (organisations) to advance an objective or end. Todeva and Knoke (2005) identified 13 different forms of interorganisational relations, based on theoretical and research literature. They identified co-operation as *'a coalition of small enterprises that combine, co-ordinate and manage their collective resources'* (p.125).

In terms of networking, a definition by Gilmore et al. (2001:171) is used. This describes networking for businesses (SMEs) as *'joining together with a common objective , working together and co-operating'* and it takes into account the definition by Carson et al. (1995) as *'an activity in which the entrepreneurially oriented SME owners build and manage personal relationships with particular individuals in their own surroundings'*

Relationship marketing has been recognised and developed as a paradigm within the field of marketing over the past 20 years. Discussion as to whether it was an actual paradigm or a shift in focus has been long evaluated, but it seems that it is a term and an approach that is here to stay in terms of both stakeholder management and marketing. Harker (1999:16) considered 26 previous relationship-marketing definitions and developed a definition based on these: *'an organisation engaged in proactively creating, developing and maintaining committed, interactive and profitable exchanges with selected customers (partners) over time is engaged in relationship marketing'*. However, Sheth (2000) considered the area underdeveloped and there was a need for an agreement on a definition, with increased research in the field required.

Relationship marketing requires co-operation and the use of linkages between stakeholders. These relationships and links may develop into networks. Gummesson recognised that relationships, networks and interactions are core values of any business and that relationship marketing could be defined as *'marketing seen as relationships, networks and interaction'* (Gummesson 1996:32). Relationship marketing was redefined further by Gummesson (2002a:3) as *'marketing based on interactions within networks of relationships'*. Prof. Evert Gummesson started his academic life as an economist and is one of the original proponents of relationship marketing and its links to management. It

was he who, during the 1990s, recognised common links between marketing, organisational behaviour, economics and other social sciences. Gummesson advocated that relationships, in terms of business, required development beyond the traditional customer and, although the business should still be customer-centric, other stakeholders also needed to be taken into account. These considerations were developed further during the 1990s (Christopher et al. 1991, Gronoos 1996 and Payne 1995) and culminated in the development of the Six Market Model (Peck et al. 1999), a model which is adapted and used as part of this research. It is discussed in further detail in section 2.12.1.

However, despite the documented importance of this model specifically within the service sector, no research has been uncovered that attempted to synthesise the understanding of relationships from complementary areas (Tower, Jago and Deery 2006). In their research, which examined relationship marketing in the not-for-profit sport sector in Australia, they identified, as a result of examining the existing literature and undertaking qualitative research, 28 key constructs that could be used as a guide to help agencies in their management of relationships (Table 2.1). Many of these constructs are similar to those identified as part of this research and contribute to the conceptual framework (see Figure 2.7). Towers, Jago and Deery recognised the broader perspective of relationship marketing and identified that these constructs influenced to some degree relationships and partnerships within the sectors of education and health and community services.

Table 2.1 Constructs Influencing Relationships Based on Literature

Construct	Relationship Marketing	Education	Health and Community Service
Acquiescence/Adaptation	X		X
Appropriate Partners		X	X
Benefits/Outcomes	X	X	X
Clear Plan/Evaluation		X	X
Commitment	X	X	X
Communication	X	X	X
Competent Staff			X
Control		X	X
Co-operation	X	X	X
Cultural/Management Styles		X	X
Functional Quality	X	X	X
Funding and Resource Allocation		X	X

Construct	Relationship Marketing	Education	Health and Community Service
Interdependence and Dependence	X	X	X
Leadership		X	X
Power/Parity	X	X	X
Propensity for Risk Taking			X
Proximity			X
Roles and Responsibilities		X	X
Salient Issues			X
Satisfaction	X		X
Shared Goals/Values	X	X	X
Shared Technology	X	X	
Social Bonds	X		X
Structural Bonds	X		
Technical Quality	X		
Time/Continuity		X	X
Trust	X	X	X
Uncertainly/Comparison of Alternatives	X		X

Source: Towers et al. (2006)

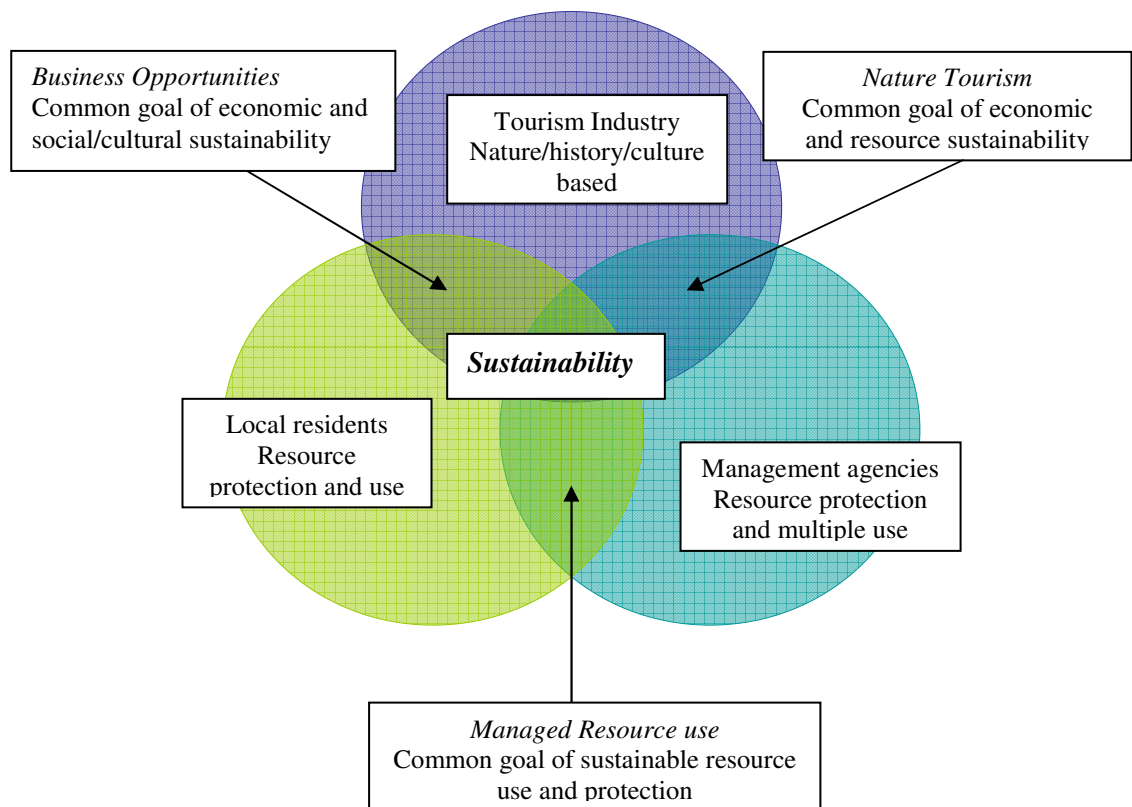
Hall (2004), when defining networks, also brings together co-operation, links and relationships. His view on networks is broad ‘*as a range of co-operative behaviours between otherwise competing organisations,.... between firms linked through economic, social relationships and transactions*’ (ibid:170). The current research explores links, co-operative behaviours and the different relationships that may or may not exist between the gardens. Whether bonds have been or can be created, and what they mean to the provision of sustainable (long term, self-sufficient), efficient and effective methods of both operating and marketing gardens is crucial in this thesis. Both the constructs from Towers et al. study (2006) and those from the Relationship Management Chain (Payne 1995) input into the conceptual framework for this study and these are examined in more detail later in this chapter.

2.11 The Need to be Sustainable

Sustainability is a term that has been used increasingly in every aspect of society including tourism in Ireland and globally. Often linked to the environment and nature, the term now encompasses many areas and focuses on the notion that tourism businesses should be

viable from economic, environmental and social perspectives in the long term. The idea of sustainability relies on the precept that most people/operators who manage/own a tourism product and open it to visitors wish to create a viable business that will operate over an extended period of time. In rare cases, a philanthropic philosophy may prevail and a tourism business may operate not for profit but for the benefit of society or charity. This approach is not common in Ireland and those that do operate in this manner may have as an objective to contribute to the community or to the socio-cultural sustainability of an area. A tourism business, in order to be viable, must sustain itself and therefore it should not operate at a loss

Figure 2.1 Major Participants in Tourism Development and their Share Goals and Opportunities for Social, Natural Resource and Economic Sustainability



Source: McCool and Moisey (2008:286)

Different types of sustainability exist. Tourism providers develop business opportunities that can contribute to social, natural resource and economic sustainability. Tourism is seen as *'a tool for social and economic development, as a method to enhance opportunity, not as an end itself'* (McCool and Moisey 2001:246). Tourism sustainability is a multi-dimensional concept and a broad interpretation includes economic, socio-cultural, political, geographical and ecological strands. The authors also advocated that tourism must fit within the existing system and *'forge symbiotic relationship with other segments of the social and economic system'* (McCool and Moisey 2001) indicating its holistic and integrative nature, and this is illustrated in Figure 2.1. More recently, the Davos Declaration (2007) has included climatic considerations to the sustainable equation, though it is through actions in the other three areas that make an impact on climate change.

The word sustainability is often linked to the natural environment and regarded in terms of ecotourism, yet it is the balance that needs to be achieved between the economic, socio-cultural and environmental parameters and creates true sustainability. Connell (2005) found that gardens run by owners and family volunteers were unsustainable due to a number of factors, including the lack of interest, poor health and inadequate availability of goodwill of those involved. This led to a restriction on opening times, a situation which resulted in the cost of opening the garden exceeding the revenue generated and an inability of the garden to sustain itself economically. Therefore, in this case it seems that ownership has an impact on the ability to operate in a sustainable manner.

Reynolds (1991) made a number of recommendations that related to partnership, working together and management of a heritage business. These emanated from a number of success indicators identified to create self-sufficiency in the sector. The process of 'partner and barter' recommended the formation of consortia to market the product regionally and/or use bartering as a technique to get work done. This could overcome restricted resources. Clustering was another recommended approach and should be undertaken with the view to establishing critical mass and providing the visitor with an overall package made up of aspects of the tourism experience, including accommodation, services and information.

A link between co-operative practices in tourism planning and sustainability was identified by Timothy (1998), whose work in Indonesia suggested that co-operative tourism planning focused on development that can be sustained well into the future. A holistic approach to planning and strategy formulation created a link between co-operative tourism planning

standards which corresponded closely to sustainability standards such as those drawn up by Bramwell and Lane (1993). Co-operation as a practice can help develop sustainability.

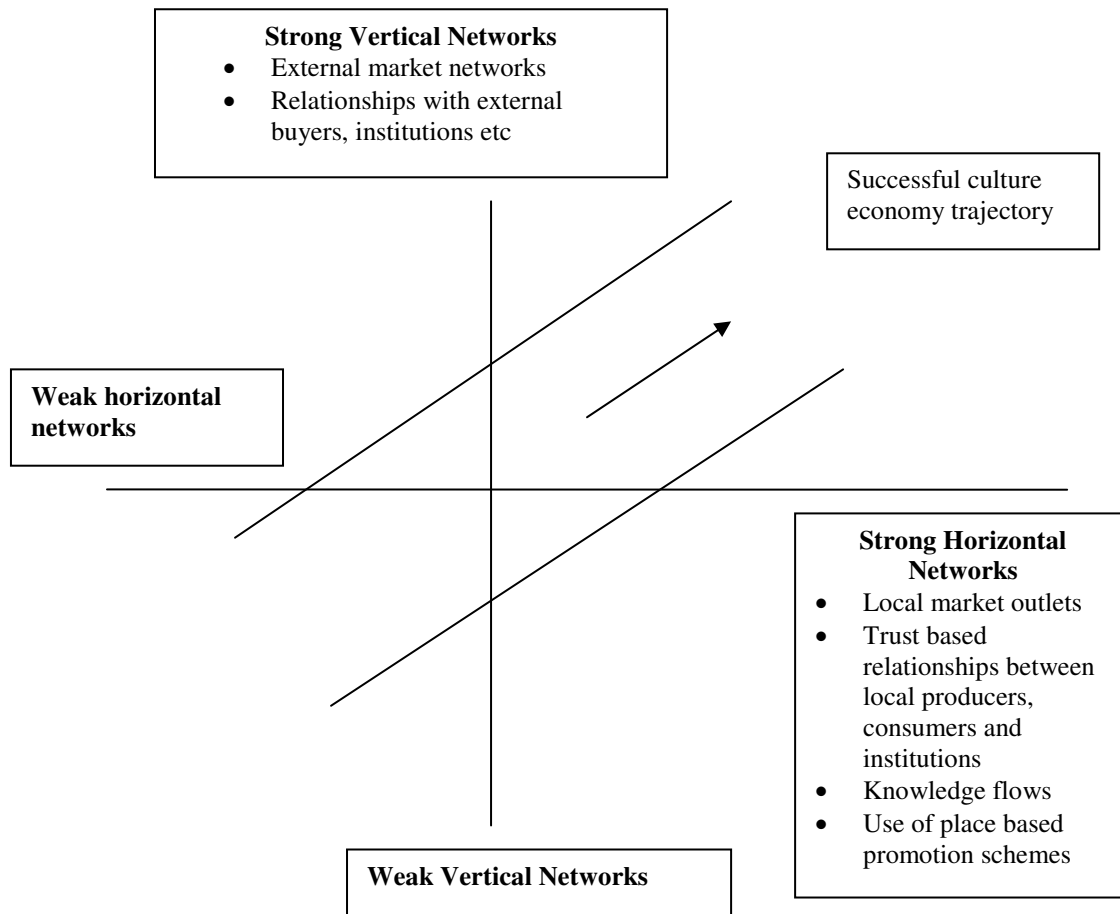
2.12 Co-operation, Collaboration, Networks and Relationship Marketing

Co-operation and collaboration can help to reduce the risk in business operation, creating a better chance of operating in a sustainable manner. These approaches can help give better access to resources (knowledge and financial support) and a sense of group identity (belonging) that will help ameliorate the uncertainties of operating a business. In the evaluation of best practices in hospitality and tourism SMTEs in the UK, where 89 award winning companies in the sector were interviewed, partnerships and networking were considered one of a number of core capabilities demonstrated by companies operating best practice (Li-Jen, Hwang and Lockwood 2006). It was found however, that certain required characteristics, such as mutuality, goal achievement, social relationships between participants, longevity and involvement were required to be in place in order to be successful.

2.12.1 The Stakeholders

Using a model proposed by Kneafsey et al. (2001:300), Oliver and Jenkins (2003) considered the different levels of partnership that emerged in rural tourism in a number of European rural destination areas that participated in the SPRITE project and focused on a number of case studies.

Figure 2.2 Theorising a successful culture economy within a networks framework



Source: Oliver and Jenkins (2003), after Kneafsey et al. (2001)

According to Kneafsey et al. (2001:300), an ideal approach to creating a successful culture economy required the incorporation of a combination of both vertical and horizontal networks. Partnerships and networks of firms can be created both horizontally and vertically in the supply and distribution chain (Gronoos 1996). The use of these types of networks was based on work undertaken by Murdoch (2000:417), who considered the use of both horizontal and vertical networks in the rural economy with a view to *‘creating new opportunities by rethinking traditional approaches’*. Oliver and Jenkins (2003) expanded on this thesis in terms of their work and identified the necessity to interact/partner and co-

operate on a vertical scale with a number of players, such as competitors and external visitors. In a horizontal network, *'tourism related business activities and the tourists themselves are linked to other economic social and cultural activities within a particular landscape'* (Oliver and Jenkins p. 297) and this is illustrated in Figure 2.2.

The approach indicates the need to be innovative and to consider new methods of developing horizontal and vertical networks. Past, present and future involvement, as well as links and relationships can give an organisation a sense of self-identity and an identity by belonging to a network. Ilberry and Saxena (2009) discuss the different types of networks that can exist in relation to integrated rural tourism using best practise examples. They concluded that there were three different types of network; the friends-focused network, kite network and cloud network. Each of these networks are differentiated by their structural attributes such as size, density, proximity and homogeneity and also by qualitative attributes such as social relations and supportive functions.

Networking can occur in any geographical context. Clustering, often used synonymously with networking (Hall 2004) is however, dictated by geographical proximity. Clustering in tourism also considers the use of horizontal, vertical and diagonal approaches (Michael et al. 2007). Horizontal clustering occurs where each firm offers a similar product/service and are in competition with each other. Clusters (or groups) may come together and co-locate in a geographical area in order to service a demand and may pool resources, share information or staff. Vertical clustering occurs where different stages of service provision may co-locate as commonly occurs at a tourist destination. Diagonal clustering exhibits symbiotic firms operating and adding value to each operational entity within the experience, and, therefore creates greater overall economic and social capital which is of benefit to all stakeholders involved.

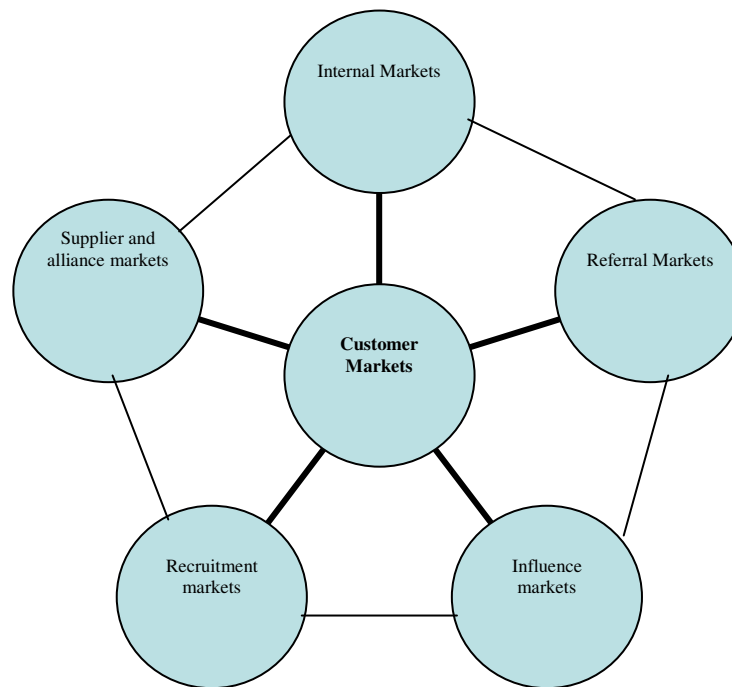
In terms of the different stakeholders, according to Donaldson and O'Toole (2002) there are three main groups which need to be taken into account in any business:

1. Internal stakeholders - owners, managers, shareholders, unions and employees
2. External stakeholders – financial community, trade associations, government
3. Marketplace stakeholders - customers, competitors, creditors and suppliers

These stakeholders had already been identified by the Six Market Model (Figure 2.3) and it recognised that there were a number of stakeholders involved in the provision and

marketing of a business. The Six Market Model was described and initially illustrated by Christopher et al. (1991) and further revised by Peck et al. (1999).

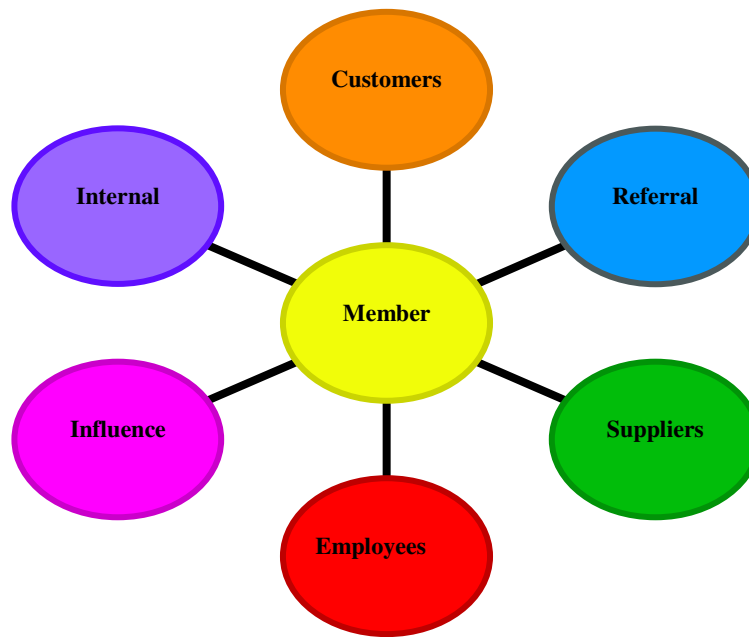
Figure 2.3 Six Market Model



Source: Peck et al. (1999)

The basic model (Peck 1999) outlined the major possible stakeholders with whom a business could have contact and develop a relationship. Contacts and relationship development and management are essential to efficient partnership and networking. The model was subdivided to cover all major stakeholder groups and has been used successfully in over fifty organisations (Gummesson 1999). More recent work has been undertaken by Payne and Frow (2005), which considered the development and extension of the Six Market Stakeholder Model. A planning model was developed using four inter-related elements: stakeholder value propositions; value delivery design; stakeholder relationship marketing plans; and measurement and feedback. Due to the exploratory nature of this work and the expectation that participants may require prompting during the course of the work, it was decided to use the basic Six Market Model adapted from Peck et al. (1999). Using an adapted version of the model (Figure 2.4) was used in the current research with the member (participant) at the core of the model and hence the relationship (to simplify understanding), and this eased the gathering of information from the participant.

Figure 2.4 Adapted Six Market Model for Purpose of the Current Research



Source: Adapted from Peck et al. (1999)

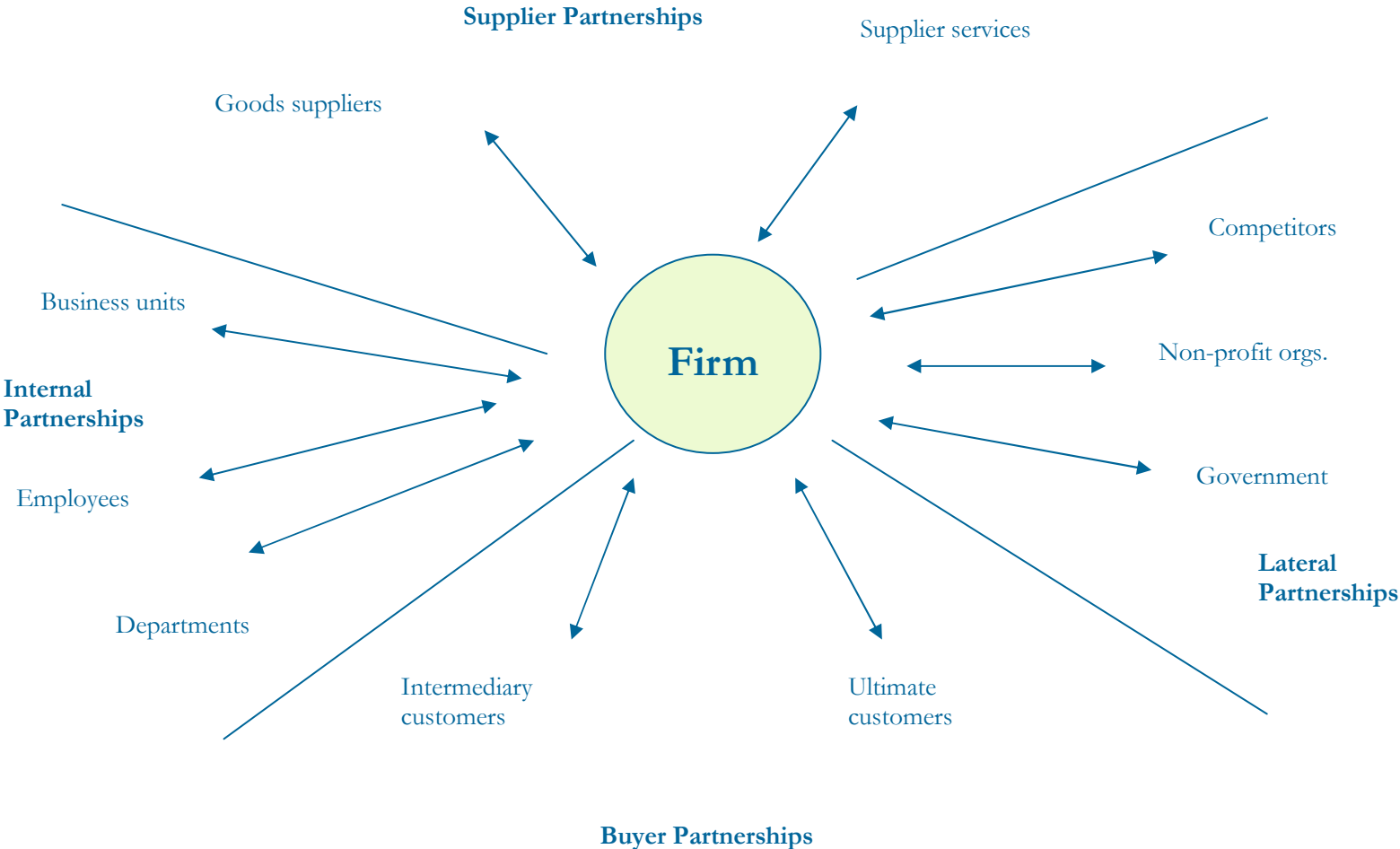
Parvatiyar and Sheth (1994) identified that relationship marketing is conducted through both a collaborative and co-operative effort. The same authors described relationships as arrangements where two or more agencies enter into agreements to work with each other at any point along a continuum from pure transaction to total integration (Sheth and Paravatiyar 2000). Kotler (2003), among others, recognised that relationship marketing was suitable only where the long-term value of the relationship was important enough or valuable to maintain. Relationships ranging from those that are dyadic in nature to network in nature were explored in this research. The traditional approach to relationships that have been developed within the marketing sphere focused on aspects of the marketing mix – product, price, promotion and place.

Morgan and Hunt, in a seminal work published in 1994, considered the different exchanges that occurred both internally and externally to an organisation. These exchanges were viewed from the perspective of the organisation being central to all relationships that were undertaken (Morgan and Hunt 1994a) and this is illustrated in Figure 2.5. The relationships are divided into four main partnership areas: internal; supplier; buyer (which includes the traditional customer), and lateral (which includes competitors). The approach to relationship marketing was expanded by Gummesson (1996, 1999), who considered other relationships, (or 3ORs), that may exist, creating a network of relationships. These may

include relationships between the provider and customers, suppliers (of visitors) and competitors, non-market relationships with the suppliers of goods, and nano-relationships, which are those relationships that take place between members (internal relationships). In the tourism sector, it is important to develop and maintain long-term relationships with some, but not all, stakeholders. Relationships may be developed, for example with: those who deliver the customer to the product such as suppliers (tour operators/tourist offices); competitors (referral); the influence market (media); and local regular visitors who have a direct link to the attraction, be it proximity to place of residence or interest. Most overseas visitors (tourists) arrive through a distribution system, be it technology-based such as the internet or people-based such as a tour operator. The distribution network (or web) of contacts varies from one attraction to another and may involve personal communications networks (PCN) as well as those specifically used for business.

Relationships of different strengths and values are developed and managed in order that all parties involved derive benefit to achieve their objectives. Following on from this, Hunt (1997) explored the theory 'co-operate to compete', giving further increased recognition to the use of co-operation as a competitive tool. However, the value of each relationship was important and Hunt also recognised that some relationships should be avoided and be conducted only transactionally, as their value did not justify effort.

Figure 2.5 The Relational Exchanges in Relationship Marketing



Source: Morgan and Hunt (1994a)

This approach, which advocated co-operating to compete, was termed 'co-opitition' by Zineldin (1998) who also recognised the importance of competitors in a marketplace. This is particularly of importance in the tourism sector where many SMEs operate in any one destination, providing low capacity and yet compete for business. Co-opitition involves both competing through co-operation, providing better capacity and overall a better product for the visitor. Working together acts as a catalyst to providing greater overall benefits to both the tourism supplier and to the consumer. However, working together does require a certain set of inputs that impact on the delivery of the objectives. These inputs or characteristics can either help or hinder the process.

Prior to considering the core characteristics of the relationships that are involved in co-operation and networking, two specific studies were evaluated and have impacted on the development of a conceptual framework for this study. First, the Relationship Management Chain (Payne et al. 1998) that formed the basis for the paradigm shift to relationship marketing in the mid-1990s contributed to the framework. This has been re-evaluated more recently by Payne and Frow (2005) who developed a conceptual framework based on five processes: strategy development; value creation; multi-channel integration; performance assessment; and information management. The authors suggest a cross-functional approach using these strategic processes in order to implement customer relationship management (CRM). This management model basically operationalised the Six Market Model and focused on customer value in terms of the different stakeholders. It followed a four-step approach:

1. Define the value proposition, with a need to understand and know how to create this value in terms of competitive benchmarking (consider the value that both the customer and the organisation requires and receives);
2. Consider the different market segments and their profitability (prioritising long term value of the relationship);
3. Design value delivery systems (integrated multi-channel communication systems);
4. Measure and get feedback from both customers and employees (quantitative and qualitative performance parameters).

The development of this conceptual framework, it was hoped, would give better direction to those who wished to gain deeper insight into more successfully operationalising strategy and implementation in customer relationship management.

2.13 Characteristics of Networking, Co-operation and Relationships

In order to explore links, relationships and co-operative practices that exist in garden tourism, it was necessary to identify the characteristics of co-operation, relationship marketing and networking. It was presumed that evidences of these characteristics would manifest themselves in the way garden attractions operated and interacted with other stakeholders. These characteristics guided the questions that were used as part of the qualitative primary research process.

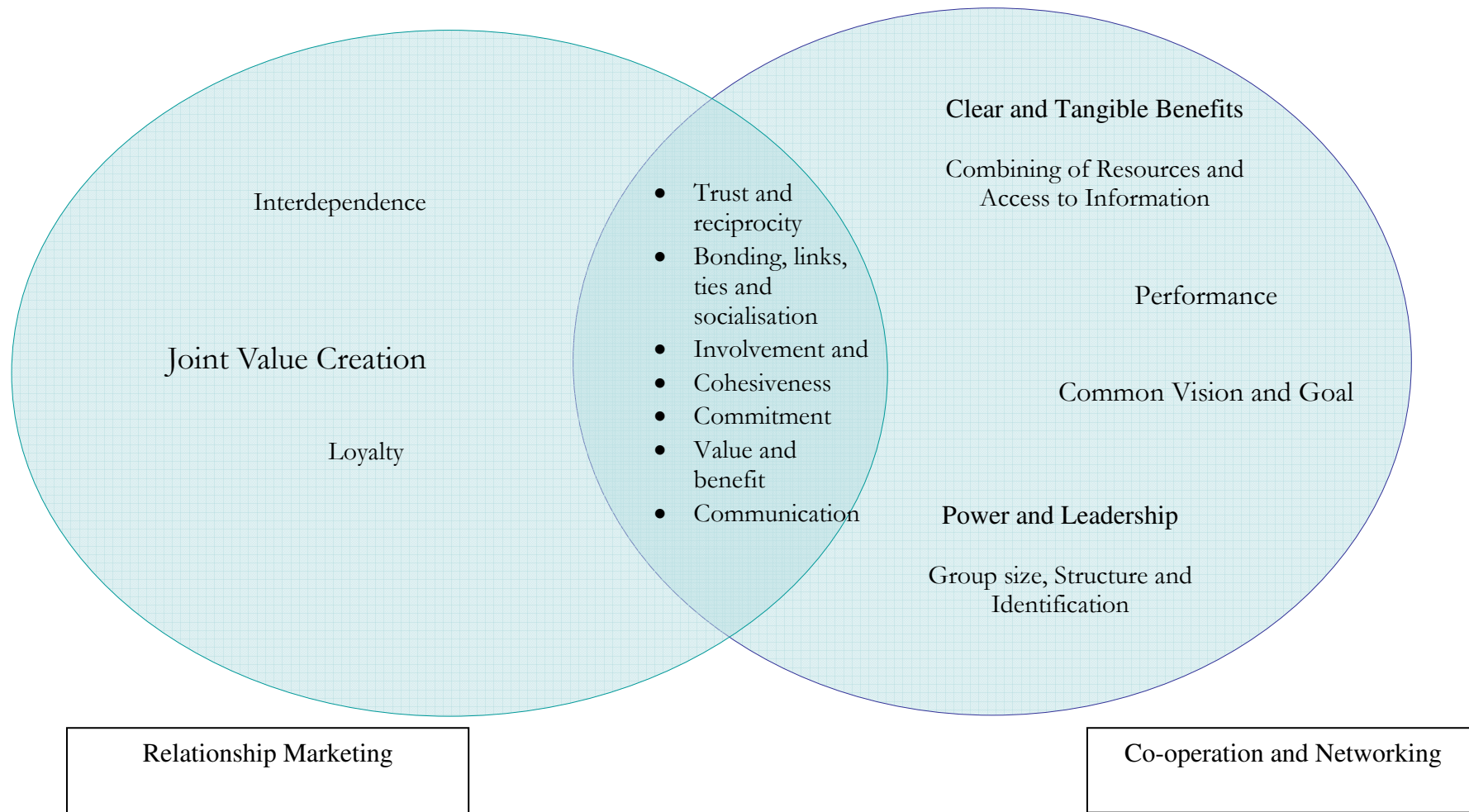
The similarities and dissimilarities of characteristics of each form of interaction were explored and are illustrated Figure 2.6. Those that are a priority to each of the disciplines are considered separately under their own disciplines. Those that are deemed to be common to both disciplines are considered within the core zone. A conceptual framework was drawn up using these characteristics as a guideline. Outcomes of the interview process related back to the position these characteristics took in the mindset of the academic literature. These characteristics are now considered in more depth.

2.13.1 Core Issues

2.13.1.1 *Trust and reciprocity*

Numerous authors have written about the importance of trust in relationship marketing (Wilson and Jantrania 1993; Morgan and Hunt 1994a, 1994b; Berry 1995; Saxena 1999). It is taken as given that trust is required to a greater or lesser degree in relationship formation and management, though the level depends on the degree of involvement. According to Childs and Faulkner (1998), trust can be classified in three forms and these lead on from one another over time: trust based on calculation; trust based on understanding; and trust based on bonding. Trust is at the heart of successful co-operation and networking. The creation of trust is also seen as an essential key to success in cluster development (Hall 2004), which involve aspects of both co-operation and networking. Empathy needs to exist whereby one person within the relationship should be able to view the position from the other person's perspective, in order to build positive exchange and help to build the trust component.

Figure 2.6 Characteristics of Relationship Marketing, Co-operation and Networking



Business has always been built on trust. Trust is the basis of the development and management of the 'guanxi' approach to business which is and has been common in China. Guanxi means 'relationship' in Chinese and involves doing business with networks of people with whom there is great trust (Chinese School 2009). *In order to be able to trust, there needs to be a number of factors present including an openness and willingness to interact and be involved. Trust is an essential construct of relationship management (Wilson and Jantrania 1993).*

Reciprocity, where there is mutual exchange of information and interdependence creating long-term interaction leading to stability, is an important requirement for successful collaboration (Grabher 1993). Yau et al. (2000) identified reciprocity as a component of relationship marketing whereby it can provide the capacity for either party to provide favours for each other within the relationship. This practice of reciprocity is evident throughout local communities, for example 'Distritti' in Italy and 'Guanxi' in China, where informal business and social relationship networks form over time becoming historically embedded within society. However, trust needs a two way approach with the sharing of information and ideas.

Trust can impact on knowledge flows in an organisation. Trust formed the basis for the 'house of knowledge', a conceptual framework which was proposed by Tzokas and Saren (2004). This framework, which has its foundations based on trust and commitment, centrally relied on interaction and dialogue in relationship management. They found that a lack of trust leads to a withholding of information and stymies its flow. Carson et al. (1995) considered the role of trust and reciprocity in the importance of information exchange within the SME sector. By networking, tourism e-mediaries, for example, can through reciprocal arrangements add value to goods and services (Dale 2003). The initial communication between two companies leads to an information exchange upon which trust is built over time and the possible evolution of social and personal bonds. This evolving social bond may even compensate for financial costs of the relationship. As Donaldson and O'Toole (2002) suggest, a successful relationship goes from being passive to active over time and this can occur particularly if there is a social dimension to the relationship.

2.13.1.2 Bonding, links, ties and socialisation

The type and extent of bonding is important in defining the type of relationship. Levels of bonding within a relationship are considered important. Berry (1995) identified three levels of bond within any relationship. These were price, social personalisation and

structural bonds. Whether the price be that which is offered to the traditional customer or that which is part of the cost of a co-operative membership creates a bond which forms a relationship and generates expectation of the service/product provider. Social bonds tend to emerge later in a relationship whereas structural bonds stipulate the context of the relationship. According to Yau et al. (2000), bonding is required in relationships in order to achieve a common goal. A common goal should be a consensus of agreement. Saxena (1999) argued that it was the social ties, personal-level commitment and individual contact of each relationship that generated commitment and trust and that these are essential to some degree or other in maintaining a partnership or network. Aldrich and Zimmer (1986) argued that in social networks, the strength of ties depends on the level, frequency, and reciprocity of relationships between persons and these can vary in strength. Networks are different from formal planning within an organisation as they involve continual investment in relationship capital. Research into networking by O'Donnell (2004) focused on the strength of ties in networking. O'Donnell found that although networking varies from one individual to another, certain dimensions (including the level of networking undertaken, networking proactivity and the strength of networking ties) were elements that encapsulated the networking process. In a seminal work, Granovetter (1973) argued about the strength of weak ties, or that a firm was better in some circumstances in having a number of weak ties with various stakeholders than a few stronger ties. Many weak ties or relationships can sometimes provide strength in terms of business contacts, and it could be argued that tourism, by its very nature, is an experience that often demands inputs from a variety of contacts and sources. Weak ties can give a greater degree of autonomy to the firm.

The use of 'strong' and 'weak' (or hard and soft) networks suggested a bond or relationship which can either have a strong or weak tie. The importance of the strength of this link is illustrated by factors operating primarily in a local manner (horizontal); factors such as trust, proximity, knowledge flows and place based promotion. This builds a strong local base where these factors are important. Vertical networks deal with external stakeholders such as competitors and customers and the factors do not play as important a role as they do with the horizontal networks.

Maintaining a sense of autonomy is essential for most businesses, otherwise they may sense a loss of control. Grabher (1993) argued that, although ties are important between those working together, loose ties (loose coupling) and the need for autonomy by individuals, along with being part of a group, were required in order for the network to

function successfully. The operation of marketing groups such as PMGs has been developed in order to support product providers and their work is expected to enhance the individual's efforts, rather than to be a substitute for it.

Gilmore et al. (2001) found that networking within SMTEs tended to move between social and business relationships and this had an impact on the process of decision-making. Social relationships tend to be more informal and rely on intuitive approaches, whereas business relationships rely on experience and, over time, become more strategic and rigorous. However, personal socialisation may develop over time. Palmer et al. (2000) saw a drift from business to social values when evaluating tourism co-operative marketing organisations, as the process of co-operation progressed over time. They also noted the production of a dynamic between co-operating firms which were at similar points within the value chain. A positive link was also noted between social activities and group effectiveness. Hall (2004) considered the development of social capital through the creation of networks by the food and wine networks in New Zealand as extremely important due to the level of uncertainty for entrepreneurs in the creation of new business. Hall proposed that this development of social capital could in fact be one of the factors that may have influenced their success. Social capital is often developed during face-to-face meetings particularly at the initial stages and therefore this type of interaction is important in the process of co-operation and network development and management.

Sometimes, socialisation may exist from the initial stages whereby there may be a social similarity between stakeholders, for example social or educational class. Structural bonding may emerge from these links and similar ties that are created through the organisation and a contract is agreed by the active stakeholders within the group. Both social and structural bonds are seen as key constructs of relationships (Wilson and Jantrania 1993). It is also important to understand as to how a new network interacts with the existing socio-economic structures within an area (Murdoch 2000). Too often there is duplication of existing synergies and structures. There may even be displacement, which can lead to fragmentation and a sense of tension within either the destination or amongst product providers. The imposition of a new network or co-operative structure can be construed as a top-down approach and may cause issue with some of these tourism providers. *'Local actors need to be linked more effectively into national networks'* (Cawley ET 2007: 418). This was evident to some degree when Fáilte Ireland initially developed the CBTLNs, particularly in Dublin and Meath. Several other groups, including county-based tourism organisations, were already creating capacity through networks and work

was viewed by some as being duplicatory in nature. It was found that geographical cliques had developed throughout the areas and, although Meath Tourism works well as a body and promotes networking, a number of issues such as conflicting personalities, allegiances and certain regulations have created barriers to the development of a CBTLN in this area (Gorman 2007b).

2.13.1.3 *Involvement*

Low involvement may cause ineffective relationships. A number of factors influence low levels of involvement and these are based on the value of the relationship to the stakeholder. Values can include utilitarian value, sign value (what the involvement indicates to others) and pleasure value (Gordon et al. 1998). To be involved should provide a benefit. It should signify to those who do not belong that they are missing out and it should also be a pleasant experience. Pleasant experiences often occur if a goal is achieved or a benefit gained. Involvement and investment which can be construed in terms of time, finances or effort are part of any relationship and make up one of its key constructs, as discussed by Wilson and Jantrania (1993) in their evaluation of the literature in the fields of marketing, engineering and real estate, which focused on the value of a relationship. To some degree, this investment can be considered to be set on a continuum similar to that developed by Kotler (2003), whereby the relationship changes from being initially transactional through the stages to eventual partnership.

The Canadian Tourism Commission suggested a number of ways to encourage involvement within tourism co-operatives. These included good communication, the establishment of teams and partnerships, participation in professional development initiatives, making the offer of participation flexible and affordable, and customising programmes to suit the SMTEs ensuring relevance (CTC 2005). These approaches require knowledge of the SMTEs – what is of value to them and their ability to participate. Greater involvement may also lead to cohesiveness of the group, as Palmer et al. (2000) found between tourism marketing co-operatives over time and this was helped by several factors such as similarity of work, group size, threats from outside, leadership style and common social factors such as age, race and social status.

2.13.1.4 *Commitment*

Whether or not to commit to a relationship within a co-operative or network is dependent on many variables. One of these variables is the social ties or connected nature that a person may have prior to the involvement with the stakeholder. As was mentioned

previously, a personal level of interaction and the individualised content of these ties contribute to the commitment that form strong relationships (Saxena 1999). Towers et al. (2006) recognised commitment to the relationship as one of six essential requirements to its management. If one party is not committed or does not display commitment, the lack of perceived involvement creates unsatisfactory tension within the relationship. What follows is greater effort and input by some parties and unfair gain by those that have not played their role in the relationship. The level of required commitment needs to be determined at the initial stages in terms of time, finances and other efforts that are required to sustain and manage the relationship within a co-operative/network situation. Buchanan and Gillies (1996) recognised that investment in customer and relationship management encouraged greater commitment from the visitor and increased the potential value of repeat visitors, thus assisting the firm to create competitive advantage, enhance profitability and improve competitiveness. The level of bonding as a result of commitment was explored by Voss and Voss (1997) in their analysis of theatre-goers, customer requirements and market strategies. Voss and Voss based their typology of commitment on whether it was informally or formally administered (Table 2.2). They argued that bonding in terms of commitment was based on either social and/or financial bonds - social in terms of wanting to interact with other people and financial in terms of monies given in exchange for something. Bilateral commitment (informal governance) in the case of the gardens could be based on those visitors who have a deep interest in plants and gardens, and as they repeat visit, they get to know both the garden and/or the Garden Owners/Manager over time. The Office of Public Works (OPW), through its heritage card scheme, encourages bilateral commitment through formal governance.

Table 2.2 A 2x2 Typology of Commitment Types

	Unilateral commitment	Bilateral commitment
Informal governance	Database marketing programme designed to create social bonds	Repeat purchases by customers whose intense loyalty is based on financial or social bonds
Formal governance	Frequent buyer programme designed to create financial and/or social bonds	Membership/season tickets designed to create social and/or financial bonds

Source: Voss and Voss (1997:281)

Commitment may affect perception of the effectiveness of a co-operative approach. Coffey (2003), in a study of the effectiveness of county tourism co-operatives focusing on County Meath, found that the deeper the commitment and affiliation members felt towards the co-operative and the more regularly they communicated, the more likely it was that the network was perceived to be effective. Meath Tourism as a county tourism body is quite formally defined in terms of the way it operates. It has a manager whose role is to organise the members and facilitate marketing effort. Members pay an annual fee. There was evidence that a number of members, including those involved in Meath Tourism and LEADER+, have created strong networks and regularly communicate with each other. This has led to a bank of information which was disseminated through the network channels. The participants to the study, all of whom were members of Meath Tourism, ranged in product provision from accommodation to activity providers.

2.13.1.5 Value and benefit

A value in belonging to a group, co-operative or network needs to be evident to both potential and existing participants. The concept of value is therefore important in terms of a relationship (Payne and Holt 2001). Perceived value is defined as the ratio of perceived benefits relative to perceived sacrifices (Monroe 1991, in Ravald and Gronoos 1996). The outcome of the relationship needs to be positive in terms of time, psychological effort and financial input. Payne (1995) developed the relationship management chain which focused on customer value. It defined the various operational processes that needed to be undertaken in order to ascertain the value proposition, in other words what was considered of value to the participants of the relationship. These included the identification of customer value segments and the use of value delivery systems. The basis of the model is that value is the key to the operation of any business (Veloutsou et al. 2002). Identification and delivery of the appropriate value to the customer results in a successful relationship and business. Wilson and Jantrania (1993) discussed the concept of value within a relationship and developed it along three dimensions: behavioural values which included social bonding, trust and culture (their role has already been discussed in terms of relationships and networks); strategic value, which considered goals, time to market, strategic fit and core competencies; and economic value, with the inclusion of cost reduction and value engineering. Although each stakeholder has different expectation of the value they hope to achieve from having a relationship with a group or other stakeholders, there may also be those who have similar expected values.

Mutual value is developed as a consequence of reciprocal interactive relationships between organisations and stakeholders in a co-operative situation or network. However, value is recreated over time and is subject to change and external influences. Within networks, the results of value creation are based on a fair and balanced division of both labour and benefits (Hakansson and Sharma 1996). A sense of equity needs to prevail. All participants need to feel that they are getting a fair share in terms of both input and emergent benefits. It is important that the value of a relationship within a co-operative situation or network is continually managed, as there is a need for constant investment. It is also important that each member of the group is involved in actively participating and inputs time, effort and finance, as well as gaining from the output benefits. Due to inadequate resources in terms of time, effort and finance, there may be a limit to the number of relationships a business or firm may successfully interact with over a given period. Uzzi (1997) found that embedded contributed towards effective use of time as decisions were made efficiently as trust existed amongst those involved. Different relationships do require different levels of interaction. It is similar to juggling a number of balls in the air at the same time and a balance has to be achieved in order to maximise benefits from each involvement. Hall (1991:227) suggested that an increase in the number of organisations within a relationship affected dependences, domains, rewards and resources. Many ties may reduce the strength of each individual tie due to limitations that may exist. Episodic value, that is the value of each encounter between stakeholders, as well as value derived from the relationship as a whole, needs to be assessed in order to gather in-depth customer-perceived value (Ravald and Gronoos 1996).

Utilitarian value, or the usefulness of the relationship, could be one or many of any benefits of the relationships, such as knowledge sharing (Towers et al. 2006), financial benefit (WTO 2003), socialisation and not feeling isolated (Morrison 1998). A company's search for efficient value-creating processes tends to be two pronged: cost efficiency and market efficiency (Wikstrom and Normann 1994, in Ravald and Gronoos 1996). Value creating mechanisms used by the customer [the gardens] need to be identified and, according to Veloutsou et al. (2002), this issue of customer-oriented mechanisms has not been addressed sufficiently. The main identified values form the building blocks on which tangible benefits can be based. These benefits can be communicated to either prospective or existing members, and will contribute to the awareness-generating stage of network/co-operative recruitment as well as to the image and brand of the group. They can also guide tangible outputs and performance parameters, for example links with tour operators, annual familiarisation trips for journalists or additional visitors to an attraction/area. O'Driscoll

et al (2000) identified that as well as the need to manage trust in relationships and monitoring ongoing costs, there was also a need to consider the benefits of involvement in developing networks. As Towers et al. (2006:177) concluded from the participants of their research into relationship marketing and partnership that *'there is an expectation that benefits will flow from the partnership itself, whereas having a partnership is just the starting point'*

2.13.1.6 Communication

The ability to communicate can be viewed as the core component of any relationship. Good communication was recognised as an essential requirement to ensuring that relationships were successful in the not-for-profit sport sector (Towers et al. 2006). Team working and interdependence depend on communication. Tremblay (2000) investigated the general configuration of linkages between stakeholders and how people interact with one another within a network, to understand such functions as communication and participation. He found that the intensity of network communication and , and the degree of integration were strategic to the decision-making process. Convergence through communication exchange allowed the organisations to learn from one another (Tremblay 2000). According to Aldrich and Zimmer (1986:11), *'communication content or the passing of information from one person to another forms a relationship between two people in social networks'*. The process of co-operation depends on communication. The increased difficulty in finding the time to communicate with an increased number of people/stakeholders impacts on the ability to establish and maintain the contacts necessary to network successfully. Therefore contacts need to be prioritised according to relationship value.

The type of communication is usually an integrated form which links the use of information technology (ezines, websites, mobile technology) with the more personal face to face approach, such as meetings and events. The Canadian Tourism Commission, after its evaluation of the formation of product clubs, suggested that good communication and frequent interaction and relationship building may encourage involvement within these product club co-operatives. Many of the methods suggested to encourage involvement of product providers with these product clubs included the distribution of a partnership/co-op booklet with the name of someone to call if required (for example personal face-to-face approach at the initial stages), a 12-month calendar of programme offerings, provision of frequent networking opportunities, a regular newsletter and a website with programme opportunities detailed (CTC 2005).

Frequency of communication [or contact] is important to establish and maintain a relationship with all stakeholders (the visitor, tour operator or competitor) within a network and can help to strengthen ties. The World Tourism Organisation (2003) advocated open and frequent communication to capitalise on the synergies at all stages of a partnership from its formation through to ongoing management. The correct timing and frequency of this communication is imperative to sustain commitment. Both timing and frequency need to be established at the outset, although this needs to be flexible and managed at each stage to cope with the demands of the dynamic process.

Connell (2004) specifically focused on the effectiveness of tools used for communication when considering visitors (one of the stakeholders) to gardens in Great Britain. She investigated the way in which visitors obtained information both prior to and during the visit to the garden. Connell found that word of mouth (WOM) was by far the most important source (83.4%) used in terms of gathering information on a garden. WOM is a referred personal approach and is dependent on the referring visitor's expectation and product quality experienced. Connell also found that the internet was the least important channel utilised for information, with only 8.3% consulting the web. Although this may come as a surprise, and no doubt may have changed since the research was undertaken, the result may be a reflection of the older age group which has a propensity to visit this type of tourism product with the profile of visiting market segment being aged over 45 years.

Other communication tools which focus on the customer may involve incentives. In other industries, such as the aviation and hospitality industry, frequent flyer programmes and hotel loyalty schemes are two of the most frequent techniques used by tourism co-operatives to foster and maintain relationships with customers (Garnham 1996). However, Bejou and Palmer (1998) stated that many IT-driven loyalty programmes operated by airlines tended to be crude attempts to increase short-term rather than long-term relationships with customers, and do little to encourage repeat purchase of the brand. The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector widely uses the practice of loyalty cards, as evidenced in stores such as Tesco and Boots. Loyalty is developed through data management and communication with the customer using ezines, newsletters and promotional offers. The use of database marketing in conjunction with these forms of incentives provides a ready list of consumers who have previously purchased, though the degree of actual loyalty to the organisation or product shown by customers is questionable, with price rather than quality playing an important role.

This use of data mining and management is considered as one of the main tools used to both develop and manage relationships. The use of information technology and such initiatives as social networking have changed the ways many tourism enterprises operate and manage both their business and their stakeholder relationships. People have become more connected than ever before and information can be disseminated almost universally the moment it is generated. However, according to Gummesson (2002b), technology should be used only as one of a number of tools to develop and manage relationships. Managing the relationship a Garden Owner/Manager has with its customers (a stakeholder) is essential to managing the business of operating a garden as a tourist attraction. This use of IT in this context was first termed 'information enabled relationship marketing' by Ryals and Payne in 2001. According to Payne and Frow (2005), customer relationship management (CRM) which incorporates the use of IT into relationship marketing can be defined on a continuum. At one end, it is strategic and broadly defines a holistic approach to managing relationships, creating shareholder value. At the other end, it is narrow and tactical with the implementation of a specific technology solution. However, initially, the strategic approach is required with the focus on identified shareholder value before tactical implementation, in this case the use of a tactical marketing tool. Strategy comes before tactics. Core characteristics essential to successful relationship marketing, co-operation and networking have been discussed. Other characteristics considered specific to co-operation and networking, and relationship marketing are now discussed under the different processes.

2.13.2 Co-operation and Networking

2.13.2.1 Group size, structure and identification

Many tourism providers/businesses are involved in more than one type of group or network. Dutton et al (1994:239) suggested that strong identification between a member and an organisation existed when, '*1. his/her identity as a member was more salient than alternative identities; and 2. his/her self-concept had many of the same characteristics he or she believes defines the organisation as a social group*'. Stoel (2002) found that communication frequency, which is considered an essential element for effective network relationships, was more difficult when groups were larger and group identification was affected by the size of the group involved. The larger the group size, the weaker the group identification. Group identification was defined by Kelly and Kelly (1994:64) as '*the desire of an individual to connect with other members*'. Discovering the effective structures for reciprocity in terms of size and identity is essential. In restricted exchange,

there is a limit of two people. With a generalised exchange, in the case of a network or co-operative group, there is exchange in terms of numbers of people (Saxena 1999). Certain personal characteristics such as 'getting on with' and 'liking someone' and similarity of goals or background, educational or otherwise, are conducive to building relationships. These personal characteristics can help to form an identity for the group or, as in many cases, a series of identities with the creation of cliques. In developing a typology for sustainable tourism partnerships in the United States, Selin (2000) used organisational diversity and size as one of the dimensions on which the typology was based.

The structure of an interactive organisation is important to its operation. Campbell and Wilson (1996) identified a number of different types of structures. These included: social networks; market-based transactions with little social context; vertical integration and value creating networks (managed relationships). The latter are formed by the co-operation between independent firms along a value-added chain to create strategic advantage for the entire group. The structure of an organisation was viewed as an important element of the ability to develop relationships and was designated by O'Donaldson and O'Toole (2002) as part of their '5 S' framework guiding relationship management. An effective structure can encourage participation and involvement, is easier to manage and leads to more successful performance. From a different perspective, Palmer et al. (2000) found that those who have a higher disposition to co-operate are better at gauging structural requirements, for example in recognising different customer needs and preferences and delivery of most appropriate responses. Balance needs to be achieved between an individual's needs and the needs of the group. Murdoch (2000), however, concluded from his study of networking within rural development (the agro-food sector), that often what was important was not the structure of the actual network, but that which was carried through it - the distribution of information, socialisation or a sense of security in numbers. The focus should therefore be the quality of information available through the network to the participants and the sense of belonging, which was also considered important to members. Wilson and Jantrania (1993) identified structural bonds as a key construct of a relationship. For example in terms of this research, how is garden tourism organised in terms of function and operation? Do the structural bonds in place encourage the flow of information and relationships to flourish? The need for 'active channels' within organisations, whereby information generation and dissemination is undertaken on a continual basis, were considered important to clustering of tourism products, and even if the critical mass of firms were achieved, co-operative objectives could not be pursued if active channels were not in operation (Hall 2004, in evaluating work undertaken by Rosenfeld 1997).

Other authors who considered structure include Bodega et al. (2004) who identified four inter-organisational structures or forms on examining alpine tourism. These were identified as: the community model, where each provider operates alone; corporative model, a concentrated scenario with recognised agreements and is controlled by a small number of people; a governed model, where tourism operates around a node of expertise; and a constellation model, with high density relationships, reciprocal trust and balance of power. Saxena et al (2007) summated that networks operating in a rural context tended to be soft (with an open membership and more co-operative style), non-hierarchical, less economically sufficient and differed in the degree of formalization.

Griffin (1999) identified two basic models of organisational interactivity in exploring tourism operation and organisational structures in the Lough Derg region in Ireland: dyadic activity, where there was interaction between two providers, for example an activity centre and a hostel; and inter-organisational structural activity, where there was focal agency emphasis and dyadic relationships with other organisations. Formalised agreements, external division of labour, behavioural norms vis-a-vis other organisations and dealing with defined principles for the recruitment of new members differentiated this type of activity. The other type of interactivity identified were the inter-organisational networks which brought together product providers to attain collective and self-interest goals and to resolve specific problems. Examples of these networks in the Lough Derg region included development groups, tidy towns and marketing groups which bring product providers together with a common goal.

Most tourism businesses conform in either a formal or informal manner to each of these models or use both depending on the relationship and the type of provider. The development of relationships with varying depths of involvement are part of the interactionary process. Within the network/group, Snow et al. (1992) identified several other players that are required for the network to succeed: the architect or the creator of the network; the lead operator or the manager of the network; and the caretaker who manages the different relationships within the network. The recognition and clarity of these roles can help to give a structure to the group and aid with more efficient operation. A successful co-operative group is made up of a unique mix of personalities with a diversity of skills, philosophies and resources (Selin and Chavez 1994). A group can muddle along for an indefinite period and then become dynamically charged by the entry of a new personality into the group. This person may demonstrate the ability to lead. The key is to

recognise the personality types, provide them with a role and harness the energy for the good of the group.

2.13.2.2 Leadership and power

The dispersal of power within any group/network is seen as an important factor in achieving effective and satisfactory operation. Waddock (1991) suggested that a balance of power amongst partners correlated with the effectiveness of partnerships. There is sometimes a fine line between good leadership and power which can be used by some members in an unbalanced manner. In exploring the emergence of Squamish, British Columbia as a tourist destination, Reed (1997) found that power relations were used as a wielding force in terms of tourism development. Reed concluded that the use of power decided if collaboration was to be successful or not in a destination.

Bucklin and Sengupta (1993), in a survey of 98 manufacturing organisations which were involved in co-marketing activities, found that an imbalance in managerial power between those involved in working together led to a less than effective relationship within these co-marketing alliances. Palmer et al. (2000) recognised that problems can arise when there is more than one dominant person within the group. It can upset the structure and operation of the group. Power, considered by Grabher (1993) as an essential component element of networking, can also be used as a barrier to group entry. Not belonging to the right affiliate group or having the right contacts can make a potential member feel marginalised and unable to be involved. Groups which require an invitation or referral to join can be considered elitist, although this elitism can also be construed by potential members as a connection of prestige and value. The tag line 'Only the Best' was used by Bord Fáilte when initially developing the PMGs in the hope that both providers and visitors alike would associate the groups with quality and a standard of experience that had to be achieved.

Gray (1985) recognised that collaboration was an emergent process. He suggested that interdependency of stakeholders (an incentive to induce participation) was required. As Gray (ibid) identified joint ownership of decisions as being essential to the process of collaboration, and that stakeholders assumed collective responsibility for the future direction of the domain, equity of power was required. Gray found that forces of mandate depended on whether there was an external mandate and a co-incidence in values, a requisite for going forward.

In many cases of successful co-operatives, networks, and partnerships, there may be one person who has a vision and carries the group forward, a project champion, as was evident in the bench-mark case of the Canada Sport Tourism Alliance (WTO 2003). Hall (2004) identified the existence of a champion (or leader) as a contributory element to success. Without an appropriate cluster champion within the food and wine industry in New Zealand and associated relationships creating strategy (formal or otherwise), co-location in the case of cluster formation may as much lead to rivalry that works against cluster development as behaviours that do. Therefore, strong leadership and governance style leads to a greater effective operation in co-operative marketing. This, rather than an informal approach, was found to be the case by Palmer (2002) who examined the causes of effectiveness in tourism marketing organisations in the UK. However, a strong leader can lead to excessive reliance by the members of the group and group members acting in a passive manner. Kompulla (2000) found that if a company's commitment to the idea of networking and co-operation was not dependent on an external push or leader, that is to say there was an internal vision, it would have as strong a chance of success. So internal vision, with a form of leadership which takes the vision and pushes it at all times, is therefore crucial.

2.13.2.3 Vision and goals

Common vision and goals are required for a group to work co-operatively (WTO 2003). The vision and goals should be re-evaluated regularly and are dynamic, reflecting both internal and extraneous variables and their impact on the industry, the group and its members. Such tactics as brand association (Hall 2004), which is linked to the vision and a sense of belonging to this vision and identity, may all contribute to the success of a network. In relation to community tourism planning and collaboration, Jamel and Getz (1995) suggested the need to formulate jointly a vision statement and tourism goals. As the nature of the industry was fragmented, they identified a need to develop methods such as cross-structural collaboration that could facilitate and implement consensus in order to achieve successful co-operation. The formation of a network may occur whereby there is a common vision of issues. Common vision and goals can also act as a catalyst to the formation of a group or network according to Kompulla (2000). If a common vision of an issue is identified, the activities of the actors are based on co-operative relationships. So, vision plays an important role in both stimulating relationships, co-operatives and networks and in the guidance of their operation.

Goal compatibility was considered a key construct of relationship development (Wilson and Jantrania 1993). People are more likely to work together if they have common or complementary goals. Brouthers et al.(1995) endorsed this, saying that it was one of the four elements that made a strategic partnership. The other three are complementary skills, co-operative cultures existing between firms and the need to have commensurate levels of risk involved. The creation of any partnership arrangement requires vision and energy and the process is easier if the benefits are seen clearly (WTO 2003). There needs to be a mission (Fyall 2008). Vision and goals need to be clearly articulated and transparent. They give direction and also provide parameters on which to base benefits and performance.

2.13.2.4 Clear and tangible benefits

The delivery of clear and visible benefits is an essential factor in the successful operation of tourism networking organisations (Morrison et al 2004). Benefits of inter-organisational relationships can include transaction cost economics (TCE). This concept of economics in terms of interaction was discussed considering its benefit in terms of relationships by Barringer and Harrison (2000). TCE seeks to minimise the sum of the production and transaction costs in terms of inter-organisational relationships. Production costs may be affected by such elements as scale of operations, learning and experience and location. Transactional costs could be those costs that are associated with arranging, managing and maintaining relationships with markets. Uzzi (1997: 37) argues that TCE however demonstrates a bias towards dyadic relationships and that opportunistic rather than co-operative relationships are described. The costs associated with delivering the tourism experience of a garden visit to the visitor can be minimised by having strong, value-laden relationships with priority stakeholders. Access to information, expertise and distribution channels can help minimise the cost of both production and delivery of the experience for the provider. In tourism, although benefits sought from co-operating with a stakeholder or group may vary from person to person, clear and tangible benefits will help to give a sense of purpose to belonging to a group, particularly at the awareness stage and initial commitment. Not only can these benefits be used to attract members, they can also be used as performance parameters on which regular auditing can determine productivity levels of the co-operative/network interaction.

2.13.2.5 *Combining of resources and access to information*

A sharing or combining of resources is a factor of unification in peripheral tourism organisations which enable effective marketing (Morrison 1998). Telfer, in Laws (2002), described the Canadian Tourism Commission product clubs (www.canadatourism.com) as groups that were established to combine resources in the tourism industry in order to offset seasonality, increase diversity and be more competitive. Canadian tourism providers often operate in isolated areas and this issue of isolation was combated by the identification of products similar in nature which interact and work together towards common goals. These have been supported by the Canadian Tourism Commission. This combination of resources led to sharing of information. This access to information and the way in which it is disseminated through a group or network helped to create competitive advantage for those involved.

The provision of information is one of the reasons why networks are created (Childs and Faulkner 1998) and the mutual exchange of this information is essential to ongoing networking (Grabher 1993). Access to information was one of the most common reasons for involvement in a network (Halme and Fadeva 2001) and this was shown to be the case in the ParNetourism Interreg funded project that was undertaken during the course of this thesis. The majority (52%) of tourism product providers surveyed in counties Wexford and Carlow said that access to information was the main reason for joining a group or network (ParNetourism 2005 – see Appendix III). The sharing of this information and ideas was also cited numerous times throughout both the qualitative focus group work of providers and key interviews of those working within the tourism industry in this area. Access to information was also deemed important by those operating within the food and wine networks of New Zealand, with Hall (2004) suggesting that this access as one of the factors that influenced the success of these networks. Zineldin (1998) recognised the importance for some stakeholders such as competitors to use networks or co-operative situations to gain access to information about businesses outside their own. Relationships developed with similar businesses can also provide an opportunity to learn about the business within the macro environment and lead to a competitive advantage. Reinforcement of partnerships allows organisations or providers to learn from one another, as there is a convergence through communication exchange. This approach also allows experimentation and generation of new ideas which can be discussed between those within the group. However, the extent of knowledge sharing depends on its percolation through the network, the extent of connectivity in terms of type of communication used, number

involved, quality of information and the receptivity of those that are to share it (Tremblay 2000). The closeness of members within a network in the context of rural tourism provision facilitates the dispersal of knowledge, however can be characterised by an 'us versus them' scenario (Saxena et. al 2007). Today, the emphasis is on the use of IT as a method of knowledge dispersal, and it is very evident within the tourism industry that there are increasing numbers of those who are comfortable with the use of information technology and use it as a tool for communication. However, there are those who prefer an integrated approach to communication with a mix of more traditional approaches (including personal contact, telephone etc) and information technology. The increased use of IT as a tool to disseminate information will occur over time as the younger generation becomes involved with the industry. However, while the use of IT as a communication tool may break-down certain barriers and overcome issues of proximity, it is a more impersonal approach in place of meeting face-to-face. Networking and co-operation are often associated with a mix of approaches in information exchange and personal contact plays an important role especially at the initial stages of involvement.

2.13.2.6 Performance

The performance of a co-operative group or network can be difficult to gauge, and its success invariably depends both on what the stakeholders or members wish to obtain from participation and their input into the process. In the tourism industry, the motivation to belong to a group may include such objectives as increasing business, gaining information or the sense need to belong in order to overcome a feeling of isolation in peripheral destinations. Morrison (1998), in researching tourism in peripheral tourism destinations, concluded that the unification of tourism organisations enabled effective marketing of a tourist destination to reach its potential business performance and in turn this benefited individual small participating firms.

Performance in terms of relationships with stakeholders can have an effect on the perceived performance of the overall co-operative group. A comparative level of performance of a relationship is often used by participants with the expectation of the relationship performance being based on past experiences and comparisons with such experiences (Wilson and Jantrania 1993). Gummesson (1999) found that the different types of relationships a business can have can both directly and indirectly affect performance and profitability. Therefore, the worth of each relationship needs to be evaluated in terms of how it will affect the overall performance of the organisation.

Evaluation of performance is an essential component of the relationship management chain (Payne 1995, Payne et al 1998, Payne and Frow 2005). The customer (or in this case the member of the group) needs to see that benefit value is being achieved, and the evaluation of this benefit and worth is continually being undertaken. Different indicators and measurements can be used to ascertain performance. They can be quantitative, as in the case of raw data, ratios and percentages. They can also be qualitative, for example the use of normative, nominal or opinion-based indicators (WTO 2003). If a relationship does not perform as expected, it may be terminated and the experience may lead to a negative association with the particular relationship in the future. This has happened in garden tourism in Ireland and therefore other co-operative groups involved with the garden tourism product were also interviewed to explore the reasons for these breakaway decisions. It is not only in the tourism industry that there is a lack of understanding in terms of the performance measures utilised. Providers who expect full occupancy by being a member of a group or a rapid increase in visitor numbers are unrealistic. Realistic performance parameters are often not a recognised part of the process. This leads to ambiguity and an over expectation by the new entrant, which when not achieved, leads to disillusionment.

2.13.3 Relationship Marketing

2.13.3.1 *Interdependence*

Interdependency exists whereby those involved in the relationship depend, to a lesser or greater degree, on one another in some way. Dependency may need to exist due to a number of reasons: a deficit of skill or information, access to distribution channels or a feeling of isolation and inability in knowing how to operate within the tourism business environment. Interdependency creates a tie and a bond. If over time the participant becomes increasingly independent, there is less need for involvement with the group or network and the relationship may decline. Trembley (2000) identified that structures such as networks and partnerships allowed high levels of interdependence and cohesiveness and this in turn can provide an economic efficiency to one or both partners. Grabher (1993) and Gray (1985) also recognised interdependence as an important factor to successful networking. Different forms of interdependence can occur: horizontal, which is the most competitive form, with members competing directly with one another for resources and the disposal of goods and services; vertical, whereby different members act at different stages of production; and symbiotic, where there is the least competition and organisations complement one another (Pennings 1981). There are also times, however, when one or

other stakeholder may wish to remain independent, where the coming together is only for part of their business as in co-opitition (Zineldin 1998). They may wish to remain independent during certain dimensions of the relationship (Palmer and McCole 2000) in order to function as an individual entity or business, and this is encouraged in relation to belonging to a PMG.

2.13.3.2 Loyalty

Growing customer loyalty is an essential part of relationship marketing. It is important, however, to identify those markets to which the business wishes to develop loyalty. The development of customer loyalty and the management of relationships are important within certain markets that yield profitable business to the product provider. Loyalty can come in many forms. In terms of the FMCG (fast moving consumer goods) industry, customer loyalty ties in promotional offers, including discounts and preference offers to those who buy into a company. As mentioned in 2.13.1.6, some of the most popular and well known of these are the supermarket club cards and point systems that are offered throughout many industries. In order to identify those customers from which the business will gain greatest long-term yield and benefit, the value of each relationship needs to be ascertained. Value of the customer requires consideration according to Reichheld (1990) and satisfaction should not be mistaken for loyalty. If a customer (visitor) is satisfied, it does not necessarily mean that there is loyalty to repeat visit or to refer. Potential repeat visitors, for example local people, those who refer visitors, such as tourist offices and the media, and distributors such as tour operators are of greater long-term value to gardens than are overseas visitors who may visit only once. This is especially true for example in relation to the fully independent traveller (FIT) segment. Increased effort can be used to customise a loyalty programme which can then be implemented.

2.13.3.3 Joint value creation

The customer (or stakeholder), however, may not always want to have a relationship (Gronoos 1997). An understanding or an agreement to co-operate, by both parties (dyadic) or all parties, needs to be part of the process. Customers or stakeholders may not be in a relational mode or the relationship may not be justified from an economic viewpoint due to a number of reasons, such as long-term value of the relationship and its cost in terms of effort, time and financial input. There is a need for joint value creation; in the case of the gardens, there is a need for a relationship that will allow both the visitor, the provider and the other stakeholders to gain a valuable outcome. The customer (or visitor) is also a

stakeholder, and in a tourism relationship, the visitor is core to tourism. Customers (visitors) can create value through co-operation and collaboration in their own domain, as argued by Tsokas and Saren (1999). This is manifested through a relationship and dialogue between the supplier (the garden) and the customer (visitor) often in the form of WOM.

2.14 Contributors and Barriers to Successful Relationships, Co- operation and Networks

Prior to developing a conceptual framework to guide the primary work, it was important that both contributors and barriers to successful relationship within co-operatives and networks were explored. A number of studies have focused on this topic in varying degrees. Many provide lists of issues or elements that require consideration prior to the development and also in terms of both implementation and management of successful relationships with stakeholders. Some of these looked specifically at contributors and barriers; others related to the successful management of partnerships and relationships and summate much of the previous section on characteristics with relationships in co-operative and networking scenarios. Some of these studies related to the tourism industry and more to other sectors.

Wilson and Janatrania (1993) identified seven different constructs that affected the success of relationships when working together. These were identified as follows:

- Goal compatibility;
- Trust;
- Satisfaction;
- Investments;
- Structural bonds;
- Social bonds;
- Comparison level of alternatives.

Many of these constructs have been discussed before. Others such as ‘comparison level of alternatives’ can be used to illustrate the changes that have occurred on the tourism sector in Ireland in the past 20 years. As the industry has developed and matured, there are an increased number of co-operative organisations and networks available to product providers. Twenty years ago, prior to the boom in the tourism industry, the National Tourism Board and a small number of accommodation groups and networks (such as the Irish Hotels Federation and Town and Country Homes) were operating in the sector. Providers had a limited choice with whom they could work to market their attraction. This has changed and each year new groups are being formed, some of national origin and some

international, all trying to entice members to participate in their specific group. This is particularly evident in the hotel accommodation sector. Choice prevails for the tourism provider and dissatisfaction with one co-operative group may lead to a change in membership of a group with similar objectives and ideals.

Selin and Chavez (1994) identified a number of constructs that related to the development of successful partnerships in the US forestry industry. The characteristics were usefully categorised in terms of the organisation and its employees and are outlined in Table 2.3:

Table 2.3 Common Characteristics of Successful Partnership

<p>Personal Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right mix of people • Strong leadership • Propensity of risk taking • Community spirit 	<p>Interpersonal characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication • Trust • Shared vision • Mutual adjustment
<p>Organisational characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative support • Flexible protocols • Staff continuity • Mediators role 	<p>Operational Characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written plan • Meeting environment • Co-operation agreement • Set new goals

Source: Selin and Chavez (1994:55)

As can be seen, they correspond in many cases to the core characteristics previously identified and discussed in this chapter. In order to maximise the potential for developing partnerships and strong linkages, Selin and Chavez suggested a number of approaches. These included: more flexible personal and financial accounting systems; staff continuity throughout the life of the partnership; staff training workshops; the setting of new goals to maintain the energy of the relationship; the importance of rewards or incentives to partners; and the importance of having the time to engage in partnership activities. Time dedicated to the relationship indicates its value and priority.

Donaldson and O'Toole (2002) developed the '5 S Framework' which addressed issues that required consideration when implementing a relationship management programme with the various stakeholders. These issues included:

- Structure;
- Staff;
- Style (doers or managers of doers, the need for a task oriented approach, an emphasis on conceptual thinking, a relationship oriented culture);
- Systems;

- Schemes, such as the use of customer relationship management.

Using this framework can help the participant evaluate their approach and minimise potential barriers that may exist.

In the tourism sector, the WTO (2003) identified six key requirements needed to successfully manage a partnership or network:

- Clear and well articulated goals and objectives;
- Open and frequent communication;
- Building capability through continuous learning;
- The use of indicators and measurement to determine where value is received and whether the process was worth the effort;
- Adequate resources;
- Planning and risk management.

The WTO also identified the need to be proactive and to assess risk continually. Inadequate resources (monetary, time and manpower) are often a problem. Groups, co-operatives and networks may be funded over a limited period (grant aided) with the objective of attaining self-sustainability after an allocated time. Self-sustainability often does not occur as was the case in the golf sector in Ireland and in relation to some of the product clubs in Canada, where there has been the demise of a number of groups, particularly as either resources have diminished or champions/leaders have moved on. In terms of the success of a networking organisation, Morrison et al. (2004) explored factors associated with successful and sustainable operations in ten international tourism networks and identified the need to have clear objectives and purpose, suitable organisational structure and leadership, continuity of resource, member engagement, the delivery of visible benefits and inter-organisational learning as essential contributors to their success.

When evaluating other sectors, Towers et al. (2006) identified six different foci that can help to manage relationships in a co-operative or network context, with a number of them similar to those endorsed by the WTO:

- Similar building relationship with partners that have complementary expertise and knowledge;
- Understanding the management styles of partners;
- Making a commitment to the relationship;
- Having good communication;
- Having staff continuity and the importance of retention;

- Generating satisfaction in the relationship by attaining the objectives initially agreed.

Factors that act as barriers to successful and sustainable co-operation and networking are often the antithesis of those identified factors that contribute to success. Stodgill (1974 cited in Palmer et. al 2000) identified a number of factors in organisations that contributed to failure in terms of co-operation. These included inefficient leadership and management, declining interest among members and member's interference with management. Interference with management might suggest a breakdown in organisational structure that can lead to a blurring of roles. The need for guidance and the need to know of the required commitment in terms of belonging to a group or network are essential, particularly in the initial stages of development. According to Tower et al. (2006:178), factors that contributed to failure of partnerships in the not-for-profit sports sector were due to both personal and professional reasons. They included issues such as: not having clarity at the start '*they did not always know what they should be doing in order to make their partnership work*'; the need for a serious investment in time; poor communication, incompatible management styles, '*they did not always focus their efforts on managing the partnership*'; and lack of commitment and satisfaction.

Research undertaken in Canada indicated a plethora of challenges and barriers which prevented SMTEs within the tourism sector becoming involved in co-operative marketing programmes (CTC 2005). Their research and experience for this study had come from the Commission's involvement with product clubs which it had initiated in 1996. Factors identified in deterring involvement included confusion, lack of resources, inconsistency of standards, lack of trust and feelings that the larger partners were getting a better deal and finally, a lack of understanding of marketing processes and procedures. Mitchell and Schreiber (2007) identified different stages of development and perceived lack of cohesion within the sector as a barrier to co-operation when research wineries in New Zealand. Hoffman and Schlosser (2001) suggested that that SME's lacked the knowledge of professional management and partnership governance and that this prevents them from cultivating partnerships to fulfil their potential for value creation. The issue of resourcing has always been a problem. The PMGs in Ireland and the product clubs in Canada were set up with an initial fund to encourage involvement and aid with the start up process. As in many cases, resources were limited and, in terms of the Canadian situation, product clubs were deemed successful only if they were self-sustaining after three years. In Ireland, limited product and financial resources in terms of membership input to a co-

operative marketing group resulted in issues such as the recruitment of a part-time rather than full-time marketing executive in the gardens PMG.

A number of factors which contribute both to success and to failure of working together have been identified. Some have been grouped due to similarity and these are synthesised in Table 2.4. The characteristics of relationship marketing, co-operation and networking together with the contributory factors to success and failure, were used as building blocks on which to generate a conceptual model. Interview questions used in the primary research were based on this conceptual model.

Table 2.4 Key Constructs and Key Authors

Key Constructs	Key Authors
Trust and Reciprocity	The need to have trust - Wilson and Jantrania (1993), Selin and Chavez (1994), Berry (1995), Saxena (1999) Childs and Faulkner (1998), Hall (2004), Tsokas and Saren (2004) ... and reciprocity - Yau (2000) Grabher (1993) Carson et al. (1995) Lack of trust - CTC (2005) Different use of ... (Harris 1993)
Bonding, Links, Ties and Socialisation	Types and the need for bonds - Berry (1995), Yau et al.(2000) Social Bonds - Wilson and Jantrania (1993) RM and Health sector - Towers et al. (2006) Structural Bonds - Wilson and Jantrania (1993), Towers et al. (2006) Horizontal and vertical approach - Oliver and Jenkins (2003), Kneafsey et al. (2001), Gronoos (1997b) and socialisation Palmer et al. (2000), Hall (2004, Gilmore et al .(2001), Wilson and Jantrania (1993), Towers et al (2006) Lack of cohesion(Mitchell and Schreiber 2007)
Involvement, Commitment/Loyalty and Interdependence	Making a commitment/investment to the relationship - Towers et al. (2006), Wilson and Jantrania (1993) As required characteristic - Li Jen and Lockwood (2006), Saxena (1999) Declining interest among members - Palmer (2000) Loyalty- Reichheld (1990) Lack of commitment and satisfaction - Towers et al. (2006),Buchanan and Gillies (1996), Voss and Voss (1997), Coffey (2003) Autonomy - Palmer and McCole (2000), Zineldin(1998), Pennings (1981)

Key Constructs	Key Authors
Value, Joint Value Creation and Benefits	<p>Types of value - Payne and Holt (2001), Monroe (1991), Veloutsou et al. (2002), Ravald and Gronoos (1996)</p> <p>Through CRM - Payne (1995)</p> <p>Shared values - O'Driscoll (2000)</p> <p>Generating satisfaction within the relationship - Wilson and Jantrania (1993), Towers et al. (2006)</p> <p>Building capability through continuous learning - WTO (2003)</p> <p>Delivery of visible benefits - Morrison (2004); and TCE (Barringer and Harrison 2000)</p> <p>Customer creating value - Tsokas and Saren (1999)</p> <p>As a value to organisations - Child and Faulkner (1998)</p> <p>Inter-organisational learning - Morrison (2004)</p> <p>Value creating processes Wikstrom and Normann (1994)</p> <p>Anti-value creation - Gronoos (1997)and gender (Harris 1993)</p>
Communication	<p>Open and frequent communication - WTO (2003), Towers et al. (2006), Selin and Chavez (1994) Poor communication - Towers et al. (2006)</p> <p>Convergence through communication - Tremblay (2000)</p> <p>Adequate resource - WTO (2003), Morrison (2004), Hall (2004)</p> <p>Methods: CTC (2005), Farnham (1996), Payne and Frow (2005)</p> <p>Effectiveness of. - O'Connell (2004)</p>
Group Size, Structure and Identity	<p>Structure - O'Donaldson and O'Toole (2002), Campbell and Wilson (1996), Griffin (1996)</p> <p>Size - Selin (2000), Hall (1991)</p> <p>Suitable organisational structure - Morrison (2004)</p> <p>Administrative support - Selin and Chavez (1994)</p> <p>Identity - (Kelly and Kelly 1994), Dutton et al (2004)</p>
Leadership	<p>Strong leadership, champion - Selin and Chavez (1994), Morrison (2004), Hall (2004), Palmer (2002), Towers et al. (2006)</p> <p>Linked to vision - Kompulla (2000)</p> <p>Inefficient leadership - Palmer (2000)</p> <p>.. and power - Reed (1997), Gray (1985), Bucklin and Sengupta (1993), Palmer et al. (2000), Grabher (1993)</p>

Key Constructs	Key Authors
Vision and Goals	Clear and well articulated goals - WTO (2003) Compatibility - Wilson and Jantrania (1993), Brouthers et. al (1995) Shared vision - Selin and Chavez (1994), Morrison (2004) Common - Kompulla (2000), Mission (Fyall (2008) Shared goals - Towers et al. (2006) New goals - Selin and Chavez (1994) Lack of direction and clarity -Towers et al. (2006) Confusion - Morrison (2004)
Combining Resources, Access to Information	Building relationships with partners who have complementary expertise - Towers et al. (2006) Understanding management styles of partners - Towers et al. (2006) To offset seasonality - Telfer in Laws (2002) Lack of resources - CTC (2005) Access to information – Tsokas and Saren (1999), Zineldin (1998), Childs and Faulkner (1998), Hall (2004), Halme and Fadeva (2001).
Performance	The use of indicators and measurements to determine where value is received and whether process was worth the effort - WTO (2003), Gummesson (1999), Payne (1995) Benefits of - Barringer and Harrison (2000) The use of rewards and incentives - Selin and Chavez (1994)
Management	Having staff continuity – the importance of retention - Towers et al. (2006), Selin and Chavez (1994) Flexibility - Selin and Chavez (1994) Planning and risk management - WTO (2003) Comparison of alternatives - Wilson and Jantrania (1993) The need to be proactive - WTO (2003) Members interference with management - Palmer (2000) Incompatible management styles - Towers et al. (2006) Lack of understanding of marketing and business processes - CTC (2005)

Source: Author for the purpose of this study

2.15 Part C: The Development of a Conceptual Model

In evaluating the secondary material in the relevant discipline areas, common characteristics emerged linking the areas. Using these characteristics, a conceptual model was created and this model has been the under-pinning justification for the interview questions in the research.

Four key areas were considered:

1. The product: product description, the perception of the product using SWOT analysis, visitor facilities, value;
2. Perceived importance of product: visitors numbers, revenue, employment, satisfaction, reason for opening, allocation of marketing budget
3. Embedded issues such as history, ownership of the garden, occupation and experience, geographical location and proximity;
4. The exploration of co-operation and relationships which considered definitions, identification of essential characteristics for success, barriers to success, membership, views on co-operation and relationships, communication and usage and effectiveness of marketing tools, the use of monitoring, auditing and market research.

2.15.1 The Product

2.15.1.1 Use of SWOT as a tool

It was also important that qualitative perceptual strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of the garden tourism sector were obtained. A SWOT analysis is a tool which is used extensively throughout the business and non-business sectors internationally. Its use successfully contributed to a study of stakeholder relationship marketing in China (Murphy and Wang 2006). Piercy and Giles (1989) could not find the origin of this strategic tool, though praised it in terms of its simplicity and it was with this in mind that it was used as part of this research. Piercy and Giles (ibid) went on to state that it can contribute to identification of a shared vision with the pooling of ideas and information from a variety of sources, and that this produces richer results. What it required is that an individual or company, either internally or externally, undertakes an analysis of a product/place/operation focusing on its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This knowledge contributes to a resource-based view of the organisation and is recognised as a specific tool that puts theory into practice in terms of identifying competitive

advantage (Tzokas and Saren 2004). Strengths and weakness are micro-oriented factors and deal with the internal aspects of the company. It is within the power of the company to change or manipulate these. Opportunities and threats are macro-oriented factors and deal with external issues which the company has an inability to change. A TOWS matrix (Wehrich 1982) identifies and analyses the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats and ensures that the maximum information is used in providing a strategic direction for the organisation. Due to its familiarity of use, SWOT was used as an analytical tool to encourage participants to concentrate and evaluate the garden tourism product.

2.15.1.2 Perception of the value of the product (gardens)

There was a need to understand the perception of the value of gardens to both the tourism industry and to the visitor. The need to explore this was based on the understanding of value in terms of the experience. The need to define the value and benefit of having such a product in terms of self, the visitor and the tourism industry overall may help to assimilate a vision of value for the sector.

2.15.1.3 Visitor services and facilities

What are the constituent elements of garden tourism provision? What are the facilities that have been developed to aid with developing the experience for the visitor, how is the visitor serviced and how are gardens managed? In Great Britain, Connell (2005) found that there had been a significant increase in the number of visitor services after a garden was opened to visitors. Connell surmised that this confirmed the argument that there has been an increased commercialisation and commodification of the garden as a leisure experience which was even evidenced from the opening of country houses to visitors in the 19th century in Great Britain. Increased commercialisation may be due to the 'need' to become more commercial, offering a more diverse product to a wider market and providing better opportunity to be economically sustainable. Related merchandising and retail opportunity forms part of the suggested approach to self-sufficiency in the heritage attraction sector (Reynolds 1991). However, in terms of gardens, can this work and how does this impact on the product in the minds of the owners and managers?

2.15.2 Perceived Importance of Product

2.15.2.1 Importance and benefit from product

In the tourism industry, success in terms of business sustainability is viewed in relation to a number of elements. These include the number of visitors attracted to the product, income

generated from the product, numbers employed and the marketing budget allocated. The reasons for opening were also included under the perceived importance of the product, with the premise that the manager/owner deems it of a sufficient level of interest to the visitor market in order to open it to the public.

The importance of the product (gardens) was ascertained in a number of different ways: reasons for development and opening, economic importance, visitor numbers, employment and marketing budget. Why do people develop a garden and open it to the public? They may have unique plants or a unique history. The garden may be landscaped in a way that is considered tranquil or beautiful and again they may wish to share this with people. Or they may wish to make the garden pay for itself. Maintaining and managing a garden is an expensive business. Its existence is transient and only continues to exist through hard effort and work. The main reason for the opening of gardens in Great Britain was for charity fundraising (51.9%) (Connell 2005). Garden maintenance was cited by 19.6% of the participants, with only 11% stated running a business enterprise was the main reason for opening the garden to the public. Great Britain has more of an emphasis on charity openings than Ireland, and in terms of the attractions sector, gardens are uniquely associated with charity openings. In Ireland, the domestic and visitor potential (5 million population plus 8 million visitors) stands at just under a fifth of the total domestic visitor population for Great Britain (60 million) and therefore do gardens have to work harder to attract visits and ensure viability? Do requirements to be economically viable drive the co-operative marketing of gardens?

People work together for a number of reasons, but there has to be benefits to any effort made. As relationships are dynamic and respond to both internal and external variables, the benefits need to be evident from early on or one or other partner will get disillusioned and the relationship will go into decline. However, relationships do not focus only on economic exchange and benefits. Saxena (1998) found that relationships require both economic and social exchange. In the evaluation of linkages and relationships in national parks, Saxena found that the economic and/or social benefits need to be part of a goal or vision and the outcome of their exchange needs to be seen in terms of both rewards and costs. Developing the research further, Saxena (2005) argued that sustainable tourism is 'territorially embedded' in social networks and relationships.

2.15.3 Embedded Issues

Issues of an embedded nature can be said to exist when the tourist attraction/product is part of the recreational and social landscape and when the tourism product commodifies the landscape, heritage or history in terms of use (Oliver and Jenkins 2003). Uzzi (1997) noted that there was a lack of well-defined theory on embeddedness and interfirm networking, though more recently authors such as Cawley et al. (2007) and Saxena et al. (2007) have written on the subject particularly in the context of rural tourism. The gardens which participated in this work have without exception a long history. For example, those that participated in the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme were eligible to do so by being of 18th or 19th century origin. Although in many cases the original garden may have disappeared, the objective of their restoration was to recreate what had been there originally through the use of historical plans and notes. Garden historians were employed throughout the restoration process and the final products have recreated part of history (Reid 2002). Generations of families had been involved in developing and maintaining such gardens and links through plant collections and other gardens both in Ireland and abroad have created a unique mix of both planting and design in each case.

2.15.3.1 History and social issues

History is important in order to give a greater understanding of a subject (Kjellern and Soderman in Gummesson 2000). The formation and maintenance of the Distritti in Italy (famous for their development and management of networks) was linked to a sense of place, history and the internalisation of production (Bauer 2001). Bauer goes on to say that history dictated these networks and their maintenance which led to a proliferation of SMEs. According to Kneafsey (2001), networks and their relationships may be historical, providing those involved with a sense of attachment and place. Many of the Garden Owners/Managers interviewed were linked to the houses attached to generations of families, all with their story to tell and strong links to their geographic area and history. Some of the older houses and gardens were part of the 'landed gentry', with historical associations to the then reigning British monarchy. Many of these gentry socialised and followed the same religious affiliation of Church of Ireland over the majority religion of Catholicism in Ireland both then and now. A common link has been established over the centuries through both religious beliefs and origins. The relationship between the 'big house' and the local population differed from place to place. Johnson (1996:554) suggested that '*the resistance to using it [the big house] as an Irish icon and as an ingredient in definitions of cultural identity*' may be due to the perceived harsh role played by landlords

during the Irish Famine. Many of these houses (and gardens) have become commoditised (open for tourists) and the link to history is more readily available for consumption. Interpretation also varies, some focusing on a social and cultural history, as in the case of Strokestown as documented by Johnson (1996), and others are more private about their role in the local society. This is particularly the case with the owned and inherited properties. Easton and Araujo (1994:81) argue, however, that '*all exchanges are embedded in a social matrix, and therefore are driving forces which support the establishment of a relationship regardless of economic outcome*' and therefore the social matrix of the gardens is important.

2.15.3.2 Length of time in ownership

Garden ownerships are divided into public or private ownership. In the Republic of Ireland government/department owned gardens are operated by the OPW (Office of Public Works); in Northern Ireland and Great Britain many of the public gardens are operated and maintained by the National Trust, which is a charity-based organisation. Private gardens are owned primarily by families. In a small number of cases, a consortium or group may own the garden and a board of management may oversee day-to-day operations including marketing. Ownership may also impact on commitment and in turn sustainability (Connell 2005).

2.15.3.3 Qualifications, occupation and experience

Although Gummesson (1999) advocated that all stakeholders are 'part-time marketers', previous experience and/or qualifications (knowledge) of management skills may lead to a familiarity with the approach and processes of marketing which may include the use of co-operation to do business. Indeed, the CTC (2005) cites a lack of training or understanding of the marketing process as a barrier to successful co-operation and networking. It was found by Hall (2004) that the knowledge of networking, including the further development of social capital, was evident when there was a high degree of regional competitiveness in the food and wine industry in New Zealand. It could also be argued that sometimes these skills are inherent in an individual who can be 'born' with skills to manage successfully and market such a tourism venture. In Ireland, training has been and is considered essential in creating a competitive tourism industry and this is evidenced in the various tourism development strategies formulated since 1989. The most recent strategy (Fáilte Ireland 2007-2013) recognises that while the tourism industry in Ireland comprises mainly of small and medium enterprises, there will continue to be a need for support in terms of

professional and enterprise development and skills training (Fáilte Ireland 2007:55, Fáilte Ireland 2005). This may involve the up-skilling or even in some cases learning the basic steps to managing a business. The proposal in this strategy is to continue to develop both county-centred and product-centred learning networks. Financial allocation and incentives to encourage participation have been and are evident through many EU and national programmes. LEADER+ companies and County Enterprise Boards (CEB) have also funded and encouraged training in this sector.

2.15.3.4 Management structure

In selecting to explore the co-operative practices, links and relationships within garden tourism, its context, structure and operation within the tourism sector required examination. The structure and position of co-operative marketing bodies within the sector has implications for the members in terms of their perception and relationship with the group. There are different reasons for joining such a group. There is a formalised agreement in terms of a membership fee being paid. An executive is often employed by the group to undertake marketing on its behalf. There is also an issue of mandatness in Ireland, as membership is encouraged by the national tourist board and indeed required for those who received funding through the GGRS. Marketing strategies employed by the group are guided and facilitated by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland Limited, with matching financial resources being allocated to marketing activities. These activities can take the form of literature production, promotion abroad, through the tourism offices or at consumer and trade shows, and the use of the gardens as part of familiarisation itineraries.

Jarrillo (1988), in his seminal paper on strategic networks, found that networks were more efficient than markets or hierarchies when a network arrangement minimises costs for the participating firm. Jarillo suggested that a strategic network should be organised around a 'hub firm' - an organisation or firm that initiates and manages the network (in this case the tourist boards). The network is perceived as positive if previous experience in dealing with the network had been positive and members will wish to continue to be involved. It was important to ascertain the type of management structure in place in each of the gardens and its relationship with the 'hub firm'. The gardens, as mentioned before, ranged from hierarchical, in the case of some of the state and county council operated gardens, to family-run businesses. A difficulty in identifying conclusively the person with whom the relationships in terms of tourism provision and marketing was anticipated, as the remit of the person involved in operating the garden in terms of being a visitor attraction varied greatly. The resources and support also varied from one garden to another and it was

expected that this might impinge on the ability to co-operate, develop links and relationships.

2.15.3.5 Geographic proximity and scale

The geographical location of the gardens and their proximity to one another could impinge on their ability to develop and manage relationships and links. Gluckler (2007:4) surmised that the relationship between geography and networks could be theorised in at least two ways 1. *Proximity affects network formation* and 2. *Place makes a difference*. Geographical proximity was identified by Hall (1991) as an important factor in determining the level and frequency of interaction. Those who are geographically far apart may feel isolated, lack group identity and be less motivated to co-operate or network (Pyke 1994, in Huggins 1998). Hall (2004:174) terms this spatial separation, whereby physical distance may contribute to the increased communicative distance between firms and stakeholders. More recently technologies such as the use of email and teleconferencing can help to offset the isolation felt by some members of a group. Within a rural context, where network participants might not be located in proximity to each other (as in the case of many of the gardens), Murdoch (2000) surmised, that due to a lower density of population within rural areas, network relationships covered larger areas and therefore it required greater time and effort to maintain them. Dredge (2004) found that when evaluating policy networks and tourism in New South Wales (Australia) that the networks were affected by geographical fragmentation and this has led to impacts on collaboration and harmony. This could however, be due to issues linked to local identity. Geographic scale was also considered important in terms of sustainable development and, according to Selin (2000), is considered one of the dimensions required for a typology of tourism partnership. Hall (2004) argued that place mattered. He found that the role of place was significant for the development of networks and clusters in the food and wine tourism industries in New Zealand. However, geographical location alone did not necessarily lead to cluster development or activation in terms of interaction. Relationships needed to be established first, between those working together, and this was done by using a variety of communication tools.

Geographic location and identity in terms of networks may be linked. Kompulla (2000), in exploring a number of different tourism networks, found that small entrepreneurs found it difficult to identify themselves as part of a network on a regional scale, as they did not usually know the other members of the network. Kompulla suggested that commitment could be developed through more local and issue-based networks and therefore it can be

surmised that both geographical proximity and similarity of issues played a role in their knowledge of each other. Socialisation can also occur where there is collective learning at a local scale, indicating the need to be in proximity (Camagni 1993). Recently, the use of the internet/email helps to develop relationships through IT. Co-operative interaction within a network can work only if each of the providers knows who else is operating within the network. It is only then that a relationship management programme can be developed and implemented.

Geographical connection in tourism has also prompted the creation of tourism destinations, places where visitors base themselves. Clustering has been encouraged as an approach to both tourism development and marketing. An experience encompasses all the necessary elements of visitor provision. Certain attractions may act as a 'pull' around which other smaller facilities and services required by the visitor may be attracted. Destination development and management in tourism is a key component part of the industry, part of which is the creation of a dynamic required to develop links, relationships and networks contributing to a strong base on which to build the industry.

2.15.4 Co-operation and Relationships

2.15.4.1 Perception of co-operation

It was deemed important to identify what co-operation meant to those being interviewed. The participants were asked to define and use words that they associated with co-operation. In quantifying their thoughts, the three most considered important characteristics required for successful co-operative marketing were sought.

2.15.4.2 Level and type of involvement

As previously discussed, low involvement causes ineffective networking and co-operation (Gordon et al. 1998). The level (frequency, with whom) and type of (how) were ascertained. It was expected that the number of contacts would change from operator to operator. The intensity and nature of the contact may also strengthen or weaken ties. Contacts that were deemed important were ascertained, as was the method in which contact was undertaken.

2.15.4.3 Use of marketing communication tools and perceived effectiveness

Marketing communication tools disseminate knowledge throughout the organisation and throughout the network. It has been agreed previously that both access to information

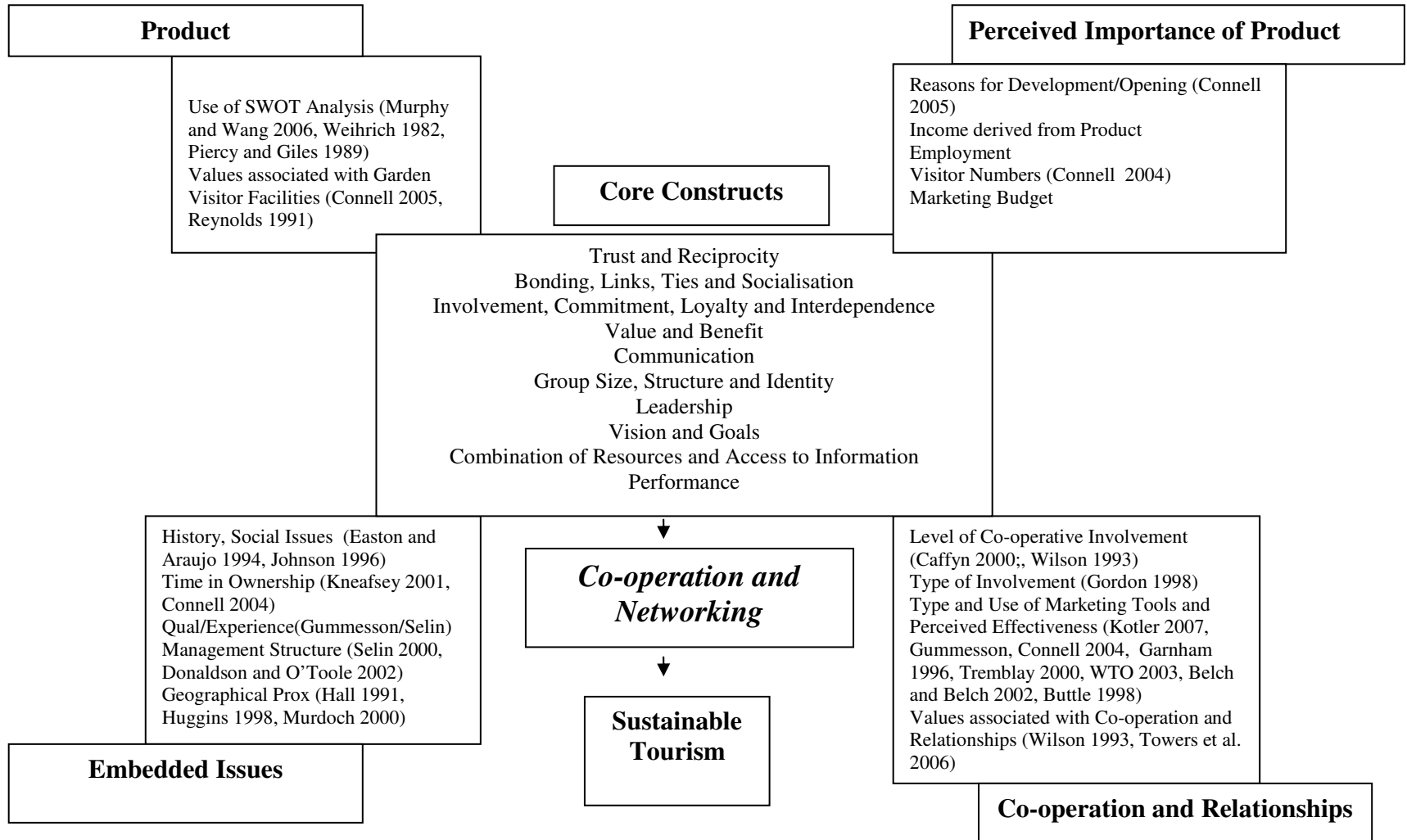
(Grabher 1993, Halme and Fadeva 2001, Hall 2004) and knowledge (Tzokas and Saran 2004) are essential to co-operation and to networking. Interaction in terms of both co-operation and relationship building has relied more recently on the use of information technology (for example database marketing, the use of relationship management software and data mining). It was considered prudent, due to the ages of both the product providers and the garden tourism market, that an exploration of the more traditional approaches to communication and marketing be considered as many of those operating within the sector are limited in both their access to and knowledge of IT. This was also prompted by such studies undertaken by Wood (2001, in Clarke 2004), in his examination of MIS in tourism SMEs, who found that trade associations were valued above the internet as sources of information.

2.15.4.4 *Monitoring performance and feedback*

Monitoring performance and ascertaining customer feedback to ensure the product is satisfactory are important to the provision of any product. This is discussed in section 2.13.2.6. The importance of this process was evaluated by the inclusion of a question on whether formal research was undertaken in terms of monitoring the performance of the product. Although the individual product provider and what they provide for the visitor is important in terms of the business, it is the customer or tourist who decides whether the product (in this case gardens) performs well, contributing to its viability. Visitor dissatisfaction leads to negative word of mouth. Monitoring the garden in terms of perceived visitor satisfaction was also sought. Performance in terms of group and relationships was also ascertained. A positive performance leads to greater satisfaction with the group and a greater propensity to continue involvement with either the relationship or the group.

Using the themes and the identified core constructs (Table 2.4), a conceptual framework was developed and is illustrated in Figure 2.7.

Figure 2.7 Conceptual Framework



2.16 Conclusion

Overall it is difficult to measure the input and output in relation to co-operative practices, and networks. In relation to tangible input, measurement can be considered in terms of time spent on a relationship and monetary allocation. However, intangible input such as effort and psychological commitment are more difficult to measure. In relation to output, economic benefit through an increase in visitors/bed nights, information transfer and revenue generation are the usual parameters. However there are other positive relationship outputs such as involvement, trust and commitment. These variables are dynamic and often depend on the success of achieving the more tangible benefits which often form the initial reason to co-operate.

There are many issues that affect the interactions that occur in the relationships developed with a variety of stakeholders in the garden tourism sector. The identified constructs of co-operation, relationship marketing and networking in this chapter gave direction to the question content of the semi-structured interviews. An insight into gardens, their formation and history and more recently operation as a tourism commodity contextualises the research.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter initially considers the philosophical basis for the choice of methodology used for this research. As at the outset there was no definitive hypothesis and the research explored social issues, a positivistic approach was deemed unsuitable. The use of a qualitative approach is justified in this chapter. The structure of the research process is discussed in detail and consideration is given to the choice of participants, methods of data collection and analysis employed.

3.2 The Process of Research

The process of research followed an adapted approach described by Malhotra and Birks (2003) and this is illustrated in Figure 3.1. The process, however, was not straightforward, as indicated on the diagram, as each of the stages were revisited on several occasions as information evolved. These stages are now discussed in more detail, justifying the choice of use and approach taken.

3.2.1 Stage 1: Problem Statement

The identification of the research problem occurred at the outset of the research process. It was primarily from engaging in the field with product marketing groups (PMG) that the research topic was germinated. The researcher had observed over the previous decade the development of a number of product and destination marketing groups, both in Ireland and abroad. Some of these have been more successful than others and there was a need to explore the factors that both contributed to, and detracted from the success of these groups.

During the 1990s, a paradigm shift was evident in the way marketing was perceived. This approach which considered not just the product and the market, but also the many other stakeholders and the relationships that were developed and maintained between these stakeholders became the research focus by numerous authors (e.g. Gronoos 1996, Gummesson 1999, Payne 1995). Carson et al. (2001) identified that there was a trend exploring relationships in marketing, and that it had attracted significant interest within the field.

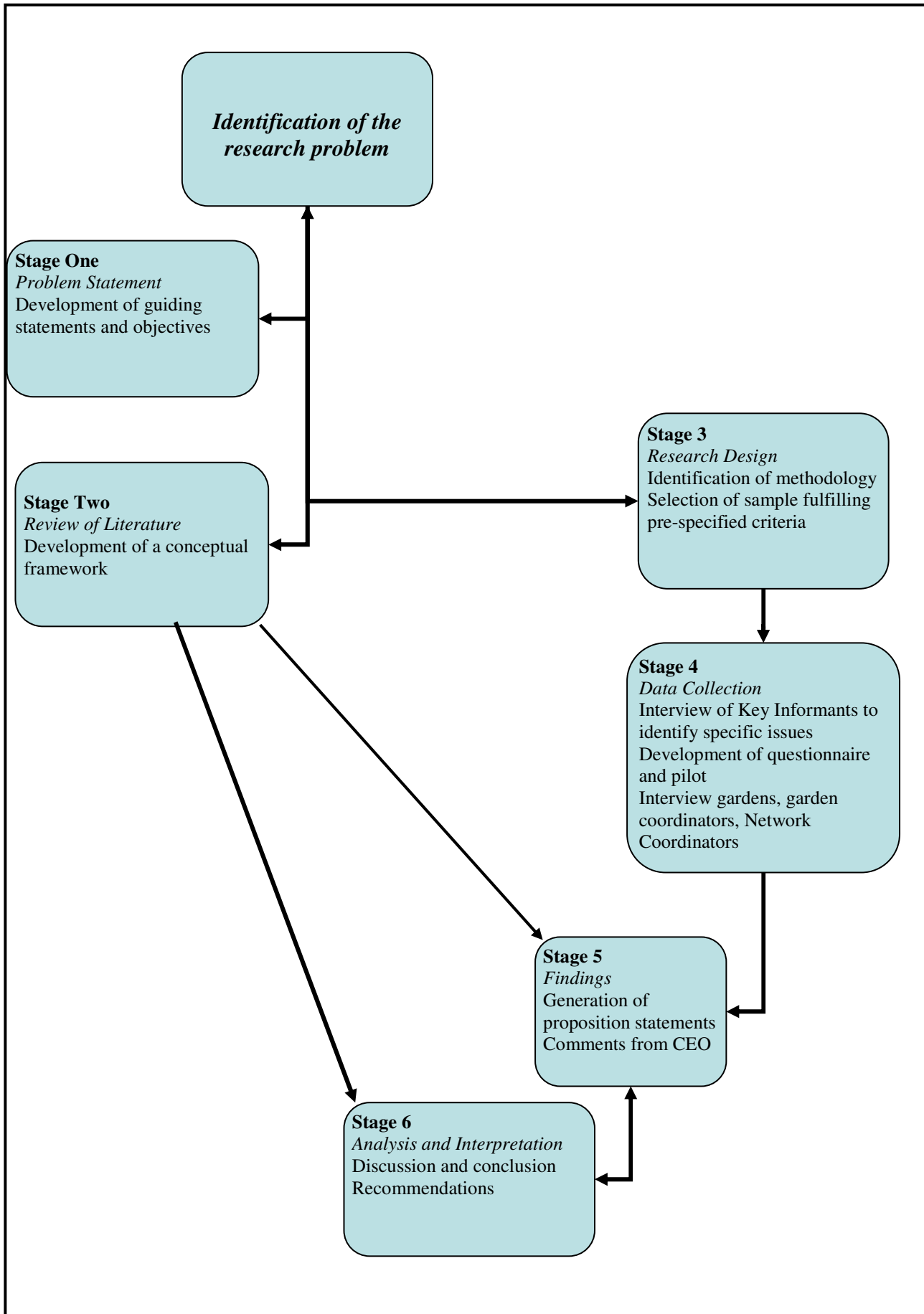


Figure 3.1 The Research Process

The research problem exploring intra- and inter-group relationships was developed particularly in light of the increased emphasis on relationship marketing, co-operation and the use of networking by providers within the tourism sector.

3.2.1.1 *Development of guiding statement and objectives*

Due to the qualitative nature of the research area of interest, the development of a guiding statement, and a set of objectives helped to keep the research focused. At this stage also, a rationale was developed which outlined the reasons for undertaking such research.

This guiding statement together with specific objectives were set out in the introductory chapter and are reiterated here.

‘to explore, and seek an understanding of co-operation, links and relationships that exist (or not) in a tourism product group in the garden tourism sector in Ireland’

A number of specific related objectives were developed and these are as follows:

1. Exploration of the relevant literature in the fields of tourism, garden tourism, marketing, tourism marketing, geography, organisational behaviour and social sciences, with a view to identification of the key constructs for developing relationships for co-operation, linkages and networking;
2. Evaluation of relationship marketing as a marketing tool for co-operation and networking;
3. Exploration of the type and extent of co-operation and relationships being undertaken by members of a product marketing group;
4. Exploration of the use of relationships and interaction as an approach to providing a tourism experience;
5. Examination of the marketing strategy and tactics used by members of the product marketing group and evaluation of these tools in relation to developing and maintaining relationships;
6. Consideration of the importance of value as a construct in developing co-operation and links;
7. Evaluation of the impact of location, experience, qualifications, history and other embedded issues on the development and maintenance of relationships;

8. Identification of the positive and negative characteristics associated with effective co-operation;
9. Assessment of whether or not the approaches used contribute to sustainable tourism provision.

During the course of this thesis, the researcher supervised a number of minor theses at both undergraduate and postgraduate level which considered different aspects of relationship marketing, networking, strategic alliances and networking (Appendix IV), and this work also input into the analysis and understanding of the relationships and links within the garden tourism sector. The research problem led the researcher through Stage 1 of the research process, and focused on an extensive search of secondary material which consisted of journals, books, web material and reports. The review of this material gave a contextual setting for the research and led to the development of a conceptual framework.

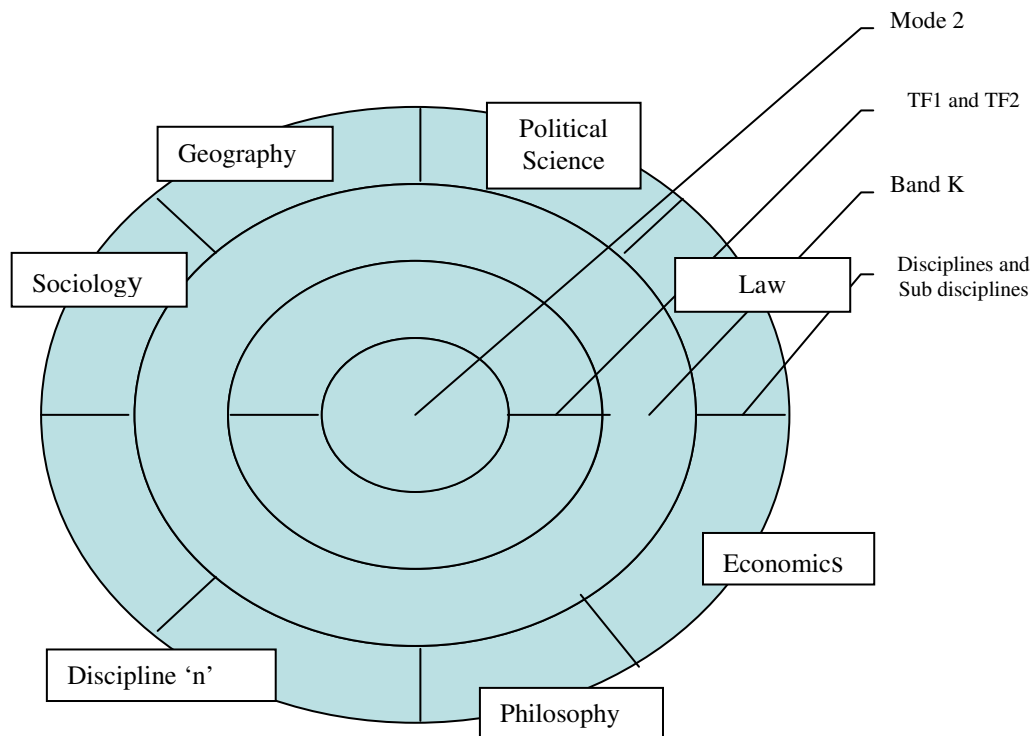
3.2.2 Stage 2: Review of Literature and Secondary Documentation

Both published and unpublished sources of secondary material collected for some purpose other than the problem at hand (Silverman 2000; Malhotra and Birks 2003) were used as sources of information for the research. Internet and web sources were also used extensively during the study. Geography is the conceptual foundation on which this research is based. Hall and Page (2006) describe extensively the role that tourism has played in geography over the past fifty year, and rationalise the inclusion of tourism into the discipline of geography. They quote Sant (1982:136), who views geography as [a discipline] that deals with human and physical landscapes. Tourism strives to be an area of significant importance, and in consideration of the increasing extent and impact of the industry, dedicated research is required to both explore and understand the complexities of supply and demand. The focus of this research was on co-operation, relationship development and networking in the context of supply.

The generation of sound theoretical concepts strengthen tourism as an area of academic study. Tourism derives its concepts from many disciplines and fields, and hence it was deemed appropriate to review a broad range of secondary literature from geography, business, economics, sociology, and tourism. Tribe (2004) argues that tourism is a field rather than a discipline, consisting of two fields: tourism business studies (TF1 in Figure 3.2) and all the other fields that contribute and impact on tourism (TF2). Mode 2 refers to the knowledge created from TF1 and TF2, which Tribe calls extradisciplinary, using the definition described by Gibbons (1994) as *'knowledge that emerges from a particularly*

context of application with its own distinct theoretical structures, research methods and modes of practice, but which may not be locatable on the prevailing disciplinary map' (Tribe 2004:21).

Figure 3.2 The Creation of Tourism Knowledge



Outer ring: disciplines and sub disciplines
 Band K: area in which tourism knowledge is created
 TFI: business related tourism
 TF2: non-business related tourism
 Mode 2: extra discipline knowledge

Source: Tribe (2004)

Tourism Knowledge is influenced and derived from a number of discipline areas (as indicated in figure 3.2 in the outer ring). This tourism knowledge is divided into business-related and non-business related tourism. This in turn creates extradiscipline knowledge. This knowledge is new and specifically applies to the tourism sector.

As the focus of the research was on gardens and their operation in the context of tourism supply, this provided the initial direction of literature review. Specific literature relating to gardens, garden visiting and the recognition of them as a tourism product has only recently been published (Connell 2004, 2005, Connell and Meyer 2004, Sharpley 2007). There is some material on the relationships that people have with gardens or other similar places, that is, place bonding and recreational places (Hammit et al. 2006, Brown and Raymond

2007) and gardens and post-modernism (Hewer 2003). Reference to co-operation, networking and relationship marketing is found in the literature of several disciplines such as management, marketing, tourism, geography and the social sciences. Other secondary material such as annual reports, industry newsletters and reports, strategy and policy documents, marketing materials and other research reports were utilised as additional resources. The literature review helped to contextualise the research problem and develop a conceptual framework of key constructs which helped to guide the process of theme and question formulation.

3.2.2.1 *Development of a conceptual framework*

The gestation of a conceptual framework occurred early on in the review of the literature. It was necessary to identify the elements that could play a role in the relationships and links that were being developed and maintained by the gardens. The framework was developed under four headings: embedded issues; perception of product; perceived importance of product; and co-operation, links and relationships converging towards the research statement. The constructs required for co-operation and variables that may impact on this process formed the central themes which were explored using the qualitative process of semi-structured interviews. The conceptual framework formed the basis from which the questions for the interviews were derived and gave a structured approach to both the analysis and discussion.

3.2.3 Stage 3: *Research Design and Choice of Methodology*

Both the literature and the guiding statement influenced the direction of the research design in Stage 3 of the process. The aim of the research which focused primarily on issues of a personal nature, for example assessing co-operation, links and relationships, as well as prior experience and involvement, impacted on the choice of methodology and analysis.

3.2.3.1 *Philosophy of the research: choice and justification for methodologies utilised*

The epistemology of the research was considered. Over the past thirty years much discussion has revolved around post-modernism and its impact on the way lives are lived. The *Tourist Gaze* (Urry 1990, 2002) discusses the role of the tourist in a post-modern society. According to Seale (1999), a post-modern world consists of multiple selves and endless fragmentation of experience and according to Fuat Firat and Schultz (1997), fragmented images, which are rarely linked, impact on everyday lives. This sense of confusion impacts on the way people provide and consume. Brown (1997:176), in his

introduction to marketing science in a post-modern world, identifies twenty different schools of post-modern marketing and illustrates the extent to which this philosophy has impacted on the discipline of marketing. Post-modernism is conceptualised by the use of signs and symbols, rather than objectives or real representations (Tomasevic 2007). In researching garden tourism, both the Garden Owners/Managers and consumer of gardens (tourists) seek attractions that they can provide and to which they can relate. The use of a methodology that embraces post-modernism and the complexities associated with supply and demand in tourism is required in order to achieve the depth required. Other methodologies were considered. In researching gardens, Doolittle (2004:402) argues that while there has, and is a need to analyse relationships among components in a positivistic manner, and that a scientific approach may provide more knowledge, it may not provide more understanding or insight. Previous knowledge of the sector and advice from a number of experts in the area eliminated the use of postal or telephone questionnaires as it was considered that non-response could be an issue. Telephone interviews for such a lengthy interview was considered unsuitable. An active and labour-intensive approach towards genuinely self-critical research is required in order that something of value and of an original nature is created. Active involvement of physically interviewing in the garden allowed both comfort of familiar surroundings, and the opportunity to suggest/relate information back to the garden and the experience it offered to the visitor. The choice of qualitative methodologies was based on the complexity and personal nature of the area under exploration. A visit to the garden, the procurement and examination of literature and other information relating to the garden together with the semi-structured interview, yielded a significant amount of information which was continually analysed and is described in subsequent chapters.

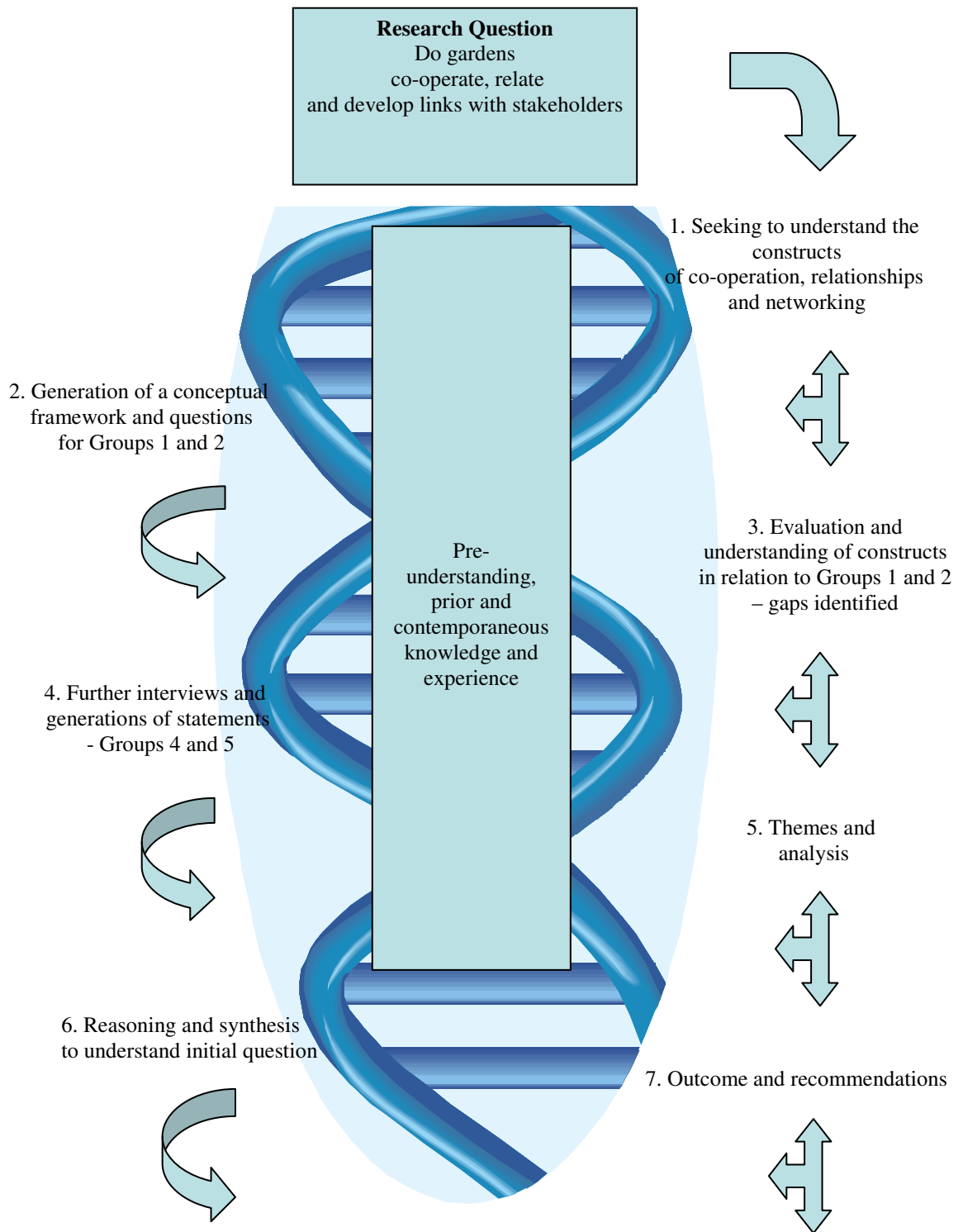
Husserl (1859-1938) and Heidegger (1889-1976) are considered the first thinkers on phenomenology and influence on methodologies. This approach, which integrated Kantian philosophy and a traditional ontology, was developed in Heidegger's book '*Being and Time*'. The core of this philosophy is based on *Dasein* or existence of the being. It was acknowledged that the issues of prior knowledge of gardens, tourism and co-operative groups, as well as the subject being explored, would have an impact on the process of the research. Involvement and pre-understanding influenced the philosophy that guided the choice of methodology. Heidegger claimed that pre-understanding and mode of access impacted on the answer to the question that is asked. Therefore, it is suggested '*that we carry out a reflection on what we ourselves understand about the situation under research*' (Moran 2000:236) and this was considered wholly appropriate for the research question.

According to Blattner (2006:94), Heidegger's perception of interpretation is influenced by *'our ability to grasp the world in such a way that we can characterise it descriptively derivative of our engaged abilities, our skills and capabilities'*.

A phenomenological approach focusing on interpretivism (hermeneutic) was used as a framework by the researcher in an attempt to explore and understand the research objective. Interpretivism is a method of phenomenology that considers the sense of self-identity and embodied relations with others. The two main paradigms, positivist and phenomenological, guide research methodologies and represent extremes on a continuum of core ontological assumptions (Morgan and Smircisch 1980, in Hussey and Hussey 1997). A positivist approach is objective and provides reality as a concrete structure. A phenomenological approach is subjective and is concerned with meaning rather than measurement. The phenomenological researcher aims to provide a rich textured description of lived experience and focus on the intentionality of the participant of the meanings of what they do and their experiences (Finlay 2008). The researcher tends to be personally involved with the process (as was the case with this research) and data emerges during the course of the research. Hermeneutics, which guides this philosophy, presumes that researcher involvement, personal values and experience cannot be separated from the interpretation of the research findings. The hermeneutic spiral can help to ensure depth of interpretation and is illustrated in Figure 3.3. The spiral approach indicates that a conclusive answer can never be drawn from findings as experiences and understandings change as the researcher goes through the process of interpretation.

The word hermeneutics is derived from the Greek *'to interpret'*. Interpretation in hermeneutics involves the ability to try to and understand the intentions of another person. It is also sensitive to the multi-layered realities of meanings and therefore seeks to understand the meaning behind the words. The interpretivistic approach *'allows the focus of the research to be on the understanding of what is happening in a given context'* (Carson et al. 2001:5) and therefore is more context directed (Odman 1985:2162). This given context, in the case of the chosen research, was the *'the use of co-operation, links and relationships by those involved in provision of an attraction in the garden tourism advances and achieves the outcomes of increasing business'*. This influenced the choice of location for each of the interviews. The offer to meet in the garden or place of work, surrounded by that which was being shared with visitors or other gardeners, contextualised the interview and what was being said by the participant.

Figure 3.3 An Adapted Hermeneutic Spiral for this Research



Source: Author for purpose of research

In the interviews with the Gardens Owners/Managers, the place of interview ranged from the kitchen to the living-room, to the garden itself or the tea-rooms. Only two of these

interviews were held outside the garden attraction and this was at the request of the participant.

The interpretivistic approach according to Carson et al. (2001) takes into account '*multiple realities; different actors*' perspectives and the researcher's involvement in the process of the research. According to Creswell (1994 in Hussey and Hussey 1997:48), the phenomenological paradigm, in rhetorical terms uses the '*personal voice*' and the '*researcher interacts with that being researched*'. It also takes into account the contexts of the phenomena under study and the contextual understanding and interpretation of the data.

3.2.3.2 Principles of qualitative research

In the use of a qualitative approach, four basic principles need to be observed (Carson et al. 2001): links to literature need to be explicit; there needs to be a methodology; there needs to be good description of the process; and the identified methodology needs to be both reliable and transparent with ethical issues considered.

Access to substantive information is always an issue in research. Through the course of the research, theory building was evident. Most researchers use a combination of inductive and deductive logic (Judd et al.1991). Primarily the research was inductive. However, analysis did rely on an element of deductivity as it utilised a conceptual framework that was deduced from existing theory and literature. Existing literature and theory were also used to interpret and analyse the findings. Although a seminal question based on experiential evidence and prior involvement had been gestated, each stage and each individual interview contributed to further investigation of the secondary research theory. The target population chosen were members of product-marketing groups in the garden tourism sector, each having a different though related tourism product: a garden open to visitors. Each garden was a separate entity, a business with costs and income.

Methods used for the collection of data included documentation; archival records; interviews; direct observations; participant observation; and physical artefacts. Most of these methods were used in the current research, though the main focus for the collection of information relied on the interview process. However, interviews should always be considered verbal reports only. As such, they are subject to common problems such as bias, poor recall and inaccurate articulation (Yin 1994). There is a delicate balance between putting the participant at ease by developing a relationship with them and biasing the interview. Denzin and Lincoln (2000:633) argue that '*the interview is a negotiated text, a site where power, gender, race and class intersect*'. It is important that these, as

well as other personal characteristics of the interviewer, were considered, as they have an impact on the propensity of the participant to agree to be interviewed and on the information that is delivered. Documentation on each garden, direct observation during the visits to the gardens and physical artefacts (the gardens themselves as the tourism product) also contributed to the process associated with this research and helped the researcher to build a picture of each participant and garden. The use of triangulation (in this case observation) helped with the accuracy of the interview by increasing sensitivity to the variable relationship between an account and the reality to which it infers (Seale 1999). Triangulation helps to limit personal and methodological biases and enhances the study's trustworthiness (Decrop 2000:163). Interdisciplinary triangulation, which allows for richer interpretation, takes investigations, methods and theories from different disciplines and is especially relevant to tourism research due to the multidisciplinary nature of tourism.

3.2.3.3 *The issue of involvement in the empirical work*

As mentioned previously, the researcher had significant involvement with a number of the participants prior to the research being undertaken. This previous experience with the garden-tourism sector played a significant role in the choice of methodology utilised and also in the understanding of the issues being explored. Prior knowledge had indicated that there might be difficulties in accessing some of the participants and also in encouraging them to talk. Indeed, some of the participants were quite private about their gardens (although they were open to the public) and did not appear to engage hugely with either the local or national support structures in place at the time.

Procedures should always be undertaken to eliminate influence from the individual researcher. Links and relationships should be made explicit to the reader as to what the personal perspective is, so that readers can make up their own minds about the situation (Seale 1999:24). The relationship between the reality and the researcher had to be considered in the choice of methodology. In the research undertaken, there was also a historical linkage between researcher and the subject matter which led to a degree of both knowledge and involvement. The researcher had worked in the National Botanic Gardens for seven years in the mid-to-late 1980s and had been involved in a national organisation (Secretary of the Irish Garden Plant Society) which included a number of the gardens. The researcher subsequently worked in tourism marketing in a regional capacity with Fáilte Ireland and had sat as a regional representative on the national committee of the PMG – Gardens of Ireland in the early 1990s. Gardens of Ireland was a precursor to Houses, Castles and Gardens PMG. Therefore, both access and historical knowledge had a bearing

on the use and implementation of the methodology. This also contributed to the pre-understanding of the subject area, the gardens and botanical terms, and to the working paradigm which Gummesson (2000) argues can have a positive effect on the research. In the case of the Key Informants, the researcher had worked with each of them in the past and this relationship proved of great use in obtaining a depth of information that might not have been available to someone less familiar. These Key Informants had been involved with tourism and gardens for the past 20 years and had combined experience in the sectors of over sixty years. According to Seale (1999:54), observation and the recording of data can themselves never be wholly free from the values, assumptions and the theoretical perspectives of the researcher. There is argument as to whether trust, which is an essential component of the interview process, may be more likely where the researcher and the researched share similar experiences (Seale 1999). Therefore, where considered suitable, general introductory comments were about familiar and shared issues relating to gardens and tourism. However, in some cases, people may find it easier to share information with strangers and this also needs to be considered.

3.2.3.4 *Interview sample and justification for choice*

Sampling for interview of the gardens was undertaken in a purposive manner which is common in the use of qualitative methodologies. The criterion was that the participant had to be, or have been, a member of a garden tourism marketing co-operative. The membership of a national tourism marketing co-operative ensured that links existed at least at a level that was recognised by the tourist board as provision of an attraction of a particular standard and quality. A pilot interview was undertaken with a garden owner which was not a member of the national marketing co-operative, but was a member of regional and local marketing co-operatives and had extensive knowledge and experience in tourism and marketing. The choice to focus on those who were members of a national co-operative structure allowed membership of at least one stratum of co-operation and possibly other strata, such as local, regional and county co-operative groups. In Ireland, Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland was the main primary target group as the members own or manage a garden which is considered a tourist attraction and the group, which is supported by Fáilte Ireland, represented a good geographical spread (Figure 3.4) of gardens in Ireland. It was considered the most pragmatic way to access such gardens and previous experience with the group helped the researcher to gain access. Each member pays an annual fee to employ a part-time co-ordinator who markets and promotes the gardens on their behalf. On commencement of the primary research, gardens in Ireland which had

been members of the Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland co-operative marketing group during the period 2000-2005 were asked to participate. Over this period, annually an average 40-50 gardens signed up as members of this group. During the research, two Garden Owners/managers, one public and one private as well as a Garden Group Coordinator from outside Ireland were interviewed. These were used as a reference cases in order to highlight any anomalies, and are profiled in Appendix X.. .

There were a number of reasons for undertaking purposive sampling. A marketing group had to be accessed that had been in existence for a number of years in order that relationships had had an opportunity to develop over a period of time. Both groups were in place and had been for some time. Due to the interview length and depth of subject nature, it was important that the members could relate to the interviewer and therefore previous experience and knowledge was used to gain access to members of the group in Ireland.

Garden types varied from state-owned businesses to managed, privately-owned organisations to being family owned. Each required different levels of privacy and confidentiality about the information that was being sought. The interviews (except for two) took place in each garden or associated house. If the participant was the manager of the garden (an employee), the place of interview was their workplace. If the participant was the owner, it was their home and this required consideration when administering the interview and its impact at the analytical stages of the research.

Over the period of the research, thirty-nine garden owners in Ireland were contacted and asked to participate. One garden in Ireland agreed to be a pilot case study at the initial stage. Twenty-eight garden owners agreed to be interviewed in Ireland (71%), and 11 declined for a variety of reasons. The total number of gardens represented by these interviews was 31 as some managers were responsible for several gardens.

In 2009, the HCGI website is divided into three separate areas; Irish gardens, historic houses and castles and attractions. Only twenty-two gardens are listed on the website and 17 of these were interviewed for the research. Another five gardens that were interviewed are listed under the historic houses and castles.

During the course of the interviews with the Garden Owners/Managers, a number of other garden marketing groups (local, regional and national) were mentioned by the participants and, in order to get a deep understanding of their structure and views on garden tourism and co-operation and their influences, it was considered pertinent that a number of these

other groups that marketed gardens should be interviewed using similarly theme-based questions. In the early 2000s, the Office of Public Works withdrew from the Houses, Castles and Gardens group and created its own co-operative marketing groups. Although each garden had a small budget with which to market, the main marketing decisions and tactics are made and implemented by the Head Office in Dublin; there is little autonomy on the ground and *'matters relating to the historic properties are managed centrally'* (www.opw.ie/en/Heritage/HistoricProperties). They are a very important part of the gardens tourism product in Ireland and although the individual garden managers were not interviewed, an interview was sought with the marketing officer of the co-operative group responsible for their marketing. Towards the latter stages of the research, a new initiative which focused on the development of vertical networks was mooted by Fáilte Ireland, and although it was not garden specific, it did focus on developing and managing links and relationships amongst tourism suppliers. It was therefore considered essential to interview Network Coordinators for their views on co-operation and networking to bring the research up to date. Interviews with two coordinators were undertaken: one managing a large network and another representing a small network. An interview with a manager of a tourism product group was the final interview undertaken, though this was primarily discursive as it required commentary and feedback on a number of statements that had been generated from preceding findings.

A total of 39 interviews were conducted over the course of the research. The duration of these interviews varied, ranging from 45 minutes to 3.5 hours.

The interviews were divided into the following groups:

Table 3.1 Categorisation of Interviews Undertaken

Group No.	Description	No. of interviews	Gardens/businesses represented in total
1	Key Informants	3	Managers and advised within the garden tourism sector
2	Garden Owners/Managers	28	31 gardens
3	Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators	5	112 gardens 152 other heritage attractions
4	Network Coordinators	2	462 businesses (some of which are gardens)
5	Manager Tourism Product Group	1	135 businesses (some of which are gardens)

3.2.3.4.1 Key Informants

This group consisted of three Key Informant interview whose experience and knowledge with gardens in Ireland gave an insight into its growth as a tourism product in Ireland over the past 20 years and identified issues of note relating to co-operation. The main objective of these interviews was to explore the commoditisation of the garden as a tourism product - one that becomes an attraction, a space and place that attracts fee paying visitors - and to seek to understand levels of co-operation within the sector. They also sought to identify key questions and issues that were considered pertinent to exploring such a group and their endeavours to attract visitors to their respective properties (Appendix V). The main emphasis of each interview was to enquire as to the knowledge of each Key Informant, from their roles in a support and advisory capacity, as to whether gardens work together with the different stakeholders and to understand the level of co-operation and relationships that were built by them. Each of the interviews took place in a location chosen by the participant. They were not recorded as one participant from this group in particular specified that the interview should not be recorded. However, this did ensure maximum confidentiality and openness in relation to the subject. Each of the participants brought something different to their respective interviews in light of their extensive experience with the gardens and helped to identify issues that were used as a basis for subsequent interviews. Although their backgrounds and knowledge differed, all three participants had significant experience in the garden tourism sector and in their endeavours to develop and market a sustainable tourism product.

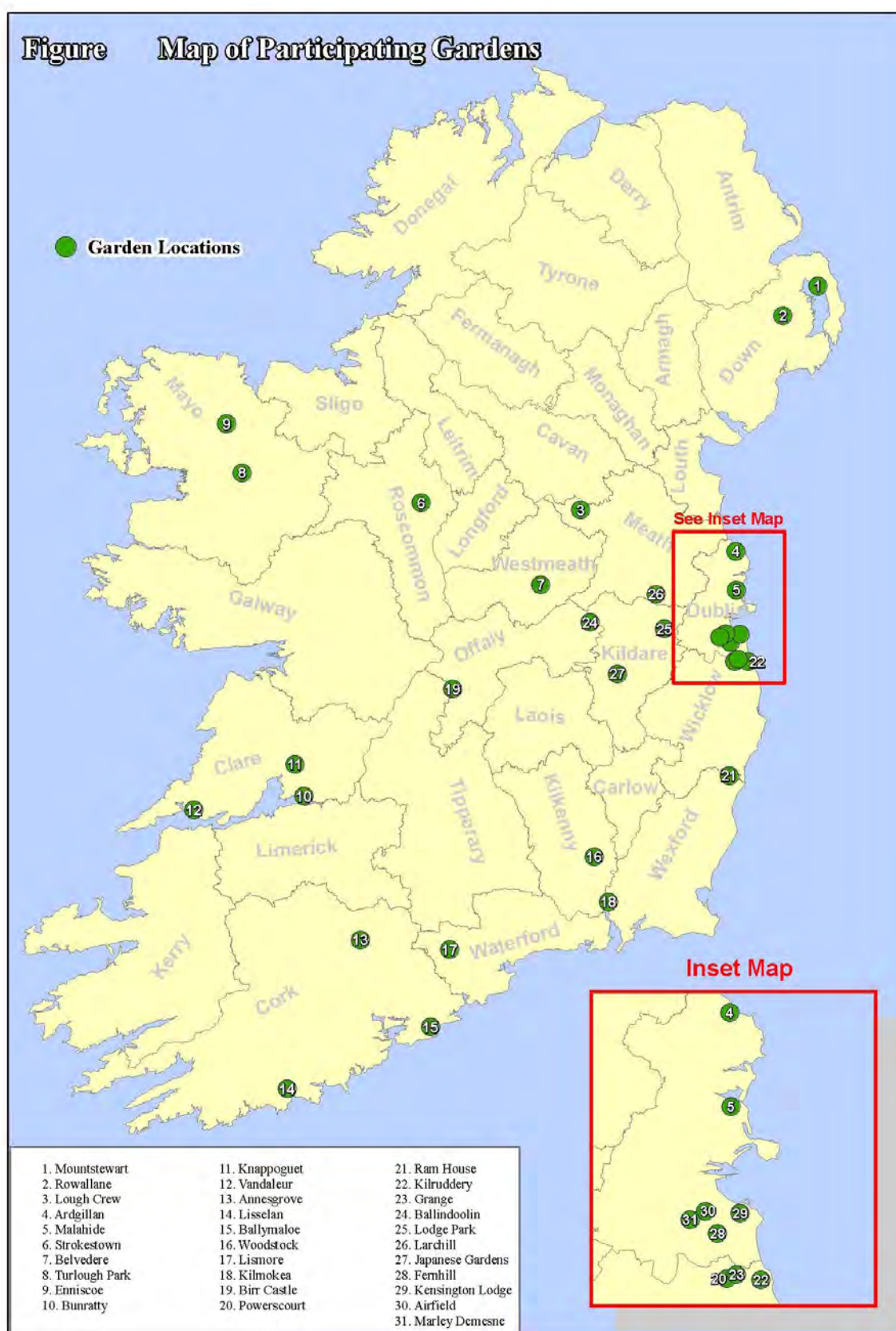
3.2.3.4.2 Garden Owners/Managers

Garden Owners/Managers consisted of those who either owned, and/or who managed a garden. Twenty-eight of these interviews were undertaken. Some of those interviewed had more involvement with the garden than others, though the initial request for interview was with the person who was involved with, and interacted with, the Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland. Some of the managers were responsible for more than one garden and therefore gardens represented by these interviews numbered 31 in total.gives a brief profile of each garden and Figure 3.4 shows their geographical distribution. More extensive description of the gardens can be read in Appendix II. The information emanating from the key participant interviews and the concepts derived from the secondary literature formed the basis for the questions posed. It was considered prudent, however, to undertake a 'test interview' to explore whether there were any comprehension issues in relation to the questions and also to address issues of question clarity and flow.

Table 3.2 Participating Gardens

	Garden	Ownership FPV (Family/private) PB(public/charity)
1.	Airfield, County Dublin	PB
2.	Annesgrove, County Cork	FPV
3.	Ballymaloe, County Cork	FPV
4.	Ballindoolin, County Offaly	FPV
5.	Belvedere House and Garden, County Westmeath	PB
6.	Birr Castle and Gardens, County Offaly	FPV
7.	Bunratty Castle Gardens/Knappogue Castle Gardens, County Clare	PB
8.	Enniscoie House and Garden, County Mayo	FPV
9.	Fernhill, County Dublin	FPV
10.	Grange, County Offaly	PB
11.	Japanese Gardens, County Kildare	PB
12.	Kensington Lodge, County Dublin	FPV
13.	Kilmokea House and Gardens, County Wexford	FPV
14.	Kilruddery, County Wicklow	FPV
15.	Larchill Arcadian Gardens, County Meath/Kildare	FPV
16.	Lismore Castle Gardens, County Waterford	FPV
17.	Lisselan Gardens, County Cork	FPV
18.	Lodge Park, County Kildare	FPV
19.	Lough Crew Gardens, County Meath	FPV
20.	Marley Demense, County Dublin	PB
21.	Powerscourt Gardens, County Wicklow	FPV
22.	Ram House, County Wicklow	FPV
23.	Rowallane Gardens/Mount Stewart Gardens, County Down	PB
24.	Strokestown House and Gardens, County Roscommon	FPV
25.	Talbot Gardens, Malahide/Ardgillan Gardens, County Dublin	PB
26.	Turlough House, County Mayo	PB
27.	Vandaleur Gardens, County Clare	PB
28.	Woodstock Gardens, County Kilkenny	PB

Figure 3.4 Map of Participating Gardens



The ‘test subject’ was the owner of a garden and other ancillary facilities who has great interest and knowledge of plants and gardens and has the innate ability to promote himself and his product. The garden was not a member of the HCGI group although it was a member of a number of other co-operative tourism and marketing bodies. Of great importance was the fact that this individual spoke directly and frankly and the researcher knew him well, thus ensuring good feedback.

Questions were developed along the themes that were being explored. The questionnaire used a mixed methodology and consisted of both open and less structured questions and closed questions to ensure the maximum amount of information was obtained. The main theme of co-operation and relationship development was incorporated into the middle of the interview with profile, history and SWOT analysis addressed initially, which aided dialogue flow between the interviewer and participant (Appendix VI).

The Garden Owners/Managers interviews were not recorded as the interviewer wished to maximise confidentiality and it was felt that the nature of the topic under exploration (co-operation and relationships) might be considered sensitive by some.

3.2.3.4.3 Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators

This group consisted of coordinators of gardens and heritage co-operative tourism marketing groups. Each group had as an objective to market and promote gardens to tourism visitors as well as in some cases to develop the product within the group itself.

Table 3.3 profiles Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators.

Table 3.3 Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators

Type of group	Status of group
Statutory body with remit of both gardens and other heritage attractions	Irish national
Charity body with remit for gardens and other heritage	Northern Ireland and UK
Commercial marketing business with gardens and other heritage	Irish national
Voluntary group with gardens as the only focus	Irish county and local based
Publicly funded with gardens as the only focus	Irish county and local based

The group consisted of five coordinators of tourism co-operative marketing groups which were garden specific or had gardens as members of a more diverse tourism group. As in some cases these groups had a wide-ranging membership, the questions were changed to

suit the participants and their responsibilities and objectives, though the core questions relating to co-operation and relationships remained the same. It was expected that all five of the participants could speak to some degree about gardens as a visitor attraction, as gardens were part of their remit. These six interviews represented 112 gardens and 152 other products which are mainly in the heritage and culture sphere.

The perception of the garden as a tourist attraction varied with each group. Gardens are considered as a heritage resource by the statutory body, however the emphasis by another group is more botanical or horticultural. The questionnaire was adapted to suit each particular group, though the general emphasis of each question was the same as those administered to the Garden Owners/Managers, and while numbers of visitors to gardens could not be asked, a generic profile of visitors to gardens was sought. The core emphasis of the questionnaire was on co-operation, links and relationships. The information emanating from these participants gave insight into the operation of these co-operative structures, perceptions of the gardens as a tourism product and the process of co-operation and working together was evaluated.

3.2.3.4.4 Network Coordinators

Interviews were held with two Network Coordinators who operated on a geographical basis as part of the Fáilte Ireland Tourism Learning Network (TLN) initiative. Though gardens were part of their network, the overall organisation of these networks was delineated by geography rather than by product. Their members originated from a tourism destination area comprising of myriad of products and services that make up the tourism experience.

Table 3.4 Network Coordinators

Type of group	Status of group
Two EU funded non-garden specific networks	Regional and local based

The reason for their inclusion was that during the course of the research, Fáilte Ireland initiated the Tourism Learning Networks (www.tourismlearningnetworks.ie). In 2006, instead of focusing on developing co-operation between similar products, the emphasis was directed more at the destination and potential co-operation and networking between vertical tourism suppliers. Dedicated and experienced support teams were involved in such activities as mentoring and creating a dynamic at local and regional level. Initially, seven geographic areas were identified covering the whole country and these were

managed by seven organisations. Subsequently, during the second phase (December 2008), Ireland was divided into two distinct network areas (South and North/West/Midlands) and two organisations have been given responsibility of bringing tourism businesses together. In this present phase (starting December 2008), horizontal networking or themed networks have emerged in the different areas. Two coordinators from Phase 1 (2006-2008) were interviewed: one of whom worked with a large number of businesses from an area with a long history of tourism; the other from an area which was smaller in size and new to tourism. Aspects of co-operation, links developed and relationships were the emphasis of the questions posed and the questions related both to the generalities of tourism as well as to the garden tourism product.

3.2.3.4.5 CEO/Manager Tourism Product Group

The final participant was the chief executive officer (CEO) of a product-focused destination which concentrates on both product development and marketing and has over twenty years experience in the tourism industry. The use of co-operative practices and networking are core to their approach in operating within the tourism sector. Towards the latter stages of the research, the participant was allocated the task of developing one of the tourism networks in a large part of Ireland as part of the Fáilte Ireland networks.

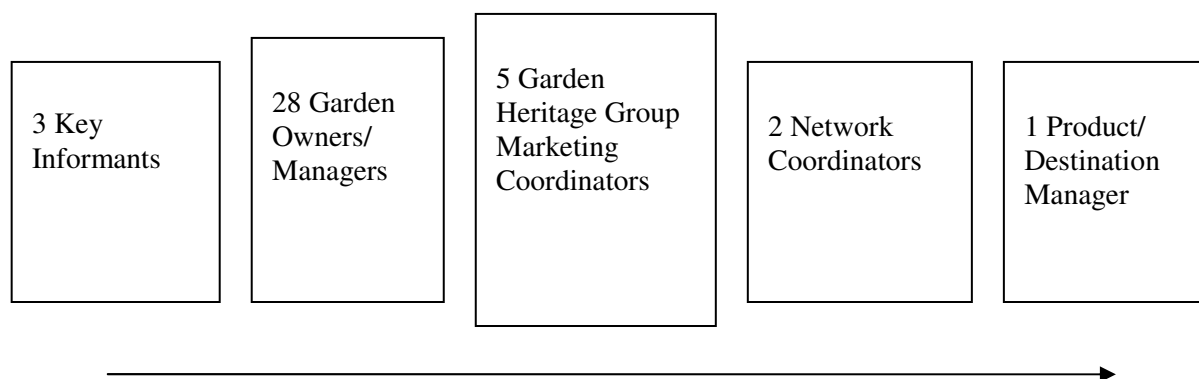
Table 3.5 Manager Tourism Product Group Participant

Type of group	Status of group
A manager of a product specific group	Product and destination (regional) specific

The final participant was used to discuss a number of the issues emerging from the preceding research. After interviewing the first four groups, a series of statements based on the findings were developed. These statements were discussed using a consultative process with the final participant and comments are included in the findings chapters. This approach aided the reflective process which was required towards the latter stages of the work.

The emergent nature of the research is evident from the order in which the interviews were undertaken and is illustrated in Figure 3.5. The essence of the research was on co-operation and relationships in garden tourism and therefore the main focus was the garden interviews, with the other interviews acting as a support to give better insight into garden tourism. This provided a more holistic approach to understanding the research objectives in Chapter 1.

Figure 3.5 Order of Interviews



Over the duration of the research for this thesis a number of projects relating to the research area of relationships, networking and co-operation were undertaken. These, particularly ParNet project (Appendix III) and the evaluation of networks undertaken for the Tourism Research Centre, DIT, proved useful in both contacts made and information. A number of interviews were undertaken, primarily with those involved in a co-operative/networking situation and they gave an insight into the process in other industries. These interviews had an impact on the research and, where this is the case, are referred to in the discussion chapter.

3.2.4 Stage 4: Data Collection

During Stage 4, the methodology was implemented. As mentioned in Stage 3, the methodological tool used primarily was that of semi-structured interview. As the gardens were the focus of the research, the interview questions revolved around the issues under consideration and interviews of the Key Informants, the Garden /Heritage Group Coordinators and the Network Coordinators included questions adapted to suit their particular product or situation.

3.2.4.1 Development of the questions

The questions that were developed for the administration of the interviews were based on the conceptual framework (Fig. 2.7) and followed its structure, grouping questions under different themes. The research statement, research objectives and relevant literature informed the format and the wording of the questionnaire. The completed semi-structured questionnaire used a mixed methodology (a mix of open and closed questions), and was administered individually to the Garden Owners/Managers. It consisted of fifty questions and included a number of sub-questions. Interviews took between 45 minutes and 3.5 hours to complete. The use of Likert scaling in some of the closed questions gave

direction to the answers and helped to elicit the information required from the participants. Quantification was required in relation to certain responses and numbers were sought in the case of visitors, financial budgets for marketing and similar. This is considered by Bryman (1988) as an accepted practice in qualitative research and contributed to the mixed methodological approach.

Prompts and aids were used during the interviewing with the main aid being an adapted diagram of the Six Market Model (Peck et al. 1999) (see Appendix VII). This was used to help participants identify the contacts and relationships they had in marketing the garden. These problems were overcome by the use of the Six Market Model which eased participant discourse. This model was adopted as it is one of the most commonly used models, it is easy to understand and it has been successfully employed in over 50 organisations (Gummesson 1999). The inclusion of visual aids and prompts (Appendix VII) were used as a result of experiential evidence in relation to the lack of conscious knowledge garden owners had in this area and this was also apparent from the test interview.

The areas explored within the interviews included the following:

1. The product: product description, the perception of the product using SWOT analysis, visitor facilities, value;
2. Perceived importance of product: visitor numbers, revenue, employment, satisfaction, reason for opening, allocation of marketing budget;
3. Embedded issues such as history, ownership of the garden, occupation and experience, geographical location and proximity;
4. The exploration of co-operation and relationships which considered definitions, identification of essential characteristics for success, barriers to success, membership, views on co-operation and relationships, communication, usage and effectiveness of marketing tools, the use of monitoring, auditing and market research.

The interviews initially sought classified information and this included information on qualifications and experience, time in ownership or in the position and role within the garden.

Many people like to talk about themselves and about what they know and it can help to create conversation flow. It was on this premise that questions relating to the history,

development and organisational structure of the garden were sought at the initial stages of the interview. Questions about the location and proximity to Dublin and other access points were asked in order to assess the geographical perception of the garden, whether rural or Dublin/urban centric. The creator of the garden, information on soil type, size of garden, dominant plant and habitat types etc. were also sought. Organisation and management of the garden sought to identify the economic impact of the garden including employee numbers, incomes, other business and facilities and management structure. It was assumed that the answers to these questions would indicate the depth of knowledge and involvement with the garden. The perception of the garden as a business was asked using two questions: one asked whether it was associated with any other business; and another asked for ancillary facilities using a prompt/suggested, list if required.

A more generic approach was then used to discuss the participant's knowledge of gardens and garden tourism. They were asked to define the concept of an Irish (or Welsh) garden in order to contextualise their subsequent answers. The use of SWOT and a view on future developments of the garden tourism sector helped to give information which could be used to undertake a TOWS matrix and input into understanding whether a vision for the garden existed.

The marketing section of the semi-structured interview considered the allocation of budgets which indicated the importance of the garden to the owner/manager, and participants were asked to identify the different marketing tools used and their perceived effectiveness. Being a member of a co-operative group was included as one of these tools. Comments on the type of marketing they thought should be undertaken were also sought.

In order to get the participant to focus on aspects of co-operation, links and relationships in greater detail, a number of questions sought to define co-operation and the essential characteristics for successful co-operation. This helped to build a picture of the individual perception of the co-operative process. Thoughts on the different levels of co-operative marketing groups were sought. As direct questioning in relation to the different bodies involved in co-operative marketing would create a biased scenario, comments were sought on the different generic levels of co-operative marketing - national, regional, county and local groups - rather than specifically naming any particular group.

If there was no potential visitor interest in the garden, there would be no reason or benefit in opening the place. Information was requested on the visitor, the numbers, market breakdown and the values they sought in terms of the garden and the co-operative

marketing group. The value of the group was explored. This was explored in two ways: what was the perceived value of the group to the members and what is the perceived value of the group to the visitors. This was undertaken to evaluate whether the cost and effort of membership was worth the benefits of belonging to the group, that is, awareness generation, additional visitors, joint marketing initiatives and were these values or benefits evident. Suggestions as to how to increase numbers to the garden were also sought. In terms of performance, participants were asked about auditing and monitoring as well as whether any type of market research was undertaken.

In conclusion to the interview, comments and suggestions were asked for and any outstanding points were clarified by the interviewer

The questions were adapted according to the group being interviewed. The Key Informants, for example, were not asked about the marketing budgets for the garden or about additional facilities. The Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators were not asked specifically about numbers of visitors to the gardens and the Network Coordinators were not asked to define an Irish garden. The objective of the interviews was to create a dialogue where the participants would discuss their approach to co-operation and identify the links they had developed (or had not) through the co-operative process

3.2.4.2 Description of the interview process

Holstein and Gubium (1995) noted that the focus has been on the 'what' of the interview and the substantive findings, rather than on the 'how' of the interview, which considers the contexts, particular situations, nuances, manners and people involved. They suggested that this 'how' in the process of interviewing required further attention. With this in mind, interviewing guidelines were developed. These included the regular taking of notes both before and after the interview, note taking during the interview was as inconspicuous as possible, notes were analysed on a frequent basis and post-interview thoughts were also recorded in many cases.

The method of a semi-structured interview was used to elicit the information as the semi-structured nature can be used as a resource to reflect the participant's reality outside the interview (Seale 1999). According to Judd et al. (1991), semi-structured interviews are used to obtain a more intrinsic study of people's perception and attitude towards something. They can be used to find out the fundamental issues (as in the case of the Key Informant interviews), how people conceptualise a topic (the gardens) and their level of understanding in relation to the subject under consideration (co-operation and

relationships). The justification for taking the approach of using interviews was endorsed in May 2004 when a proposal was sought from the researcher by Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland for commercial market research work to be undertaken in relation to visitor numbers and profile. A proposal which, due to time and financial constraints, focused on a questionnaire survey method of collecting data was rejected by the group. Feedback from the committee of the PMG indicated that this survey method would not be suitable for their members as '*they did not fill out questionnaires*'. This response to the use of questionnaires justified the use of face-to-face interviews as the only way to elicit the information required.

Prior knowledge and previous experience can be used to access a group of potential participants or to elicit richer information. Judd et al. (1991) considered the interviewer effect (sex, race and appearance) one of the disadvantages of using an interview. Deciding on how to present oneself to the participant (Fontana and Frey 2000), even the vocabulary used, accent and dialect, can portray an interviewer in a particular light that might be either favourable or unfavourable to the interviewer. This can affect the amount and depth of the information elicited. The researcher used her knowledge of garden tourism and botanical terms to communicate trust and reassure the participant in order that they felt comfortable about being able to talk (Ackroyd and Hughes 1992). A relationship develops between interviewer and participant and the use of agreement (head nodding, actively listening) within the context of the interview was used to encourage greater disclosure. The interviewer can often end up divulging an element of themselves, learning about themselves and their reactions in learning about others. Therefore, notes were included on the interview scripts about the participant and the situation of the participant, both immediately after the interview had taken place and also later on during analysis of the findings. This raises the issue of both involvement and subjectivity, which typifies the interpretivistic approach. Fontana and Frey (2000) discussed the participation of the interviewer with the process of the interview. Indeed, this link between the interviewer and participant could be considered a form of philosophical hermeneutics whereby the interviewer engages with one's own biases, leading to the conclusion that there is never really a correct interpretation of information received (Schwandt 2000), as depicted in the hermeneutic spiral illustrated in Figure 3.3. Some academics, particularly those of a positivistic nature, question both the reliability and validity of this type of research and these issues are dealt with in greater detail in section 3.3.

3.2.5 Stage 5: Findings

The information from the 39 interviews created a large amount of material. The transcribed material had to be sorted to create a structure that catalysed understanding and helped with the analytical stage of the research. Information from the interviews from Key Informants, Garden Owners/Managers and Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators was documented, transcribed and analysed manually. Three methods of analysis were utilised based on Carson et al. (2001). Axial coding identified the participant. Selective coding, using the main construct in each case, identified themes that were common to the literature and this information was clustered using frequencies throughout the findings to provide material for analysis and discussion. Material taken verbatim from the interviews was used as evidence to illustrate certain points or extremes of viewpoint. The use of a systematic coding system was important, whereby material was indexed in the first instance and then codes allocated to the indices. Simple counts and counting interactions were used to enhance qualitative work (Seale 1999 after Bryman 1988). Personal feedback from notes and involvement were incorporated to give a clearer picture of the participants. The findings were tabulated where appropriate and the format of the findings followed that of the questionnaire and addressed the question under the separate groups (1-3). Lexicographical similarities were used to group responses under many of the questions, for example dominant plant type/habitat, reason for opening the garden etc. Some of the numerical answers, for example marketing budgets, employment numbers and visitor numbers, were also grouped where possible in order to aid with analysis and interpretation, and to clarify points of information. For a number of findings, a method of calculation was developed, such as in the case of ascertaining the perceived level of effectiveness of the communication tools utilised by the different gardens. A simple count and use of frequency tables illustrated the links the various groups had with the different stakeholders and this was facilitated by the use of the diagram of the adapted Six Market Model (Peck et al 1999).

The interviews with the Network Coordinators (Group 4) took place after the interviews with Groups 1-3 and these are incorporated to either agree or disagree with comments made by those in Groups 1-3 in the discussion chapter. As only two Network Coordinators were interviewed, it was deemed that these interviews were supportive rather than conclusive and were undertaken to bring the research up-to-date with recent initiatives being undertaken by the national tourism development authority. Subsequently 32 propositional statements using the themes of the conceptual framework were used as a basis for comment and gave greater depth of understanding to the types and reasons for the

links that the gardens have with stakeholders. Some of these statements yielded more significant information than others and all the findings from the process were evaluated in greater depth in the discussion and analysis chapter.

3.2.6 Stage 6: Analysis and Interpretation

Analysis was undertaken manually, that is, no computer package or aid was used. Manual analysis required constant rereading of the material in order to get a feel for the responses. There was a need to 'understand the situation' in each interview. This took place from the time the first interview was undertaken. The analysis and interpretation, which led to the discussion of the issues under exploration, incorporated the information from all of the interviews, observations and visits to the gardens and meetings over the course of the research. It was also influenced, as in the case of phenomenological interpretivism, by previous experience and knowledge. The process of interpretation did not follow a straight directed path. The sequential building of information from each of the groups interviewed contributed to the process of analysis and interpretation. This was enhanced by re-visiting the literature and each of the interviews continuously. During the analysis, each set of interviews was revisited to explore emerging themes, creating a spiral of information from which a number of outcomes could be derived. This approach can be explained best as the use of a hermeneutic spiral (or circle) whereby emerging understandings influence and seek to synthesise further outcomes as the corpus of the information is revisited (Fig.3.3). The analysis considered all of the findings under the key constructs of the research and used them to identify as to why certain responses had been made to the questions posed. The SWOT analysis was used as a basis for a TOWS matrix which considered the similarities in responses and identified potential approaches to both developing and marketing garden tourism in the future. The use of a mixed methodology proved difficult both to develop and interpret. Qualitative material always yields substantial amounts of information. The analysis of this research was found to be particularly complex by the researcher due to the level of prior involvement with many of the Garden Owners/Managers. The awareness of this influence ensured that all recognised biases were minimised as much as was possible.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

All research requires a degree of rigour and structure that can be documented to show how the research was undertaken. Although some authors say that internal validity is unreliable in the case of qualitative research (Seale 1999), validity was integrated with theory by the continuous assessment of assumptions, revision of the scripts and findings and evaluation

of the theories set out in the literature review. Throughout its course, the researcher revisited all elements of the research. As the method of analysis was undertaken manually, this involved much note taking, ideas, mind-maps and the use of visuals that helped identify some of the main constructs.

This approach helped to increase the quality of the research. The study sought to explore and understand an issue which previously had not been considered and this contributes to its uniqueness and capability to generate new understanding, thought and reflection.

Reliability, that is internal reliability, is the degree to which other researchers can match given constructs to the data in the same way as the original researcher (LeCompte and Geertz 1998). Research that uses a quantitative approach can, in some cases, be replicated by another researcher who, if undertaking the same research under the same conditions or constructs, can expect similar results making it internally reliable. However, a qualitative study, especially that which is primarily inductive in nature, needs to take into account many dynamic variables which cannot be either replicated or controlled. The relationships that people have are dynamic and are influenced by a myriad of factors that are internal to the relationship, that is factors concerning those involved and external factors such as the economy, funding or demand for garden tourism. Another variable of influence may be that of previous knowledge or involvement with the interviewer and this has been documented in section 3.2.3.3. Being aware and documenting these influences contributes towards reliability, however this research attribute tends not to be considered when using qualitative methodologies. Although many variables involved with data collection and interpretation are not controllable, replicability of the work can be managed to some degree with the use of a mixed methodology (closed questions) and extensive documentation. The holistic approach to the research echoed the post-modern philosophy that directed the process.

Although Carson et al. (2001) and Gummesson (2000) suggested that generalisability (or transferability), which is the transfer of the results beyond the data of the study, is not an issue in qualitative research, it was important to identify what aspects of the research could be used to benefit situations in garden tourism, tourism or further afield. This has been undertaken under future research in the final chapter.

3.4 Some Limitations

The geographical spread of the participants proved a limitation. Indeed, one participant was contacted over ten times and broke an appointment as the researcher was travelling (250kms) just before the due appointment time - the interview never took place.

Some elements of the research which initially seemed to be limitations actually contributed to the depth of research, such as the duration of time over which the work was undertaken. As the research evolved, different groups of people were interviewed, each contributing to the exploration of the research problem. Garden Owners/Managers were interviewed over a four year period consequently gardens groups were interviewed over the following two years. During the period of research, both academic (through teaching and post-graduate supervision – Appendix IV), and practical input (through conference papers, book chapters and consultancy work – Appendix VIII) helped the research by providing a deeper and richer view of the research problem. This input was evident while undertaking both the analysis and the discussion in particular.

3.5 Conclusion

The methodological approach taken in this thesis has been described and justified in this chapter. The researcher reflected on the philosophical context within which the research was undertaken and a qualitative methodology guided by a phenomenological paradigm was considered the most suitable approach. One of the main issues considered that would have an impact on the research was the level of involvement and prior knowledge of the researcher. This was discussed in terms of both the subject area and justification of the methodology chosen. The process of research has been described, both in diagrammatic and verbal form, detailing the stages of the research process and justifying the use of semi-structured interviews. Validity and reliability and their role (or lack of) in the case of qualitative research were briefly discussed. Finally, some limitations were addressed.

Chapter 4

Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter documents the findings. The main emphasis of the research was on the garden product provider, in this case the garden owners and managers. The Key Informants provided the background information prior to the interviews with the Gardens Owners/Managers, and the interviews with the Garden/Heritage Coordinators took place as a consequence to the garden interviews. The findings are presented using the themes identified in the conceptual framework. As the Network Coordinators and the final consultation interview were undertaken towards the latter stage of the research and as a result of the findings, they are integrated into the analysis and discussion chapter. An outline of the interview groups and a brief profile of the participants that contributed to the findings in this chapter are reiterated. The interviews were divided into the following groups:

Table 4.1 **Categorisation of Interviews Undertaken (Groups 1-3)**

Group No.	Description	No. of interviews	Gardens/businesses represented in total
1	Key Informants	3	Key Informants were not specifically responsible for gardens
2	Garden Owners/Managers	28	31 gardens
3	Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators	5	112 gardens 152 other heritage attractions

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The findings presented in this chapter formed the basis for a series of statements that were used as points of comment for the last interview (Manager/CEO - Tourism Product Group). This final interview was more of a consultation, as it sought comment rather than information specific to the business of the product group. The findings and the interviews conducted with Network Coordinators and the Manager of the Tourism Product Group (CEO) are explored further in terms of the conceptual framework and input into the discussion, recommendations and conclusion.

4.2 Profile of the Participants

4.2.1 Key Informants

Three Key Informants were interviewed. Key Informant A was solely marketing oriented, and this was evident in many of the responses that were given. Indeed, the terminology used was reflective of both their role in tourism and the way in which they viewed the garden tourism product/experience. Key Informant B was primarily plant/horticultural oriented and had a great deal of practical experience working in, and with gardens. However, in their role of being involved in a horticultural manner, they have had to address issues such as attractiveness of the product to visitors and the development of gardens that are both enhanced from a conservation perspective and are viable businesses. Key Informant C had a marketing orientation, though responses also included aspects relating to the gardens themselves and there was evidence of plant and garden knowledge. This again was reflected in their responses. Although the Key Informant backgrounds and knowledge differed, all three had significant experience in the garden tourism sector.

Table 4.2 Code and Description of Key Informants

Code	Description
KIA	Marketing oriented. Three years direct involvement with the HCGI group
KIB	Primarily horticulturally oriented with seven years direct involvement with HCGI group
KIC	Primarily marketing oriented with seven years direct involvement with HCGI group.

4.2.2 Garden Owners/Managers

All those interviewed in the Garden Owners/Managers group, were members of a co-operative marketing group, Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland .Only seven of those interviewed were not members of other groups. Those that belonged to other groups cited Heritage Island (commercial marketing business) and county or regional destination and product marketing groups, for example East Coast and Midland and Meath Tourism, as the groups to which they belonged. A number of other garden owners who were also members of Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland were contacted (n=11) and either they did not want to take part in the research (*'it's none of your business'*!), were not interested or, despite several attempts, there was a lack of success in meeting up to conduct an interview.

Table 4.3 Codes and Description of Garden Owners/Managers

Code	Ownership Private (PV) Public/Charity (PB)	Role of Respondent Owner(O) Manager(M)	Membership of Groups Other National (N) Local (L) Regional (R)	Other Businesses/Facilities Farm (F) Stately House (SH) Accommodation (A) Tea/Coffee (TC) Other Business (OB)
GO1	FPV	O	C	F, SH,A,TC,OB
GO2	FPV	O	C	F,VA,TC
GO3	FPV	O	C	TC
GO4	PB	M	C,	OB
GO5	FPV	O	C	F,A,OB
GO6	FPV	M	R,C	F,OB
GO7	FPV	M		A,OB
GO8	FPV	O	L	F,SH
GO9	FPV	O		OB
GO10	PB (Two gardens)	M		SH
GO11	FPV	O	R,C	F,SH,A
GO12	FPV	O		OB
GO13	PB	M	N,R,C,L	F,SH,TC,OB
GO14	PB	M		TC
GO15	PB (Two gardens)	M	N	F,SH,OB
GO16	FPV	M	R	F,SH
GO17	PB	M	R	TC
GO18	FPV	M	N,R,L	SH,OB
GO19	PB	M	L	TC,OB
GO20	FPV	M	L	F,A,TC,OB
GO21	PB	M	N,C	TC,OB
GO22	FPV	O	L	F,SH,OB
GO23	FPV	M	R,C	
GO24	FPV	O	N,R,C	F,A,TC,OB
GO25	PB	M		F,TC,OB
GO26	PB	M	L	SH,TC,OB
GO27	FPV	O	N,R,L	SH,TC,OB
GO28	PB (Two gardens)	M	N	SH,TC,OB

Notes:

- i. All participants were members of Houses Castles and Gardens at the time of interview
- ii. Stately Homes (SH) were a mix of those open and those not open to the public
- iii. Other Businesses included Folk Park, golf, museum, educational facilities, children's play areas, and nursery and cookery school

4.2.3 Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators

Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators consisted of coordinators of gardens and heritage co-operative groups. Each group had as part of its remit to market and promote gardens to tourism visitors as well as in some cases to develop the product within the group itself. Table 4.4 profiles the group and includes some observations about the interview encounter

Two of the coordinators had marketing backgrounds (GC4, GC5), one was a public servant (GC2), another was from a banking background (GC3) and the fifth had a degree in journalism (GC5). Their time involved with the organisations ranged from 8 months to 15 years, though in the case of the latter, this was a voluntary position. Although the primary objective of all of the groups was to attract and increase the number of visitors to the gardens, this objective was achieved in different ways. The commercial emphasis of these gardens varied, with some forming part of a commercial business operation, another group was of charity status and another group was satisfied with the small numbers achieved and minimal revenue generation.

The history and structure of these groups also varied. Two of the organisations were supported by public funding (GC1, GC5) and therefore, objectives to achieve numbers for commercial viability, though important, were not essential to the survival of the organisations. The coordinators interviewed in both these organisations had little actual knowledge of gardens themselves or issues such as constituent planting and they viewed gardens as general tourist attractions, though both organisations have the responsibility for some of the best known gardens in the country.

One of organisations (GC5) operates an event on behalf of a number of gardens. These gardens vary in size and degree of commercialisation, with many opening only for limited periods and some with the proceeds going to charity. The objective to be viable is not considered a priority for many of these gardens.

Table 4.4 Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators: comments on encounter

Code	Type of group	Status of group
GC1	<p>Statutory body with remit of both gardens and other heritage attractions</p> <p>Enthusiastic person though seemed hesitant in answering some of the questions. Seemed to know little about the gardens/properties or issues of marketing except for the more obvious methods.</p>	Irish national
GC2	<p>Charity body with remit for gardens and other heritage</p> <p>Participant well tuned in and knowledgeable, although little direct experience with gardens. Creative and open in approach. Listened to the question and answered what they could.</p>	UK national
GC3	<p>Commercial marketing business with gardens and other heritage</p> <p>The participant was a former student of the interviewer and had considerable knowledge in terms of co-operative approaches and relationship development. Possibility of biases (lecturer/student relationship), though has other experience in the industry since graduation. Clear and confident about what was required. Also not afraid to learn, or face problems.</p>	Irish national
GC4	<p>Voluntary group with gardens as the only focus</p> <p>Participant's previous experience included senior level in marketing in the manufacturing sector though did not see their present role as a marketing one. He had developed a customised approach and viewed the gardens from the gardener's perspective (sharing common passion). The background in marketing did help them focus on marketing issues in the interview. The participant was precise in what was said though not particularly engaging.</p>	Irish county and local based
GC5	<p>Publicly funded with gardens as the only focus</p> <p>Two persons made up the interview for this group. A number of problems had been encountered over the past few years whereby redundancies occurred and therefore the interview situation had to be dealt with in a sensitive manner. The main participant was initially quite withdrawn (arms folded, laconic answers) though this changed during the course of the interview. The second participant was almost too positive – almost as though they were giving the interviewer what she wanted to hear.</p>	Irish county and local based

Another organisation has charity status (GC2), is over one hundred years old and is positioned strongly in the minds of its primary market. A membership scheme helps to create a sense of belonging and interaction with like-minded people; those who have chosen to belong to and support such a scheme.

In the case of the commercial business (GC3), its role is as an intermediary and thus requires a level of performance on which it is judged. Delivery of the agreed objectives and satisfaction for its members is essential to its survival. There is a focus on feedback, and relationships are developed between the organisation and its members, rather than between the members themselves. The commercial business considered the recent use of blogging by members and customers a concern. This use of blogging and other social media interaction has created a fear of what might appear in the virtual world impacting on the company. Therefore, it was deemed important to *'be seen to be networking and involved in relationship marketing'* in order to minimise negative portrayal of the organisation (GC3).

The group which was voluntary in nature (GC4) wished to share its passion for gardens with like-minded visitors. It emerged 15 years ago from a feeling of dissatisfaction with what was going on in the garden tourism sector. It consists of a number of private gardens which are invited and proposed by fellow members. There is an air of élitism about this group and a common thread of extensive gardening interests is what binds this group together.

4.3 Theme 1 – Perceived Importance of Product

The perceived importance of the product (gardens) was ascertained in a number of different ways: reasons for development and opening, economic importance, visitor numbers, employment and marketing budget. Why do people develop a garden and open it to the public? They may have unique plants or a unique history. The garden may be landscaped in a way that is considered tranquil or beautiful and they may wish to share this with other people. Or they may have more of a business focus and wish to make the garden pay for itself. Maintaining and managing a garden is an expensive business. Its existence is transient and the garden continues to exist only through hard work using a variety of resources. The main reason (51.9%) for the opening of gardens in Great Britain was for charity fundraising (Connell 2005). This question was asked to explore whether differing of the importance of the garden by their owners contribute to or detract from the co-operative process.

4.3.1 Opening Times and Size of Garden

All of the gardens were open to the public as this was part of the criteria for interview. There has been a significant increase in the numbers of gardens open to the public in the past 20 years in Ireland and this has been catalysed by such incentives as the GGRS. Of

the twenty-eight garden owners/managers interviewed, 18 had opened their gates to the public for the first time during the period 1990-2000, with the earliest garden opening being in 1850 at Fernhill, Sandyford in Co. Dublin.

Due to the seasonal and transient flowering nature of gardens, it was not surprising that just over a third of the gardens open on a year-round basis (n=10) and those that did more often than not had other facilities or attractions to keep the visitors engaged. The decision to open can be problematic. It requires staffing and additional financial resources. Coinciding opening times with periods of higher expected demand and the flowering period of the gardens makes economic sense. In order to create added attraction and demand from potential visitors, there has been pressure on gardens to create and extend opening times by the use of different planting schemes, for example snowdrops at Primrose Hill in Lucan, Co. Dublin. The issue of seasonality has been addressed to a degree with some gardens also providing related activities or events and the use of sculpture (Fernhill), themed children's areas and walks (Lough Crew and Belvedere) and events and activities (Larchill) are efforts to extend season and market appeal. Seasonality is more prevalent when the garden is the core of the attraction, as in each of these gardens. In other cases, such as Kilmokea, Bunratty/Knappogue, Turlough House and Lisselan, the garden is a feature complementary to the overall experience, rather than being the core offering and other facilities (including accommodation, castle banquets, museums) act as attractors helping to overcome seasonal and market demand restrictions. The gardens ranged in size from 0.8 to 64.7ha (2 to 160 acres), but five gardens could not answer the question as to the size of the garden. All except one participant (GO26) stated the size in acreage rather than hectares, perhaps indicating the age of participants.

4.3.2 Reasons for Developing/Opening the Garden

A sense of worth attached to the garden is required in order to make the choice to open the garden. Conservation was the main reason for the development and the opening of the gardens to the public, with 19 gardens from the Garden Owners/Managers group citing this as a reason and the majority of these giving it as the main reason to develop the garden (n=13). Thirteen of the gardens mentioned financial motivation, with six saying that it was the main reason and two mentioning tax breaks. Over a third stated that minimal income was derived from the garden, with many citing a loss or minimal income (n=11). Reasons to develop and open the garden included '*upkeep*' (GO3), '*pay for itself*' (GO12) and '*defrays cost*' (GO16) - reasons linked to financial motivation. Only three indicated social reasons and meeting people as a motivation to develop the garden and no-one spoke of it as

a priority, although one mentioned ‘*doing something for the community*’ (GO16).. The fact that conservation is a driver indicates a certain value being accrued to the garden. The lack of social awareness/need may indicate as to the type of person involved, a predictor of interest, willingness and ability to develop relationships, co-operate and network.

The owners/managers were asked to discuss whose idea it had been to open the garden to the public and the responses are indicated in Table 4.5. This was to explore a number of issues. As funding had been available, it certainly had acted as a catalyst to open for some properties and this was indicated to be so by eight of the gardens interviewed. Table 4.5 shows that 13 gardens were driven to open by self/family or were inherited and this may indicate a sense of responsibility and link with the property.

Table 4.5 Catalyst to Open the Garden

Idea/catalyst	No.
Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme or related persons	9 (GO 1,2,8,13,14, 17,19,26)
Owner/self/family	9 (GO3,4,5,7,9,12,16,20)
Community	3 (GO6,17,22)
Historic/owner inherited	4(GO10,11, 23,24)
State or other body	4(GO 13,15,17,28)

4.3.3 Employment

In total, 28 interviews were undertaken with Garden Owners/Managers. These interviews represented 31 gardens as a three of the managers were responsible for more than one garden. There were 158 full-time equivalents (full-time equivalent = 2.5 part-time) employed in the 31 gardens at the time of interviews. Other training employment in these gardens included 35 students (National Botanic Gardens), 54 students (non-specified) and FÁS (National Training Authority) funded employees.

4.3.4 Perception and Knowledge of Product

Half the Garden Owners/Managers (n=14) considered their gardens as specialist rather than general gardens, indicating a perception of uniqueness. Ten of the Garden Owners/Managers perceived themselves to be general, with two indicating that they were both specialist and general in nature. Some of those that considered themselves as general

gardens went on to say that they ‘*were unique*’ (GO1) or a ‘*cottage garden*’ (GO3), ‘*Robinsonian*’ (GO5,GO12) or for ‘*foodlovers*’ (GO7), which could be construed that there was a theme or specific identifiable aspect about the garden. During all interviews, there seemed to be a sense of pride in terms of what they offered.

Knowledge of soil type was also sought. Soil type dictates the plant habitat and ability to grow certain types of plants. Four of the participants (all non-horticultural) referred the question on to someone else. Otherwise responses varied from acidic, limestone/limey (n=8), neutral/clay (n=1), acid (n=10) to a variety of other soil and non-soil answers.... such as acid limestone! It is essential that a gardener knows his/her soil type. It could be argued that knowledge of soil type indicates a garden oriented person and an involvement over those who do not have this knowledge.

In further evaluation of product knowledge, the owners/managers responded to a question on dominant habitat/plant species in Table 4.6. This was asked again to ascertain the knowledge and link the person had with the garden and greater understanding of the garden tourism product and predominance of each garden type. All participants responded to this question, with some focusing on habitat and others on the landscaping period or predominant plant type.

Table 4.6 Dominant Plant/Habitat Type

Focus	Example	No.
Geography	South African, Chilean, Australian	4
Plant Species	<i>Rhododendron sp.</i> , <i>Dierama sp.</i> , ericaceous, bonsai	5
Habitat	Woodland trees	2
Age	Regency, Victorian	4
Landscape/planting	Robinsonian, cottage, vegetable, herbaceous	13

4.3.5 Income Derived From the Garden

This question provoked wide ranging responses. Eleven were wholly negative, ‘*enormous losses*’ (GO5), ‘*total loss*’ (GO9), ‘*zilch* (GO22 and laughs)’, ‘*don’t know what you can say to this*’ and ‘*no garden in Ireland can support itself*’ (GO1). This indicates a lack of confidence in the ability of the garden tourism product to be economically sustainable.

There were also some less negative responses with percentages of '20%' (GO8), '50%' (GO2); '100%' (GO28), '2/3 of income' (GO27) or 'part of the experience' (GO15) being given as responses to this question.

The response did rely on the extent of the product and related portfolio that was on offer to the public. The product offering or experience varied widely. In some cases, the garden, though important, is part of a portfolio or package of experiences and indeed is used to complement other experiences, such as accommodation or attractions. This puts less pressure on the garden to 'make it pay for itself'. In the more commercial setting and wide-ranging ventures, gardens such as Powerscourt, County Wicklow have a portfolio of products and facilities and this has opened the garden up to a wider market of people, attracting local, domestic and international visitors. The package has become increasingly commercialised with great focus on business and revenue generation.

In the case of those gardens that are owned by the state/local authorities (like Woodstock, Marley Park, Talbot), although the objective is for the garden to pay for itself, or at least cover much of its costs, the real fact is that those that manage them (the local authorities) underwrite their losses and so they are not under the same pressure to be sustainable. The present economic climate (2009) and financial constraints being imposed on the local authorities no doubt, increase this pressure. However, since there is no potential to underwrite a private garden, the emphasis to be economically sustainable is heightened if the garden is viewed as a stand alone business (private) rather than an adjunct to another organisation such as a local authority.

4.3.6 Visitor Profile and Numbers

4.3.6.1 Perception of customer profile

There was general agreement between the Key Informants that the typical profile of the garden visitor was 35+, UK based, from a broadly-based social background, with a tendency towards the female gender and a preference for larger gardens. One Key Informant (B) mentioned the need for 'real gardeners' and considered the visitor was 'elitist at present'. When broached about ways in which additional visitors might be attracted to the garden, the marketing oriented participant (KIA) replied that the 'resources were not there' and horticultural participant 'they don't realise the value of the co-

operative'. However, it was suggested that the greater use of journalists and the media might help to attract additional visitors (KIC).

Most of the Garden Owners/Managers offered a brochure on the garden when asked for a brief history, though websites for each of the gardens were also perused in gathering information on marketing and these are analysed in section 4.6.5.2.

Visitor numbers and profile were explored in order to ascertain the knowledge the Garden Owners/Managers had of their customers. Thirteen of the providers had seen an increase in visitor numbers over the previous five years, which was positive. Some of the providers did not wish to answer the question and considered the information sensitive, while a number (n=4) admitted that they did not know the actual numbers that came to the garden. There was huge difference in the numbers attracted to the various gardens. This ranged from 500 per year (GO9 -small seasonal garden) to 380,000 per year (GO15 - large year-round garden with multiple facilities). A number of internal and externally factors may influence these numbers. From an internal perspective the capacity of the garden, the objective of the garden owner, the degree of commercial stake held by the garden as a business entity and the marketing of the gardens including opening times will have an impact. External factors include the inherent attractiveness of the garden, whether it is located in a recognised touristic area, marketing by a destination-marketing organisation and proximity of the garden to the area/centre of population. Issues such as stage of lifecycle, market and consumer positioning and other facilities available influence the appeal to visitors. This indicates the substantial difference in product type and capacity and indeed potential revenue generation. The larger gardens tended to have additional or complementary facilities, thus being attractive to a broader market which could include children/families, general day visitors and tour groups, in addition to specialist plant lovers.

A number of the participants gave market percentage breakdowns (n=16). These percentages and comments are described in Table 4.7. Most of the participants (n=17) said that the garden was the main reason for visiting - the garden was the main attractor. Therefore, the garden was seen as being core to the visit. Those that said that it was not the main reason (n=11) specified that other facilities (castle, museum, folk park, stud) motivated visitation and in other cases being a passer-by or the attractiveness of the area (West Cork) acted as the main pull and core reason to visit.

Table 4.7 Market Breakdown

Market Type	Percentage Breakdown and Comments
Overseas	17 Garden Owners/Managers mentioned the overseas market, though numbers were small. Two gardens indicated that over 50% of business was from the overseas markets 6 Garden Owners/Managers indicated that 20-45% of business was overseas Remainder <20% of business
Domestic/local	Although 14 Garden Owners/Managers responded, some could not breakdown numbers statistically – however 10 gardens attributed the local and domestic market with over 50% of their business
Group	Although 21 Garden Owners/Managers mentioned groups visitors, the percentage of groups were significantly lower than individual visitors Smaller gardens attracted a higher number of groups
Independent	40-100% cited independent visitor business, with the vast majority of gardens attracting more independent visitors than group visitors (n=13)
Casual	n=12 Garden Owners/Managers mentioned casual visitors as a market, with generally higher contributing percentages (40-100%) attributed to the business
Specialist	18 Garden Owners/Managers mentioned specialist visitors though a number of these gardens (n=7) indicated 'very few', '2-3%', '15%', '10%

As the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators were also either directly or indirectly involved in marketing, customer profile knowledge again is considered essential to delivering a value experience. Due to the nature of the groups (small voluntary to large state), the numbers of visitors varied considerably. Only the state group coordinator (GC1) said that they could get the actual figures, the reluctance of others being possibly due to confidentiality issues, with this being indicated as the reason by the commercial company.

In relation to market breakdown, the domestic market seemed to be more prevalent than the overseas markets and independent visitors were more prevalent than group visitors, except in the case of the voluntary group (GC4) whereby all of its visitors came as part of a group. Furthermore, this voluntary group (GC4) attracted all specialist visitors (a specific objective), whereas the visitors to the other gardens mainly consisted of casual visitors.

Three of the participants said that the gardens were the main reason why people visited the area, although one said it was heritage and culture (which is deemed to encompass gardens as a product as perceived by the tourist board). It was too obvious a question to be asked

of the voluntary group as all their visitors were specialist groups. This question was not answered by the commercial company.

There were also some odd answers and in answering the question on marketing and promotion of gardens by garden co-operative groups, one of the participants was evidently product-oriented rather than marketing-oriented and suggesting '*litter waste bins, interactive panels, wood sculptures*'! (GC1).

4.3.7 Marketing Budget

The allocation of a marketing budget indicates that the product or service being offered is of sufficient importance to a market and it is deemed attractive and a potential commercial entity. The variation in allocation may be due to a number of factors including experience and knowledge of business and marketing by the owner/manager, or the perceived importance of the garden as a commercial entity that it may not deserve the allocation of funding. It may also relate to the stage of life-cycle i.e. the garden which is well developed or mature in the mind of the consumer will require less marketing than that which is at the initial or growth stage of the product lifecycle of business

The 15 Garden Owners/Managers who said they had a marketing budget ranged from the subscription of the PMG alone to €80,000 per annum (GO21), with eight allocating less than €5,000 per annum. Ten Garden Owners/Managers were not aware of their marketing spend. Some allocated a percentage of turnover (3-5%). However, while this bodes well if turnover is reasonable, a problem with this form of allocation is that if turnover declines, spending on the marketing budget also declines. This may be at a time when it may be more appropriate to increase allocation, in order to increase awareness and, hopefully, subsequent turnover from additional visitor numbers.

The participants were also asked to break-down their marketing spending according to market, if at all possible. Many of them undertook this verbally rather than statistically. The summary of this is given in Table 4.8. Overall, the overseas and specialist markets were seen as the most important in terms of the allocation of marketing budget. Only five participants were happy with the way the marketing budget was spent, although one said that there were additional opportunities that could be explored. The others who were positive commented also on a number of changes that could be undertaken '*developing website and literature*' (GO1), and '*linkages with B&B's to create packages*' (GO2). Other changes included a need to focus (GO17), and that there was too much literature produced (GO23). One participant who was part of the responses who made up the eleven who were

not happy with the marketing budget said that she would *'like quite a bit more!'* (GO4), and another said that he *'never saw it as an enterprise'* (GO5, indicating differing objectives displayed by the Garden Owners/Managers.

Table 4.8 Allocation of Marketing Budget

Market	Range of budget Allocation	Frequency
Overseas	10% (GO13) <i>'very little'</i> (GO20) , <i>'the odd one'</i> (GO19) to 80% (GO 15)	14
Domestic	15% (GO14) to 90% (GO2) , <i>'more Irish than anything (GO19) ,, educational'</i> (GO2) , <i>'retirement groups(GO2), 'mainly domestic'</i> (GO17)	6
Local	<i>'Little'</i> (GO21) to 75% (GO16) <i>'important for shoulder season'</i> (GO15)	9
Specialist	A few enquiries (GO14) to >50% (<i>'through co-operative group'</i> (GO9), <i>'regional tourism body'</i> (GO10). Seen as <i>'low spend and high return'</i> (GO27)	12

Only one of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators gave any information on a marketing budget; they either said they did not know, would not say or skirted around the issue making related comments about the budget. One of the groups (GC3) had segregated its marketing operations into two groups: one that dealt with domestic/local visitors; and the other that focused on its international markets. Two of the other groups were primarily domestic-focused, with one focused on the specialist markets (voluntary GC4) and the other said *'one budget'* (GC2) was used for all markets.

4.4 Theme 2 - The Product

In order to develop further knowledge of the gardens being studied and the relationship the participant had with their garden, the researcher sought to explore the perception and existing commodification of gardens as a tourism product. As the history of Irish gardens demonstrates many different influences (Lamb and Bowe 1995), participants were asked for a definition of an Irish garden and to conceptualise what it meant to them. This, after the classified information, was used as an introduction to the interview and helped to contextualise the research work. The responses helped the researcher to gain an understanding as to whether there was a common sense of identity and vision about the

core product that was being developed and marketed. In order to focus their views on the garden tourism product and to ascertain if there was a common resource-based view of garden tourism, the use of SWOT analysis (Murphy and Wang 2006; Piercy and Giles 1989; Weihrich 1982) was considered suitable as it is widely used, not just in business but in an everyday context. The need to clarify the use of a SWOT analysis was undertaken if required, though this occurred only in the case of one participant.

4.4.1 Conceptualisation of an Irish Garden

The background and experience of the Key Informants were reflected in their response to being asked to define and conceptualise an Irish garden. Key Informant A spoke solely in terms of marketing whereas KIB and KIC spoke in gardening terms using words such as '*wild*' '*foliage*' '*history*' '*landscape*' and '*Robinsonian*' (Robinson 1870; Mabey 1983). In terms of evaluating Irish garden tourism, the responses again were a mix of marketing and garden oriented approaches.

All garden participants, whether they were owners or managers, were asked to define an 'Irish garden'. Of those that replied, the participants fell into three categories: those that found it easy (n=17); those that had difficulty (n=6); and those that could not do so although they made comment (n=4). One participant did not do so or comment. Of those that could easily define an 'Irish garden', five linked it to Anglo or English influences, although three others stated that '*something that was not an English Garden*' (GO11), as though to differentiate it from this influence. The wild, natural, informal and '*Robinsonian*' elements were mentioned by eight of the gardens, however plants or their diversity were mentioned by only a few (n=3). There was one participant who had a very different perception of an Irish garden, stating that they were '*structured and formal*' (GO25), although others mentioned formal as being part of the experience. In several cases, one of the larger better known gardens, such as Powerscourt or Mount Stewart, were given as examples of an Irish garden. This linkage to an older historic house or an era of time indicates the importance of a sense of history. There were those that had difficulty in defining an Irish garden '*very difficult*' (GO20); '*it is so varied*' (GO24), '*it changes*' (GO19) and those that could not, or did not wish to, define an Irish garden. They used phrases such as '*I don't think there is such a thing as an Irish garden*', (GO17) '*I cannot define it ... hundreds of Irish gardens – all different*' (GO16) and '*I could not do it*' (GO6).

When asked to conceptualise gardens as part of the tourism product, answers given by the Garden/Heritage Coordinators proved to be quite vague in nature, although uniqueness (GC2), plants/flowers/greenery (GC1,GC2), variety (GC5) and great houses (GC3) were all mentioned. Two participants (GC5, GC3) had difficulty in providing a definition.

4.4.2 Use of SWOT as a Tool

The use of SWOT (the identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) encouraged the participants to focus on the gardens as a tourism product. Used across the three groups, it produced rich results from different perspectives - a resource based view from the Key Informants (with their extensive knowledge), the owners and managers and the coordinators who manage garden groups. Use of the TOWS Matrix based on the information emanating from the SWOT analysis helped to give direction, and this is undertaken in Chapter 6. According to Weihrich (1982), a TOWS creates a structured framework for the development of strategies, tactics and actions for the effective and efficient attainment of objectives.

It was presumed that all participants would be familiar with a SWOT analysis and in cases where they might not have been, the question relating to a SWOT was further explained. This question was asked for a number of reasons: it allowed the owners/managers discuss their thoughts on gardens and created a greater sense of conversation flow; it explored the focus of the owner/manager in terms of interest (visitor versus plant orientation); and it was used also to develop the common themes or issues relating to gardens as perceived by those involved in managing and marketing the gardens to the visitor. Any referral to co-operation and linkages were also considered, be they perceived strengths or weaknesses.

The SWOT has been divided into the Strengths and Weaknesses (which normally focus on aspects directly relating or internal to the product) which is illustrated in Table 4.9 and Opportunities and Threats (which normally focuses on aspects that are external to the product), illustrated in Table 4.10

The Key Informants were the only group to mention the aspect of the gardens being unique in terms of strengths. This may be due to their roles, which gave them an overview of the product from both national and international perspectives. They also identified the link to Anglo-Irish history as being strength, giving a sense of identity. However, a number of weaknesses including the weather (concurring with the product providers), geographical fragmentation (indicating a lack of coherence among with product providers) and a lack

of confidence in the product by the providers, which needs to be overcome in order to maximise the potential in both national and international terms.

Table 4.9 Strengths and Weaknesses

Group	Strengths	Weaknesses
Key Informants	Market oriented Growth area Uniqueness Variety History Social: Anglo-Irish feel about them Small in size	Geographically fragmented Fragility; perishable Weather related Staff and skills Unevenness of quality; customers can be disappointed Lack of confidence: need greater faith in what they have
Garden Owners/Managers	Climate n=8) Variety and diversity n=4) History (n=6) Plants/plants people (n=8) Management/marketing/tourism issues (n=7) Enigmatic creation of Irish minds	No weaknesses (n=4) Marketing/management issues (n=9) Weather (n=5) Financial and resources (n=7) Quality (n=3) Immaturity (n=3) Seasonality/ Access
Garden /Heritage Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators	Sense of history and heritage Market friendly – family, children etc Variety n=2) Range of knowledge and plants (Lack of facilities Access Health and safety Not enough people into them

The climate (benign), plants and plants people were seen as the main strengths of the gardens by the Garden Owners/Managers (each n=8) followed by marketing/management/tourism issues (n=7) and history (n=5). Two of this group did not provide any strengths, *'not a good person to ask'* (GO15) and *'wouldn't know – not garden oriented'* (GO25). Weaknesses included management issues (n=9), financial resources (n=7) and the weather. Another weakness, viewed by one of the participants, was the type of person involved with gardens which they considered as being an issue *'most are run by people who are too interested and busy with the garden to do marketing ... like craftspeople – and unlikely to be good at marketing'* (GO3).

In undertaking the SWOT analysis of gardens as a tourism product, it was evident that all of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators had their own agenda: those that were primarily market oriented spoke of marketing issues and those that were product oriented spoke of product issues. Across the groups, common strengths were identified as the history and variety and common weaknesses were identified as lack of facilities, problems with access and the weather.

One of the Key Informants (KIB) saw increased commercialisation as a catalyst to greater viability for the gardens. A more personal approach by the Garden Owners/Managers and as well as greater awareness (marketing) of the gardens and a focus on the domestic markets were also seen as opportunities for the sector. Another Key Informant (KIC) did mention co-operative marketing but this may have been prompted by the nature of the research. Threats identified by the Key Informants included land costs, competition, quality and the limited number of gardens open to the public. However, one Key Informant (KIB) said that threats came from within, as gardens owners did not realise what they had, indicating either a lack of confidence and/ or a lack of knowledge about other gardens either in Ireland or abroad.

When asked about opportunities, a number of the participants from the Garden Owners/Managers group spoke in negative terms (n=11). Issues such as limited capacity, commercialisation, small population, fragmentation and lack of funding were mentioned. Some said that they did not think about opportunities (n=4), although those that did spoke overwhelmingly of increased marketing and product development as being opportunities for the sector.

Although increased commercialisation was referred to in many places throughout the interviews, only one garden (GO1) mentioned it as a threat to the gardens in Ireland. However, it was mentioned by one of the Key Informants (KIB) as an opportunity to create greater viability. There were considerably more threats than opportunities alluded to, which indicates an air of negativity surrounding the product. However, timing in terms of the recent cessation of the grants, that is, the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme, may have contributed to this negativity. This was echoed by one gardener who said '*it [having a garden] was soul destroying*' (GO23) and a number admitted that '*other businesses were required*' (GO9) in order to remain viable. Only one participant said that there were no threats evident.

The opportunities identified by the Garden /Heritage Group Coordinators incorporated many aspects of marketing and product development such as garden trails and the development of heritage and activity parks. The voluntary group said that there was a shortage of gardens to show early in the year, indicating the seasonality of the product.

Threats included competitiveness, access, viability and also a lack of new gardeners (younger people) to learn from the older gardeners; with one person saying that '*it was not an area of employment that was considered of interest*' (GC2).

Table 4.10 Opportunities and Threats

Group	Opportunities	Threats
Key Informants	Marketing, co-operate and work together Increased commercialisation to make viable	Cost of land, use for building Maintenance, quality, threats from within the group Small numbers of potential gardens
Garden Owners/Managers	Marketing including links and new markets (n=10) Development of facilities (n=3) Events <i>'need to keep the spirit of the garden'</i>	Staff and employment (n=5) also linked to financial resources (n=3) Weather (n= 6) Lack of appreciation/interest (n=4) Aging profile Overselling Transient nature of gardens Politics
Garden /Heritage Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators	Marketing (n=1) Interpretation/adding value Product development Increased number of gardens for early in the year	Viability (n=3) Maintenance and staffing Competitiveness Planning and infill buildings

Common opportunities all involved marketing, although aspects such as increased commercialisation (Key Informants), the development of facilities and events (Garden Owners/Managers) and adding value/product development (Garden /Heritage Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators) were also common themes. Common threats across the groups included staffing and maintenance, which were cited by each of the groups as problems for the sector.

4.4.3 Other Businesses Associated with Gardens

Garden Owners/Managers were asked about other businesses associated with the garden in order to explore other potential sources of revenue generation and to understand whether other income was there to support the garden. In order to get direction for this question, a number of businesses that might generate revenue were suggested to the participants. Farming or related activities (animal farms or commercial farms) were mentioned by half of the participants (n=14). This indicated the rurality of the garden setting. A stately home or historic house was associated with many of the gardens and it was this, rather than the garden, that tended to be the main attractor for visitors in many cases (n=11). Six of the participants offered accommodation as part of the place/package and this ranged from self-catering facilities to a five-star hotel. According to the gardens owners/managers, other businesses that were being operated in tandem with the garden included: teas/restaurant

facilities (n=5) (though in reality a far greater number of the gardens operated tea-rooms); educational facilities (n=5); museums or related spaces (n=7); and plant nurseries (n=3).

4.4.4 Ancillary Facilities and Importance to the Overall Experience

It was important to identify whether or not the garden was the core aspect of the operation and the role it played in the overall experience being offered to visitors. Therefore, associated visitor facilities and their importance were explored (Connell 2005; Reynolds 1991). This question differed from that above as it explored the extent of facilities available in the garden, rather than those considered as income businesses. Additional facilities can be seen as increasing the commercial aspect of the garden contributing to further commodification of the experience. One garden owner remarked that they '*sadly had to go down the road of commercialisation to become viable ... however numbers went from 4,000 to 14,000*' (GO2). Just over half the gardens stated that the garden was the most important aspect of the experience (n=16). Many Garden Owners/Managers did not rank the importance of the garden as part of the overall experience but when asked to do so gave a positive answer, for example '*yes*'. Twenty-five gardens mentioned a café/restaurant and 19 mentioned having a shop/craft area. Walking trails were mentioned by 18 gardens, and 18 also mentioned other facilities, such as a golf course, folk park, museum and educational facilities. Sixteen of the gardens mentioned the operation of nurseries or plants for sale, though this was often seasonal in nature. Childrens play areas were mentioned by 11 of the participants, although insurance was seen as a problem and one of the playgrounds has been closed down since the interview due to this issue.

4.4.5 Values Associated with the Garden

4.4.5.1 Perception of value sought by visitors

Key Informants, gardens owners/managers and garden coordinators were asked about the perceived values of the garden as sought by visitors - what value did visitors seek by visiting the garden? In order to develop relationships and links that are of worth to any stakeholder, such as visitors, there is a need to understand the value that is sought by them.

According to the Key Informants, the values sought by visitors included curiosity '*what other people have*' (KIA), '*the wow factor*' (KIB) and also new ideas, designs, peace and tranquillity. Suggested additional values that could be incorporated into the experience of visiting gardens included '*good information*' (KIA), '*the identification of plants*' (KIA) and '*communication with the customer*' (KIB). One Key Informant suggested that each

garden considered itself the only one of its type and therefore possibly construed by visitors as being unique. It was pointed out by one of the Key Informants (KIB) that Duchas (OPW) had pulled out of the marketing group and had set up its own group, which did not just include gardens but also some of the more well-known houses and attractions (Muckross House, Co. Kerry, and Newgrange, Co. Meath). It was further suggested that the 'elitism' by those involved in the Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland could be used to create an exclusive club which could be marketed in such a way that it would be attractive to the customer.

The potential to create additional value to the garden was sought. It was suggested that the gardens group provide further information and facilities for the visitor, however, as Key Informant B suggested, '*the group was not relevant to the visitor on the ground ... [they] don't realise it is the garden owners themselves*' who are involved in the group.

The values of the gardens as identified by the Garden Owners/Managers could be themed into a number of different areas. Some of the adjectives were associated with relaxation and ambience, for example '*romantic*' (GO6), '*freedom*' (GO1), '*tranquil*' (GO17) and these were cited by 10 of the Garden Owners/Managers. Uniqueness was considered a sought after value by some gardens (n=4), whereas one of the Garden Owners/Managers (GO4) said that the values sought '*depended on the visitor*'. Plant-oriented words were used by 12 of the Garden Owners/Managers '*a plants person's garden*' (GO10), '*specialist plants*' (GO2, GO17). Four gardens thought that the values associated with the family were those sought by all visitors, while facilities of various types, such as teashops, were cited by five participants. A curiosity factor was deemed by one of the gardens to be of value to visitors – though this was due to the celebrity nature of the owner (who had appeared on television and written books).

Participants were asked about the creation of further value for the visitor. Suggestions included the running of events (n=4), for example lunch with gardeners, art, sculpture facilities (n=7), plants (n=5) and a children's play area (n=3). One garden owner was happy with the way things were and a further two did not really understand the question even with further explanation.

The Garden/Heritage Coordinators were also posed with the question of value to the visitor. The values sought in relation to the garden product were divided into those that were plant/garden (product) oriented and those that were experience oriented. Plant/product orientation included '*greenery*', '*some fabulous trees*' (GC1), '*live gardens*'

(GC5), *'flowers, plant ideas'* (GC4), *'facilities'* (GC3) and *'location and access'* (GC5). Experience oriented included *'experience – that's what they come away with – maybe the personal interaction'* and *'visually beautiful all your senses'* (GC5). One participant was not entirely sure and another said it was the name that attracted the visitor to the place (GC2).

4.4.6 Future Development of Garden Tourism

The Key Informants were asked to comment on the development of gardens as a tourism product in the past and their potential in the future. Comments relating to past developments within garden tourism were positive, *'a lot of progress'* (KIA) and *'great strides have been made'* (KIC). However, Key Informant B said that this progress was down to *'involving the big names'* and *'bringing in new gardens – socially as well'*.

The development of gardens as a tourism commodity in the future was conveyed with hope, with one participant saying that *'there was a lot of scope'* (KIC). It was noted that there had been *'complaints by members of non-gardening groups about the fact there were too many gardens opening their doors'* (KIB) However, the increased numbers involved was seen by the same Key Informant to provide critical mass, thus ensuring greater presence in the tourism sector and in the long term viability.

Many of the Garden Owners/Managers were quite optimistic about future developments in garden tourism, with (n=13) giving a positive response. According to the responses, there is *'definitely a niche'* (GO15) which is *'certain to grow'* (GO16) and *'has much to offer'* (GO20). There *'is a lot of interest'* (GO27), *'proof by people visiting garden centres'*. Three participants focused on increasing markets (GO2), the domestic, international and specialist markets in particular (GO4), and the use of publicity (GO1).

There were four negative responses and three of these related to financial issues *'rapidly running out of money'* (GO12) *'the garden didn't generate as much as was expected'* (GO10) and *'gardens cost'*. One participant said they did not know about future development (GO6).

When the Garden/Heritage Coordinators asked about the future of the garden tourism product, the views of this group were mixed. Two of the coordinators were quite negative, commenting *'are the tourists out there'* (GO3) and that *'the future is not great'* (GO4). Two of the coordinators commented on issues relating to co-operative actions: *'clustering'* (GO1), *'linking in with T&CH, farmhouses and hotels'* (GO3). Two of the coordinators spoke of the future in terms of product enhancement, including additional facilities and the

need for quality. Two of the participants spoke of marketing issues – one viewing change emerging in the visitor market and another *'trying to get offers together'* (GO3) One participant said that they probably should know about the future, *'I don't know an enormous amount because I have been in the job only a few months'*(GO5).

4.5 Theme 3 – Embedded Issues

The structure and position of the groups within the garden-tourism sector has implications for their members in terms of their perception and initial relationship with the group. Therefore, the reasons for joining such a group were a mix of a formalised agreement and mandatness. There is a formalised agreement in terms of a membership fee being paid and the employment of a part-time marketing executive, though no terms of contract are issued. A position of a mandated nature exists to some degree, considering that the PMGs were initiated by the national tourism board and joining them is encouraged. In the case of the Great Garden Restoration Scheme in Ireland, grants were allocated based on the agreement that on completion of the work, the garden would become a member of the PMG. Marketing strategies employed by the group are guided and facilitated by Fáilte Ireland and Tourism Ireland Limited in Ireland, and the Welsh Tourist Board in Wales, with matching financial resources being allocated to marketing activities. These activities can take the form of a common website, literature production, promotion abroad through the tourism offices or attendance at consumer and trade shows and the use of the gardens as part of familiarisation itineraries.

4.5.1 Garden Ownership

Garden ownerships are mainly divided into public (state), private or charity ownership. In the Republic of Ireland state-owned gardens are operated by the OPW; in Northern Ireland and Great Britain they come under the National Trust which is a charity-based organisation. Most of the gardens were in private or family ownership (n=17). This has significance as they do not receive regular state funding or support. Some had received funding through GGRS though others had not. All of those interviewed were the owner or the manager of the garden. One garden had charity status and the remainder were public in ownership, primarily being operated by local authorities. The length of time in present ownership of the gardens ranged from five years to 400 years.

4.5.2 History

Each garden is different and it is a managed form of wild nature, often with alien species living side by side with native species; a creation of artificial habitats. A short history and general information, including website address, on each garden is included in Appendix II. Overall, the gardens ranged from those that had been newly restored to those that had been in existence for up to 400 years.

It takes time to build and develop a garden. This is difficult to comprehend by some markets, particularly the non-specialist garden visitors (general) who may have little knowledge and appreciation of the seasonal nature of growth. The soft landscape of gardens can be considered as ephemeral, requiring constant management and upkeep in order that they are presented in a manner which is attractive to visitors. Gardens that open to visitors need to be able to exhibit aspects of interest during the time of opening and therefore a young garden may not have sufficient interest to deem itself worthy of being visited by some markets.

The youngest garden was five years old at the time of interview and some of the younger gardens included a number which had been funded recently by the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme incorporating other facilities that make up the garden visiting tourist experience, for example Woodstock, Co. Kilkenny. Other recent gardens included Ram House (a small private garden developed from a greenfield site in County Wexford) and Kensington Lodge in South County Dublin (since sold on and developed). Many of the gardens have a long and sometimes turbulent history attached to them, being linked to the landscape and social milieu of the area in which they are located. Many are part of the 'Big House', such as Belvedere, Annesgrove, Fernhill and Lismore. They included formal (Killruddery) and kitchen gardens (Ballymaloe). What was evident is the diversity of the product and, in terms of size, the enormity of the cost of upkeep and management of such places. Restoration of the buildings and the gardens was being undertaken in places such as Grange, Co. Kildare and Vandaleur, Co. Clare where gardens used to exist. These gardens (as well as many of the others in the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme) have relied hugely on garden historians and archaeologists to provide the guidelines and direction required to develop the gardens as close as possible to their original form.

4.5.3 Qualifications, Occupation and Experience

Just under half of the participants had no formal qualification in marketing, business or horticulture, or were from a non-related background, and had therefore learnt 'on the job' (n=13). Those employed (other than family) by an organisation to manage, rather than those that owned the garden had a greater tendency to have formal qualifications with a number having business, marketing or horticultural qualifications. However, working in and with a garden in terms of designing, propagating and planting requires different skills to those required to manage and market a sustainable attraction to the visitor.

4.5.4 Year of Origination and Originator of Garden

Some of the gardens were developed from green-field sites (Ram House) and others had been in existence for many years (Fernhill). Those that were in receipt of a GGRS grant were developed based on thorough investigation into the previous history of the place and garden. In the case of a place such as Woodstock, the garden had long disappeared and new gardens were created on the site where the old existed. Participants differed in their consideration of year of origination, with some referring to the old garden and others to the new garden, for example '*five years old*', whereas the original garden had been there tens of years prior to this. Four participants differentiated specifically between the old and the new gardens. Generally, the responses indicated the level and degree of the restoration that was required in order to create a garden. Ten out of the 28 participants referred to the original developer of the gardens when asked who originated/created the garden. Other gardens, mainly those who were in receipt of the GGRS, referred to that scheme or those involved in operating the scheme as the garden creators. In some cases however, stories emerged such as '*it was when xxx, a garden historian, a friend of ours came over to dinner, he thought we may have something here ... and it went from there*' (GO2).

4.5.5 Management Structure

It was important to ascertain the type of management structure in place in each of the gardens. In terms of business operation, the question was asked as to whether the organisation was considered to be flat or hierarchical in nature. This was asked so as to understand better the influence or say the participant had within an organisation. This concept of organisational structure had to be explained in some circumstances and a number of gardens (n=16) considered themselves flat at same management level, '*allowed what one wants to do*' (GO28) and the rest all classed as hierarchical '*through local authority*', '*Shannon Development*'(GO15).

It was found that the remit of the person involved in operating the garden in terms of being a visitor attraction varied greatly and the resources and support also varied, as did the access to expertise in the field. One manager had little interest or knowledge in aspects of the garden such as soil or speciality plants, although only four of the gardens did not know their soil type – a knowledge required by active gardeners.

4.5.6 Geographical Proximity

Co-operative interaction within a network can work only if each of the providers knows who else is operating within the network. This interaction may be influenced by the geographical proximity of one garden to another. More recently, distance has been overcome to a degree by technology, however, personal contact, which is important in the initial stages of developing a link, can be difficult if gardens are sited a distance away from one another. This was mentioned several times throughout the interviews as a deterrent to meeting with other Garden Owners/Managers, although in recent times the meetings led by HCGI have taken this into account, with different locations hosting them around the country.

The participants were asked about their proximity to an access port in order to ascertain their geographic identity. Most of the participants (n=22) cited distances that were within 50km of an identified access port. Two garden owners cited that distances to an access port were over 100km and these were Dublin centric (as perceived from the West of Ireland). Access ports given in the interview included Rosslare, Shannon, Cork and Dublin.

4.5.7 Geographical Levels of Operation of a Co-operative Group

In Ireland, as in most other countries, co-operatives and groups which network and work together are evident at all geographical levels. These span from local to county (in the case of Ireland), regional, national and international level. As all participants in GC1 and GC2 were operating at least at one of these levels, it was deemed pertinent to ask them to comment on these geographic levels. Geographical proximity is an aspect that may have an impact on the way a group operates and on its success rate. While specific names of co-operative groups were mentioned by the participants, as they are based on opinion, they have been excluded from the findings to protect confidentiality.

Table 4.11 Group Membership at Different Geographic Levels

Geographic Level	Examples	Examples
National	GO13, GO15, GO18, GO21, GO27, GO28	Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland: www.castlesgardensireland.com Heritage Island: www.heritageisland.com
Regional	GO6, GO11, GO13, GO16, GO17, GO18, GO23, GO27	Regional Marketing Groups now through Fáilte Ireland e.g. www.discoverireland.ie/southwest
County	GO1, GO2, GO3, GO4, GO5, GO6, GO 13, GO21, GO23, GO24, GO27	Kildare Tourism: www.kildare.ie Clare Tourism: www.clare.ie
Local	GO 18, GO19, GO20, GO22, GO46, GO27	East Cork: www.eastcorktourism.com Carlingford: www.carlingford.ie
No membership of other groups apart from HCGI	GO5, GO&, GO8, GO9, GO10, GO12, GO14, GO25	

4.5.7.1 Local co-operatives/groups

Twenty-three Garden Owners/Managers commented on local arrangements. Feedback covered a wide number of thoughts ranging from ‘essential’ GO2 to the more negative ‘*the co-operative model fails as it attracts a certain type of person – altruistic rather than business people*’ GO14. This response came from a person who had studied co-operative theory at third level and was familiar with its concept. Overall, negativities at this level were voiced as ‘*parochialism*’ (n=6), ‘*the need for stronger people*’ and ‘*the requirement for a serious commercial stake*’ (GO14).

A number of the participants (n=13) were positive about co-operation at a local level – ‘*good at keeping people in the area*’ (GO15), ‘*cost effective*’ (GO2), and some mentioned focus and control as being important, with one stating that larger groups were difficult to manage.

Similarly to the gardens, a number of the coordinators actually gave names of groups at the different delineated levels to illustrate points within their answers. The state body (GC1)

felt *'that they didn't have an angle at any level because of the nature of their role'* and stated that *'we don't have to advertise'* and they did not have anything to say specifically about the different levels of co-operation. Little seemed to be known about the local level by some of the other groups – some mentioned and spoke of *'a willingness'* (GC2) at this level and that they were *'good'*, with one group aligning it to the Tidy Towns (GC5).

4.5.7.2 County co-operatives/groups

Overall, there seemed to be less involvement with the county groups/co-operatives. This may be the case as in some counties where lack of resources or interest have caused problems in the operation of the county-based tourism organisations. Certain counties, such as Meath, have a strong organisation which has been operating for many years through the local authority and has developed a strong identity with providers, albeit politically driven. With other counties, such as Kildare, Tipperary and Clare, this is not the case and operation has been fraught with problems, including staff turnover, and this has led to poor identity and positioning with the providers.

The responses the Garden Owners/Managers (n=20) were not as positive as their comments in evaluating the local co-operation. Comments like *'very fragmented'* (GC20), and *'dare not approach them'* (GC15) demonstrated a lack of interaction and communication between the provider and the county group. One provider thought that they were *'very important – makes you open to the world'* *'[they] are good at networking'* (GC23), indicating less negativity.

In relation to the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators, the county level of operation appeared to be recognised more by the commercial company and by three of the other groups, all citing the same county due to its visibility in the tourism sector. One group (GC4) wished to be more aligned to another county group and was frustrated as this was not possible because they lay outside the county boundaries. A festival which was run by a county group was also seen to be important and one of the groups recognised its uniqueness, saying that what this festival provided something that was quite different.

4.5.7.3 Regional co-operatives/groups

Twenty-one of the 28 Garden Owners/Managers commented on the regional co-operatives/groups, with half making positive comments (n=10) and half being negative about them. Positive comments included *'the optimum'*(GO17), *'successful'* (GO6) and *'working together - mostly beneficial'*, and negative comments such as *'find this did not work – perhaps too spaced out'* (G03) , *'not as supportive as they could be'*(GO13) and

'nobody has been near us' (GO24). Many of these negative comments indicated that the providers saw the regional bodies as doing something for them' rather than operating a truly co-operative approach which involves reciprocity. This is perhaps because they, as providers, pay a membership to the regional tourism boards and therefore expect something in return.

The regional level of operation focused strongly and positively with a number of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators with the charity saying *'it can work better as there is a depth of knowledge and funding to carry out extensive marketing'* (GC2). The commercial company said that *'regional tourism was extremely important'* (GC3). However, the voluntary group said it need clarity in relation to its role. The other county group was not aware of their work and said that someone else in the organisation dealt with the regional tourism boards.

4.5.7.4 National Co-operatives/groups

Most of the Garden Owners/Managers commented on national co-operatives/groups (n=25), with the overwhelming majority (n=23) being positive about the approach. Words used included *'essential'* (GO2), *'effective'*(GO7), *'brilliant'*(GO11), *'good as a concept'*(GO14) and *'some effective and some useless'* (GO5). It was identified that there was a need for national co-operative groups to be there in order to interact with the trade, for overseas marketing, and networking in general. It was also recognised that there was an overall need to work together. However, one participant which one said that *'they forget about the smaller properties'* (GO1). Issues did arise according to some participants *'although they have a role to play ... there was no monitoring in place and little feedback'* (GO20) and the issue of size emerged with two properties saying that national co-operatives/groups were too large (GO4, GO17).

The national level of operation was viewed by one Garden/Heritage Group Coordinator that *'it can be all things to all people'* (GC2), while questioning its benefits, *'costs can outweigh the benefits'*. However, stated that there was a *'need to be part of something that is part of an all Ireland product'*. The commercial organisation (GC3) was very positive about co-operative groups at a national level and named specific contacts, stressing the importance of developing relationships with them. This particular company dedicates one or two people to developing and maintaining these relationships. The smaller voluntary group felt as though they were *'hijacked by the larger gardens'* (GC4) at national level,

and the county group '*thought that it was more of a challenge at the county level*'(GC5) as there were more resources and a bigger team operating at the national level.

4.6 Theme 4 - Co-operation and Relationships

The core research question of this thesis related to the exploration of the use of relationships and links in the garden tourism product. It was, therefore, deemed fundamental to ask the participants about their views and thoughts on co-operative practices in order to gain an insight into links and relationships that were being developed by them. In order to ascertain the participant's perception of co-operation, it was deemed important to identify what co-operation meant to those being interviewed. Word association was used initially to steer the interview (without naming any particular group), ensuring that garden product marketing groups were the focus. Instead of offering a definition of co-operation, the participants were asked to define and use words that they, in their role as a member of a product marketing group, *thought* were associated with co-operation in terms of garden tourism. In expanding these definitions further, the three most important characteristics required for successful co-operative marketing were then sought.

4.6.1 Word Association

Two Key Informants who were marketing oriented were very positive when asked for the first word to come to mind associated with 'co-operative marketing groups'. Words such as '*legacy*', '*heritage*', '*wonderful gems*' and '*personal*' were mentioned by Key Informant A words which create a sense of both enjoyment and effectiveness about the approach, as mentioned by Key Informant C. However, Key Informant B was more negative, stating that gardens were '*not doing enough for themselves*' and were '*always fighting*'. This Key Informant is horticultural rather than marketing oriented.

The participants in Garden Owners/Managers in most of the interview circumstances had been open with their conversations and willing to share information in relation to the background of the garden, history and the marketing of the place. The following questions changed the focus from the garden to co-operation and co-operative practices, particularly in light of product marketing groups (PMG). Several of the participants were confused with this change of question focus (n=6) and showed a lack of understanding: '*what?*' (GO12), '*what are you talking about?*' (GO16). Thirteen of the other answers were divided into positive connotations with words used including '*listen*' (GO1), '*dedication*' (GO2), '*togetherness*'(GO21), '*expansion of capacity*' (GO28), '*a good idea*'(GO3),

'quality'(GO10), 'communication'(GO18), 'contact'(GO11) and 'grandeur'(GO25). Negatively associated words (n=8) included words/statements such as 'diverse' (GO13), 'aging members'(GO14), 'ineffective' (GO15), 'a lack of them'(GO19), 'character clashes'(GO27), 'unfulfilled'(GO5) and 'oh god, poor' (GO8).

Of the five Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators whose role involved the management/co-ordination of groups, three were unsure and had difficulty in answering the free association question on co-operation in garden tourism product marketing groups: '*don't mean anything to me as a person*' (GC1), '*not too sure of what you mean*' (GC4) and '*explain – I am not entirely sure*'(GC5). Other words used appeared quite negative: '*confusion*' and '*don't see ourselves as much as a marketing group*'. There were also positive words used: '*very effective locally*' (GC3), '*good for local knowledge representation*'(GC3) , '*a great idea people doing it*'(GC5), '*want it to be a great success but don't want to spend money*' and '*cross-marketing*' (GC2).

4.6.2 Definition of Co-operation

Teasing out the term of co-operation further with the Key informants and seeking to identify the characteristics required, the participants were asked about the meaning of co-operation. '*People working together*' and '*different people with different strengths and weakness coming together*' were considered the basic premise of co-operation and were cited by Key Informants A and C. Key Informant B mentioned a degree of reciprocity - '*genuinely looking out for each other as well as yourself*' (as opposed to fighting as per answer to previous question) and '*the spirit of the movement*' were mentioned.

The Garden Owners/Managers were asked to expand their thoughts and define co-operation in terms of what it meant to them. Again responses were divided into positive and negative, with positive responses (n=24) overwhelming those who were negative in their ponderings and these are documented in Table 4.12. Examples of negative responses (n=4) about co-operation included that it was '*poorly resourced*' (GO24) and that further finance was needed to make it more effective. One participant said that '*I ring up the [other] gardens and find out their rates – you are on your own*', (GO14) whilst another said that '*it takes too long – like a camel pulling in all directions*' (GO3).

Table 4.12 Frequency of Positive Words/ Phrase Used to Define Co-operation by Garden Owners/Managers

Words/Phrases Used	Frequency
Working together/interaction /networking/linkage	11
Commonality (aims, vision, sharing, sameness, similarity)	6
Reciprocity (helping each other, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours)	4
Pooling resources/efficiencies	5
Communication	2

* Number exceeded participant number as some used a number of words to describe co-operation

When asked about their thoughts on co-operation, one of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators said that co-operation was to do with business and manufacturing and was not applicable. The other participants used words such as '*working together with ultimate goals*' (GO2) '*shared knowledge and resources*' (GO3), '*working hand in hand*' (GO5) and '*communication*' (GO5) as part of their descriptions and these have been themed and tabulated in Table 4.13. One state body said that '*I am open to it ... though it's not a monetary word*' (GO1).

Table 4.13 Frequency of Positive Words/Phrases Used to Define Co-operation by Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators

Words/Phrases Used	Frequency
Working together/interaction/networking/ linkage	1
Commonality (aims, vision, sharing, sameness, similarity)	1
Trust	1
Reciprocity (helping each other, you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours)	no mention
Pooling resources/efficiencies	1
Communication	1

4.6.3 Characteristics Essential to Co-operate Successfully

Essential characteristics required to undertake successful co-operation again differed between the Key Informants. Those from a marketing orientation (KIA, KIC) mentioned ‘*competition*’, ‘*paying subscription on time*’ and ‘*providing for the visitor*’ as characteristics, which indicate a certain degree of narrowness in relation to the approach. Key Informant C went on to expand the answer and considered ‘*trust*’ and ‘*creation of a dynamic*’ as important, although trust was seen in the context of ensuring committees worked in the best interest of the group. Key Informant B suggested ‘*trust*’, ‘*common purpose*’ (also mentioned by Key Informant A), ‘*ability to understand*’ and ‘*knowing what will work for you*’ as being the key characteristics.

A large amount of information emanated from the Garden Owners/Managers in response to this question, with over 125 characteristics/traits suggested as being successful to co-operation. Only two participants said that they did not have a clue or did not know. Some of these characteristics/traits were mentioned by several participants. The most common characteristics (themed), as defined by the participants, and the number of times mentioned are illustrated in Table 4.14.

Table 4.14 Essential Characteristics for Successful Co-operative Marketing by Garden Owners/Managers

Main Characteristics Mentioned ... the need for	Frequency
Leadership	7
Understanding/knowledge requirement	7
Commitment	7
Size/structure	5
Communication /regular meetings	5
Focus/vision	5
Sharing/team aspects	4
Common goals	4

There were many other characteristics mentioned. A number of these related to the requirements of the individual participating in the group, while some related to the group themselves. Others related to the nature of the leader/manager, such as having ‘*ideas*’ (GO1) , ‘*listening ability*’(GO2), ‘*youth*’(GO8), ‘*interest*’(GO3), ‘*energy*’ (GO14) ‘*good chairman*’ (GO2) , ‘*personal touch* ’(GO11) and ‘*honesty /integrity*’(GO25,GO27).Other typical characteristics associated with co-operation were not immediately evident, with ‘*trust*’(GO20), and ‘*social interaction*’ (GO22) being mentioned only once each. Other characteristics referred to only once include the ability to implement, the need for ideas, awareness of the consumer and the need for support from Bord Fáilte (Fáilte Ireland).

There were a few negative comments (n=11) given in response to this question. These included words such as ‘insecure personalities’ (GO21), ‘Dublin- oriented’(GO6), ‘too large and spread out’ (GO17) ‘unrealistic expectations’ (GO5) and ‘fighting within the group’(GO5). One owners suggested that what was needed was someone’ who was not bogged down with running a garden’ (GO8).

Responses from the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators were varied with characteristics linked to communication as being the most important as illustrated in Table 4.15, though no-one mentioned leadership, commitment, sharing or focus/vision, which were considered essential characteristics by the Owners/Managers. Ideal personal characteristics required for successful co-operation were described by some as an ‘*ongoing liaison*’ (GC2), ‘*communication*’ (GC5), ‘*ability to share* (GC3) and ‘*strategic*’ (GC2). Other characteristics related more to development and operational issues: ‘*ownership is key*’ (GC2), ‘*aware of what is lacking*’ (GC1), ‘*close personal relationships*’ (GC4) and ‘*social aspects and marketing*’ (GC4) – *and spreading the word*’ (GC5) were mentioned.

Table 4.15 Essential Characteristics for Successful Co-operative Marketing by Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators

Main Characteristics Mentioned... the need for	Frequency
Communication/regular meetings	4
Understanding/knowledge requirement	1
Size/structure	1
Common goals	1
Leadership	0
Sharing/team aspects	1
Commitment	0
Focus/vision/objective	1

4.6.4 The Use of Marketing Tools in Co-operation, Links and Relationships

The section of the interview on the marketing of the garden sought to explore the role marketing played in the business, the types of tools used and aspects of marketing operation that might suggest that relationships or co-operation existed through the development of links and contacts. ‘*Marketing is the activity, set of institutions, and processes for creating, communicating, delivering and exchanging offerings, that have value for customers, clients, partners and society at large*’ (AMA 2009). As can be seen from this definition, marketing requires a holistic approach, includes the organisations, people and processes and impacts at all levels. Through marketing, a level of confidence and worth is developed in the product, giving benefit and value to both the provider and

the customer. Awareness and delivery of that product to an interested and ready market is conducted through an array of integrated marketing tools, many of which are directed at the traditional customer but also some of which are directed at other stakeholders involved in the distribution process such as intermediaries including tourist information offices (TIO), tour operators, handling agents.

The focus on the use of integrated marketing communications tools such as advertising and promotion is well documented by Belch and Belch (2004). The use of these tools also forms an integrated aspect to the approach taken by Payne and Frow (2005) in the development of the model to develop and manage customer relationships. Each of the participants in the groups was asked about the type of marketing that had been undertaken by the garden. As they did not specifically own or manage gardens, the Key Informants were asked a more generic question about marketing in garden tourism. Other elements such as visitor numbers, market type and marketing budget were sought from Groups 2 and 3 and also the type of marketing tools employed.

Key Informant A, who was much involved in the role of marketing, gave a list of what was happening at the time and this included the use of such marketing tools as brochures, publications, advertising, mail shots, co-operative practices (with National Trust (NT), Northern Irish Tourist Board (NITB), Irish Tour operators Association (ITOA) and Bord Fáilte), *The Irish Garden* (a publication), exhibitions and the use of IT. The other Key Informants (KIB, KIC) spoke of the ambassadorial role of a number of high-profile gardeners who were involved in promoting the gardens. At the time of the interviews, there was a series of gardening programmes on Irish television and these helped to raise the profile of the gardeners and gardens, especially with the domestic market. One of the other Key Informants recognised that the generation of awareness and information dissemination was important – that ‘*visitors know about gardens*’ (KIB) and it is essential that those involved in both marketing and delivering the experience have a personal approach – that is, that the garden owners and managers are able to talk to the visitors. It was also suggested that, in general, marketing undertaken by garden owners tended to be reactive, although there were some who were more involved, working through county or destinations groups. This marketing is often organised and undertaken by the county tourism destination groups, supported by local authorities (Meath) or it has been funded by LEADER, as in the case of the Fuchsia brand in West Cork. When asked about the types of marketing which should be undertaken in Ireland, issues raised included ‘*more resources [required] including people*’ (KIA) and ‘*more co-operation*’. Suggested

approaches such as the attendance at an increased number of trade fairs and the development of contacts, especially with the media, were referred to, indicating the understanding that relationships with certain parties are beneficial to the marketing process. Linking in with gardening experts was also seen to be a positive approach, especially in pursuit of the expert knowledge to create a more value-filled experience for the customer.

4.6.5 Use of Marketing Communication Tools and Perceived Effectiveness

Marketing is about developing a positive awareness of a product or service so that potential consumers purchase and become long term customers. In order to create this awareness and continue the relationship, various marketing communication tools are used. These tools help to create both a product and market position, which includes a desired image and promise of fulfilled expectation. The types of marketing communication tools used as reported by the Key Informants are shown in Table 4.16. This group was not asked about effectiveness as this question sought to identify the types of tools for inclusion in the interviews with the Garden Owners/Managers.

Table 4.16 Use of Marketing Communication Tools Key Informants

Tools	Mentioned	Example/comment
Membership of co operative group	HCGI not mentioned	Co-operate with Blue Book, Hidden Ireland
Advertising	Yes	With National Trust, Irish Garden magazine
Brochure Production/Familiarisation	Yes	
Promotion/distribution	Yes	Exhibitions, stand and exhibits at Chelsea L' Art de Jardin, ITB in Berlin/to market offices
Tour operators/Commission	Yes	ITOA, group planners
Distribution	Yes	To market offices
Internet/web	No	
Other	Television Trails	

With this group, the use and effectiveness of different marketing tools were explored with the Garden Owners/Managers. Due to the conversational nature of the interviews, not all participants in Garden Owners/Managers answered the effectiveness issue specifically, although of those that did, an attempt was made to create an effectiveness rating scale and tools are listed in accordance with the perceived effectiveness. Participants were asked to rate the effectiveness of the used tool on a three point Likert scale, with '1' being *very*

effective, '2' effective and '3' not effective. The accumulated ratings were divided by the numbers that responded to this question and the perceived effectiveness of these tools is listed in Table 4.17 in order of considered effectiveness (closest to '1' very effective).

All Garden Owners/Managers were members of a co-operative marketing group, with most finding it a *very effective* (n=6) or *effective* method of marketing (n=14), although ten Garden Owners/Managers said it was difficult to gauge or know the efficacy of membership. One participant was not happy with the national organisation and another was not happy with the regional co-operative group. Spending on annual membership ranged from 10% to 95% of the budget. However, this form of marketing (membership of a co-operative) was considered to be the least effective overall by those that gave a rating to it. The most effective tool was perceived to be promotion, with 16 participants using this tool. However, one participant did consider that promotion '*was being part of the co-operative*' (GO18).

Table 4.17 Usage of Communication Tools, Percentage Spend and General Perceived Level of Effectiveness by the Gardens

Tool	Usage by No.	% spend	Perceived effectiveness
Promotion	15	Free-15%	1.28 (based on n=7)
Distribution	13	5-30%	1.4 (based on n=9)
Brochure	28	12.5-70	1.52 (based on n=17)
Tour operators	16	Not specified by any	1.6 (based on n=5)
Internet/web	22	5-20%	1.75 (based on n=12)
Advertising	23	10-70	1.78 (based on n=14)
Familiarisations	17	2-25	1.8 (based on n=10)
Member of co-op marketing groups	28	10-95	1.85 (based on n=20)

Apart from being part of a marketing co-operative/group, all 28 participants used brochures as a marketing tool. This involved '*working with accommodation operators*' (GO27), however there was no mention of the PMG brochure by any of the gardens. Advertising and the internet/web were used by 22 participants. Advertising was at the experimental stage for three participants and, although all have a presence on the web through the marketing co-operative websites, the internet/web was viewed by one

participant to be *'not great'* (GO18) and by another as *'wonderful'* (GO16). Five participants indicated that *'it was too early'* to judge as they had only recently become involved in the use of the web.

Familiarisations (bringing journalists/media and other influential stakeholders around the garden) were used by 17 of the gardens while one said he may do it in the future.

Tour operators specifically deal with groups (either specialist or general) and can be viewed by many attractions as a way of bringing increased visitor numbers. Over half the gardens (n=16) dealt with tour operators, although some had tried this distribution channel with limited success. The small size and limited capacity of some of the gardens may be a deterrent to working with the tour-operator trade. Four Garden Owners/Managers said they were trying to develop this link, while three others said that they did not use it at present, with one mentioning that this link *'takes a number of years'* (GO13).

Promotion was used by 15 of the gardens. Promotion is a generally broad term used by providers and maybe interpreted in different ways. Some of the gardens saw promotion as a method of marketing requiring no financial input and used to target and market their garden to visitors. Less than half of the gardens used distribution as a marketing tool, focusing on accommodation units. Many of the gardens (n=9) mentioned other forms of marketing tools which were utilised by them. These included direct mail, personal contact, word of mouth (WOM n=3), workshops, co-operative marketing (n=1), signage and the use of local tourism information offices (TIOs).

Over the period of the research, the use of IT has become increasingly important as a marketing tool to both create awareness and to develop and maintain relationships with the various stakeholders. However, in Ireland, ITIC and AMAS (2007) found that there was a digital divide between SMTE's and the larger tourism firms. This is a cause for concern and a number of recommendations were made including awareness, co-ordination and collaboration. Reciprocal referral of other gardens (through links) can be used as a method of strengthening horizontal relationships and promoting experts and related products (accommodation, access and other activities) can develop and strengthen vertical relationships. An analysis of the garden websites was undertaken in February 2009 and a brief description and links synopsis are provided in Table 4.18.

Of those that answered as to whether they were happy with present marketing activities, about a third of the gardens (n=11) were positive and a third were negative (n=12). Four

participants said they were not involved or did not know. When asked of potential changes to marketing of the garden, a number of suggestions were made. These included greater focus required (n=4), the development of further linkages, more resources and greater development and differentiation (each n=3), further planning (n=2) and further development (n=1). Specific actions related to marketing included the development of a promotional video, increasing membership and further trade familiarisations. However there were also some negative responses and a suggestion by one participant ‘*that there were too many booklets*’ (GO23) and another of ‘*an uneven playing field*’ (GO20) at present within the marketplace.

When asked specifically about what types of marketing should be carried out by marketing co-operative groups, (not specifically identified as either regional or national), additional suggestions were made. These included focus on the specialist markets (n=6), focus on geographical markets and more increased business with the trade (both n=5), co-operative marketing and links, further advertising (both n=4), increase profile of group (n=3) and more brochures/magazine (n=2). Two of the participants were satisfied with the present position and three participants did not know.

Table 4.18 Garden Website Description and Links

	No.	Comments
Direct websites including specific garden name	16	Searched by garden name input into web search engine
Indirect websites	11	4 listed only under www.gardens.ireland-guide.com which has associated links
No website	1	As it has been sold though still comes up under Discover Ireland
Opening times/admission etc	28	Though in several cases these have not been updated recently Opening times appeared either as integrated in the descriptive text or as a separate pull down
Commonly used words to describe gardens	10 5 7 6 3	Historical Plant focused/specialist Era (e.g. Victorian and/or date cited) Natural/wildlife Facility focus
Evident focus (target market)	6 4 13 3 13	Families Educational Garden lovers/specialist Other focus (facility) None/general
Pictures (general/specialist)		Varied – ranging from the specialist (Birr Castle) to general (Vandaleur). However many included vistas, people and stonework e.g. walls, buildings and gates rather than plants

Links		4 of the gardens that linked into www.gardens.ireland-guide.com (operated under Georgina Campbell) have links to garden trails, accommodation and festivals and are not included below
• Accommodation	7	This consisted mainly of specialist accommodation (Blue Book, Hidden Ireland) though there was also some general local accommodation
• Access	2	Airlines, trains, buses
• Attractions	8	
• Other specific gardens/garden websites	4	
• Tourist organisations/offices	12	Fáilte Ireland (in one case still called Bord Fáilte) regional tourism offices or local destination organisations
• Co-operative bodies excluding HCGI	3	Heritage Island
• Houses Castles and Gardens of Ireland	7	
• Festivals	3	
• Tour Ops/other related and non-related activities e.g. golf	6	
• Other, e.g. car hire	1	
No links evident	11	This included one of the largest and most diverse attractions (GO24)

* numbers add up to more than 31 as some of the gardens had multiple foci

The Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators were asked about the different types of marketing they used to promote the gardens/attractions and the communication tools and comments on their usage are shown in Table 4.19.

Table 4.19 Usage of Communication Tools - Garden/Heritage Group**Coordinators**

Tool	No.	Effectiveness
Membership of Co-operative	4	Only one organisation rated effectiveness and this was very positive. Another group said that although they were members they had not dealt with them yet.
Advertising	3	Two found this ineffective and one found it effective
Brochure production	5 - <i>'in different languages – Chinese, Indian'</i> (GO1) Trade and consumer	Two of these found it effective though another organisation <i>'used brochures to promote the brand though did find it hard to relate back'</i> (GO3)
Promotion	4 - <i>'trade shows better than consumer shows'</i> (GO1), <i>'online'</i> (GO5), <i>'consumer lifestyle shows'</i> (GO3)	Two said they were very effective and one said promotion was effective
Tour operators	4 - <i>'good for RM'</i> (GO3) <i>'Ulsterbus'</i>	WOM mentioned
Familiarisations	4	RM mentioned
Distribution	1	Networking
Internet	3 – growth in visits to website	All positive
Other		Local media Workshops

4.6.6 The Development of Links and Relationships with Stakeholders

The identification of relationships/links, the reason for the development of these links and the levels of involvement with these links by the garden owners were explored. In order to aid the process, an adapted version of the Six Market Model (Peck et al. 1999) (2.12.1 in this document) helped to catalyse thoughts where required.

As the Key Informants had good knowledge of all the gardens, they were asked to comment on their perception of these links amongst the garden group. Key Informant B was again rather negative about this and said *'I don't see much co-operation being built*

up'. They went on to say that head gardeners, due to their common passion, were better at networking and organising trips. The reason given for the lack of links developed included the difference in '*class background; they seek similar levels with each other*' and that there is '*a pecking order amongst groups*'. Key Informants A and C were not greatly positive either, saying that '*I wouldn't be aware of them*' or that links developed varied, naming specific gardens and garden owners who made some effort and employees were also mentioned in a positive light. With regard to level of involvement, knowledge again was limited from these participants, though Key Informant C did mention that links had been made by some gardens with the media. Key Informant B (who seemed to have greater personal knowledge of the gardens and owners) mentioned a number of names and what they were doing – it was recommended that '*they should be visiting each other's gardens, social gatherings and conducting internal marketing*'

An essential aspect of the research was to identify the present contacts/links and prioritise the relationships each of the Garden Owners/Managers had developed with other stakeholders. Thirteen of the Garden Owners/Managers cited that they had a link with the state organisations and TIOs, with nine of them citing it as a priority link. The media featured as the next number of highest links (n=8), although only two of these cited it as a priority link. Links were developed with accommodation providers by nine gardens. Both employees and customers were links cited by seven of the gardens. Links with other gardens were mentioned only by seven of the participants indicating a lack of interaction, relationship or co-operation. The participants were also asked why these contacts were made and to prioritise them. Of those that answered this question (n=13), four said that contact was made for relationship and network building purposes, four cited bringing additional visitors, three said it was about the creation of awareness and two participants specified '*strengthen and monitor brand*' (GO15) '*confidence building*' (GO1) '*and believing in yourself*' (GO1). The main contacts, the number of gardens who cited the contact as their main link and some additional comments are given in Table 4.20. It is indicated as to number of gardens that gave first priority to the types/name of contact.

Table 4.20 Present Links and Relationships - Garden Owners/Managers

Type/Name of Contact	No.	Comment
State Organisations and TIOs (n=9 as no.1)	13	'very expensive' (GO3) 'increased visitor numbers' (GO14) 'BF is through seminars though TIO contact was through personal and email contact' (GO23) 'they should be able to do more for you' (GO13)
Media (n=2 as no.1)	8	Though comments showed that this was all reactive
Accommodation (n=4 as no.1)	9	'Difficult to say' 'some free vouchers to visit' (GO11) 'leaflet distribution' 'brochures posting them, leaflet drop' (GO24) 'Continuous contact' (GO15)
Employees (n=3 as no.1)	7	'very important as it is they who interact with the public' (GO24) 'try and motivate them to be proud of the product' (GO26)
Customers (n=1 as no.1)	7	'People who come back again and again' (GO26) 'season tickets' (GO25) 'staff talk to the customer' (GO13) 'WOM' (word of mouth) (GO11)
Competitors or Other specific Garden (n=0 as no. 1)	7	'keep looking at other peoples strategies' (GO11)
Referral (n=2 as no. 1)	4	'leaflets to B&B's' (GO10)
Gardens of Ireland (n=2 as no. 1)	5	'Once a year' (GO16) 'once a month' (GO8) 'no business though just a lobbying group' (GO2)
Suppliers (n=1 as no. 1)	3	'great contact with tour operators' (GO21)
Tour operators (n=0 as no. 1)	4	'tour operators should contact you' (GO1) 'database of tour operators – wholesale' (GO24) 'have personal relationship – know and trust them' (GO24)
Business (n=2 as no. 1)	3	
Family and Friends (n=0 as no. 1)	3	
No not really	1	This garden interview was the only interview that was tape recorded – (interview 22)

While almost all participants spoke of the links they had made with other stakeholders, several were negative about being in contact with some or all of their links, though these were in the minority: *'I am defeated by it all and the begrudgerly'* (GO9), *'time constraints'*(GO8), *'don't want to travel to Dublin'*(GO16), *'no need to meet'*, *'requires patience'*(GO21), *'expectations not realised'*(GO5), *'only you can help yourself'*(GO1). One Garden Owners/Manager said *'all were enthusiastic in the beginning – though there was a need for just one person'* (GO19).

The types of contact, priority of link and comments made by the participants in the Garden/Heritage Coordinators group are shown with comments in Table 4.21: Libraries/tourist offices were also mentioned as a link though one participant said specifically that they did not link with the competition

Similarly, the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators identified the state organisations/ TIOs as being an important link, with four of the five groups mentioning this link and two giving it as a priority link. This was followed by the media (n=4 and one citing it as priority) and employees (n=4 and one as a priority).

Table 4.21 Present Links and Relationships Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators

Type/Name of Contact	No.	Comment
State Organisations and TIOs (n=2 as no. 1)	4	<i>'On membership board' (GC1)</i> <i>'face-to-face, every couple of months'(GC3)</i> <i>'contact quite regularly'(GC2)</i> <i>'in constant contact – links from our site to theirs and that works' (GC5)</i>
Media (n=1 as no.1)	4	<i>'Personal link regarding events'(GC2)</i> <i>'good for over 55's'(GC1)</i> <i>'not good at present, have to develop personally' (GC3)</i> <i>'not clear, few of the gardens have press releases though have good relationship with specialist magazines'(GC1)</i> <i>'have contacts here – local media important' (GC5)</i>
Employees/members (n=1 as no. 1)	4	<i>'They are great, mainly email and time is spent on them' (GC5)</i> <i>'phone calls/site visits (when asked about the use of email – said that they don't answer them)' (GC3)</i> <i>'use of newsletter to enhance awareness – 2 per year' (GC2)</i> <i>Volunteers – 'feel part of the organisation' (GC2)</i>
Customers/visitors (n=0 as no. 1)	1	Consumer show – database and newsletters (GC3)
Referral (n=1 as no.1)	2	<i>'WOM' (GC1)</i> <i>'Helen Dillon etc. lectures they are with their peers – act as ambassadors' (GC4)</i>
Tour operators (n=1 as no. 1)	2	<i>'We have one colleague who deals with these, undertake DIY familiarisation trip – already relationships built up with the tour ops – use email and send out manual to them' (GC1)</i>
Business	2	<i>'Started using members' newsletter [to get their interest]'(GC5)</i>
Family and Friends	1	<i>'Second nature to promote to family and friends'(GC2)</i>

4.6.7 Methods Used to Develop and Maintain Links

Due to the complex number of links that had been developed by the participants in all of the groups interviewed, it was difficult to get a clear picture of what methods of communication were being used for which links. However, the previous answer on the links being developed by stakeholders as perceived by the Key Informants indicated their lack of knowledge as to what was going on. This was to be expected as relationships often tend to be quite close to the individual and concerned with the use of personal communication networks (PCN), which are indeed considered part of their personal competitive advantage. Therefore, it was assumed unlikely that the Key Informants would have detailed knowledge of the methods used by each of the gardens or garden coordinators.

After the prompt of ‘communication/awareness’ was used to direct Key Informants, some information was forthcoming. Comments, though varied, were divided into three categories: social interaction (reciprocal visiting of each others’ gardens, networking through email); visual (brochure, posters, photos, web); and personnel (a good garden manager).

The Garden Owners/Managers were asked about the methods of contact they used to develop and maintain these contacts and the type of communication method used are shown in Table 4.22. One participant mentioned that ‘*continuous contact was made with contacts*’ (GO15) and though this is suggested as the best approach in the literature (Kotler 2003), initial identification of ‘*the value received by the organisation and life time value*’ of contacts are required (Payne and Frow 2005:172). Therefore a greater focus on those who provide visitors to the gardens, including TIOs and intermediaries would be more operationally efficient.

Querying methods used to develop future contacts also yielded some feedback, much of which was similar to that mentioned in Table 4.22, although personal contact had a higher priority than leaflets or brochures. Other suggestions included the ‘*creation of a European co-operative*’ (GO15) and the need to ‘*brainstorm*’. One participant said that, due to capacity issues, they did not want to develop any further awareness of their garden.

Table 4.22 Methods of contact mentioned

Communication Tool Mentioned	No.
Brochures/leaflets	12

Personal	10
Telephone	8
Mailouts	3
Email	4

Only one Garden/Heritage Group Coordinator (GC2) spoke specifically about the methods by which contacts and relationships could be developed. This group thought one-to-one meetings (personal) were essential at the initial stages of the process and also included such approaches as letters of introduction. They mentioned that it was also necessary for a group to discuss core objectives and benefits and that time and arrangements of reciprocity needed exploration.

4.6.8 Frequency of Contact

Frequency of contact with links was also discussed and this was undertaken to explore the strength of bonds that may result from contact. Collaboration and co-operation were mentioned as an approach to working together by two of the Key Informants (KIA, KIB). However, they were aware of the subject matter of the research and may have been prompted into giving such a reply

Though many of the Garden Owners/Managers did not go into the detail of how frequently contact was made (instead they referred to how they made contact), those that did, primarily made contact on a monthly basis. Contact ranged from ‘*continuous*’ (GO15) and ‘*everyday*’ (GO24) in relation to the use of email, to once a year in relation to the distribution of brochures and personal meetings. In one case, ‘*there is no need to meet*’ (GO16). Some used the opportunity of meetings and seminars as a way of keeping contact with people (n=3) and another participant said that the process required patience.

The Garden /Heritage Group Coordinators did not elaborate on the frequency of contact though the state group (GO1) did say that contact ‘was prompted by events’. The commercial company which was most focused on using a personal approach said that face-to-face contact was made every couple of months with their members, and another group (GO2) used a newsletter which was disseminated twice a year. Another group (GO5) did say that they were in ‘constant contact’ with the support body, though this group was aware of the researcher’s previous involvement with the support body and this may have influenced the answer given.

4.6.9 Future Links

The participants were asked about future links they may consider making with other stakeholders. The answers are influenced by prior questions, although they give an indication of level of strategic thinking.

When asked about the relationships/links that *should* be made, one of the marketing oriented Key Informants seemed to misunderstand the question and focused in on issues like opening times and facilities, while the other two Key Informants considered building relationships/links with local clubs, garden groups and societies as being important.

Only one Key Informant (B) answered as to why links should be built up. She suggested that '*they [the gardens] know how to network ... when marrying off the kids, having horses sired etc*'. She also thought that it was both the lifestyle of the garden owners and the social interaction with them, meeting with them personally, which was attractive to the visitors.

The Garden Owners/Managers considered state organisations (n=6) as being the most important in terms of developing future contacts, as shown in Table 4.23. This was followed by tour operators and specialist groups (each n=5) and the media (n=4). However, four of the Garden Owners/Managers said that they did not wish to consider any future links or develop relationships with any other stakeholders. Interview 22 (taped) was quite forceful and negative when asked about future contacts and gave a resounding '*No!*'

Table 4.23 Possible Future Contacts/Relationships

Type/Name of Contact	No.
State Organisations and TIOs	6
Specialist groups/educational etc	5
Tour operators	5
Media	4
Accommodation	4
Employees	2
Competitors or Other specific Gardens	2
Gardens of Ireland	2
Customers	1
Bus drivers	1
Garden centres	1
None	4

The responses from the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators were not as expansive and there was less input into these responses than for the preceding question on existing links.

One of the groups wished to encourage repeat visitors (GO2) and another group (GO5), wished to use the horticultural groups and bodies to connect with the right people. The state group said that '*conservation rather than tourism*' was its main objective and hence '*protection of the site and enabling access*' was important to it. The commercial group specified increased contact with the state and support organisations and also with the media.

4.6.10 Benefits and Barriers to Co-operation

Throughout the interviews, the benefits of relationship development and contacts made included confidence building, creating and maintaining awareness, generating a good rapport, leaflet and brochure distribution, increase in visitor numbers and strengthening and building brand. However, a number of barriers and problems were also identified.

A potential error can occur when seeking 'barriers' or 'problems' in a question, is that it implies or suggests that problems may exist. However, as positive aspects of co-operation had been explored, it was deemed balanced to include some exploration of negatives issues. The aim was to get Garden Owners/Managers to identify problems about relationships/contact development without being too negative about one person or specific organisation. Five participants gave positive reactions to this question: '*nothing stands out*' (GO7), people are '*helpful and open*', '*no problems*' (GO23) and '*no negatives except standards*' (GO19).

Nineteen barriers or problems were mentioned. Some of the barriers related to the people involved themselves: '*insecurities*' (GO21), '*imbalance due to personalities*' (GO15), '*lack of understanding*' (GO2), '*fighting*' (GO4) and '*lack of trust*' (GO21) Parochialism and being county oriented which were mentioned as barriers, however, could relate to the way in which the garden owners operate, that is their perception of the role they have in the tourism destination. A number of other problems did emerge and these included a fragmented approach with a number of groups doing the same thing. Quite a number of the participants alluded to the ongoing disquiet within the co-operative marketing groups with '*moaners wondering what they will get out of it*' (GO2), '*many people seen as more important than others*'(GO1) and '*parochialism*'(GO10) on a county level. One participant mentioned the important aspect of experience – those with experience versus those without prior experience, and it was considered that this caused a problem in relation to the ability to develop contacts. One participant suggested that '*the group was too*

large' (GO17) and there was a lack of time to contact them all; however this participant also said that *'it was mainly beneficial'* (GO17).

Money was identified as an issue - *'some get caught up in the financial aspects and do not have time to market'* GO11). This could be seen more prevalently amongst those who are close to the garden, that is private/family owners who may be relying on the garden as a source of income. A lack of time and resources were mentioned as barriers to co-operation by three of the Garden Owners/Managers. Co-operation was *'a good idea but nobody to do it'* (GO20). However, this could be construed as due to low allocation of value to the process and a lack of priority given to the time required to develop and maintain the process. Financial aspects were also a barrier, although this was mentioned by only two of the participants. One of the garden owners, who is involved with one of the larger and longer standing gardens, spoke about the *'legal liability'* (GO27) of becoming involved and working with the board of a marketing co-operative group. She mentioned that this issue had not been sufficiently teased out. Consideration of these implications, or rather lack of clarity as to role and responsibilities of working within a co-operative, could create a negative attitude towards the process and to working together

In summary, perceived barriers to relationship development included lack of time, the size of the garden, parochialism amongst the group and group dynamics.

Some of these responses may indicate a general lack of understanding of the work of the co-operative and the objectives of the group, and show a lack of group vision and direction. Group and individual responsibility also seemed to be unclear in many circumstances – for example one participant (GO1) thought *'tour operators should contact you'*, though in relation to the co-operative marketing group, the same participant stated *'it is yourself who is important – only you can help yourself'*.

The only negative issue mentioned by Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators was that some of the smaller properties were not getting a fair share of the funding and felt that they were being left out.

4.6.11 Value of the Co-operative Group to Visitors

Subsequent to the Garden Owners/Managers being asked about the benefit of co-operation to the garden, a question was asked as to the value of marketing co-operatives/groups to the visitor. This question presumed that they opened the garden for the visitor and that there was a value to the process. Some confusion was evident in the responses given, although many of the Garden Owners/Managers responded to the question. One was not

sure of the value to the visitor, while others referred to the tools used (maps, brochures and marketing n= 9) and others to the cost efficient nature of the approach (n= 2). The provision of quality (n=2), a sense of worth or being special were also important, although a number did not provide an answer (n=5). Added value or ways to create additional value included marketing ideas (development of packages, further distribution of marketing material, tours) and were suggested by seven of the providers. Increased profile (n=3), the need to be involved and the running of conferences and seminars were also suggested, although both professionalism and administrative skills were considered an important requirement in the overall operation of the group.

In order to gain further information and to probe in relation to whether co-operation and relationship development were being considered by the participants as a method of marketing, they were asked about the methods used to increase visitor numbers to their respective gardens. Almost all the gardens made some comment (n=25), while one garden did not know and another did not reply. Aspects of marketing were mentioned by nine of the gardens and, linked to this, another two specifically mentioned the need for additional books/promotional literature. Increased relationships with different stakeholders were mentioned by seven gardens (familiarisations, tour operators, WOM), although only one of these referred to the importance of staff and this was in the context of staff training. Events were mentioned by three Garden Owners/Managers and one of these was already involved in using events as part of its experience. Two Garden Owners/Managers, both of which were well established, were happy with the way things were. Other activities included product development, or related diversification of product such as bird/wildlife, organise growing different plant types, and different ways of conveying the experience to the market through multimedia.

The value of the group to the visitor forced the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators to think in terms of the final market, the customer (visitor), and of its role in providing an experience to the customer. One group (state) saw itself as being different from other groups and considered one of the other groups as being '*a bit precious, elitist*' (GC1) The charity group perceived itself in terms of its visitors as '*an exchange of experiences*' (GC2) and advocated the use of research on-site to understand the best way to deliver better value to the visitor. The other three groups considered information dissemination as an important value to the visitors - '*it's about helping people find their way around*' (GC5). Two of the groups (GC3, GC4) spoke about the value of being a member of the group and of the need to '*keep the members happy, have to understand what they want, and [their]*

being part of a marketing group'. Value was seen to increase awareness, be of financial benefit, increase visitor numbers and allow participation in the associated publication of the group. Availing of incentives, such as discounts and promotion, and the use of reciprocal arrangements were given as examples. However, adequate resources and time were mentioned as being required in order to fulfil these objectives.

Three of the groups (commercial, voluntary and a county group) spoke of the additional value that could be created by the group for visitors. These included facilitating access (ease of booking and information) and experience (personal touch, talking, exchange of passions and knowledge). Decision-making in terms of the product readiness for their market was also evident with comments such as *'not putting visitors into gardens that are not worth seeing'* (GC4). Methods suggested to increase numbers of visitors to gardens were product-oriented (events, access and transport), marketing-oriented (packaging, leaflets, radio, newspapers, branding) and people-oriented (need to give personal contact, add value, relationship building liaisons).

4.6.12 Monitoring Performance and Feedback of Customer Satisfaction

Monitoring performance of self and feedback from customers in terms of satisfaction with the product and related services contributes to a quality and sustainable business. These elements feature prominently in the relationship chain, in the form of measurement and feedback and monitoring of the service process (Payne 2005). A positive performance leads to greater satisfaction with the group and a greater propensity to continue involvement with either the relationship or the group. The importance of this process was evaluated by the inclusion of a question on whether auditing or monitoring and performance were undertaken. This was assessed by asking about visitor satisfaction. Although to assess the perception of performance from the individual product provider is important in terms of the business, it is the customer who essentially contributes as to whether the tourist product (in this case gardens) is performing well and is sustainable or not. Therefore monitoring the garden in terms of visitor satisfaction was also sought.

4.6.12.1 Auditing and monitoring

It was necessary to find out whether auditing and monitoring were being undertaken by the gardens or groups at all, prior to exploring either the parameters or the feedback.

In order to explore whether the Key Informants were aware if feedback was being obtained from visitors by the garden owners or in relation to other stakeholders, they were asked about their knowledge of whether monitoring and auditing methods were being employed.

Overall, negative responses were given, with all informants in agreement that monitoring techniques were not being employed. However, Key Informant B mentioned one of the larger gardens as having means to undertaking auditing. It was also suggested that ‘*standard procedures were required for monitoring visitors ... as they are not being properly monitored at present ... places not open ... some will deteriorate*’. In terms of the garden owners, the annual AGM of the PMG was the place at which any feedback was sought and it was admitted that a survey to assess satisfaction had been undertaken, albeit several years ago.

Performance management is essential in helping a business reflect on past operation and strategy and in preparing objectives and parameters for future strategy. It can also act as a guide to identifying gaps where additional value can be created. The responses from the Garden Owners/Managers, with a number of related comments, are set out in Table 4.24. Almost two thirds of the gardens considered that they undertook some type of auditing or monitoring, although half of these were undertaken in an informal and ad hoc manner.

Table 4.24 Auditing and Monitoring by Gardens

Auditing/Monitoring	No.	Examples of Responses
Yes	18	
Formal	8	Did questionnaire five years ago, yes work out formally and ask questions, have done research and have found it helpful, mystery visitor 3 times a year
Informal	10	Talk to people – I forget what they say, just comments from the visitors, informal – lady at the ticket booth, yes – the English give feedback, there is a book if they want to sign
No	10	Had sheets thrown around the garden need a personalised approach, don’t make much contact - not at the moment but want to, - no I don’t that is something I would look at fascinated to know... need a small system and try and put into operation

The Garden Owners/Managers were also asked to rate the feedback from visitors on a five point Likert scale and the participants almost wholly allocated the positive rankings of *very positive* or *positive* to the feedback obtained from the visitors. Although over only a third had feedback mechanisms in place, only two gardens did not/could not respond. Seventeen Garden Owners/Managers gave *very positive* feedback on the scale, with some giving statistics in relation to positive feedback such as 98%, 86% *very positive*, as a

rating. A couple did mention a few complaints such as lack of signage or lack of benches, while others did not elaborate on the complaints. Nine gardens gave *positive* as the general outcome from feedback, with one saying that some visitors were indifferent. Overall, there was little negative feedback mentioned, indicating either a sense of pride in the product or a sense of not wanting to 'let the side down' when speaking to the interviewer.

The final question again explored the aspect of market research and many of the participants echoed the answers to the previous question on auditing and monitoring. Eleven Garden Owners/Managers said that they undertook market research, although this was both formal (n=4 for example questionnaires) and informal (n=8 for example observation). Some of these participants said that they were working with the county tourism boards, or with a café/shop to monitor sales and quality. Two of the larger, more established gardens said that it was very important and could be used as a benchmark

The responses from the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators indicated that there was some confusion in terms of this question. Feedback systems were generally considered, pertaining to visitors rather than to the members of the groups. Two of the groups spoke of systems in place in relation to members, though one of these did not give any judgement on feedback. Two of the groups had employed formal auditing and monitoring techniques, for example websites, surveys, mystery visitors and satisfaction surveys, which were obtained every three months from a certain group of members. One group mentioned the use of informal feedback and another said that it did not know. Three of the groups said that member feedback was very positive and another two said it was positive, with one case citing 70% as the figure of those who were happy. Pursuing the more formal research agenda, one of the groups (GC3) carried out more formal/structured research. . The commercial group visited all the sites of their members to meet them personally and much information was derived from these visits. The other groups had less formal approaches and spoke of gaining information relating to strategy, perceptions and awareness in the form of verbal feedback but they did not have any structure in place.

4.6.13 Additional Comments

At the conclusion of the interview, all participants in each of the groups were asked if they had additional comments or wished to make any suggestions. This seeking of additional information provided an opportunity for the participants to speak about co-operation or other related areas.

One of the Key informants (KIA-marketing oriented) thought that the issue of garden maintenance was a big problem, although marketing aspects were also considered important (including local marketing and being aware of what was being done). She stressed that it was important that the group ‘took ownership’ of the situation. The other marketing oriented participant had no comment to make. The horticultural-oriented participant (KIB) spoke about the need to be professional, to ‘know what gardens were about’ and ‘what was needed was a marketing person with the knowledge of gardens’. In relation to the process of managing the group, ‘very strong leadership’ was required to the point of being ‘undemocratic’, even ‘a dictatorship’, in order to operate successfully. Both training and knowledge of other gardens were also considered important to the success of the co-operative group. KIC did not wish to comment any further.

Twenty-two Garden Owners/Managers gave further comment or suggestions. Of those that did not, two had lost interest by the end of the interview and one (who was taped) appeared nervous and wished to end the interview. The other four participants said no, although they appeared to be still engaged with the process. Of those who commented further, some reiterated points that had been made throughout the course of the interview and overall tended to be critical of the existing situation, without offering much in the way of future suggestion or progress. Comments/suggestions made have been tabulated under issues in Table 4.25.

Table 4.25 Additional Comments/Suggestions - Garden Owners/Managers

Issues	Comments
Different objectives	<p><i>‘Some actually wish to discourage visitors’ (GO5)</i> <i>‘depends on the nature of the garden’ (GO17)</i> <i>‘Inherited gardens do not look at it from a commercial perspective’ (GO14)</i></p>
Structures/supports	<p><i>GGRS – ‘has become facility oriented rather than garden oriented’ (GO5)</i> <i>‘People in Bord Fáilte not really interested ... little feedback from the tourist office’ (GO3)</i> <i>‘Need maintenance grants’ (GO9)</i> <i>‘Marketing takes time’(GO11)</i></p>
Product	<p><i>‘Gardens are transient and there is issue with staff and funding’ (GO12)</i> <i>‘Diversity of the product is a problem’(GO13)</i> <i>‘Cannot underestimate the importance of landscape’ (GO15)</i> <i>‘xx is dreadful...going commercial’ (GO9)</i></p>
Customer	<p><i>‘Happy to have people who enjoy the garden’ ... ‘the joy of a garden</i></p>

	<i>is having people enjoy it with you</i> (GO12) <i>'Need to promise less and deliver more'</i> (GO7) <i>'Problem is that people not realising what a garden is about'</i> (GO20)
Group size	<i>'Larger groups do not work well together'</i> (GO12)
Group operation	<i>'Needs to be careful mixing of business with social'</i> (GO13)
Being innovative	<i>'Create spatial thinking' ... 'concept of emotional marketing ... appeal to people emotions'</i> (GO15)
Networking Co-operation Relationships	These tactics were mentioned specifically by six of the gardens; with stakeholders, local co-operative groups, the national group and its importance as part of what they do.

Four Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators made other comments when invited to do so at the culmination of the interview. The commercial group (GC3) emphasised their business approach though said that they were open to change and were not afraid to say if something was not working. Relationships had been built up with a core group of members over the years but they were considering other forms of marketing as well. The voluntary group (GC4) emphasised the importance of product knowledge *'I know the gardens in the group very well – how long to spend in each ... gives them [the visitor] enough time in each garden'*. The county group (GC5) spoke of the existing relationships between the gardens *'gardens certainly know each other ... no need for them to be constantly in touch with each other'*, indicating that a more formal structure of co-operation was not needed. This group was also cognisant of feedback saying *'I am delighted ... once they are happy'*.

4.7 Statements Based on Findings

The interpretation and analysis of the interviews took place on their completion and, as they were being written up, ideas and themes began to emerge. With the use of the conceptual framework as a guideline, a series of statements was developed. These statements which mainly agree with the findings were developed in order to gather further insight into the process of not just co-operation and the development relationships within the garden tourism sector, but also an insight into gardens as a tourism product. The use of statements was to provoke discussion with the final participant, a chief executive officer (CEO) of a product-focused destination who was, and still is, involved in developing networks and therefore actively encouraging relationships and co-operation between SMTEs. These statements, are listed in Table 4.26 and the comments based on a consultation with the manager of a networked destination, are documented in Appendix IX.

Table 4.26 Statements (from findings) and Links to Conceptual Framework

Italic=disagree with findings

Normal= agree with findings

Importance of Product	Link
Ready access to a market (population) acts as a major catalyst to opening a garden to the public	Marketing/opening
Lack of confidence in the product leads to a lack of co-operation	Identification of value/benefits (Confidence)
The objectives of the garden owner dictate the multivariate ways in which a garden attracts visitors	Different objectives (Identity)
Those gardens with smaller capacity attract more specialist groups giving them a better sense of control	Size (Bonding)
Developing a link with domestic and local visitors helps to create value for both the garden and local economy (sustainable approach)	Development of markets (Creation of local capital)
The use of different communication tools changes over the lifecycle of a relationship within the context of a co-operative	Communication tools (Lifecycle)
Membership of a co-operative marketing group is considered the least effective method of marketing as being a member lacks the sense of ownership required to make decisions (reactionary)	Group type (Identity)
Relationship marketing/co-operative links do not feature strongly as part of marketing tactics used by garden tourism attractions.	Marketing
Perception of Product (Gardens)	Link
If the basic perception of the product is not universally understood, there is a lack of vision and co-operation is more problematic	Values (Vision)
More recently developed gardens have a greater ability to co-operate as they view themselves more as a business.	Lifecycle (Trust)

Perception of Product (Gardens)	Link
There is a need for external positive influence in order to create and develop opportunities	SWOT (Vision/Management)
Increasing the number of facilities is seen as a method of creating additional value for the visitor rather than creating additional value for the garden	Facilities (Value)
Values need to be linked to strengths in order to consolidate vision	Value (Vision)
Embedded Issues	Link
In a dispersed marketplace, the closer the product is to the core experience, the less likely it is to appeal to a broader market and be sustainable	Product (Involvement)
Privately-owned gardens lack the management expertise or experience however compensate with product expertise and interest	Ownership (Involvement)
Ownership dictates sustainability	Ownership (Sustainability)
The county co-operative approach is the least effective approach due to the continuous pull on resources	Geography (Combination of resources)
Products linked to a history or story are more marketable	History (Sense of identity)
Previous positive development and operation of gardens is linked to low levels of social capital and a lack of social awareness	Family/religious links (Social Capital)
<i>In product based co-operation, the social capital gives greater value to the provider than the development of the product as a business</i>	Social Capital
Co-operation and Relationships	Link
Garden tourism attractions display a divided attitude to the process of co-operation	Level of co-operative involvement (Identity)
<i>Overall the garden tourism product has a general understanding of the requirements required for co-operative practices.</i>	Awareness values (Associated with co-operation and relationships)
Key Informants (support) play a policing /dictatorial rather than supportive role with the group.	Organisation type (Leadership)

Co-operation and Relationships	Link
Key Informants (support) are not aware of the extent of the links and relationships being developed by the garden owners.	Awareness (Leadership)
The nature and degree of involvement with the product dictates the propensity for co-operation and building relationships.	Involvement
State organisations including TIOs are seen as priority links to be developed by both the garden attractions and the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators.	Links/Leadership
The gardens co-operative group of which they are members is not seen as a priority link by the gardens and therefore demonstrates lack of commitment to the group	Identification of value and benefit (Commitment)
The garden attractions know how to network but only choose to network with certain other gardens based on historical connections and factors exhibiting limited trust	History (Trust)
Brochures and the use of personal contact are more frequently used than email or other methods of contact (this may have changed) used by the garden attractions.	Communication
<i>Barriers to co-operation involve the people themselves rather than the product or the process</i>	Embedded issues (Values associated with co-operation)
There is little understanding of the value of co-operation to the customer and to the product provider	Product/market (Value and benefit)
There are few structured methods of monitoring or customer feedback in place	Goals (Performance parameters)
Overall the garden attractions operate as islands with many in isolation indicating little trust and that they are not integrated into the local tourism fabric	Values associated with co-operation/relationship management (Trust)
That a network approach involving both horizontal and vertical networks would serve the gardens attractions sector better and lead to a more sustainable product	Co-operation = Networks = Sustainable approach

4.8 Conclusion

The interviews with the Garden Owners/Managers were undertaken over a period of four years. The criteria remained the same throughout - that the garden had to be, or have been member of a product marketing group. Each interview gave an insight into both the person, the garden, their stance on tourism and the way in which they connected with a range of stakeholders. Many of the Garden Owners/Managers interacted with people within the sector for a variety of reasons (historical, proximity, experience and need), the difficulty was in getting participants to identify and verbalise the fact they did really connect or interact with them. The range and different foci of the questions helped to overcome this. On completion of the interviews, a series of statements prompted by the findings and using the basis of the conceptual framework as a structure were used as points of discussion with the final participant. These statements and resulting comments from the CEO, together with two interviews from Network Coordinators, are discussed further in Chapter 5 under the core conceptual issues identified in the literature review.

Chapter 5

Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

Chapter 4 detailed the findings from the interviews which were undertaken with three groups (Key Informants, Garden Owners/Managers, Garden /Heritage Group Coordinators) involved in working together to develop and market the experience of garden tourism to the visitor. Over the period of this research, changes occurred in the approach that was being undertaken by the industry and by the state bodies delivering this product to visitors. The product marketing groups of Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland (www.castlesgardensireland.com) exists in similar format as when this research was initiated. The focus on both co-operation and particularly in relation to networking has changed. In 2006, Fáilte Ireland initiated a network approach to developing tourism called Tourism Learning Networks (www.tourismlearningnetworks.ie), to support tourism businesses at local and regional levels. These are based on geographical areas and focus on the creation of a tourism experience that encompasses all aspects required by the visitor while on holiday in an area - accommodation, attractions, activities, information and ancillary facilities. With this in mind, it was considered important to explore the tourism learning networks further as part of the research and two interviews were conducted with coordinators from two of the six Fáilte Ireland networks. One area was chosen as it covered an area of well-developed enterprises and well-known tourist destinations (south and south-west), and the other area constituted enterprises which were relatively new to the sector (north-east). They differed to some degree as the south/south-west network was involved with managing and building on historic and existing links as well as developing new links whereas the north-east area network was involved primarily at developing new links between stakeholders. These interviews were used as a reference to understand the operation of new initiatives in relation to networking in the tourism sector.

This chapter examines initially the issues arising from the findings and discusses them under the core conceptual framework, in other words the constructs that are the basis for the questionnaire. These are as follows: trust and reciprocity; bonding, links, ties and socialisation; involvement, commitment/loyalty and interdependence; value and benefit; communication; group size, structure and identity, leadership; vision and goals; combining

resources and access to information and performance. These core constructs are central to the co-operative efforts and relationship development by the gardens and have been discussed in the literature review. They are illustrated in the conceptual framework (Fig. 2.7). These issues are then combined with the reflections of the chief executive officer (CEO) and the two interviews from the Fáilte Ireland TLN coordinators in an effort to understand the relationships that exist and to synthesise an approach which will encompass sustainability into both co-operation and relationship development in the garden tourism sector.

The interviews of Groups 4 and 5 (Network Coordinators and CEO) focused on tourism products and geographic areas primarily located outside the garden sphere. One of these areas was located in the north-east and the other in the southern part of Ireland. Although gardens made up part of the network products, each destination/network was not garden specific. In total these three destinations, which comprise two tourism learning network areas and another product-based area embrace 597 separate businesses, hence giving the participants considerable insight into the day-to-day operation and issues involved in managing stakeholders, tourism products and destinations. The rationale for undertaking these interviews was to site the findings and research in a more up-to-date context.

A series of 34 propositional statements were developed from the findings that had emanated from the Groups 1-3 (Table 4.26) and these were used as the basis for comment and reflection from the CEO of the destination organisation.

5.2 Core conceptual issues

The core conceptual issues were used to explore the research being undertaken (as illustrated in Figure 2.7) and four themes relating to the gardens were used to uncover the findings; embedded issues, the product, perceived importance of the product, and co-operation and relationships. Constructs that relate to these themes and are central to the framework are now discussed in relation to the findings.

5.2.1 Trust

The gardens interviewed were open to the visitor and constitute attractions operating at the same level of supply, forming a horizontal group of providers. Trust is essential for co-operation and trust-based relationships between local producers, consumers and institutions are required for strong horizontal networks (Oliver and Jenkins 2003). In order to work together at whatever level, a degree of trust needs to exist. Trust and commitment are inherently part of the process of co-operation (Morgan and Hunt 1994a, 1994b), of

networks (Silverside 2001) and are considered intangible drivers which can influence performance and provide tangible outcomes in such sectors as the healthcare industry, as demonstrated by Cote and Latham (2006).

Key Informant C exhibited a narrow view of trust by suggesting that paying the subscription on time and providing for the visitor were essential characteristics of co-operation. Another of the Key Informants (KIB) expanded on trust, although in the context of the committee working in the best interest of the group. Negative comments by the Garden Owners/Managers on required characteristics for co-operation (n=11) indicated there was a difficulty with trust, and comments such as '*insecure personalities*' (GO21) and '*fighting within the group*' (GO5) were used by garden owners.

Increased knowledge of the person over time may lead to an increased or decreased level of trust, depending on experience, and whether it is of a conditional or unconditional nature (Jones and George 1998). Unconditional trust provides the intense interpersonal co-operation and synergistic relationships that can act as a competitive advantage within an organisational situation. The ability to trust amongst the Garden Owners/Managers is impacted by the history of the garden - age of garden and length of being open to the public. History was recognised as being an important asset to the gardens by many of those interviewed from all categories of interviews. Those who have known each other over a period of time have in some cases an existing relationship with each other. Generations of families from the large houses of Ireland have been linked and are involved with each other through social activities (for example hunting), religious persuasion and even plant hunting (Fernhill, Lodge Park). More recent gardens (or new owners), for example Ballindoolin, Kilmokea and the local authorities, are at the initial stages of building a relationship. Stage of product lifecycle may impact on the degree of trust and knowledge that exists between gardens and hence co-operation. In order to regenerate and renew the lifecycle, re-evaluative mechanisms are required to assess new and existing products and to redesign the original goals (Caffyn 2000). This research demonstrates that history and lifecycle have an impact on trust.

However, the choice of network contact which is influenced by historical connections, as indicated by some gardens in the research may have changed over the last couple of years as the CEO said '*that time had moved on and that barriers relating to the historical nature of the place were being eroded and that it was often the support organisations that create these barriers*' and therefore further opportunities to network, as in the case of Britain, are required.

Organisational structure is also linked to trust. A flat (non-hierarchical) structure, mentioned as being the case by most of the gardens (n=16), usually indicates a more transparent, open approach and a situation where trust is more likely to exist. Geographical proximity may also contribute to trust, with greater knowledge of those who live in closer proximity than those who do not.

When asked to use word association in reference to garden co-operative marketing groups, the general strand running through the answers indicated a perceived level of mistrust and negative competition at work within the group. This could result in animosity, a creation of cliques and a breakdown in ties and relationships, which is not indicative of true co-operation.

5.2.1.1 Trust and reciprocity

A situation of trust may lead to reciprocity between stakeholders – the art of giving and taking in a relationship or co-operative situation. Both trust and reciprocity are evident depending on the relationship and the participating gardens. This trust may be derived through a common passion for plants, common issues in terms of ownership or common background or heritage, such as religion. In one case it was based on the fact that the other person was identified as being experienced. Incidences of social contact facilitate opportunity for deeper interaction and hence act as a catalyst for relationship building and co-operation. In order to initiate a reciprocal approach, the donors need to believe that they have something of worth or value to give to the potential recipient. One of the Key Informants (KIB) defined co-operation as '*genuinely looking out for each other as well as yourself*', although this was only a definition rather than a reflection of what the Garden Owners/Managers did. Although reciprocity was not directly mentioned by the Garden Owners/Managers when referring to garden marketing groups, it was cited by four of them when asked to define co-operation and what it meant to them ('*helping each other*' (GO1) and '*you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours*' (GO25)). Negatives in terms of definition (n=5) also included aspects which related to a lack of reciprocity. Comments like '*you are on your own*' (GO16) and '*it takes too long ... like a camel pulling in all directions*' (GO3) indicate that perhaps while trust may be a characteristic of some stakeholders, it is not of others. The interpersonal characteristic of trust was identified by Selin and Chavez (1994) as a requirement for co-operation, although Jones and George (1998) link it to values, attitudes, moods and emotions, indicating the volatility of this construct. Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators did not refer to reciprocal aspects as part of their definitions of co-operation, although trust was mentioned by one of them. The essential

characteristics for co-operation which were listed by the groups lacked any real evidence of reciprocity, with only four of the adjectives used conveying any degree of sharing or team orientation. Reciprocity requires interaction between people. It did exist between certain stakeholders:

- A. Garden owners and the customers: this was evident and can be seen through the interviews as *'sharing a common passion'*, the passion being the plants and gardens [private garden, voluntary group, CEO]

However, reciprocation was not evident to any great degree with a number of other stakeholders:

- B. Garden owners and the support bodies: some garden owners viewed the regional bodies as *'doing something for them'* or *'and the need for support for Bord Fáilte'* indicating an expectation and a dependence on the support body. The relationships with the state organisations, which 14 of the Garden Owners/Managers identified through links they had with them, lacked any significant degree of reciprocation, as evidenced by comments such as *'they should be able to do more for you'* (GO13) and *'nobody has been near us'* (GO22), indicating an attitude that expected a service rather than any reciprocal arrangement.
- C. Gardens owners and marketing channels: a lack of reciprocation was evident between the garden owners and the marketing channels, including the various media with one saying that *'tour operators should contact you'* (GO1), although another long established garden said that they had personal relationships with the tour operators, *'I know and trust them'* [GO24 -large well established private garden], leading to the conclusion that experience may lead to increased proactivity with the marketing channels and sustained business. From this lack of links and reciprocation, it can be deduced that information sharing, which is viewed as important in co-operation (Carson et al. 1995) and is required for long-term interaction and stability (Grabher 1993) does not exist to any great extent.
- D. Garden owners and other gardens: although many of the Garden Owners/Managers mentioned or gave examples of other gardens in a positive light, such as doing well, or in a negative light, as operating in a manner that was not quite in keeping with their view of operation, very few gardens actually suggested that they worked with other gardens. As one Garden Owner/Manager said, *'only you can help yourself'* (GO1) when asked about links with other stakeholders [small private garden]. One

garden (GO18-horticultural/state) had made an effort to contact other gardens in an area of geographic proximity in order to develop a trail. He was liaising with those in the properties who were also the gardeners rather than the owners – indicating links and perhaps greater comfort with those of similar background, experience and knowledge. The lack of links to other gardens (n=11) on the websites also demonstrated a lack of interaction (or perhaps trust) which needs to precede reciprocity. This endorses the findings by Palmer and McCole (2000) of the dearth of web links found by them to exist between tourism businesses in Northern Ireland. This they surmised was due to the fact that web links to other businesses indicate to the creation of a virtual destination and that the creation and promotion of a tourist destination is the role of the tourist board rather than the provider. Welch (2006) suggests that trust and distrust exist together in business-to-business relationships and evidence here tends to reinforce this concept. However, one of the managers (non-owner/state) did not believe in co-operation as a process as *'it attracted those who were altruistic and non-businesslike'* (GO14). One of the Key Informants did say though that some of the methods used by the gardens to develop and maintain links included reciprocal visiting of each other's gardens and this was evident when talking to the Gardens Owners/Managers. Attempts to hold meetings in different gardens to encourage reciprocal visitation had occurred [KIA]. This was undertaken in an effort to increase product awareness, use of ambassadorial word-of-mouth and social capital through events and meetings.

Overall, the Gardens Owners/Managers did not indicate that there was either a great degree of trust or reciprocal involvement with other stakeholders. Their integration into the local tourism fabric was limited and they tended to operate in isolation. This may be due to their size and the role that many of the gardens played within the local community. The CEO suggested that it may be due to a combination of factors, including history and that overall the Irish public do not value gardens. This again may be linked to the association by the domestic market of some of the gardens with the big house and its place in Irish history (Johnson 2007). As time evolves and impacts such as economic changes and change in ownership, the historical connection with the big house will become more diffuse. The emotional links between the big house and garden will lack the strength they once had in the social context of the landowners and the local community. The house and garden may become more accessible to a wider range of the domestic market, however there may be a loss in terms of historical authenticity and link through the centuries. This historical link or authenticity holds a fascination for some of the overseas (particularly the American)

tourist markets. However, the modern garden, a product of recent lifestyles, history and ‘modern Irishness’, promoted by such celebrity gardeners as Dermot Gavin may also be able to generate an identity to which certain customers can relate more readily in the future.

5.2.1.2 Trust leading to confidence

Although financial need may drive the opening of a garden to the public, a certain level of confidence is required in the garden as an attraction. Belief is linked to trust. Confidence is linked to beliefs. If there is to be confidence in the garden, it either comes from oneself or from another source such as a support agency, other gardens, experts or the visitor. There needs to be something of worth, of value for the visitor in return for their entrance fee. Garden Owners/Managers also need to have confidence in other gardens with whom they work with through the co-operative group to provide a product of reasonable quality. A variance in quality was mentioned by both the Key Informants and the Garden Owners/Managers as a weakness of garden tourism. It was evident that some garden owners lacked confidence in some of the other gardens. One garden group [voluntary] ‘*did not put visitors into gardens that were not worth seeing*’ (GC4) and hence, it was essential that every garden was known by the co-ordinator who organised the specialist visits. This comment was made by the co-ordinator of the breakaway group. Different qualities being displayed by gardens could lead to a lack of confidence in performing an ambassadorial role by the gardens, referring from one garden to another, if the quality of the garden was significantly inferior to their perceived quality of their own garden.

Confidence was mentioned throughout the interviews in answers to various questions. A lack of confidence was evident from some responses; ‘*don’t have faith in what they have*’ was cited by one of the Key Informants (KIB) in the SWOT analysis. However, overselling ‘*customers can be disappointed*’ (KIC) which was cited as a threat to garden tourism would indicate that there was over-confidence demonstrated by some of the properties. Key Informant C also argued that some of the gardens were, due to the historical past, over-confident in what they had to offer to the visitor. It was thought that the heritage aspect of the garden gave them the right to charge what they liked for something which was less than a satisfactory experience, and this was certainly the experience from some observations of the gardens. In one case, it was an embarrassment to hear English visitors (rightfully) commenting on the poor quality of the garden whose owner had just participated in the research and had been a recipient of GGRS funding. The CEO also suggested that this was the case, that they felt they were too good to co-operate,

they had a fear of sharing and that someone else might do better than them. This also demonstrates the need to be in constant or at least regular contact with the visitor understanding their needs and gathering feedback on their experience. However in relation to confidence, a fear and insecurity of performance of their own product may indicate a lack of confidence rather than over-confidence. This attitude is rife throughout small and medium tourism enterprises and is not confined only to gardens. Creating a commodity always involves a degree of risk. With risk, there is always a fear of failure creating insecurity. Prior market research can help minimise risk.

A realistic confidence must exist in the potential transaction process. A lack of confidence was demonstrated by the gardens in their product and this was endorsed through both the SWOT analysis and the evaluation of the garden product in terms of viability and perceived value. The SWOT analysis identified more weaknesses than strengths and 11 of the Garden Owners/Managers were negative about the economic viability of their attraction. Does confidence lead to the remark by one of the Key Informants that marketing undertaken by garden owners tends to be reactive, '*they wait for things to happen*' (KIC), or is this that they lack the confidence to market ... or are just lazy or do not need to market? A reactive, passive approach, rather than a proactive, action-oriented approach to business, is one which blights many small and medium tourism enterprises, particularly those that are not driven by the need to provide an income which requires them to develop awareness and sell what they have in a commercial/business world. The WTO (2003) emphasises the need to be proactive when involved in a co-operative structure. In the case of one garden, due to the pressure and need to create a viable enterprise, this private owner developed the product, expanded the marketing campaign and significantly increased visitor numbers. This was commented on in a negative manner by some of the other gardens as becoming over-commercialised. An approach that would involve the allocation of roles and time involved as well as increasing socialisation may help to create more activity and involvement (Donaldson and O'Toole 2002), although, as discussed later on, this may also impact on the trust between people required for involvement, and also the willingness to become involved.

Only 16 of the 28 interviews with Garden Owners/Managers cited that they attracted overseas visitors and even then numbers were small, with only two Garden Owners/Managers saying that this market type made up over 50% of their business. This could indicate in part a narrow focus by the gardens (parochial) or perhaps a lack of confidence in considering their gardens to be of interest to international visitors. Other

factors could be the cost of overseas marketing or the location of gardens in non-touristic destinations indicating that they are not considered attractive enough to act as a pull factor in their own right. However, the specialist market was mentioned by 19 gardens and therefore this would indicate that a certain level of confidence must be acknowledged in order that the specialist would consider their gardens a suitable or attractive choice of place to visit.

Many of the Garden Owners/Managers were positive about the future of garden tourism (n=13), indicating that they felt there was a lot of interest in the product and this was certain to grow. This positive view (though it represents less than half of garden participants) indicates a level of confidence by some in the garden tourism product. Recent economic events which have led to changes in tourism demand and the ability of the customer to pay, together with three of the wettest summers on record may have dampened this optimism. In Britain, however during the half-term periods in February 2009, the number of visitors to National Trust properties rose by 50% on the previous year, with the chief reasons given by visitors *'for taking a day out was the chance to escape everyday stresses and immerse myself in something different'* (Jenkins 2009:1). These stresses are due to the economic downturn that is being experienced globally during 2009.

A lack of confidence of a different type was evident when owners were asked about the income generated from gardens, with 11 owners being wholly negative about their ability to generate an income. This indicates a lack of confidence in the potential for the garden tourism product to be economically sustainable and therefore impacts on the perceived value or worth of the garden. The low numbers that are attracted to gardens contribute to the lack of economic sustainability. There is a need to increase their facilities and hold related events, such as the Midland Garden Festival in Belvedere in County Westmeath and has been undertaken to broaden their market attractiveness with the view to increasing their viability. One of the Garden Owners/Managers said that the reason why they linked with other stakeholders was for confidence building purposes and to enable *'you to believe in yourself'* (GO1).

A difficult situation exists. The gardens do not have the resources in many cases to maintain the properties to a level of quality and are negatively affected by other aspects such as seasonality. In order to tackle this situation, more and more gardens are differentiating their product and holding events in order to be more attractive to a broader range of markets (one of the Garden Owners/Managers interviewed holds specialist events for exotic fowl). Some of these events are specialist in nature though also extend to a

more generalized market too such as the Country Fair and Garden Plant Sale in Ducketts Grove, Co. Carlow (Aug. 2009). In Britain, many of the gardens offer wide and diverse links with the core garden product such as education, horticultural skills, food and theme events. There is a need to identify the gaps in which the product can be extended to initially the local community and then to wider markets. This will generate greater confidence in the garden as an attraction and greater potential for economic and social viability.

The Network Coordinators endorsed the need to build self-confidence and to have confidence in the product. Overall, trust and confidence in the product were not overly visible, although this may be due to the personalities involved or the perceived inability of the gardens to be financially viable. In some cases, mainly the historic properties, there appeared to be a level of over-confidence which could be linked to their historical context in the community.

5.2.2 Bonding, Links, Ties and Socialisation

To have a bond with someone or something requires a level of involvement. Bonding is associated with intra-group relationships, whereas links are those ties with other stakeholders outside the group. A bonding or relationship can also exist between the provider and the product, in this case the plants and gardens, and can have implications on their approach to being involved in a co-operative situation with other gardens.

5.2.2.1 Amongst Stakeholders (social system)

Any interaction within a social system depends on initiating, developing and maintaining a bond or a link. A bond may exist over a limited period of time as a result of payment of a membership or association fee, as in the case of price bonding (Berry 1995). A sense of belonging emerges. Granovetter (1973) considered the strength of the bonds or ties that exist between organisations. Sometimes many weak ties create a better bond than fewer stronger ties, and this was evident amongst some of the more successful gardens who identified the stakeholders that were of benefit to them. Two of the gardens owners/managers in particular did not need the prompt sheet and listed the six markets including suppliers, media, support bodies emphasising the links they had developed.

However, overall, there was little suggestion of strong ties between the gardens and the stakeholders concluding that a network scenario did not exist. The only strong ties in evidence throughout both gardens and the coordinators were those they had with the

support bodies. These ties may be historical, due to funding requirements or availability and opportunity to meet at consumer and trade shows.

'If there are strong ties in organisational markets, then there is structure, connectedness and interdependence, and the system can be described by the metaphor of a network'

(Easton and Araujo 1994:81)

Links with state bodies were more prevalent than with other gardens, perhaps indicating a reliance on these bodies. Cawley et al (2007) identified that strong vertical networks did exist in the West of Ireland through the success of a strong promotional agency which is a feature of the Irish state. Recent allocation of funding through the GGRS strengthened the bond between the gardens and the tourist board, which administered the EU funding at the time.

Different objectives and priorities in relation to the reasons for opening the garden to visitors also seemed to dictate as to the strength of the ties. Those that focused primarily on conservation as a motivator to open the garden and those linked to the local authorities did not exhibit the same number of ties as those who had a more of a financial remit to their objectives. Larger gardens also exhibited a greater number of ties though this may be because they have the capacity to service visitors as well as the space to differentiate the experience for them, and therefore bringing a wider market focus to the garden.

Many of the gardens did not see the need to develop links with other similar or associated tourism products. One garden that said that they *'ring around the other gardens and ask them their rates ... you are on your own'* (GO14). This indicates only weak ties or links, or even indeed isolation in relation to other gardens. Indicating conservation as a motivator to open the garden may also indicate as to this individual nature of the owner/manager. The garden's sense of worth and uniqueness perhaps indicates towards the lack of sharing ability or commonality the owner/manager feels towards others offering a garden attraction. However, a sense of isolation can be overcome by co-operation with others, according to the Network Coordinators. The Network Coordinators said that they found that people who worked individually do not know how to work together and are often isolated. A lack of up-to-date knowledge on the process and evident benefits contributes to this incompetency.

Having to be a member of the group as suggested by Hall (1999) or membership by mandate, occurred with some of the gardens, as membership of HCGI was a requirement

of funding acceptance for the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme. Prior to this funding scheme, houses were invited or sought to become members themselves. This mandate approach may explain why many of the gardens keep contact with the tourist organisations (in this case the tourist board/TIO structures) and was demonstrated by the number of links evident on the websites and links commented on in the garden interviews. This contact, however, is changing according to the CEO, as at present the TIO system is being reviewed and technology is the main source of referral and contact. Fáilte Ireland now tends to deal only with groups rather than individuals in order to operate more efficiently. The responsibility of being a member was changed and, as the structure changes the bonds that exist between the different members and the group become different (Wilson and Jantrania 1993). This change indicates the dynamic nature of the process and will require different approaches to ensure increased co-operation and relationship development in the future.

The exchange of a fee may also implicate a degree of expectation. A fee to an organisation may create an expectation of a service or a value in return. This creates a situation where the member may take on a more reactive role in the relationship, as indicated by several responses to questions throughout the interviews.

However, what bonds or links have been created by these gardens? Clarke (2005) suggests that attention should be paid not only to the linkages developed in a network in rural tourism, but also to the density and quality of the connections and suggests that a multilevel approach may be more enduring. Contacts were identified using an adapted Six Market Model (Peck et al 1999) and methods used to develop contacts/relationships were sought, as was frequency of contact. The responses ranged from the use of the usual marketing tools, such as brochures, familiarisations and better distribution, to the need to be more focused, creation of awareness through personal contact, creation of a bond, use of local co-ordinators and perseverance. Frequency of contact ranged from once a year or '*not a lot*', to '*once per month*', with much of the contact being undertaken in a personal manner by phone or meeting face-to-face (the highest ranked methods). Social capital often developed through these personal approaches. Those gardens that had more experience had generated a PCN and this was used to advance business. .

Bonding and exhibition of links by Garden Owners/Managers existed primarily with the support agencies and tourist offices (n=14 with n=9 as priority link), with a further six Garden Owners/Managers considering the development of these as future links as important. Certainly at the time, the support agencies and tourist offices provide expertise

and knowledge in times of uncertainty which accompany the development and early growth of a new garden and all but one of the gardens who cited the support bodies as their main contact had received funding through the GGRS. The Garden Owners/Managers also linked more readily with the customer or garden visitor than with the other gardens. This was followed by the media, accommodation, employees and customers, with competitors or other gardens being cited by only seven of the Garden Owners/Managers as a link, and HCGI being cited as a link by only five of them. Other gardens may be seen as competition and not as potential collaborators, indicating a parochial mind-set where potential demand is not considered and a self-oriented approach stymies business. This was endorsed when, on analysing the websites of the gardens, many of the gardens (n=11) had no links to other stakeholders on their web page and, of those that did, 12 had links to the tourist organisations/tourist offices, with only four sites linking to other garden sites and nine check number linking back to the HCGI. Co-operative bodies other than HCGI were linked to by three of the garden sites. Much of this information concurs with the interviews with the gardens themselves, as only seven of the Garden Owners/Managers said they had present links with other gardens and none of these listed the link as a priority link. Different backgrounds, qualifications and experience or even the 'old garden' versus 'new garden' and different stage of lifecycle may contribute to the lack of bonding. Mitchell and Schreiber (2007:99) for example, do suggest that different stages of development create barriers to inter-organisational relationships as demonstrated by research undertaken by them in New Zealand. It was evident to some degree that the more recent gardens, or those that had been restored, were more oriented towards co-operation (a new way of doing business) and may view themselves more as a business than the older 'heritage gardens'. The CEO though was of the belief that the old model of business worked better than the triple bottom line approach (consideration of economic, social and environmental aspects), as nobody was involved with the product for money as gardens were not viable, using the word '*passion*' to describe the involvement. This was a term also used several times by the Garden Owners/Managers and the Garden/Heritage Group Co-ordinators. Overall, it can be concluded that the evident strong links with state organisations and TIOs in many cases is mandated and therefore not wholly undertaken by choice.

One of the Key Informants (KIB) was quite negative about the links developed between gardens and said it was due to the '*class background; they seek similar levels with each other*' and that a '*pecking order existed*'. This may indicate the operation of personal social networks (Guanxi) between some of the gardens. Geddie et al. (2002), who looked

at the similarities of the constructs of the Guanxi networks in China and customer relationship management, found that repeated exchanges between organisations built trust, bonds and reciprocity. The closed nature of these links and bonds between some of the gardens and stakeholders in the present study was evident, as the Key Informants did not seem to be aware of the links, or the extent to which they existed. It was expected that all the Key Informants would be in communication with most of the gardens on a regular basis as part of their briefs. Two of the participants in particular said that they were not aware of them, or that links developed varied from one garden to another. This lack of awareness indicates a weak tie between the Key Informants and the gardens, as they were not aware of the way in which their businesses were being conducted at ground level.

The levels of operation were also a key to the lack of bonding that existed in terms of size of garden according to the voluntary group (GC4) who represented smaller gardens and said that *'they felt hijacked by the larger gardens'*. However, what emerged from the findings was that there was no specific pattern in relation to the size of garden and their perception of local, county, regional or national co-operative marketing bodies in the sector. Gardens owners/managers who commented on the different bodies at local, county and regional level would have different experiences depending on the part of the country in which the garden was located. The diversity of comment ranged from a large state-funded garden citing the local bodies were *'very parochial, don't waste money on it'* (GO21) to a private large garden saying that local bodies were *'most important and inexpensive'* (GO16). In exploring destination place identity in the Hunter region in Australia, Dredge and Jenkins (2003:338) found that relationships between public-sector organisations and networks of social relations [in a destination] are complex. Regional tourism organisations influence aspects such as local interest, motivation to participate and leadership, extent and quality of communication, ways in which actor's partner, development of ideas, formulation and implementation of management/marketing strategies and evaluation and monitoring (p.338). However, in the case of work undertaken by Dredge and Jenkins, they found that the assertion of greater local involvement identity led to a situation of instability and tension.

In this research, regional tourism bodies emerged as the body that was spoken of most negatively, with twelve gardens making negative comments and only five gardens making positive comments about them. The complex nature of the historic and present relationships with the regional body may be a factor in this. The national co-operative

body attracted the most positive comments (n=15), '*very much in favour*' (GO21), '*amazing*' (GO23) and only six gardens were negative about this level of operation. .

The commercial group indicated a positive approach to developing links and the importance of bonding. Specific contacts were named by the commercial group and resources were dedicated to both developing and maintaining links. The participant had professional qualifications in both business and marketing and had identified the importance of these links, indicating also the importance of introducing a social element as part of creating and managing business.

A lack of bonding may be as a result of geographical fragmentation, as was mentioned by one of the Key Informants (KIA) as a weakness of garden tourism. Conversely, another (KIB) mentioned that '*familiarity breeds contempt with threats coming from within the garden group*', indicating perhaps that links may have existed in the past and a breaking of these links for one reason or another may have occurred. Being too close can create friction and there is a need for a certain level of autonomy (Grabher 1993) for the gardens. Perhaps the fact that many of the gardens viewed themselves as specialist and worthy of conservation is a basis for friction. The ability to work together but yet be different requires balance between bonding and autonomy.

Expertise and knowledge about the gardens and indeed management of the gardens can be handed down through generations of gardeners and/or owners. This generational bond is being lost as the focus changes on the occupation and also on the ownership of big houses. Information and gardening techniques are being lost and one of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators sees a lack of new gardeners entering into the sector as it is not seen as an attractive employment option. This was echoed by one of the Key Informants (KIB) saying that horticulture is no longer an attractive employment option. There has also been a high turnover in managers and gardeners in some gardens (one large state-owned garden has had 3 managers in 10 years). This is problematic, as their knowledge and expertise goes with them. However, recent economic changes have seen an increased emphasis on gardening and this occupation may again become in the future an attractive avenue to follow.

Bonding and lexicographic similarities did feature in the use of word association of co-operative marketing groups, with words such as '*togetherness*' (GO21) and '*contact*' (GO11) being used by the garden owners. In defining co-operation, the Key Informants mentioned '*working together*' and 11 Garden Owners/Managers included working

together, linkages and co-operating as part of their definitions. However, similar lexicographies were used only by one of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators. No characteristics deemed essential for successful co-operation by the Key Informants included words that might be associated with bonding or linkage. Perhaps Key Informants did not view bonding or the generation of links as being essential to co-operation. Indeed, the Key Informants and Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators may view their role as facilitating and supporting the process rather than participating in it, indicating a hierarchical rather than equal approach to co-operation.

Sharing and team aspects were mentioned four times by Garden Owners/Managers and commitment had a frequency of seven. Six of these who mentioned commitment were gardens that had either significant experience in operation the garden or in another business. Phrases such as *'ability to share knowledge'* (GC3) and *'close personal relationships'* (GC4) were mentioned as characteristics by the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators, although other explicit terminologies indicating a level of bonding or ties as essential to co-operation were absent. Overall the use of terms did not indicate any degree of significant bonding or linkage associated with co-operative marketing groups.

The use of the different promotional tools brings gardens into contact with a number of potential stakeholders with whom links can be developed. Three of the tools in particular involve where direct links were made with tour operators, media and journalists (through familiarisations) and with the marketing co-operative group (meetings, email contact, etc). Those tools that involved contact were ranked on the lower scale of efficiency 4, 7 and 8 out of 8. One could argue that distribution of information also involves a degree of linkage (that there is a potential recipient) and this featured as the second most efficient tool used. Other forms of tools used by gardens that also involved an element of linkage included direct mail, personal contact and word of mouth (n=3) and one of the participants did consider that promotion *'was part of being the co-operative'* (GO18).

The development of further linkages was suggested as an approach to changing marketing activities by only three gardens and linkages with town and country house accommodation, farmhouses and hotels, as well as clustering and other co-operative action, were suggested by three Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators as a way forward in relation to the future marketing of the garden tourism product.

The use of communication tools that required more personal contact was less popular than those that required more autonomy in both decision and practice. The use of the internet,

which requires a less personal approach, although considered more efficient does not have the same level of engagement as face-to-face or telephone contact and this may ease a garden into a relationship leaving the decision to respond to the recipient. A degree of effort is required in order to initiate a relationship with someone else. However, there may be a fear of commitment. The identification of similar gardens and ultimately people to interact with may ease the use of marketing tools that require a personal approach. The Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators were more 'au fait' with the development of linkages and the use of marketing tools involved in this process. Most of the groups used many of the tools in some way or another and, though they did not rate their efficiency, they were overall very positive about the arrangements they had in place. Those that used tour operators, familiarisations and distribution mentioned relationship management, word of mouth and networking as aspects of their use of these tools. This may have been expected as the qualifications and experience of these coordinators made them more aware of the potential and importance of developing and maintaining such links.

State organisations, TIOs, tours operators and specialist groups featured as the most likely links to be developed in the future. Four of the gardens indicated that they did not wish to consider future links with anybody, again indicating a wish for isolation or perhaps no real interest in marketing the garden to visitors. None of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators mentioned other groups as a potential link. This may be due to perception of competition as each is selling a similar product and markets are construed as being identical. The commercial nature of one of the groups spoke for itself, saying it was not in the business of promoting other groups/companies. However, in relation to state organisations and tourism information office (a distributor rather than competitor), the links and relationships were strong and comments generally positive. The links with the media varied with the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators, although their importance was recognised and further links would be made in the future.

Bonding or linkages were not evident, as demonstrated by the reactive responses and a lack of ownership in relation to the interactive process. Responsibility for both developing and managing links was generally absent. The intention to create links with either other gardens or HCGI was limited, with only two of the participants indicating that this might possibly take place in the future. The wish to make future contact with customers/visitors was evident with some gardens. When asked about auditing and monitoring, one garden owner said that, *'I don't have much contact - not at the moment but want to'*. A number of the participants were working with the county tourist boards or with a café or shop in order

to monitor sales and quality, indicating some linkages. This lack of linkage could be seen as a lack of commitment to the group or perhaps the individual lifestyle of some of the Garden Owners/Managers impacts on their ability or interest in developing links and relationships with the various stakeholders. The CEO of the destination network commented that being a member of a group narrows the ability to cross sell and the lack of strategic orientation exhibited by the members was being addressed in her network by training.

5.2.2.2 *Between Garden Owners/Managers and the garden product*

Gardens are structured spaces, a creation of places often considered by their creators as refuges from everyday life (Hewer 2003). A spatial system is the congruency between dimension, geometry, topology and fuzziness (Koch 2005) and this particularly is reflected in the creation and use of a garden. Does a garden constitute a product? Gardens are commodified through tourism and, through this process, to create tourism products for the consumption of visitors. Product bonding can be considered as the bond that exists between the Garden Owners/Managers and the garden, rather than with the visitors or other stakeholders. This bond with the garden was strongly evident throughout many of the interviews and though did extend to some participants who indicated the link or bond they have (or would like to have) with those who share a similar bond with the garden. One Garden Owner/Manager was *'happy to have people who enjoy the garden with you'* (GO12) and another Garden Owner/Manager saw *'themselves as a specialist who attracts those who appreciate plants'* (GO2). The link between people and gardens is evident since time began (Doolittle 2004). As a garden is a creation of oneself, it reflects a personal journey.

Different gardens, due to age and history, perform different roles for their owners/managers. Owners and managers may be custodians of a space or place that has been worked and managed for generations and some of the Garden Owners/Managers had a strong bond and relationship with this space. In more recent gardens, the design aspect, as well as landscaping and planting, requires greater engagement by those involved in its being and existence. Sharing the garden space indicates a sense of pride in the place, a sense of bond with the space that has been created. In order to share the knowledge of this space, and share it in a meaningful way, for example to give value to a specialist/interested market, the knowledge of the garden needs to be acquired and shared. Knowledge of the plants, vegetation type and soil indicates a level of engagement with the garden. When asked about the market breakdown of visitors to the gardens, 17 out of the 28 participants

mentioned that specialist visitors made up part of their market. This followed second to the general group market (n=20). Many specialist visitors arrive in gardens as part of a group and knowledge of plants, the garden and indeed a shared passion help to deliver a quality service to those visitors.

Bonds and links with the garden were evident and led to a relationship between the Garden Owners/Managers and the garden itself. On exploring links between gardeners and gardens, Crouch (1999:263) found, on analysing embodied space and practice of allotment owners, that there was an interesting connection between those who worked on the allotments and the soil. This attachment or link with nature which also appeared to be embodied was because the allotment owners were physically closer to the ground and saw the space in a different way. For anyone who has worked in a garden, the relationship with nature, the soil, the nurturing process of sowing seeds, watering, feeding and caring for plants can provide a metaphor for personal and marketing relationships that are used to co-operate and work within a networking scenario. The time and effort in the garden may replace that time and effort that is required in developing relationships outside the garden. The benefits (or the fruits of labour) in gardens engage all the senses either directly or indirectly (the sound of peace), and therefore it is not surprising that gardens have been equated to the creation of a paradise by several authors (Hewer 2003, Hamilton 1997). Certainly there maybe less conflict and perhaps more control tending a garden than dealing with people. However, co-operation could be encouraged with someone because of their garden i.e. the wish to visit, experience or be associated someone else's garden. It could be argued that true co-operation might also involve the use of many of the senses. This has occurred especially in relation to the specialist where those gardens of note have provided prestige and an aspiration to others in the sector. This finding, the emphasis on conservation and the involvement with actual product and experience (the garden) is important, and impacts on the ability and willingness that Garden Owners/Managers exhibited to both develop, market and manage the garden as a visitor attraction. The successful developing and marketing of a visitor attraction requires the ability to see the experience from the visitor's perspective, and self-involvement impacts on this perspective.

5.2.3 Involvement, Commitment, Interdependence and Loyalty

Once links have been made with stakeholders, bonds are created and an involvement with stakeholders evolves over time. The degree and level of involvement depends on many variables, including the objectives and value of the link and previous experience.

However, there needs to be a willingness to become involved, to a greater or lesser degree, and it is often these degrees of involvement that can cause problems in a co-operative scenario.

5.2.3.1 *Involvement with stakeholders*

Although the Key Informants indicated that some of the garden owners were more involved in marketing the gardens than others using the marketing channels of the county and destination tourism groups, they were not hugely aware of the marketing tactics being undertaken by the individual gardens. The fact that conservation was the main driver to open the garden (n=19) indicates a certain value being accrued to the product. However, the lack of social need (meeting people) as a motivator (n=3) to open the garden may indicate the level of involvement the Garden Owners/Managers have as providers of an attraction to visitors. For some Garden Owners/Managers there is a need to have a social aspect to the co-operative process, to develop social capital with some or all of the stakeholders. However, the owner may be the type of person who does not wish to be involved to any great degree with the tourism sector (which is basically a people oriented sector) and therefore there is reluctance to market the garden. This reluctance to be involved may be a predictor of interest, willingness and ability to develop relationships or network with other stakeholders normally associated with marketing of a tourism attraction. Strong involvement (ties) between the gardens as stakeholders was limited and low involvement may cause ineffective relationships, as suggested by Gordon et al (1998) and with implications for co-operation. The individualistic lifestyle of some of the owners/managers is a predictor of the level of involvement. Indeed, they converse and visit those who are also specialists as they share a common language (usually Latin plant terminologies), and they can relate to one another with greater ease. Glover and Parry (2005) in their research on community gardeners found that garden talk was important to building relationships amongst the community gardeners. These owners/managers find greater difficulty in relating to the much larger, and generalised markets (Fig. 1.3). Unfortunately, it is this generalised market that provides most potential business.

The very premise of involvement was questioned by one of the participants in terms of the structure of the group and the legal liability and responsibility in being involved. One provider (larger historic garden) who spoke about the '*legal liability...of becoming involved and working with the board of a marketing co-operative group*' (GO27) saw this as an issue. She mentioned that it had not been sufficiently teased out. This lack of clarity

as to role and responsibilities of working within a co-operative creates a negative attitude towards involvement with the process.

Several Garden Owners/Managers said that there was a lack of appreciation of gardens and cited this as a threat to the sector. Garden Owners/Managers may seek appreciation for the garden they have created and for the work is required to manage and maintain it. However, it is the specialist who appreciates this work and therefore they connect more easily with this group.

Commitment, an essential component of relationship management (Towers et al. 2006), involves a personal interaction with the process. It can create strong ties in relationships (Saxena 1999). Personal interactivity with selected stakeholders (which could be seen as a catalyst to gaining greater commitment to the process) was mentioned by a number of Garden Owner/Managers (two large state owned), indicating special support relationships had developed, mainly with those who could give direction or who had experience in the area. Commitment was mentioned seven times by the Garden Owners/Managers when listing characteristics essential for successful co-operation, although this was out of a total of 125 words that were used by this group. However, commitment was not mentioned by the Garden/Heritage Group co-ordinators as a characteristic.

The importance of commitment to the process of networking, which takes time to implement, was reiterated by the CEO. The coordinator of the larger network group also mentioned the importance of commitment citing it second only to the need for a champion as a characteristic required for successful co-operation. The sporadic and overall lack of commitment to the process leads to ineffective relationships and can, according to Coffey (2003) impact on the regularity of communication [a requisite WTO 2003] and perception of network effectiveness.

5.2.3.2 Involvement with the garden (product)

Recommendations from one of the Key Informant (KIA) suggested that the PMG '*took ownership*' of the situation, indicating that a greater degree of involvement (type not specified) is required. This low level of involvement was also evident when one of the garden owners indicated that a weakness of the sector was the type of person who was involved with gardens as being an issue '*as most of the gardens are run by people who are too interested and busy with the gardens to do marketing, like craftspeople... and are unlikely to be good at marketing...*' (GO3). Involvement with the product (as in product bonding) was also indicated by the ease with which the majority of gardens answered

questions on soil type (n=24) and dominant plant/habitat type (n=28), with many of the terminologies used consistent with a good knowledge of the gardens and gardening.

The gardens differed both in origination and in ownership. New gardens, those that had been developed recently or had be recreated through the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme, have less potential for embedded product involvement than those that had been developed and nurtured over the centuries by generations of families. There is a different sense of involvement and relationship to the garden. However, it was a manager rather than the owner (horticultural background) who said under opportunities that '*there was a need to keep the spirit of the garden*' (GO10), indicating a sense of involvement with the garden. The fact that 13 of the gardens were driven to open by self/family or were inherited indicates an involvement and link with the place which might not necessarily be there when it is managed by someone who is not personally linked to the garden.

A lack of involvement was indicated by four of the gardens when asked whether they were happy with the present marketing activities, replying that they either were not involved or did not know. This lack of involvement or interest was indicated again by two Garden Owners/Managers who, when asked about strengths of the sector, said that they were '*not a good person to ask*' (GO15) and said that they would not know as they were '*not garden oriented*' (GO25). These participants were from non-horticultural backgrounds, being managers with a focus on marketing and business rather than the garden.

The only mention of involvement with employees was indicated by the charity group which said that the volunteers who worked with them felt very much part of the organisation. Otherwise, employees were spoken of in terms of being a resource and at times a costly one at that. Out of the 109 different stakeholders that were mentioned by the gardens as links, only six Garden Owners/Managers cited employees as a link and this occurred even after the gardens had been shown the six market model (which includes employees as a stakeholder). Three of these gardens were those that were the more successful gardens. The importance in involving employees, apart from instilling in them a degree of pride and even responsibility about the garden, is the fact that it is often they, and not the owner/manager who interact with the visitors. They often have the knowledge and expertise that can give the visitors a more fulfilling experience during their visit.

It can be deduced that the level of product involvement (spatial) may predict the ease at which relationships with other stakeholders (social) can be developed and maintained. The nature and degree of involvement with the product dictates the propensity for co-operation

and building relationships, although the CEO commented that, through cajoling and coaxing as well as an incentive, 90% will co-operate if they see the product benefiting. The benefit to the garden from participating in a co-operative manner needs to be evident from the outset and strongly emphasised during the process.

Interdependence, when a stakeholder relies on one party or another, was not evident although support bodies, due to their funding capabilities and access to markets were seen as important links. There was some evidence of vertical interdependence (accommodation providers, tourist information offices and tour operators), but little evidence of horizontal interdependence except where geography played a role (and this was not in all cases). Hetz (1996) did note that interdependency in a relationship changes over time drifting closer and further apart depending on the need. A period of increased market volatility (such as that in 2009) may increase interdependency. Symbiotic interdependence (Pennings 1981) may help to establish a stronger bond; however, both a value and a benefit of this symbiotic action needs to be evident in order for this to exist.

There seemed little loyalty amongst the Garden Owners/Managers for their respective PMG's. Loyalty was rather more evident in relation to their own gardens. The Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators, being in the position of co-ordination, did demonstrate some loyalty and overall spoke positively about their members. Loyalty could be viewed in ascertaining the use of positive words and phrases about the group and other members or stakeholders. However there was no specific mention of loyalty by any of the groups interviewed.

5.2.4 Value and Benefit

In the tourism industry, success can be viewed in the tourism attraction sector as being similar to that in tourism destinations, where tourism contributes to both social and economic benefits in an area (Buhalis 2000). Social benefits include positive involvement with community and social acceptance, interest and subsequent visits from visitors and links with the local population. Economic benefits such as income generated, numbers employed, marketing spend and minimisation of economic leakage contribute to this success. Benefits of opening can be used as performance measurements in the industry, as discussed by Lerner and Haber (2000) who investigated small tourism ventures using a multidimensional approach. The researcher sought the reasons for opening the garden to the public in order to explore the drivers behind the decision. It was also assumed that a certain level of confidence in the garden is required by the owner, in order that it is deemed

of sufficient interest as a paying attraction for a visitor. Although it might be presumed that grant aid surely acted as a catalyst to opening the garden with 16 of the gardens receiving funding, 10 of these who received grant aid cited conservation as the main motivation to open the garden to visitors. This may indicate as to the value accrued to the garden by the owner.

In some cases, though the minority, the garden was not the core aspect of the attraction, for example Belvedere, Powerscourt and Turlough Park. In Great Britain, increasing commercialisation and commoditisation of the gardens, by developing facilities and services, has been undertaken in order to service a wider and more differentiated marketing group (O'Connell 2005). Similar development has occurred in Ireland, particularly in the case of those gardens close to centres of population, who represent potential demand.

In Ireland, a 'push' by visitors has led to the provision of essentials such as toilets and pathways. 'Pull' factors employed by the garden, such as the provision of tearooms, plants sales, craft shops, children's play area and associated weather-proof interpretation, may open up opportunities to attract additional markets. Often they are developed after the more essential facilities have been put in place.

There was a general air that to be commercial, that is, having additional non-garden related facilities for visitors (for example golf courses, animal farms) was almost to have failed. Perhaps this is based on the precept of the ability of many of the English gardens open to the public to remain solely garden focused and attract adequate visitor numbers to sustain themselves. However, both potential and existing market size in Britain is considerably greater than in Ireland. Many of the gardens in Britain offer other facilities such as tea-rooms, plants for sale and even attractions for children. Indeed, the National Trust, a charitable organisation which has a membership of over 3.5 million people, has used this type of site augmentation to attract the public, which they are doing in increasing numbers (Jenkins 2009). The urban nature of much of Britain and a far greater density of population, together with a road network also creates ease of access.

Value can be construed in a number of ways. It is often associated with financial worth and certainly the propensity to be viable does inculcate a level of value in a product or service (Wilson and Jantrania 1993). There are also a number of other perspectives on value. It can be interpreted as a being linked to the way one lives one's life (behavioural value), or perhaps add a benefit which might not necessarily be financial. In the case of tourism, value may be construed as access to and sharing of information (Wilson and

Jantrania 1993) and knowledge (Towers et al. 2006), access to distribution channels, or new markets, or contribute to an increase in social capital, desirable particularly at the early stage of a relationship (Venkatraman and Van de Ven 1998).

Value was assessed across four linkages:

- the value of the garden to the customer/visitor;
- the value of the garden to the garden owners/manager (i.e. perception of worth);
- the value of the group to the garden;
- the value of the group to the customer/visitor.

These values were sought for two reasons. First, similar perception of value of the garden to the visitor helps to identify the level of understanding the Garden Owners/Managers has of the customer. The second reason was to identify the similarity between the responses on perceived value of the garden across the group; if a similarity exists, it can contribute to a common vision for the group. In antithesis to these questions on value, barriers of belonging to a co-operative were also sought in order to gain a balanced view. Value or worth was also referred to in many other circumstances in response to the questions.

Reflection is required on the type of person who might become part of such a group and the reasons behind membership. By belonging to a group, in this case a horizontal network arrangement, with provision of an experience along the same level of supply, there is an expectation as to a degree of value in return for belonging. A value needs to be evident from belonging to a group, with benefits evident from developing links and relationships.

The propensity to become member of a group may be influenced by the type of person who owns or manages the garden (interest and wish to belong to such a group). Awareness of a suitable group, what it does, and the belief that the garden is of at least similar worth to be included and associated with such a group is also required. There are those owners who do not wish to belong to such a group, those who go it alone, who do not believe in the co-operative model and who market directly to the visitor. One particular member who had not been a member for several years viewed their renewed membership as a potential supply channel as they had recently relaunched the garden. The use of technology, particularly the web, as a tool to disseminate information perhaps diminishes the need for other marketing techniques in the eyes of some of the group. Marketing has become increasingly easier with the use of such tools as the internet, web pages and emails to interact with the customer and all but one garden had an indirect or direct site for the garden. The content of, and way in which these tools are used is important and this can be

focused to delivering value only if there is knowledge of both the garden and customer wants and needs.

5.2.4.1 Value of the garden to the customer

If the value of the garden to the customer is understood, it can create a vision on which co-operation can be based. However, the customer is broad ranging across many segments (Figure 1.3) and is motivated to visit a garden for many different reasons. For the vast majority of visitors, a garden is a place of beauty, something to do and place to go. However, this was not mentioned to any great degree by the Key Informants or the Garden Owners/Managers who, when asked about value to the visitor, focused on the specialist visitor. The use of gardening experts to increase knowledge was deemed as an approach that should be adopted by gardens according to Key Informant C when asked about the future as, according to them, this would create a more value filled experience for the customer. The benefit of visiting somewhere unique and a curiosity relating to the owner, may appeal to a certain market. While uniqueness was considered a sought value by some gardens (n=4), this was not identified as a strength by the garden owners when undertaking the SWOT analysis. From experience of involvement with specialist plants people, the unique aspect is of inherent importance, especially when plant species and cultivars are involved. Garden groups such as the Irish Garden Plant Society (www.habitas.org.uk/igps) and the Royal Horticultural Society (www.rhs.org.uk) and Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland (www.rhsi.ie) are a testament to this. Many of the Garden Owners/Managers cite that specialists are part of their markets, however, only the group who was voluntary in nature and expressed a shared passion of gardening seemed to understand the values sought by their customers. This is problematic as not understanding the values sought by visitor's means that they cannot provide the experience they seek. This is especially the case of the broad more generalised (and possibly more lucrative) market. A dilemma exists as many of the gardens do not have the range of facilities or resources to be significantly appealing to the broader market group and are therefore doomed to be economical unsustainable. Innovative and creative approaches which involve linking in with other providers (plant nurseries, events and food) may help increase the attractiveness and appeal of their product... if they wish to pursue this route.

5.2.4.2 Value of the garden to the Garden Owners/Manager

Garden Owners/Managers can view value in a number of ways. Value or worth can be construed in financial terms, for example, is the garden viable and economically

sustainable. Many gardens can yield only a supplementary income, especially when taking into account the level of demand for such an attraction from local, national and international markets. This occurs for a number of reasons. The issue of seasonality experienced by gardens causes a problem, although mentioned only by one garden as being a weakness. Less than half the gardens are open to the public all year round (n=12). This impacts on accessibility, capability to sustain employment and ability to generate income. This is particularly so when the garden is the core attraction - 16 of the gardens perceived the garden as the most important part of the experience.

Some garden owners view value or worth of the garden in terms of being a place of beauty (for example tranquil), and perhaps this perception of place does not equate it with financial value or worth. Certainly, the words and phrases used to describe garden tourism by Key Informants, Garden Owners/Managers and the coordinators indicated the many aspects of beauty, tranquillity, nature and value of the garden to both themselves and the visitors. However, there was a marked discrepancy in their description of the garden (or aspects of it) as a business with 11 of the Garden Owners/Managers being wholly negative about its financial viability.

Garden owners were also asked about associated businesses, in order to assess the importance the garden had in generating an income for the place and also to ascertain the perception of the gardens as a business (generating income). This was undertaken by comparing questions on associated businesses and the additional facilities the garden possesses. Sixteen of the Garden Owners/Managers cited that they had plant nurseries/centres, but only 3 cited such developments as a business. Twenty-five of the Garden Owners/Managers cited that they had tearooms as part of their facilities, though only five of them stated that they were a business.

Allocation of a marketing budget shows an admittance that the garden is worth consideration as a business. While it is considered good business sense that a percentage of turnover each year is allocated to marketing (Kotler 2003), and a number of gardens followed this approach, this is disputed to some degree by Mantrala et al. (1992). They found that market resource allocation affected sales response, investment level decisions and profitability. Proportional resource allocation led to non-optimal allocation to sub-markets and therefore resource allocation decisions warrant further attention in terms of market budgeting. In the case of the gardens, the majority adopted an ad hoc manner was adopted when it came to the allocation of resources for marketing. It seemed as though marketing was not a priority to many of the gardens. The onus was on the PMG to

undertake the marketing for them or in some cases other groups such as Heritage Island. This shift in responsibility creates a degree of expectation from the PMG and other co-operative marketing organisations to which they belonged. It also creates a situation in which reactivity is more the norm, rather than pro-activity, impacting negatively on involvement, commitment and decision-making, as well as the approach taken in terms of business operation. A more integrated approach to budget allocation is desirable, one that preferably reflects on the long term value of the co-operative practises, links and relationships being fostered.

If an increased economic value could be derived from a garden, it may enhance the view of the garden as perceived by the owner/manager. Increasing the number of facilities is seen as a method of creating additional value for the visitor, rather than creating additional value for the garden. Contrary to this, if a garden does not attract visitors or generate revenue, it may be perceived in a negative manner by the Garden Owners/Manager. The CEO suggested a better developed product was required, with a flagship in each county. Although the distribution is rather unequal, a garden is created through history, knowledge and work and to create a flagship from a green-field site would take considerable resources. However, it has been done successfully in the Botanic Gardens in Wales (www.gardenofwales.org.uk), with the Eden project in Cornwall (www.edenproject.com) and Alnwick Castle (Sharpley 2007) in Britain, though funding for both of these was considerable with access to far greater potential demand.

5.2.4.3 Value of the group to the gardens

Values associated with co-operation focused on both derivation (using the group to gain access to information) and marketing. Apart from those for whom it was obligatory to become a member of the PMG, in other words those who had received funding from the GGRS, the need to seek information and be in touch with what was going on spurs membership. The overwhelming positive response by the Garden Owners/Managers when questioned about national co-operative groups indicates that some value or benefit is being derived from being a member of such a group. One garden owner was hugely positive throughout the interview, although this garden was not a member of any other group and did not otherwise market the garden. This response came from an owner of a large, private garden whose advanced years and having little knowledge of marketing may have influenced the outcome. Some Garden Owners/Managers were negative, and some felt overwhelmed '*they forget about the smaller properties*' (GO1, GO2). This does not echo a fair and balanced division of labour and benefits required for successful co-operation

(Hakansson and Sharma 1996). However, the Network Coordinators said that co-operation was a slow process *'that people were used to having support'*. The change in the availability of funding in recent years means that a change is required in the mind-set of the providers. Working together is a dynamic process, hence the importance for small, incremental and tangible achievements which need to be evident as part of this process. The Garden/Heritage Group co-ordinators were not overly positive about the national garden group, with one saying that the *'costs can outweigh the benefits'* (GC2). However, the national garden group may have been seen as being in competition for membership, hence the negative response. The fact that membership of this group is listed by the garden participants who cited it as a communication tool (n=20) as being the least effective method of communication demonstrates that they may not understand or know of its value or benefit, or even consider it. None of the Key Informants mentioned the website of HCGI as being a marketing tool although they did mention brochures, trade shows and other methods of promotion.

The PMG is not a market-efficient value system, which needs to be the case if there is to be a basis for co-operation (Wikstrom and Normann 1994). Membership of a co-operative marketing group was considered the least effective method of marketing, as being a member lacks the sense of ownership required to make decisions (reactionary). The importance of commitment to the process of networking was reiterated by the CEO, noting this process takes time to implement.

5.2.4.4 Value of the group to the customer/visitor

The value of the group to the visitor might not be explicitly evident, however effective and efficient co-operation in both developing and marketing a product can have many benefits for the end customer (visitor). While this may not be obvious, or perhaps should not be so, the responses to this question ranged from tangible (such as brochures, maps) to intangible benefits (quality product, sense of worth and cost efficiency – which is also a benefit to the provider). According to the Garden Owners/Managers, internal capacity building and marketing are the two areas in which further value can be incorporated by the group for the visitor. These sentiments were echoed by the Key Informants who suggested that training and knowledge of each others' gardens were also considered important to the success of the co-operative group. This knowledge would indeed give the group members greater confidence in what was being offered to the visitor and ensure that they were in a position to cross-sell the product, hence internalising the marketing effort. Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators (n=3) viewed dissemination of information about the gardens as an important

value to the visitors. One of the groups viewed their members as customers and spoke of the use of incentives, discounts, promotions and reciprocal arrangements as being of value to them.

Cooper and Lewis (2001) recognised the role of the value chain and suggested that relationships between tourism firms should be a series of value chains or value-creating systems where all were involved in co-operating to produce value for both the customer and the tourism firm. The gardens and garden groups demonstrated little understanding of the value of co-operation to either customer or to themselves, the product providers. Why is this the case? The CEO suggested that the gardens are not well developed in terms of knowledge, other than that of the garden. Perhaps the level of involvement in developing and maintaining a garden by the owner either does not allow the time or interest to co-operate and develop links or relationships with stakeholders. They are therefore not open to co-operation and do not see the value of the group to the visitor. An extension to the garden through vertical and horizontal networking would create capital in many different forms. It could enhance the multiple and complex requirements of the 5 A's (accommodation, access, activity, attractions and ancillary facilities) for the visitor creating additional value. This is slowly happening with linkages on the HCGI website to accommodation (the Blue Book), wedding venues and itineraries.

Time or rather insufficient time available to co-operate is an issue that can also be equated with value to the development of links and relationships with all stakeholders. If a link or relationship is not viewed as priority (accruing sufficient value or worth), time will not be allocated to involvement. Although only three of the garden providers mentioned a lack of time as a barrier to co-operation, it was referred to under different questions and topic areas. Citing a lack of time as a barrier could be construed as low allocation of value to the process and therefore non-prioritization of time. A resource allocation strategy which considers the customer lifetime value (CLV) requires time to develop and maintain relationships with those customers who are of greatest benefit to the firm. In this way, limited resources can be utilized in the most efficient way. A lack of time was prominent as a reason for non-participation in the co-operative process in a study that was undertaken evaluating partnerships and networks in counties Wexford and Carlow as part of an Interreg project (see Appendix III). Relationship management requires constant investment and active participation in terms of time (Ravald and Gronoos 1996), and frameworks have been developed to help improve Customer Lifetime Value (CLV) through the *'appropriate design of marketing contacts across various channels*

(Venkatesan and Kumar 2004:121). The allocation of resources (including time) by the gardens to the contacts and relationships that yield greatest benefit (or those that are of most value to them) is required, particularly in the case of those who are operating within constrained circumstances.

5.2.5 Communication

Communication is often seen as the key to successful co-operation and the development of fruitful relationships. The type of communication used, the frequency and the intensity depends on a number of factors including the objective of the individual and the wish to communicate.

When the Garden Owners/Managers were asked to use associative words to link to 'gardening co-operative marketing groups', contact and communication were mentioned by two of the gardens, although neither the Key Informants nor Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators mentioned words associated with communication. In defining co-operation, however, two of the Garden Owners/Managers specifically mentioned communication in defining co-operation, and one of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators specifically mentioned communication. However, both of the groups did mention other actions that require a degree of reciprocity, or working together. These actions, such as linkages, networking and pooling resources, all require communication, though not explicitly indicating what type of communication. In terms of defining the essential characteristics that are required for successful co-operation, communication, including regular meetings, was mentioned by five Garden Owners/Managers. Other attributes took precedence with the Key Informants, leading to an absence of recognising communication as an essential characteristic. Listening and personal touch (also methods of communication) were listed amongst the other 125 attributes considered essential by the Garden Owners/Managers. Communication and regular meetings were mentioned by four of the group co-ordinators. This may be due to the structured nature and the role that these people may have – in many cases they would be responsible for the planning and organisation of meetings. This group also spoke about the need for feedback, close personal relationships and spreading the word – all of which are forms of communication.

Communication may be seen as of specific value to the customer and this was identified as one of the values sought by the customers, with three of the groups specifying information dissemination as a value. The use of communications which focus uniquely on the customer through customisation is an essential part of managing customer relationships

(Payne 1995). This form of communication was not identified as being of value to the customer by the garden owners. One of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators suggested that '*an experience – maybe personal interaction*' (GC3) was of value to the visitor. When this was explored further in terms of creating additional value for the visitor, experiential aspects such as having a personal touch, talking to and the exchange of passions and knowledge were mentioned. One of the present foci of tourism in Ireland is the development of the experience for the customer which includes the quality and value in every aspect of their visit, whether it be domestic or overseas in nature (TRG 2009:23-24). The Key Informants identified that a greater awareness of the gardens by the different owners was an opportunity and this was reiterated as an additional comment, leading to the conclusion that greater communication was required between the gardens and also between gardens and their visitors.

A number of questions were specifically concerned with the use of different marketing communication tools and their effectiveness. If a market consists of a number of stakeholders, as argued by Gummesson (1999) and Payne (2005), these tools can be directed at the stakeholders to increase the range and attractiveness of the provision. Applications of these tools in most cases can stretch financial resources, so therefore, it is important that the provider is prudent and efficient in their spending. Different tools are used in different ways; some require and encourage co-operation and others can be used in a non-personal manner, such as advertising. Table 5.1 sets out the different communication tools that were mentioned by the garden owners and managers and comments as to their use in co-operation.

All 28 participants from the Garden Owners/Managers group had a brochure and all 28 were part of a product-marketing group. This was followed by advertising, internet/web and promotion. Advertising tends to be used as a generic term for marketing, however advertising was taken as its definition in Table 5.1. Only one (out of 28) of the Garden Owners/Managers mentioned co-operative marketing as a method of marketing communication, even though they were aware to some degree of the nature of the research and, therefore, it seems evident that garden owners/manager do not value co-operation as an aid to marketing their attraction to the visitors.

Table 5.1 Marketing Communication Tools as an Aid to Co-operation

Tool Used	Type of Communication and Use to Aid Co-operation
Promotion	Depending on type of promotion
Distribution	Requires link to those to whom material or information is distributed e.g. brochure to accommodation providers or tourist office
Brochure	Depends on what is done with brochure – however creation of a brochure itself does not develop a link
Tour operators	Requires strong often personal link
Internet/web	Used as a tool but unless it is set up for blogs/comment and response, it is often just information oriented
Advertising	By definition it is a ‘non-personal form of marketing’
Familiarisations	Require strong personal links and relationships with targeted tour operators, handling agents or media
Membership of a co-operative group	Requires close links and relationship focused on an agreed goal
Direct mail	Requires direct link with customers
Personal contact	Face-to-face contact (verbal, visual, aural)
Word of Mouth	Can be influenced but mainly used by the customer
Workshops	Similar to tour operators/handling agents – as at Meitheal – strong relationships and links required
Co-operative marketing	The research theme of this thesis

Word of mouth (WOM), though not so much a structured method of communication, has been identified as being of great importance to businesses. Various studies by authors such as Buttle (1998), who created a model to explain its role in marketing, view both the positives and negatives influence of WOM, especially in relation to the purchase of services. Although it is used widely, it occurs in a mainly informal and unstructured manner and hence the difficulties of keeping track of its influence. Only three Garden Owners/Managers mentioned WOM, which is surprisingly low. This referral or the ambassadorial method is no doubt in far greater use than indicated, as evidenced from the interview narratives which were littered with the names of other gardens and people (and comments were not all positive!). Having knowledge of how customers use this method (WOM) was not evident either but findings in Britain, which indicate that 83.4% of garden

visitors used it as a source of information (O'Connell 2004), show the importance of WOM in the garden provider-visitor relationship. This form of marketing has changed in format over the past five years and the use of the internet in the form of blogs has become more prevalent (for example Trip Advisor). This was cited as a method of great importance by the commercial group, who viewed with concern the negative impact a blog can have on a business. This has grown with the use of social networks, word of mouth sites and blogs (www.theswom.org/group/tourismswomies). Social networking and interactive web sessions were identified as a way forward for one of the participants from the tourism networks (Group 4), saying that they liked to be innovative and try something new each year in this area. Each tool has a role to play and some provide better scope than others to communicate with the stakeholders at various stages of the relationship.

All groups were specifically asked about the methods used to develop and maintain links and relationships between the stakeholders and these varied according to the group. As was discussed under the bonding and linkages developed, Key Informants were not aware to any great degree as to what or how the Garden Owners/Managers were actually communicating. They were not aware of the extent of the links and relationships being developed by the garden owners.

Interaction, through the use of visits and emails, was mentioned by the Garden Owners/Managers as were the use of brochures, posters and the web (directed at visitors). Methods used by the garden owners included non-personal (n=12), personal (n=10) and telephone (n=8) (Table 4.22). Further contact was suggested along more personal lines, indicating that this form of communication is usually the best approach when developing a link or relationship with a new contact.

Many of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators had spoken to some degree about the types of communication used by their organisations and they varied, with personal contact being preferred by the smaller specialist group as they had limited capacity and knew their customers well. The county group suggested that there were already relationships between the gardens, indicating a degree of prior and perhaps existing communication. The gardens certainly know one another, *'no need for them to be constantly in touch with each other'* (GO5). This however, was spoken of in a county context, indicating a comparative close proximity and similar policy jurisdiction.

This need for personal interaction was endorsed by the Network Coordinators who, although using email as the priority method of communication with their members, said

that *'you always start with the phone'* (a personal method of contact). When undertaken, it was important that email was customised and there was a need to show an understanding of the business and the product.

Frequency of communication between the Garden Owners/Managers and other stakeholders was probed. Many of the participants in Garden Owners/Managers referred to the method and could not refer specifically to the frequency, with vague feedback such as *'in continuous contact'* (GO15) to *'once a year'* (GO16). Many did refer to frequency being once a month and email was mentioned as a support tool, with one Garden Owners/Manager saying they were on it all the time. Open and frequent communication is required and participants [of a group] should know how to communicate in order to establish respect and trust (Huggins 1998). The increased use of email as a contact since much of the field research was done would probably have had an impact.

Since every social system requires a communication system, the relationships between system elements result from the capacity to link these communications. Communication itself is a synthesis of information, message and understanding (Koch 2005). Communication happens utilising a wide range of tools. It allows people to interact with one another, disseminating knowledge and information. Communication is used as a catalyst to convey trust and commitment in a process and creates both a bond and a link between people, whether in a personal or business capacity. Communication plays an important role in successful co-operation between stakeholders (Stoel 2002) and as a required interpersonal characteristic for successful partnership (Selin and Chavez 1994). In business, integrated marketing communications (IMC) are used to develop relationships with a range of stakeholders and these require a deep knowledge of the customer in order to tailor the approach (Garber and Dotson 2002).

There was little evidence of structured communication between the stakeholders. Nano relationships (between members) seemed particularly limited. This may be for a number of reasons, including embeddedness, geographical proximity and lack of knowledge or understanding about the process.

5.2.6 Group size and Structure

It is suggested that group size may have an impact on the ability to co-operate and particularly to maintain relationships of links with contacts. Kerr (1989) suggests that co-operation decreases in large groups because people feel less efficacious and less identifiable within the group. However, De Cremer and Leonardelli (2003), in a study

which considered the contribution of individuals to a public resource, indicated that it was the need to belong which impacted on levels of co-operation, rather than group size. Two Garden Owners/Managers specifically mentioned group size as an issue and both thought that national co-operatives were too large. However, as a co-ordinator put it '*there are more resources and a bigger team operating at national level*' (GC5). Some of the Garden Owners/Managers mentioned group size as an issue in relation to the importance of focus and control and one stated that larger groups (those larger than locally operated) were difficult to manage. Another Garden Owners/Manager, when asked about the characteristics essential for successful co-operation, said '*that the group now that it had become larger, that there was a lot more fighting within the group*'. (GC5).

Group size was also mentioned under additional comments sought towards the latter stages of the interviews and one garden said that '*larger groups don't work well together*' (GO12). Commitment to co-operation, available time and recognised benefit will influence the amount of interaction that a person will have with other members of the group. Meeting face-to-face is important in the earlier stages of a relationship (personal involvement) and this does require greater time if the group is geographically dispersed or fragmented, as was mentioned under weaknesses when conducting the SWOT analysis. The employment of a part-time marketing executive in HCGI is problematic as time is required to develop and manage the co-operative links and relationships. Only one Garden Owners/Manager (GO15) said that they did not go to meetings at all and there was no need to meet. Injecting social opportunities into the co-operative process may be attractive to certain group members and also create a greater sense of belonging for those who seek it. Long-term potential benefits, such as learning from the 'competition' and gaining product knowledge with a view to creating added value for the customer, requires actual experience of other gardens and gardeners. This has been achieved to a degree by holding meetings in one another's gardens. If there are large numbers in the group, a greater amount of time and information assimilation is required in order to gain this knowledge. However, recently technology has helped to overcome geographical distance and it is now common to communicate via email and even, in some cases, virtually visit gardens using webcams and video-footage.

There is a plethora of groups operating within tourism and also specifically within the garden tourism sector. Both the gardens and the groups interviewed ranged in type of operation from top-down (hierarchical) and driven by policy makers to those that were charity-based and involved a huge element of volunteerism. More than half of the Garden

Owners/Managers did consider themselves operating within a flat or equal structure and therefore must have shouldered some responsibility for the decision-making, planning and implementation process.

The ParNet project identified that a core group of between 8 and 12 people was the most efficient in delivery of the objectives. Initial face-to-face meetings (which require time and energy) were also important to the success of the co-operative process.

5.2.7 Leadership

In order for a group to function well and achieve goals which emulate an agreed vision, a leader (champion) is required to help give direction. Although the gardens were asked inadvertently about leadership, little evidence of leadership was identified through the interviews, either with the Gardens Owners/Manager or the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators. One could surmise that the coordinators themselves may be deemed to be leaders, or at least view themselves in a leadership role. In exploring leadership and identity, Lumby and English (2009) suggested that the leader requires multiple identities which are negotiated and constrained based on culture and context. In consideration of the identities as a construction of self, they suggest that a *'dynamic process of creating narratives and relationships attempts to achieve for the individual, a sense of self and coherence, of worth and some permanence'* (ibid:100). From the garden's perspective, guidance is required in terms of both development and marketing of the tourism product through the various distribution channels using the most effective methods available. Stevens (1992) identified the need for leaders and entrepreneurs as an essential factor in the development of tourism within a community. In consideration of the levels of co-operation, *'the need for stronger people'* (GO14) was identified at a local level by one of the garden owners as being important. Leadership and recognition that there was a need for someone to manage the group, was mentioned seven times by the gardens owners/managers as an essential characteristic of successful co-operation, although only one specified it as the priority characteristic and another, in deference to this, said that a characteristic requirement *'was no ego-tripping'*. None of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators mentioned leadership as a characteristic.

When asked about the development of relationship and links with stakeholders, one Garden Owners/Manager said *'that they were all enthusiastic in the beginning – though there was a need for just one person'*, recognising the need for a figurehead or leader. This concurs with Hall (2004) who recognised the need for a champion to lead the co-operative

process and Morrison et al. (2004) who identified the need for leadership in international tourism networks. One of the Key Informants (KIB) recognised that having '*a good garden manager*' was important, although whether this is to manage the garden as a horticultural entity or as a tourist attraction was not clear. The same Key Informant, under additional comments, said that there was a need for strong leadership of the co-operative group, almost to the point of being '*undemocratic ... or even a dictatorship*' (though this was accompanied by a laugh). Strong leadership is a determinant of effectiveness in tourism marketing co-operatives in the UK (Palmer 2002) and as a personal characteristic required for successful partnerships (Selin and Chavez 1994), although balance of power, in terms of strength of the leadership, needs to be examined to ensure there is equity between prescribing the direction and facilitating the group. A number of gardens owners/managers have strong personalities and, being individualistic in their lifestyles, might not be appropriately disposed to a leadership. An imbalance in power may lead to a lack of collective responsibilities in relation to decision making in the future (Gray 1985, Bucklin and Senegupta 1993). One might expect that the Tourist Board may be perceived as giving a degree of leadership. However, this did not seem to be the case and one of the gardens inferred that there was a lack of interest and little feedback from the tourist board.

Collective responsibility in decision making was also considered an issue by one of the Key Informants (KIB) who said that the group members were not doing enough for themselves and were always fighting. This was endorsed by one of the Garden Owners/Managers who said that there were character clashes (GO27). The Key Informants did not mention leadership as a specific characteristic essential for successful co-operation.

There is a need to have a champion with strong leadership skills. It may take time to identify the champion. According to the co-ordinator of the larger TLN, a champion did become evident, but only in the second year of operation. A level of confidence building is required. During the interviews, it could be viewed that the Key Informants (who should be viewed as providing support) tended to play a policing/dictatorial, rather than supportive, role to the group. The CEO said this was the case historically, although changes were in place as there was more confidence in the product.

5.2.8 Vision and Goal

People work together for a number of reasons - but there have to be benefits to any effort that is made and, as time progresses, the benefits need to materialise or one or other partner will get disillusioned and the reciprocal arrangement will falter. Relationships require

both economic and social exchange. The economic and/or social benefits need to be part of a goal or vision (Saxena 1998) and the outcome of their exchange needs to be seen in terms of both cost and reward.

Vision and aim were mentioned by a number of garden owners and by one of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators, as being part of the defining characteristics of co-operation and working together. Neither term were mentioned by any group as part of the word association exercise. Vision/focus and common goals were not seen as being wholly important by participants when asked for the characteristics essential for successful co-operation, with these terms or associated words being mentioned only nine times out of a total of 125 characteristics cited. This is particularly pertinent in relation to the responses from the Key Informants who, although in a leadership/support role, did not mention this requirement when talking about co-operation.

Reasons for the lack of affinity with either vision or the setting of goals may be due to the way in which the participants viewed themselves in comparison to others. The disparate and politically contentious nature in which gardens have been historically developed has created an issue in developing a clear vision. Shared vision is an identified interpersonal characteristic for successful partnership (Selin and Chavez 1994). This can contribute to the potential for trust to exist. One of the state bodies viewed its role as being different to others involved and therefore its objectives are not the same, leading to a discord in vision.

A vision for the product helps to create a framework directed at a specific goal. The three groups were asked about the garden product, its strengths and future and also about what the visitors might expect from their visit to a garden. Similarities in views give an overall perception of garden tourism and whether a vision for the product existed. History certainly appears to be a common thread through much of the existing marketing material (web and brochures), with ten of the gardens specifically focusing on the historical nature of the garden and targeting specialist markets/garden lovers. The projected images on the individual websites used for marketing are, however, not directed particularly at plants-people or specialist markets, which are seen to be important to many of the gardens. There is a noticeable lack of unusual or specialist plant images used to market the gardens on either the web or the printed material, with people, views and vistas and stone work/buildings being more prominent.

The different qualification and skills may also contribute to different goals and vision for the group. Those who are horticulturally- oriented focus on that specific market and may

not consider the wider general tourism and non-tourism markets who seek a day out, rather than a visit to a specific garden (see market segment and profile Figure 1.3). Those owners/managers who are more business oriented tend to seek to attract all visitors, without consideration for the different benefits sought by each of the different market segments.

It was obvious that the state body viewed itself as having a different role. This role is primarily conservation and consequently they felt that as this was the case that it did not have to advertise. However, the role of conservation was also prevalent amongst the garden owners, with the majority of the gardens (n=19) citing this as a reason for the development and opening of their gardens to the public. Conservation could act as the basis of an encompassing vision.

Considering the basic conceptualisation of an Irish garden forced the participants to think about what such a product actually meant to them, with a view to identifying commonalities that might signify a unifying vision of the garden tourism. Quite a number had difficulty in defining an Irish garden, with 10 out of 28 slow or unable to answer. If the basic perception of the product is not universally understood, there is a lack of vision and co-operation is more problematic. The Key Informants and Garden Owners/Managers (n=8) identified the wildness, linking it to William Robinson, the Irish 19th century landscape designer who created furore with his unstructured approach in defiance of the structured nature of his English counterparts. A number of participants linked it to the older historic houses, citing examples. Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators were vague in their definitions and indicated a lack of thought or knowledge on the subject and little vision. Their approach in terms of vision may be more marketing oriented with a focus on the customer, rather than on the garden tourism product.

Using the SWOT analysis, a vision can be derived from the strengths of the product. Common strengths (Table 4.9) between the three groups were identified as history and variety – however neither history nor variety were referred to in the effort to define the Irish garden, except to refer to the Anglo-Irish connection. Values need to be linked to strengths in order to consolidate vision. The CEO agreed this to be essential and said that people do not know the values or benefits that are being delivered. However, a new generation is emerging, one which is not linked to the past history of the area.

The issue of commercialisation of the garden, which is a route taken by some of the properties, was referred to as a positive (*'increased commercialisation to make viable'* -

KIB), a negative (*'would not like to be like xx and what they have done to their garden'* – GO23 a garden manager/private) and as a necessity (*'sadly go down the road of commercialisation... to make viable'* – GO2 a garden owner/private). One Garden Owners/Manager stated that *'inherited gardens do not look at it [the garden] as a commercial perspective'* (GO14), indicating a bifurcated view, and this was endorsed by the CEO.

Commonly perceived values, as sought by the visitor, may also hold a key to creating a common vision for the gardens groups. Plant-oriented aspects were identified as of value to the visitor by 12 of the Garden Owners/Managers and also as a value by the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators. However they were not mentioned by the Key Informants. Experience values were cited by each group, particularly the creation of *'tranquillity'*, although one participant said that garden values sought were *'for a cultural thing'* (GO24). An understanding of the values sought by the customer can help to create, build and guide a vision for the group. An adapted gap analysis focusing on the Gardens Owners/Managers and visitors could be undertaken to compare perceived and actual visitor values of the gardens.

Future marketing activities suggested by some of the Garden Owners/Managers (n=3) did indicate that a greater focus is required for vision and direction. This group seemed to be a number of actors working loosely together with no clear or evident vision or goal. A unifying vision, jointly agreed (Jamal and Getz 1995; Komppula 2000) needs to be created in order that the group is involved in activities which are meaningful and beneficial activities for all.

5.2.9 Combining Resources and Access to Information

The resources of one organisation may be seen as of value to another organisation and this may act as a catalyst to work together. Both TLNs said that their networks were resource intensive and they had a network of suppliers, indicating considerable resource capital for potential sharing. This combining and sharing of resources is recognised in network unification by Morrison (1998). Much of the co-operation within this group involves joint promotion, which is undertaken by an executive, and the compilation and distribution of a joint brochure. However, the combination of resources can help and both the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme and funding for marketing were used as a catalyst to encourage gardens to join and stay as member of the HCGI. Matching financial resources have been allocated to marketing activities and, together with access to the

national and international traditional tourism distribution channels and contacts through Tourism Ireland Limited (TIL) and Fáilte Ireland, act as a 'carrot' to potential members. As 24 of the Garden Owners/Managers stated they were located within 50km of an identified access point to the country, access to a market (population) may also act as a major catalyst to opening a garden to the public. However, the CEO said the garden tourism product is such a specialist market that if it [the garden] is good enough, people will travel.

Combining of resources occurred on both a macro and micro scale. On a macro scale, the tourism boards allocated grant aid on the basis of 75% of funding to local authorities and 50% to private bodies in the development of the gardens through the GGRS. This can be considered as a combination of financial resources to initially restore and develop the product. Marketing the gardens via the co-operative was also undertaken through a combination of financial resources from both the public (Bord Fáilte at the time) and private sectors (the gardens themselves), with matching funding normally being required for the development prior to the implementation of any marketing. On a micro scale, combining resources, whether they be ideas, information, finance or expertise, can help a business succeed or at least be more efficient than operating by themselves. The access of sharing of information did not feature at all in terms of the PMG or other gardens. This does not concur with research undertaken in the ParNet project or indeed with many authors (Childs and Faulkner 1998, Hall 2004). Dissemination of information was considered valuable to the visitor market and was cited by different Garden Owners/Managers under present value of the group to visitors (n=5), additional value that could be developed for the visitor market and the benefit of the PMG, where again it was mentioned as a benefit to visitors. The Garden/Heritage Co-ordinators also cited that information dissemination was a benefit of the group to the visitors. The Garden Owners/Managers may be too proud or consider it inappropriate to say that they seek information themselves; however, it was evident after completing the interviews that many of them could learn a great deal from one another about both the operation and marketing of tourism

The issue of combining resources can be fraught with difficulties: what does one contribute or how much does one contribute? Garden Owners/Managers needed to know the extent of their resources in order to ascertain ability to contribute. The resources, financial or otherwise varied considerably between gardens. Even their knowledge of what they had or did with resources was vague as in the case of allocation of funding to marketing. Eight

Garden Owners/Managers allocated less than €5,000 per year to marketing, ten Garden Owners/Managers were not aware of their marketing budget, and one garden allocating €80,000 per annum.

In defining co-operation, Key Informants did not mention the combining of resources, although it was mentioned by five Garden Owners/Managers as words used to define co-operation. One of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators also defined co-operation as '*shared knowledge and resources*' (GO3). In all, only four of the Gardens Owners/Managers amongst all those interviewed, hinted to any aspect of sharing associated with the essential characteristics of co-operation. The combining of resources was not referred to by any participant as an essential characteristic of the approach, which indicates perhaps a basic lack of understanding of the concept of co-operation. The 'forced' combining of resources, in the case of the PMG, impacts on whether the gardens 'need' or 'wish' to belong to the group. This in turn impacts on the role of the garden within the PMG and questions the desire and level of commitment to the co-operative process.

5.2.10 Performance Parameters

Generating satisfaction in a relationship by obtaining goals initially agreed is an essential part of its management (Towers et al. 2006) and can be achieved only through the identification and use of performance parameters to obtain the initial goals (WTO 2003). Each of the groups was asked specifically about auditing, monitoring and market research. The Key Informants all concurred that monitoring techniques were not being implemented, with a suggestion that if this did not happen in the future, places would continue to deteriorate. However, they said that feedback was sought from members of HCGI at the annual AGM. In order to manage a relationship and to understand its worth and value, it is important that performance parameters are developed and measured on a regular basis. Payne (1995) considers evaluation of performance to be an essential component of relationship management. This makes sound business sense. How many visitors came to the garden last year and has there been an increase this year? How did they find out about the garden (what method of promotion/marketing works best?) and was money spent in places where there is little yield? Overall, limited formal research/monitoring of the market (the visitors to the garden) suggests little contact with customers. In terms of evaluation of the national co-operative, one garden owner said that there was little monitoring in place or feedback and this was echoed in several places in relation to the gardens and the support bodies. Also important is the understanding of the value of the garden to the visitors - what they like, what they do not like and how improvements can be

made. All of these questions require feedback from stakeholders and this can be undertaken in a formalised or informal manner. In terms of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators, feedback from members is essential to ascertain whether the group is performing in an efficient and effective manner and if objectives are being achieved.

Nine of the Garden Owners/Managers indicated their implementation of formal auditing and monitoring of the market, although in reality only four of these Garden Owners/Managers were involved in up-to-date and continuous research of their market. Two Garden Owners/Managers (both well established) said that it was important and they use the findings as a benchmark. Of those that answered the question, the majority indicated positive feedback from their visitors. There is a need for Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators to get regular feedback from members, especially where there is payment involved. The commercial firm would not exist if the members were not happy and withdrew. This payment occurred in five of the six groups and was allocated mainly to common marketing for the group. One of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators suggested the need for feedback as one of the characteristics essential for successful co-operation, concurring with Wilson and Jantrania (1993). However, this group considered feedback as that pertaining to visitors rather than members. Overall, there was no evaluation of either the market or any type of performance by the gardens. No parameters were eluded to except for the obvious parameter of visitor numbers and satisfaction levels. Even these in most cases were anecdotal. This could indicate a lack of interest or perhaps little expectation as to how the garden is performing as a tourist attraction. There were also no evident performance parameters being used by the TLN networks, although one network said that although it was concerned, it was working everything towards the use of auditing and monitoring procedures. Although this may be the case, in the service industry it is essential to both get feedback from customers and in any business to gauge how the business is operating by using appropriate performance parameters.

In terms of a PMG, examples of productivity parameters focusing on the traditional consumer may be the attendance at consumer promotions and resulting business, access to various markets or distribution channels, publication of literature and presence on a group's website. These parameters provide tangibility and can be used to attract future members as well as to encourage increased involvement within the group. In terms of other stakeholders, such as media, productivity parameters might be linking in with media by providing stories and the development of familiarisations trips for journalists. Productivity parameters in terms of self/internal markets may be group meetings, getting to know the

industry through talks, visits to other similar premises and addressing issues that may impact on the group.

Overall, there are few structured methods of monitoring or customer feedback utilised by the gardens and the CEO agreed with this. There is a need for qualitative and quantitative performances parameters to be identified in order to give a sense of direction and achievement. The Tourism Implementation Group (TSIG 2008) addresses some of the issues in relation to monitoring and implementation, though this is a national group. Monitoring and implementation need to start at product level where interaction with the visitor takes place. The on-site mentoring service may address product level issues in the future.

The findings of the research have been discussed under the constructs identified as part of the conceptual framework. These are now examined further considering the extent and approach to co-operation, development of relationships and networking by the gardens. This is undertaken with a view to giving additional insight into the research objectives of this thesis.

5.3 Towards Co-operation and Relationships or not?

Different words are used in the literature to illustrate characteristics associated with a successful and efficient approach to co-operation. They include leadership, active co-operation, intelligence, focus, interest, ability to deal with people, image definition, commitment, enthusiasm, sharing, dynamic and the need for training and a marketing background (Morgan and Hunt 1994, Gronoos 1996, Tremblay 2000, Bauer 2001, WTO 2003). Many of these characteristics were identified during the course of the interviews. Healy (2001) advocated that relationship marketing was dyadic, neo relationship marketing was with suppliers and networks involved four or more stakeholders. At present, twelve of the gardens cited three or fewer links with other stakeholders – and this was after they were shown the six market model. It could be deduced that many of the gardens do not operate within the context of a network, however have relationships with a variety of stakeholders. Initiation and management of a relationship requires energy and also there is often an assumption that the customer (or stakeholder) actually wants a relationship and are willing to work at it (Rosenfield 1999). It is a negotiated journey fraught with decisions of trust. However, many of the participants may not be interested in working together with stakeholders.

However, there are a number of other embedded and underlying issues that impact on the propensity for members of the group to interact with one another. These include history and social issues, qualifications and experience, ownership, a difference in objectives and links with the product. Some of the gardens were evidently customer oriented, others not so, indicating that it was only those that appreciated or were passionate about the garden that were welcome. These issues form the basis for different identities and create a dynamic tension impacting on the propensity to co-operate. The different identities and related issues are now explored in greater depth.

5.3.1 A Multiplicity of Identities

Four different types of identity emerged from the findings of this research. These identities are influenced by history and social systems, conflicting objectives and spatiality, ownership and qualification and experience and these are illustrated in Figure 5.1. Kelly and Kelly (1994:64) define group identity as '*the desire of an individual to connect with another member*'; however, the evidence for the findings would suggest that there seems to be no single identity within this group. People who work together in co-operatives need an identity to give direction and meaning to what they do. A co-operative requires linkages forming a network scenario. Networks need an identity (Silversides 2001) and network participants need to be able to take pride in the reputation of the network and what it represents. The research indicated that there is limited communication, bonding and even involvement between Garden Owners/Managers. Aspects of socialisation were also limited and this leads to the conclusion that networking was limited. It did exist where ties based on history, ownership, similar qualifications and objectives had created a link. These links can be defined as a form of socialisation that is social links that require the development of relationships with people. However, another link or tie existed for some of the participants which related to the garden itself, as it was apparent that a number of the Garden Owners/Managers had developed relationships with the garden. The garden is a constructed space which over time becomes a place (garden). It involves planning, planting, growth and death. However, this constructed space is ephemeral. Spatial links create spatial relationships. In the creation of a garden, space is constructed to become a place, and the owners/managers relate to both the space and place of the garden. The different links and relationships that garden owners and managers have with their gardens, as well as with the (social) stakeholders, have created different identities which influence their co-operative and the ability to develop links and relationships.

In terms of projected image and evidence of identity, the evaluation of the websites in relation to market focus ranged from garden-lovers and specialists to the general and family market as portrayed by both the images and the descriptions of place. Also, reflecting the historical nature of some of the gardens, commonly used words tended to align with aspects of history and this was the single most common identity that can be traced through the garden tourism product. Using this as a single identity may omit new or recently restored gardens, especially those that have lost their link (possibly family connections) to the past. A multiplicity of identities exists and this influences the co-operation and relationships between not just the gardens, but also between the other stakeholders such as the state bodies, tourism operators (and other distribution channels) and the customers (visitors).

On exploration of a definition of garden co-operative groups, a number of the gardens (n=6) and half of the group co-ordinators (n=3) were confused. The lack of identity with the overall product (garden) may have contributed to this confusion and a lack of understanding as to what or who this referred to was not clear. The Garden Owners contributed to Houses, Castles and Gardens by means of a membership fee and this fee constituted 10% - 95% of their marketing budget. However, membership of a co-operative marketing group was considered the least effective method of marketing when compared to other methods. The members do not readily identify the co-operative group as having a role to play in terms of marketing. This was endorsed when commenting on the use of other tools as, although all the gardens mentioned the use of brochures as a marketing tool, not once was the brochure developed by HCGI mentioned as a part of their marketing tools. These are now discussed in more detail.

5.3.1.1 Identity: history and embedded social systems

'Networking and embeddedness contribute to maximising the benefits of a sustainable and empowering approach in rural tourism' (Cawley and Gillmor 2008:328). Embedded issues link the garden with the social space and landscape. Issues of an embedded nature can be said to exist when the tourist attraction/product is part of the recreational and social landscape; when the tourism product commoditises the landscape, heritage or history in terms of use (Oliver and Jenkins 2003). The gardens which participated in this research have, without exception, a history attached to them and to the social systems in place within the group. In order to be eligible for the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme, it was stipulated that gardens were to have been 18th or 19th century in origin. Most are large gardens and most are rural. In many cases, generations of families had been

involved in developing and maintaining such gardens. Links through plant collections and other gardens both in Ireland and abroad have created a unique mix of design and planting. In terms of those that received funding through the Gardens Restoration Scheme, the original garden may have disappeared. The objective of their restoration was to recreate what had been there originally through the painstaking research of plans and notes and the final products have recreated part of history. The more recent gardens have been created over time and often encapsulate the local and social history of an area. Many glimpse back to times past using plants to create a landscape and provide a reflection of the present for the future. Nature, the senses and experience are used by the owners to produce the transient space that is a garden.

A historical embeddedness, in the form of an Anglo-Irish tradition, runs through a number of the older gardens and was identified as such by the Key Informants. It was seen as both a strength of the product and as a form élitism - which was considered positively to be used as a marketing tool (KIB) and negatively in terms of being exclusive and being non-accommodating (by a group co-ordinator). Easton and Araujo (1994:81) argue, however, that *'all exchanges are embedded in a social matrix, and therefore are driving forces which support the establishment of a relationship regardless of economic outcome'*. Every social system is a closed system which has a series of dynamic boundaries. Every social system has a history. History provides a sense of attachment to place and space and some networks, and the spawned relationships which are historical in nature, may provide a sense of attachment and place to those involved (Kneafsey 2001). Many of the Gardens Owners/Managers interviewed lived in houses/homes attached to generations of families with a rich story to tell and strong links to their history and the geographic area. Some of the older houses and gardens were part of the 'landed gentry' with historical connections to the area going back hundreds of years. Many of these historic or Anglo-Irish ascendancy landowners connect through common links such as education and religious belief. Dietrich (1994, in Todeva and Knoke 2005) argued that the level of co-operation between businesses seemed much less influenced by internalised costs and benefits than [amongst other factors] by the history of the partnering firm's relationships

This historical embeddedness and identity could provide additional value to the customer and a link within the group. The story and history of the garden can create a more human and marketable product. The CEO endorsed this and proposed that it is the human aspect which is of interest to visitors, as long as it is not over-academised.

The historic nature and the way in which many of the gardens are linked to big houses embed them in their local area. They are viewed in the context of not just the house and garden, but in terms of their interaction with the local population or their ancestors, other landowners and businesses. Many of the local population may have in the past worked in the garden or the house or farm. Fourteen of the gardens had farmland as a principal source of income.

Ten out of the 28 Garden Owners/Managers referred back to the original owner of the garden when asked who created or originated the garden, indicating a link to the history of the place. However, this historical link, though evident in promotional literature and throughout the interviews, is mentioned by only one garden owner as being of value to the visitor. History forms a great part of an identity for a number of houses and 13 have been with the same ownership for more than 50 years. History is evident as a common thread winding its way through the descriptions on the different websites. However, it is not capitalised on to any great degree, perhaps because of the sensitivity of the involvement of Britain in Irish affairs up until the early 20th century and the perception that many Irish people have had of the 'Big House' and in this case the associated garden. It is important that the diversity of the gardens is acknowledged and applauded. There has been significant decline in the number of historic houses in Ireland (Dooley 2003). The decline in this aspect of history erodes the Irish identity that is attractive to overseas visitors. Changes in policy and legislation as advocated by Dooley (ibid), and time may mitigate negativities in relation to this aspect.

The development of social capital is seen as a value in strategic alliances by some authors (for example Koka and Prescott 2002; Hall 2004). The development of a social element or social capital was mentioned by a number of the more successful gardens as an important factor, although one garden owner mentioned that the members of the national co-operative had broken down into cliques as '*there were some people that you got on better with than others*'. However, socialisation was not strongly evident amongst the garden group. A number of the more successful gardens however mentioned the importance of creating a more social aspect both for other members (visiting each others gardens) and the visitor (events, meeting gardeners), but there was little reference to it otherwise. According to Donaldson and O'Toole (2002), socialisation can contribute to successful relationship development as it creates a situation where involvement goes from being passive to active. Zontanos and Anderson (2004) argue that relationship building in small business involves both direct and indirect involvement which takes place in a rich social context. An

understanding of the social contexts considered suitable by the gardens for relationship building requires further exploration.

One participant who had studied co-operation in an academic context was wholly negative about the concept being used for the gardens as a tourist attraction as *'co-operatives and their structure attract altruistic rather than business people'* (GO14). The same manager suggested that one should *'look at the underlying reasons why people join co-operatives'*, suggesting that there is a social rather than a business need. Some garden owners may feel the 'need to belong' whatever the outcome of belonging brings to them or the business. Baumeister and Leary (1995) suggested that interpersonal attachment is a fundamental human motivation and as Palmer et al. (2000) stated that this drift to a more social focus tends to occur as a co-operative relationship progresses, this introduction of a social element for some Garden Owners/Managers may help to strengthen ties and increase cohesiveness, making it more difficult to leave the group if there is an element of social equity tied up with the group. The manager did believe, however, that *'the co-operative model will work, but only if ... there is continuous adherence to the co-operative principle and if the members have a serious commercial stake in the property'*. However, in this research there seemed little evidence of social or even commercial interest across the members and that conservation was the main focus of these properties.

It could be said that, in the case of these gardens, where co-operation is based on the product, that social capital gives greater value to the provider than the development of the product as a business (only 3 gardens cited social reasons as to why they opened the garden). The CEO agreed and also disagreed with this, though made a point that many open their gardens for themselves due to lifestyle choices and wishing visitors to be part of that lifestyle choice. The CEO quoted a woman who said to her *'I did not want the type of tourist Bord Fáilte wanted me to have'*; as she herself had identified the people she wished to interact with. In order to increase value several Garden Owners/Managers said that they had lunches with either local people, the Tourist Office or hold a marketing lunch, suggesting that a form of socialisation might add value to the experience of working together. Key Informant B suggested the *'involvement of the big names'* and *'bringing in new gardens – socially as well'*, in order to give a sense of status to the group and creating the social links. This was reiterated in consideration by the same Key Informant of the values sought by visitors to gardens, in that HCGI could form *'an elitist group of houses, castles and gardens'* (in deference to that being offered by the state body) and this could be used as a selling point, with it being viewed as an exclusive offering. However, the fact

that only three of the gardens mentioned social issues as to the reason why they opened the garden may suggest that this approach might not work due to the type of person involved with this product. Working in a voluntary manner, however does not seem to be part of the Irish psyche, although the National Trust in Northern Ireland and National Botanic Gardens in Dublin utilise volunteers to some degree. The perception by the Key Informants was of the lack of development of links and relationships between the stakeholders (primarily the gardens) and it was the difference between class background that caused the lack of (or the existence of) links between the gardens, *'type seeks similar levels amongst themselves ... there is a pecking order amongst the group'* (KIB). It was also suggested what they should be doing *'is to visit each others gardens', have social gatherings and conduct internal marketing amongst themselves'* (KIA,KIB,KIC). Furthermore, in terms of future links, comments such as *'they [the gardens] know how to network when marrying off the kids or having their horses sired'*, suggest a strong social interaction between some of the gardens, perhaps indicating either a linkage through history or family not unlike Guanxi in China. This underlying (not visible) social capital could be a strong contribution to the operation of the group. Rosenfeld (1997, in Huggins 1998) argues that that social capital is indeed often the least visible but most undervalued contributor to economic development.

One of the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators (GC3) mentioned social aspects and marketing as an essential characteristic for co-operation, as the process of socialisation can be seen as a way of extending the lifecycle of the group. It is argued by some authors that the creation of social capital may help to enhance and indeed strengthen relationship and co-operative bonds (Hall 2004) and corporate social capital, if achieved in the form of prestige, reputation, status and brand name recognition (Todeva and Knoke 2005:126). One of the gardens owners mentioned, when asked for additional comments, that care needed to be taken in mixing business and social aspects with co-operation, possibly indicating their own wish not to become involved in the process.

5.3.1.2 Identity: conflicting objectives and spatiality

In their evaluation of eight tourism networks in Europe, Halme and Fadeva (2001) identified conflicting goals as a barrier to networking. In this research, those who see conservation as a priority and those who open for financial gain, have different objectives. Of the 19 Garden Owners/Managers that cited conservation as a reason to develop the garden, 13 of these gardens gave it as a priority reason. Thirteen of the Garden Owners/Managers cited financial reasons for opening and developing the garden, with six

stating that it was the main reason to open. However, Cawley and Gillmor (2008: 330) state that entrepreneurs tend to prioritise economic gain, indicating that some gardens are not entrepreneurial in their approach to provision. Financial objectives are the key drivers behind the development and operation of the Tourism Learning Networks (TLN). The larger network, however, did allude to the requirement of *'feeding the needs – the social aspect... some passionate... craftspeople'*, which shows an approach which is attempting to integrate both the business, social needs and the different types of people involved in the group. Being driven to conserve and being driven to be a business can create conflict. Business focuses on the generation of revenue by marketing and selling of the product to interested consumers; conservation on the other hand is primarily product focused. The emphasis is on the product and its specific context, not just with present consumers but also with its link to the landscape and role for future posterity. Commercialisation and conservation did not appear to work together. Increased commercialisation was seen as a threat to the garden tourism sector, or an unfortunate way to go, by some of the gardens. However, increased commercialisation was cited as an opportunity by one Key Informant (KIB). The garden itself is construed by some owners/managers as a unifying sense of identity. Do the Garden Owners/Managers see the gardens as a business or a tourist attraction and therefore attractive to a wide range of markets, or as garden specific with a focus on those who share a passion for the product? The TLN coordinators emphasized *'the importance of having strong [sense of] business underpinning everything in the network'*. Certain gardens are part of a portfolio of businesses or other facilities such as restaurants, shops, play area and walking trails. The garden does not always play the key role and 11 gardens cited reasons other than the garden as the motivation to visit. With these 11 places, the garden is not the focus of the attraction and therefore these gardens are positioned differently, being complementary to the overall experience rather than the main attraction. In some cases, the garden is seen as a financial drain, *'the garden does not generate as much as expected'* (GO10) and *'costs going up sharply'* (GO5).

Garden tourism attractions display a divided attitude to the process of co-operation, although the CEO considered this as quite normal. However, there was a need to state and understand as to why the group was set up initially. The objectives of the garden owner dictate the multivariate ways in which a garden attracts visitors. Although the CEO disagreed with this, it was because she wished to view the garden from the perspective of the visitor as well as the owner/manager. The different objectives for opening a garden, whether they are conservation or financially driven, impact on the approach the garden

owner has in marketing the garden to the visitor. These objectives create different identities for the garden.

5.3.1.3 Identity: ownership

It is important that it is understood how providers in tourism operate within the context of tourism provision. The complexity of operation requires interaction with people to a lesser or greater degree. The ability (and wish) to interact impacts on the level and type of operation, as well as having a knock-on effect on other providers and tourism provision in the sector as a whole. Identities can be chosen or inherited. An identity can be created by self; it is how we perceive ourselves. It is also influenced by how others perceive us. Historical and embedded identities, for example, are what gardens carry with them. It brings with it a social system and existing network of relationships

New gardens, including some of those who have accessed the funding, do not have this access to historical networks and have not developed an identity for themselves, both with the sector and with the various stakeholders. In the case of the local authorities, links existed between the local authorities prior to involvement and contribute to the identity of ownership. Other local authorities, though small in number, have through county tourism boards established strong links and created an identity for tourism stakeholders. This has taken time, although a number of the more prevalent county tourism boards (funded by the local authority) were mentioned by those interviewed, particularly when asked about county co-operative groups. Some gardens were identified as being of significant value by the Great Gardens of Ireland Restoration Scheme (GGRS) and, as part of the funding allocation requirement, it was agreed that future losses incurred by the garden were to be underwritten by a local authority. Therefore, it was through this scheme that local authorities became the owners of a number of significant gardens in Ireland. However, this does raise other issues - the core objective of opening the garden to the public. Is it to operate the garden as a business with the need to constantly address viability, or is it to provide the local community and further afield with access to local heritage? And as losses are underwritten, is there less focus on the need to remain viable? Ownership may impact on commitment and investment in a relationship and commitment is essential to effective co-operation (Towers et al. 2006). Indeed, O'Connell (2005) often found that gardens run by owners and volunteers of the family were unsustainable. This was due to a number of factors including the lack of interest, health and availability of goodwill of those involved, leading to a restriction on opening and sometimes a situation which resulted in the cost of garden opening exceeding the revenue generated. However, the CEO said that

none of the Garden Owners/Managers could be involved in provision of the garden as an attraction to make money, as gardens were not viable tourist attractions. One of interviewed groups in Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators (GC4) was set up due to the dissatisfaction of what was going on in the garden sector at the time. This feeling of dissatisfaction led to a lack of trust, a requisite for co-operation (CTC 2005), and so a smaller number of gardens joined together with a focus on specialist gardens '*who shared a common passion*' (GC4). The objective of this group did not include being viable, rather it was about sharing this passion for garden and plants, a point echoed by the CEO when commenting on the statements.

Another number of gardens who were owned by the state and had been of HCGI a number of years ago set up their own group (GC1) This group (state) does not list tourism as one of its main objectives, although as part of its portfolio it has some of the most visited houses and gardens in Ireland. This group, together with another group (GC2) of charity status (UK based), consider conservation as its main focus. Economic sustainability was important. However, the main focus was conservation and its role in ensuring the gardens (and houses) are accessible by all in society.

The fact that HCGI does not include many of the well-known gardens is an issue and even within this PMG the differing structures operating with each of the gardens inevitably lead to different objectives and emphases on aspects such as the availability of resources and the pressure to be viable. Ownership may dictate sustainability of the product as each owners/managers has different objectives and expectations of the garden in terms of its being a tourist attraction. The CEO said, however, that she had rescued a number of totally unsustainable products; it was the management and expertise and how they were used that dictated the sustainability. So, perhaps privately- owned gardens lack the management expertise or experience but compensate with product expertise and interest, a statement with which the CEO agreed, though this impacts on the gardens to be viable or economically sustainable. Further training or mentoring in terms of management expertise may be required if participants are willing to take this on board.

Many of the gardens positively identified with the national level of co-operation with 25 of the gardens making positive comment about it. Both the gardens and the garden groups viewed the role of the national co-operative groups as important for international relationships and marketing, and in one group the co-ordinator saw it as important for them to be associated with something that is part of an all-Ireland product. Increased profile of the group (greater sense of identity) was suggested by three gardens, when additional

comments were being sought on what types of marketing should be carried out by co-operative groups. This was reiterated when they were asked about the creation of additional value of the co-operative for the visitors.

5.3.1.4 Identity: qualifications and experience

An issue of identity may be caused by the different skills and embedded histories of the gardens, as mentioned previously, and this is exacerbated by the different remits of those who are involved in developing and marketing the garden. It was noted that a number of the participants had trained in horticulture and knew other horticulturalists who had also trained in a similar institution of learning, hence bringing with them a prior identity and bond. Garden owners, on the other hand, were defined in some cases by their family link with the garden and house. There was a marked difference in relationship between those who had either been through some form of education/training in business/marketing experience and those who had neither a great deal of experience or knowledge of marketing.

Although Gummesson (1999) advocates that all stakeholders in a business are ‘part-time marketers’, previous experience and/or qualifications (knowledge) of management skills leads to a competence with the process of marketing and management, including the use of both co-operation and networking techniques as part of business strategy. Indeed, some authors (CTC 2005) cite a lack of training and understanding of the marketing process as a barrier to successful co-operation and networking. Just less than half of the Garden Owners/Managers said that they had learned on the job. It could also be argued that sometimes these skills are inherent in the individual who can be ‘born’ with the skills to successfully manage and market such a tourism venture. However, different backgrounds, experiences and skills may contribute to a lack of unity amongst those involved in developing and promoting the garden. One of the Key Informants stated that it was the gardeners and not the owners that actually networked more, as they knew each other and shared a common interest. Training has been, and is, considered essential in creating a competitive tourism industry (Tourism Development Strategies 1989-2013). The most recent strategy recognises that, while the tourism industry in Ireland is comprised mainly of small and medium enterprises, there is a need to support professional and enterprise development and skills training (ibid:55). This may take the form of up-skilling or learning the basic principles of management and marketing. This is very much part of the continued development of both county and product centred learning networks and is facilitated by Fáilte Ireland (Fáilte Ireland 2008). Financial allocation and incentives to encourage co-

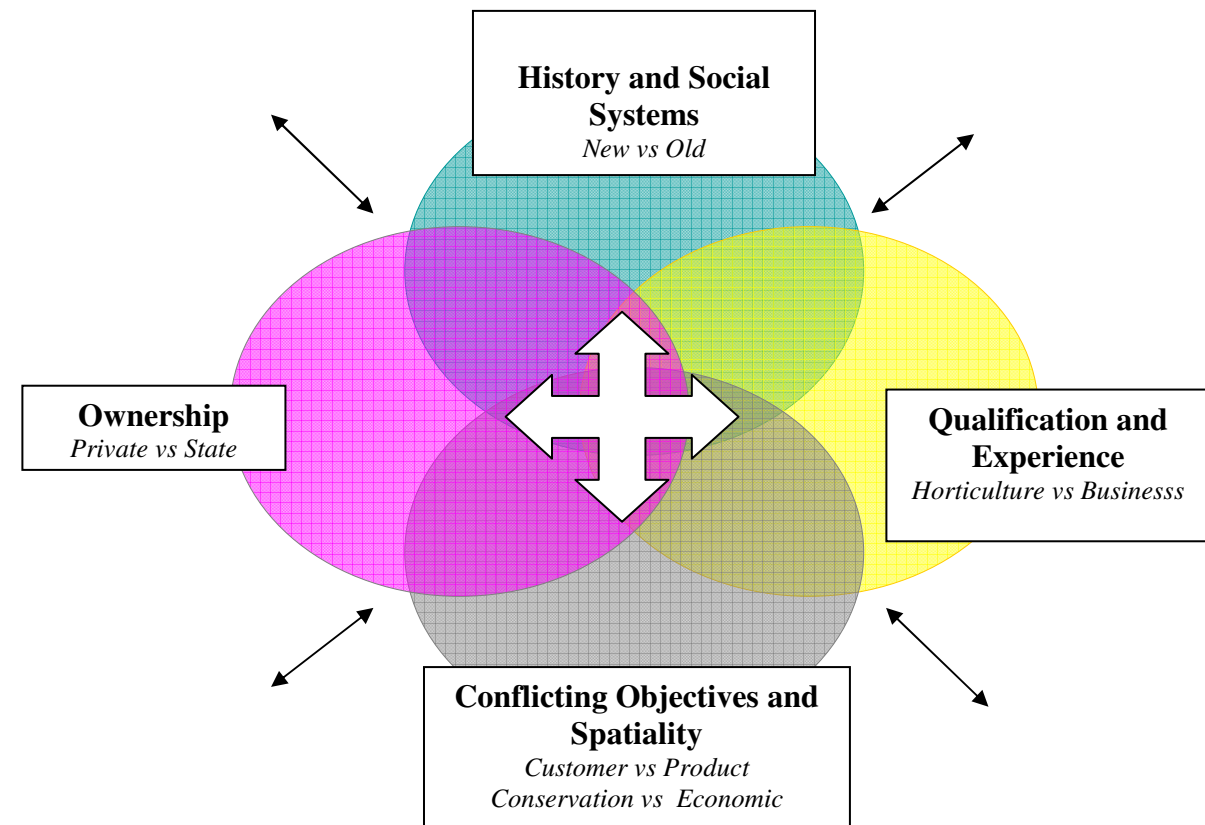
operation and networking have been and are evident through many EU and national programmes. It has been the basis for such programmes as LEADER and LEADER +, as well as at a more local level, such as County Enterprise Boards which also fund and encourage training, mentoring and involvement with this process.

It was evident that experience played a role and some of the larger gardens which attracted a greater numbers of visitors listed the different markets that they were involved with, without the need to prompt them using the adapted Six Market Model (Figure 2.4). This indicates a more planned and strategic approach to marketing. King et al. (1998), in profiling the activities of small tourism businesses, found that urban rather than rural, and large rather than small, enterprises tended to be more strategic in their approach to marketing activities. This, they argued, was due to managerial experience and the ability to allocate staff to the required tasks. A divide between a horticulture focus and a marketing (business) focus was evident when questioning the Key Informants, all of whom had dealt with most of the gardens in some manner or another. When asked about many of the issues (for example conceptualisation of an Irish garden), marketing words and perspectives were used by those that had involvement with marketing, and words focusing on plants/people and garden owners were used by the horticultural oriented Key Informant. A balance between garden and market orientation is good, as each provides a critical knowledge and resource which can be shared. However, a common vision and goal would help to combine these different approaches.

5.3.2 Towards Co-operation

History and social systems, conflicting objectives and spatiality, ownership and qualification and experience create a multiplicity of identities which operate under dynamic tension and influence co-operation, relationships and networking amongst the gardens. This is illustrated in Figure 5.1. The process to co-operate is exacerbated by some organisations that remain outside and look in saying *'that they didn't have an angle at any level because of the nature of their role'* (GC1) and this creates a barrier to anyone who wishes to interact or co-operate with them. The different identities also create cliques. Those clique members exhibiting similar identities may bond more easily with each other than with those outside the clique. Buchanan (2007) cites the anthropologist Rob Boyd, who argues that our ancestors required skills to identify others with whom they shared social norms, thus allowing them to interact more easily due to similar expectations.

Figure 5.1 A Multiplicity of Identities



Some garden owners prefer, indeed like, those others within the group and visitors who have the same expectation of the garden; the knowledge of Latin terminologies for plants and using this as part of the social discourse is an example of this. Each identity group has an energy and power. If the organisation exhibits similar characteristics that align to the self-concept of the owner/manager, there will be strong identification between them and the organisation. Some aspects of self-concept could however be aspirational. Not belonging to the *right* affiliate group (the use of power to exclude) can act as a barrier on the ability to belong and potential new entrants may feel marginalised (Grabher 1993). Non-identification of cultural differences that exist within the garden group may contribute to the lack of real relationship building and co-operation. There is a need for tolerance, as suggested by the CEO *'because tolerance is the biggest thing that people need to have. We put people into these groups as we want a box to fit everyone – we want everyone to have a box for the same 10 things – we don't promote our diversity'*. Childs et al. (2000) suggest that the absence of sensitivity to partners' cultural issues can lead to alliance failure. Even though this was identified by these authors in relation to the global context, it may also be true for a more local or national situation as in the case of the gardens in Ireland.

5.3.3 Other Identities: size and geographical location

Notwithstanding these four main identities, there are other factors that also contribute to the complexity of the ways these groups interact with stakeholders. Size and diversity of the product may contribute to a different identity. What was evident was that the gardens and the groups ranged considerably in size and capacity to attract or indeed accommodate visitors. The numbers of visitors to the gardens varied considerably, from 50 to 380,000 per annum, as well as the capacity and size of the garden (under 1ha. to almost 65 ha.).

Such diversity does not lead to a sense of unity or similarity between the gardens and therefore an inability to create an identity to which each garden can relate. Size was also deemed an issue in terms to equity and the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators thought that some of the smaller properties were not getting a fair share of business. Those gardens with smaller capacity attract more specialist groups, giving them a better sense of control and the CEO concurred with this. Whether the location is rural has an impact on identity. Most of the gardens are located in rural areas, although a number are close to Dublin. Although this was not posed specifically as a question, the gardens were asked about their closest access point (visitor access).

Most of the participants cited their local access point (within 50km), indicating that they view their product within its own locality rather than being Dublin centric. Only two of the Garden Owners/Managers who had nearer access points than Dublin indicated that Dublin was their main access point for visitors, indicating a Dublin-oriented product. However, another garden said that the national group was very Dublin-centric. One can deduce two things from this: those that cited Dublin as being their point of access may consider themselves more in a national context as Dublin does generate the most visitor entries; and those that cited an access point less than 50km view their product as a more local or regional tourism product.

Kompulla (2000), in surveying different tourism networks, discovered that small entrepreneurs found it difficult to identify themselves as part of a network on a regional scale, as usually they did not know the other members of the network (Section 2.15.3.6). Huggins (1998) argues, however, that wider spatial networks are less parochial and may combat local competition. This was also mentioned by the co-ordinator of the larger TLN who said that local networks tended to be too parochial. During the course of the interviews, it was found that two smaller local groups had been initiated recently to overcome the issue of geographical distance and to use a more referral based method of business. However, there were also some negative comments about these groups, especially by those who viewed them with suspicion as they were not involved. Huggins (ibid) also suggests that commitment could be developed through more local and issue-based networks and therefore it can be surmised that both geographical proximity and similarity of issues played a role in their knowledge of one another. Although it was evident there was a degree of trust at local level, there was also mention of parochialism.

The Garden Owners/Managers were generally more positive about national co-operative marketing groups, though this may be due to the fact that only a third of them were members of other groups and therefore could not make personal comment on the other strata of marketing co-operative groups. There seemed to be little complaint in relation to geographical distribution of the other members or location of meetings, though it was recognised that a core group of people did attend meetings and sometimes distance did prove a problem; *'too large and spread out'* (GO17), *'don't want to travel to Dublin'* (GO16) and *'some of the gardeners don't get involved enough – easy to sit back'* (GO11). Other elements tie this core together especially a passion for plants and gardens which was evident throughout many of the interviews.

Overall, it was not evident that a dispersed geographical pattern had a negative impact on the operation of the co-operative group as it was and promoted as a national group, though close geographical proximity increases parochialism. A more broadly based view is required to overcome this.

5.4 Conclusion

Overall, there seemed to be a lack of focus by Garden Owners/Managers on the customer (visitor) and participants were more garden-oriented than tourist-oriented. There was also a focus on conservation which does not seem to incorporate an entrepreneurial or business approach. Those that were driven by financial aspects were focused on making money rather than to be strategic about creating a business that will make money. It seemed to be the cost of operation was being pushed by the numbers game. This may have emerged with the national obsession of increasing visitor numbers which was prevalent in the early 1990s. A focus on the type of visitor (creation of added value) or the type of experience (revenue generating) has been emphasised more in the past three years, and certainly in terms of global sustainability, the social, cultural and environmental aspects are playing a more important role.

The gardens interviewed as part of this research can be divided into inherited and new gardens. The former, though ranging in size, were personal and owned in many cases by descendents of the Anglo-Irish culture. These garden owners were more purist in their outlook, wishing to be non-commercial and to attract small specialist groups or individuals, in other words the visitor as a garden lover, like minded and appreciative of the gardens and plants. These gardens have a story to tell which would be attractive to the general visitor market, though sometimes this is not readily communicated or packaged to achieve this. This may be due to lack of knowledge or ability, or it may be part of a purposeful decision to interact only with a selective group of people. The new gardens, or rather new garden owners, tend to be more business oriented. These gardens are managed by either new owners or paid managers and visitors are recognised as paying customers. Their approach includes developing relationships and co-operating, though with some managers there is a lack of knowledge and even interest about the garden as a rich historical link with the landscape.

Thought and effort in relation to their involvement in co-operation, developing relationships and networking varies considerably from garden to garden. This is often linked to experience and training/education in the area of management. Not all tools of communication were used by members and their usage linked either to knowledge of

marketing, the specific objectives of the garden or the desired level of involvement. Although a high level of involvement is important to a relationship (Wilson and Jantrania 1993), this involvement needs to be preceded by the wish to become involved. The ability to be involved may be impacted by geographical proximity to other members and to Dublin. However, this is part of place and cannot be changed. Use of technology can help to overcome distance if used creatively. However, the use of email can help overcome distance, especially after a relationship has been initially developed. Meetings take place in the different member gardens and this allows members the opportunity to visit the other gardens and to mediate distances travelled for the purpose of meetings.

Many of the participants did not identify with their PMG, looking at it solely as a body to market the gardens overseas and bring additional numbers of visitors to the garden. There was not a unified vision or objective. Group identification (Stoel 2002) and vision (WTO 2003) are essential elements of successful co-operation. The participants in the Garden Owners/Managers group appeared to form a group that was quite informal, unstructured and spontaneous, with many of the members being reactive rather than proactive in their operations, confirming the situation that existed within networks in the SME sector as observed by Gilmore et al. (2001). The lack of a structured approach by the members to relationship development, whether within the group or with other stakeholders, needs to be addressed and a continual investment in relationship development is required in order to be sustainable (Tremblay 2000).

Although it does appear that the groups are not co-operating either efficiently or effectively, perhaps it is out of choice. Gardeners are not marketers, and marketers are not gardeners – perhaps the processes use different parts of the brain. Gardening for the most part is creative, with business having a more positivistic approach to operation. ‘Creating a pleasant environment’ was the most cited value in terms of enjoyment identified by urban gardeners in a study undertaken by Dunnett (2000:43) in to the perceived benefits to human well-being of gardens and creativity was specifically valued by 36% of the respondents(*ibid*). Gardeners work individually: perhaps it is an approach (occupation and lifestyle choice) that indicates as to the ability to co-operate, forms links and relationships. There seemed to be a general understanding of what co-operation was about, and many of the phrases/terms used to define characteristics are considered in the literature to be essential requirements to successful co-operation. A greater sense of identity or at least a tolerance of the existing multiple identities that exist would help to stimulate a more efficient and effective approach to co-operation.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

*'I will arise and go now, and go to Inisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.'*

The Lake Isle of Inisfree by William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

6.1 Introduction

Berger et al. (2006:135), when exploring identity, identification and relationships through social alliances, quotes Josselan (1992), who contends *'that people have specific defining relationships that shape them and their identities'*. This was evident in garden tourism and emerged over the course of the research. Four principal identities contributed to the development of relationships and co-operation of those interviewed: history and social systems, conflicting objectives and spatiality, ownership, and qualification and experience. Overall, the participants from all groups were positive about the interview. Some of them said that it had prompted them to think about what they were doing. The Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators were all different in the approach to developing links with others. Indeed their perception of the product was different, reflecting their different objectives and roles. The participants varied in their openness to change and in the frankness of their responses. This could be linked to a number of contributing variables, such as the personality of the participant, their perception of academia and their general trust of the situation. Although all were involved in marketing gardens to visitors, the range in knowledge and even interest of the product was marked - with the commercial groups and the voluntary group having the greatest knowledge. With 768,000 visitors to gardens in Ireland in 2007 and 72% 'very satisfied' (FI 2008) with what they experienced, the garden tourism sector in Ireland has a sizeable market. There is potential to grow and expand in terms of both capacity and market. Although co-operation does not exist to any great degree at present, this can be achieved through the understanding of the variables that contribute to their processes whilst embracing the multiplicity of identities that exist within the sector.

6.2 The Objective of the Research

‘to explore, and seek an understanding of co-operation, links and relationships that exist (or not) in a tourism product group in the garden tourism sector in Ireland’

The guiding research statement iterated at the beginning of this thesis led to an exploration of the interactions and connections that existed between gardens and other stakeholders in marketing garden tourism. The criterion for the study was that the garden was open to visitors and was, or had been, a member of a co-operative marketing group.

A number of objectives were developed in order to undertake this exploration of issues. These include the following:

1. Exploration of the relevant literature in the fields of tourism, geography, garden tourism, marketing, tourism marketing, organisational behaviour and social sciences, with a view to identification of the key constructs for developing relationships for co-operation, linkages and networking;
2. Evaluation of relationship marketing as a marketing tool for co-operation and networking;
3. Exploration of the use of relationships and interaction as an approach to providing a tourism experience;
4. Exploration of the type and extent of co-operation and relationships being undertaken by gardens open to the public and which are members of a product marketing group;
5. Examination of the marketing strategy and tactics used by members of the product marketing group and evaluation of these tools in relation to developing and maintaining relationships;
6. Consideration of the importance of value as a construct in developing co-operation, and links;
7. Evaluation of the impact location, experience, qualifications, history and other embedded issues have on the development and maintenance of relationships;
8. Identification of the positive and negative characteristics associated with effective co-operation;

9. Assessment of whether the approaches used contribute to sustainable tourism provision.

Despite previous involvement and knowledge with garden tourism which acted as a catalyst to undertaking the research, the researcher had no expectation of the outcome. Due to its inductive nature, the process and the findings evolved over time. The main driver of the research was the exploration of whether co-operation and relationships existed (or not) with people who were involved in providing gardens as visitor attractions. Aspects identified from the literature and associated with the development of the relationships, co-operation, partnership and networking were evaluated through the interview process. These includes: trust; bonding, links and ties; involvement and commitment; value and benefit; communication; group size; leadership; vision and goals; combining resources and joint value creation; loyalty; and performance parameters. Key Informants associated with garden tourism, as well as Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators of bodies with similar objectives and knowledge (of marketing garden tourism) were also interviewed to give a further insight into the sector and its approach. During the latter part of the research and due to initiatives within the tourism industry in Ireland, interviews were undertaken with Network Coordinators to explore if their approach was similar to the findings of the gardens research. A series of statements based on the findings were developed as a basis for comment from the CEO of a destination and networked organisation.

The findings from these sources (39 interviews in total) have been evaluated under the main constructs of the conceptual framework. It was found that a multiplicity of identities existed within the garden tourism sector and each of these identities create a dynamic tension. These tensions ebb and flow depending on the garden involved and the individuals' different priorities for the garden. They are contested by garden owners and managers and even the visitors. Identities can shift and change through for example gaining qualifications, additional experience, and change of ownership or objectives. Some identities are embedded, such as historical connectedness and personal characteristics. Tensions between these identities impact on relationships developed between the gardens and other stakeholders and the subsequent ability to co-operate.

A substantial amount of information was gathered as part of the research. The organisation of the information into a form that the reader could understand and relate to required thought. A number of methods of presentation were undertaken before the final approach was used. Although not perfect, it was the best approach in relaying the stages of research, the analysis undertaken and the outcomes. The information gathered raised more

questions than answers (as per normal in an inductive situation), and there is both consensus and disagreement with the existing literature on co-operation and relationship development. Many of the participants are involved in different elements of relationship marketing and management. However, in many cases they do not consider what they do or actions they take to be relationship marketing or management. It is not something they have specifically learned. The aspects of relationship marketing and management exhibited by the gardens, however, lacks the reciprocity required in order for it to work most effectively. The approaches undertaken by the gardens are mainly reactive, although proactivity is evident in relation to the tour operator trade in some cases and the support bodies where the link may be driven by past funding and a mandate to belong.

The research showed that most of the members of the various co-operative marketing bodies are positive about their involvement. However, are the levels of involvement and the perceptions of value of the co-operation significant enough to create a truly co-operative approach? It appears a basic framework does exist on which to build links, develop relationships and a co-operative structure. The number of the variables that are suggested in the guiding statements create a barrier to sustainability, and they also influence the multiplicity of identities and associated tensions that exist within the group. These impact on the level of co-operation and interaction and hence the fulfilment of the overall objective, which is to deliver the experience to the consumer or tourist.

6.3 The Issue of Identity

Many of the participants did not identify with the group, looking at it solely as a body to market the gardens overseas. Several could not cite a vision or objective. Most did not consider it as a marketing tool, it was just a body that they either had to belong to or wished to belong to as it was part of a recognised national group associated with the Irish Tourist Board.

Group identification (Stoel 2002) and vision (WTO2003) are considered essential elements of successful co-operation, however these attributes were not hugely evident in this sector. The multiplicity of identities in garden tourism leads to a desire for an individual to connect with *a select number* but not all members of the group. This creating a number of identities rather than a single group identification as defined by Kelly and Kelly (1994). Identities are complex and can create tensions. Over-embeddedness within a network can also contribute to negative feeling that creates an unconstructive situation (Uzzi 1997). This was demonstrated by one Garden Owner in particular, who had previously worked closely with other gardens. Other gardens with whom she had been involved with

previously had become more successful in terms of both exposure and visitor numbers, and this could have contributed to the negative undertone to many of her responses. An overly parochial view may also contribute to these increased tensions. The issue of identity is now discussed further under the key constructs of the conceptual framework with recommendations and further research.

6.4 Trust and Identity

There is a need to have trust in order to work with each other (Wilson and Jantrania 1993, Selin and Chavez 1994, Berry 1995, Saxena 1999, Childs and Faulkner 1998, Tsokas and Saren 2004), and a degree of reciprocity is also required (Grabher 1993, Carson et al. 1995, Yau (2000) as part of this process. Little trust and reciprocity was evident between the gardens and where it did exist, it was through other connections such as ‘sharing a passion’ for plants or through historical connections. The trust that existed fuelled common identities and the ties between those who share those identities. This trust, or rather lack of trust, led to a lack of confidence in the overall product and a lack of confidence in the business prospects of a number of partners, creating barriers to working together (Huggins 1998).

Networks can be used as mechanisms to create trust which in turn aids with co-operation (Lynch and Morrison 2007). Trust lies at the very centre of a relationship and co-operative action. Trust needs to be inculcated in order to create confidence in both the product and also in each other. This can be created through increased knowledge and opportunities to work together in smaller groups of similar identity. An openness and transparency is required between members of the group.

6.5 Bonding, Links and Ties and Identity

A degree of bonding and ties (though strength of these will vary) always exists when interaction takes place in a social system (Berry 1995, Yau et al. 2000). There was a lack of evident bonding, and links and ties between stakeholders varied between one garden and another. This was due again to the different identities exhibited by the gardens. There were linkages evident: those gardens operated by local authorities linked with each (due to common ownership), the private historical gardens linked with each other (due to historical connections) and the more recently developed gardens linked with each other (due to common funding). There were those who operated in isolation, with some of the smaller Garden Owners/Managers happy to garden and not overly concerned about the visitor,

having different objectives. They did not want to enter into the world of relationship marketing. Although structural bonds considered important (Wilson and Jantrania 1993, Towers et al. 2006) did exist in that they are part of a horizontal system offering a similar product, social bonds considered essential for building relationships (Glover and Parry 2005 and social capital (Venkataraman and Van de Ven (1998), Hall 2004) were less evident. Where they existed, they did so through history and other elements of an embedded nature. A lack of bonding and ties was demonstrated by the mainly reactive responses and lack of ownership in relation to the development of relationships and communication with other stakeholders.

There is a need for integrated planning and development, a critical success factor for Alnwick Castle (Sharpley 2007). Careful planning and investment are advocated by Fox and Edwards (2008) as approach to deal with factors associated with garden visiting. However, firstly a planned approach to relationship building and co-operation incorporating strong vertical and horizontal networks should be developed as a blueprint for the gardens, leading to a more integrated and holistic system (Figure 2.2). This will create as strong sector and a confidence to develop and grow. Trust, proximity, knowledge flows and place based promotion are important to those operating at the same level of provision and therefore these need to be addressed prior to vertical systems. This research indicates that at the moment there is more evidence of vertical links and relationships. There is a need to promote greater integration between both horizontal and vertical networking (Cawley et al. 2007, Saxena et al. 2007), and in doing so create a more successful culture economy (Kneafsey et al. 2001, Oliver and Jenkins 2003). This approach should address and incorporate the key constructs required for co-operation and networking. There is a need to ascertain at the outset of the co-operative process the degree to which people wish to become involved and their expectation from involvement. Degrees of membership could be incorporated into a co-operative system, for example membership fee (and this may not always be monetary) being linked to involvement. This would incentivise proactivity and greater interaction within the group.

6.6 Involvement, Commitment and Identity

A garden open to visitors becomes a space of consumer [visitor] consumption. However, is real social engagement limited to those who share the common passion and knowledge of gardens? Do those involved in creating gardens more readily engage with the garden space than socially interact with other stakeholders? *'And live alone in the bee-loud glade'* - is this an indication of personality type of many of those involved in gardens and

gardening – connection with the garden (space) rather than people (social)? The involvement is with the garden and the gardening rather than with the customer and the market. It was summed up well by one of the garden owners who said *‘most are run by people who are too interested and busy with the garden to do marketing ... like craftspeople – and unlikely to be good at marketing’* (GO3) – and this was seen as a weakness of the sector. Two Garden Owners/Managers (GO5, GO14) actually stated that many Garden Owners/Managers did not actually want visitors. For some, their involvement in the garden was so great that it was to the exclusion of all else, and as suggested by GO8, need *‘possibly an owner who is not bogged down with running a garden’*. Level of involvement is important to a relationship (Wilson 1993) though is impacted by the multiplicity of identities that exist. For a number of gardens, the involvement with space seemed more important than involvement with the social system of co-operation or working together. Crouch 1999:263) found an embodied connection between allotment owners and nature. This was due to their proximity to the ground which changed their perception of space. Can those who are so connected to the garden have the ability to market their commoditised tourist attraction to the wider market? Do they have the ability to connect with others who are equally connected and to those who are not connected, as required for co-operation?

It is hoped that once trust has been established that a greater degree of involvement and commitment will evolve. Making a commitment to a relationship is essential for it to be productive and yield benefits. Lack of involvement and commitment across the board is the result of the different identities that the Garden Owners/Managers exhibit. Power can be used by groups as a method of excluding others from involvement (Grabher 1993). The variety of backgrounds and experiences does not contribute to the cohesiveness of the sector and at present, there is a lack of a common ground, an attribute essential for co-operation (Palmer 2000).

Cawley et al. (2007) recognize the importance of empowerment in the creation of a meaningful embeddedness within the context of rural tourism provision. In many of the gardens there is no evidence to suggest that the gardens are embedded in a local context particularly those that are in private ownership. Integration at a local level requires consideration primarily to develop the experience for the visitor and to promote local sustainability.

An overarching identity needs to be created for gardens tourism. A sense of identity can ameliorate the uncertainties of operating a business (section 2.12). This should be a loose

arrangement and allow for degrees of autonomy for the separate identities that make up the sector. Ties between identities will be dynamic and change in both strength and frequency over the lifecycle of a both the product (garden) and the group. A balance between embedded ties (which would facilitate the sub-identities of different objectives, historical links etc. within the group) and ‘arms length ties to reach out into the market and to prevent isolation (Uzzi 1997) and therefore creation of an integrated network or co-operative framework needs to be achieved. Ties need to be both flexible and adaptable to cope with micro and macro factors that will impact on their existence.

6.7 Values, Benefit and Identity

The use of value-creating mechanisms is considered commendable in creating additional business (Veloutsou et al. 2002), however there is a need to know what is of value to each of the different stakeholders. Values leading to evident benefits need to be identified and communicated between gardens and:

- Other gardens
- Customers (visitors)
- Distribution channels (tour operators, handing agents, tourist offices)
- Support bodies

These values may range from unique planting, beautiful visits and tranquil environment to play areas, packaging and information, depending on the garden and the stakeholder concerned. Many of the gardens, the Key Informants and the Garden/Heritage Group Coordinators had wide-ranging perceptions and understanding of what values the gardens bought to either themselves or the market, though the two most common were the plant-oriented (n=12) and the experientially-oriented (n=10). The people who are part of the garden and the heritage are unique. There is a need to integrate this uniqueness into the experience offered to visitors. Owners and managers that do not wish to participate in using this uniqueness need to develop the link through those that have the passion for the place. Development of a holistic approach focusing on the heritage, the people, the location rather than the plants and the garden will create an attraction with greater appeal to a wider market.

Shared values could be seen as a ‘passion’ for gardens by the voluntary group and a number of the gardens themselves. Their focus was on the plants and gardens and their wish to share these with ‘like-minded visitors’. This demonstrates a sense of belonging or a clan approach to shared values a requirement for working together (O’Driscoll et al.

2000). If a garden is to become commoditised, and indeed by opening the garden in the first place a degree of commoditisation occurs, there is a need to know what is being commoditised and how this should be undertaken – to be able understand its value, to label and brand it. Identification of the garden's unique qualities gives advantage and could provide the basis for a focused or niche market differentiation strategy.

An identity that might appeal to both the specialist markets and the garden owners could be created through plants and planting. The use of specialist plants or landscaping features may be an approach that could create and strengthen a link between the gardens. It might be a scheme such as that operated by the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG www.nccpg.com) which is well organised in the UK. Many gardens in the UK are involved in developing and maintaining specialist plant collections and, if undertaken in the Irish gardens, this might help to create added value for the visitor and create a common thread between the gardens, garden owners and managers. Only two Garden Owners/Managers interviewed have plant collections, one each in the North of Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The general market segment which constitutes the majority of potential business has been forgotten by many of the Garden Owners/Managers.

Another identity that would focus on the general visitor segment also needs to be considered by those gardens that wish to pursue this approach. As part of this research, it was found that a few of the gardens have diversified into the provision of retail units and activities which broaden their market appeal. The garden has indeed in some cases become ancillary to the tourism experience. Many gardens in England, including some of the most well-known such as Sissinghurst, offer a wide variety of experiences such as adult education, children's trails and activities and the use of local produce from the farm in their restaurants for the different market segments. This sense of local ownership and community orientation has proved to be a critical factor in the success of other gardens such as Alnwick in northern England (Sharpley 2007). However, it is the National Trust, an organisation with charity status that manages some of the most important gardens and they encourage that sense of ownership through volunteerism.

Although this research revealed that diversification was considered by some of the specialist gardens an inappropriate approach, it could be argued that due to existing and potential low yield from the specialist market, it may become necessary for gardens to pursue a broader market segment in order to be economically sustainable. Capitalising on the increased demand for allotments, the gardens could offer (for a small sum) space to

local people to develop potageries. This would develop a stronger link with the local community as well as both developing an awareness, raising additional funds and creating a sense of pride as well as a shift in position of the garden in the mind-set of the community. A link with food tourism could also help to diversify appeal to other market. Food tourism has been identified by the TSIG in 2008 (page 6) as being of considerable potential. A link from food grown in the garden, to being cooked and served would link in with seasonality and nature. Some gardens such as Ballymaloe have already done this to some degree.

This also raises the point that the National Trust equivalent in Ireland (An Taisce) does not own or manage any gardens as part of its present property portfolio. Its focus is primarily on the natural heritage, planning issues and buildings heritage. The OPW, which does own and manage houses and gardens of significance, is part of a government department which does not view tourism as part of its remit. In July 2006, the Irish Heritage Trust (www.irishheritagetrust.ie) was launched to manage heritage houses and gardens. However there are no eminent gardeners listed as board members. To date only one property, Fota House in Cork has, been acquired by it. It would seem unlikely that in the present economic depression, that either its garden or property portfolio will expand in the near future.

6.8 Communication and Identity

Convergent communication helps organisations learn from each other (Tremblay 2000), to know and to have faith in each other's product (the uniqueness and the reason why people should visit) and will advocate an ambassadorial role for each garden owner and true reciprocity. Although word of mouth (WOM) was not identified as a major form of communication by the gardens owners/managers it is a powerful source of communication (Buttle 1998) and positive word of mouth occurs when customers [visitors] can identify with the product. This has recently manifested as blogging, the use of twitter and social and information networks (www.garden.ie, www.gardensplanireland.ie). Gardens position themselves to be attractive to certain segments of the market and need to create identity through the use of communication tools appropriate to both their product and their market segment. Methods of communicating with the various stakeholders are wide ranging, some of which are more conducive to co-operation, for example meeting face-to-face and familiarisations.

The creation of an internal communication system which advocates open and frequent communication, a requisite for successful co-operation (Selin and Chavez 1994,

WTO2003) within an internalised social system. This would help to strengthen the links between each Garden Owner/Manager and respect the different identities of the group. Workshops and seminars which bring together gardens focusing on topics of interest, such as historical aspects or unusual plants or marketing issues, would help to inculcate informal relationships. These types of events can help to develop trust, bonds emerge and these feed into long term contacts and the building of social capital.

It is also recommended that there is the creation of an external communication system to interact with the variety of stakeholders with whom the gardens have relationships. Glover and Parry (2005) recognised that building relationships was important to resource mobilisation and the community gardeners who participated as part of their research realised the importance of being open and friendly and willing to talk to people. However, within this study, the identity of a group or multiplicity of identities and subgroups would impact on the methods of communication used, for example different objectives will require the use of different forms of marketing communications. The diversity of identities can be used to maximise links and develop relationships with appropriate stakeholders. Those that have a historical identity should link with those stakeholders who seek such values from the product. Those that are conservation driven should link on behalf of the group with those seeking conservation values. The combination of resources (identities) and appropriate use can act as a competitive advantage.

6.9 Leadership and Identity

It is advocated that strong leadership, or rather facilitation, will help to guide a group towards the achievement of an identified vision and goals. With a multiplicity of identities at play, the role of leader is complex - whilst appealing to one group, for example historical, another, such as those who operate with business ethos at the core of their operation, may be alienated. Only the garden owners mentioned leadership as a characteristic required for co-operation (n=7), although personalities and egos were mentioned as problems with leadership. Power can be used by groups who network as a barrier to exclude others from involvement and this was perceived by some of the smaller garden groups as being a problem. It could be considered that it is a leader who is driven by a passion will succeed A sustainable approach requires collective decision-making in relation to the process of strategic planning and implementation, and a passionate and focused leader who brings the gardens together respecting their identities will be more successful than one who creates tension through power.

Chair people of HCGI are elected each year at the AGM. A revolving chairperson is a good idea, although sometimes continuity of ideas and approach is an issue with this approach. An elected core of potential chairpeople should form a pyramidal grouping (Figure 6.1) with succession of chair (and priority objective of conservation or financial) moving across the group. This would give those involved the knowledge and experience, and thus the confidence in the position of being an apprentice chair prior to the position in the role of lead chair.

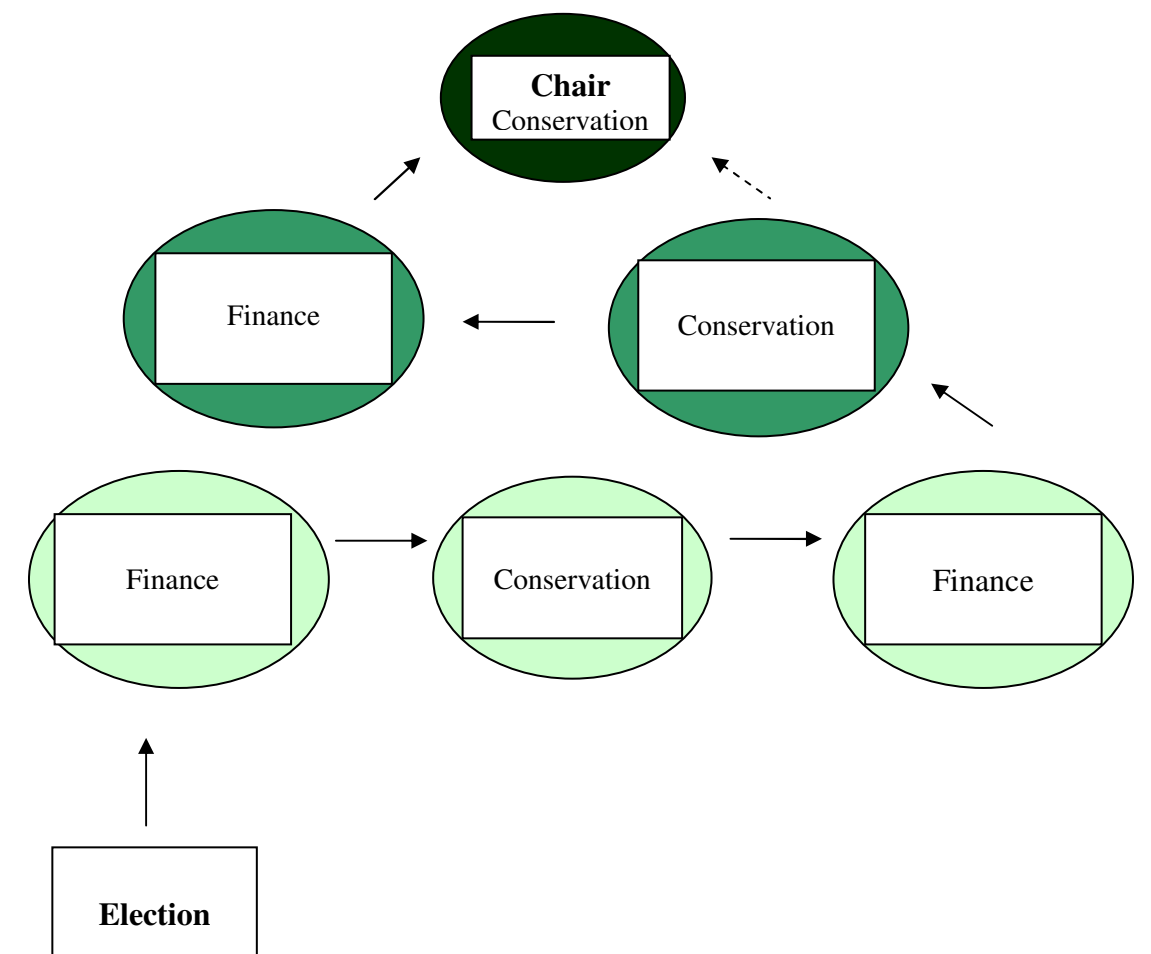


Figure 6.1 The Position of Chairperson

The chairperson should also reflect the different identities that are part of garden tourism – in other words, a plant-oriented horticulturalist, a heritage garden in private ownership and a state-owned local authority garden. A three-year strategic plan and approach should be

agreed by the pyramidal group and implemented in broad terms (with capacity to revise in light of sectoral changes each year) by the chairpeople over their term of office.

Leading or facilitating often takes a huge amount of time and effort and, since this is often done in a voluntary capacity, the opportunity to do this might not be appealing. This involvement could be made part of membership and designated responsibilities. It would also give members a greater voice in the direction of the group. It would encourage relationship development between the different identity groups in garden tourism.

6.10 Vision, Goals and Identity

A clear vision that engages all those involved does not exist for garden tourism and this is complicated by the multiplicity of identities evident. The formation of a vision leading to a number of compatible goals is essential for co-operation (Brouthers et al. 1995, Jamel and Getz 1995, Wilson and Jantrania 1995, Kompulla 2000, WTO 2003) The reason for opening the garden to visitors seems to impact on the number of links the garden has, with those that stipulate conservation as the main reason having less links than those who are financially focused. Conservation as a goal indicates as to the propensity to co-operate and develop links and relationships

The creation of this vision can be aided by conducting a SWOT analysis and TOWS matrix undertaken by both garden owners, visitors and other stakeholders. It can help formulate a mission so essential in the collaborative process (Fyall 2008). The use of a TOWS matrix, which is derived from a SWOT analysis, and emanated in this research from the three garden-focused groups that were interviewed, can help to identify a vision and give direction to the gardens. An example of how a TOWS matrix could help is illustrated in Figure 6.2, with this matrix using the main findings from the SWOT analysis (Figures 4.9 and 4.10) and suggesting approaches that could be taken. The TOWS matrix combines the elements and evaluates the potential outcomes. Figure 6.2 is an example and a comprehensive evaluation of each combination would need to be undertaken to both identify a vision and give direction. A two-pronged approach to vision, one encapsulating the historic nature of the gardens and the other focusing on the new and innovative approach to gardens, could be used to help position the gardens more clearly in the minds of all stakeholders. Internal vision needs to be driven by a facilitator or leader and revisited on a regular basis, especially considering the volatility of the tourism industry.

<p>TOWS Matrix</p>	<p><u>1. Opportunities</u> Increased marketing –co-operation Increased commercialisation Product development Adding value/interpretation Development of facilities Events</p>	<p><u>2. Threats</u> Cost of land/Maintenance Small numbers of potential gardens Staff and employment issues - financial resources Weather Lack of appreciation by market Aging profile of garden owners/Overselling Transient nature of product Viability/Competitiveness/Politics</p>
<p><u>3.Strengths</u> Market oriented Growth area/Demand Uniqueness/Variety History Small size Climate Plants/plants-people Management/marketing strengths</p>	<p>1x3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Create vision from uniqueness, variety and history and use to market product ⊗ Events linked to plants-people and plants ⊗ Use plants/plants-people to increase co-operation ⊗ Develop facilities to create new product ⊗ Events targeted at specific market (families, children , specialist etc) 	<p>2x3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Use weather to advantage – how to harness rain/irrigation/creation of bog gardens ⊗ Market to those destinations who find uniqueness in the weather e.g. arid countries ⊗ Development of indoor gardens using technology and plants e.g. Delta Sensory Gardens, Carlow
<p><u>4.Weaknesses</u> Geographic fragmentation Fragile Weather/seasonality Cost and availability of staff and skills Quality Lack of confidence Immaturity of product Access Lack of resources Lack of facilities Health and safety</p>	<p>1x4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Interpret further to increase quality ⊗ Up skill staff ⊗ Use co-operation to reduce geographical fragmentation ⊗ Use associated events to overcome seasonality ⊗ Develop facilities for visitors and add value ⊗ Increase commercialisation of gardens to increase revenue ⊗ Use co-operation and networking to increase confidence 	<p>2x4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ⊗ Use of voluntary /local schemes to overcome maintenance and cost of staff/skills shortage ⊗ Engage younger staff to combat aging profile and lack of confidence ⊗ Pool resources through co-operation tackling the issues of politics and lack of resources ⊗ Plant for the different season overcoming transient nature and seasonality may lead to uniqueness ⊗ Create a database of gardens to overcome lack of potential product ⊗ Creation of a template of what is required – to overcome overselling and lack of confidence

Figure 6.2 TOWS Matrix

6.11 Group Size, Structure and Identity

Group size did not impact on co-operation, although some gardens did say that this was an issue and the group (in the case of HCGI) was Dublin oriented. Group size did feature as an issue when undertaking research as part of the ParNet Tourism project (2005). An overall consensus from that research was that groups of the size 8-12 work best together and this is often the size of a committee. If the garden group increases substantially in size in the future, the ability to communicate and link with others within the group would become increasingly strained. Ireland is a small tourist destination and the visitor can cover a substantial part of the area in a relatively short space of time. The findings from the research do indicate the existence of aspects of the community model (Bodega 2004). An informal structure with loose links certainly does exist; however, it is difficult to find any other aspects of the model. Even the corporative and governed models are not entirely fulfilled though there are the strong players within the sector and there are agreements drawn up in terms of marketing activities. The models can overlap to create both macro and subsystems. Alternatively, there are also aspects of a kite network system (Iberrry and Saxena 2009) with evidence of cliques each with their own identity and unequal links. The different identities exhibited by the Garden Owners/Managers may impact on the degree of overlap in these systems.

Fragmentation relating to the garden tourism sector was indicated as a weakness by the Key Informants and as an aspect of co-operation by the Garden Owners/Managers. This perception on fragmentation may indicate a lack of cohesiveness which acts as a barrier to successful co-operation (Mitchell and Scheiber 2007) . The use of provincial or area coordinators could help to deal with local issues and develop the garden tourism experience further with the member gardens horizontally or with other related tourism suppliers vertically, such as accommodation and relevant attractions. Recommendations from the ParNet project did suggest the operation of task oriented sub-groups and this has been successful at both national and county levels of tourism operation.

The recent approach taken by Fáilte Ireland in facilitating co-operation for networking purposes and the development of Tourism Learning Networks may act as a catalyst to develop a product-based network in garden tourism. The operation of these networks (two geographical areas in 2009) may help to set a benchmark and to instil a better and more intrinsic understanding of the requirements and processes associated with working together effectively. Certainly, the two coordinators interviewed for the purpose of this research

were well aware of both the requirements of and the barriers that exist in terms of co-operative marketing and networking.

6.12 Combining Resources, Access to Information and Identity

The combining of resources (including funding) in the past has helped to create an identity through the GGRS. It has acted as a catalyst in bringing numbers of gardens together. The sharing of ideas and expertise, especially for those who are new to a group, is immensely attractive and gives them both a sense of status (belonging) and connections that will enhance the overall experience for both the garden owners and visitors. The sharing of PCNs is encouraged, but, realistically these are used for individual competitive advantage. The closeness of some members facilitates knowledge dispersal amongst themselves (Saxena et al 2007), and although the information exchange in these embedded ties may be considered more holistic than information exchange in a less embedded situation (Uzzi 1997), there is a danger of excluding other external information which may yield important and progressive knowledge particularly in relation to management and marketing of the gardens. The evident lack of confidence in the garden-tourism product exhibited by some of the Garden Owners/Managers who despite positive comments on its future, detracts from the trust required to combine resources to any great extent.

The efficiencies and benefits of working together need to be more explicit. The lack of time required for working together can be off-set by knowledge of one another creating greater trust and embeddedness (Uzzi 1997). Aspects of expertise and information can be used throughout the group to enhance its operation and achievement of goals. However, only a small number of Garden Owners/Managers (n=5) mentioned any aspect of sharing in relation to co-operation and this may indicate that members still view themselves as autonomous individuals, attractions operating solely with no inclination or wish to become involved in co-operatively marketing their gardens. Performance parameters and the achievement of objectives can be used to incentivise the sharing of resources. However, it must be kept in mind that in most co-operative situations and alliances, degrees of autonomy need to be respected to provide a sense of responsibility and 'healthy competition' amongst the members of the group.

There is a need to explore the formation of 'symbiotic relationships' (as per Figure 2.1) in the garden tourism sector. Networks or a co-operative group exhibiting a balance of embedded and disembedded ties could offer reciprocal arrangements of differing

magnitudes and depend on the wants, needs and identity of each member. A need exists to balance the considerations of overall sustainability, that is the economic (revenue generation), social (other stakeholders including visitors, other gardens and the local community) cultural and the environment (conservation) sustainability of the sector. At present the broad remit of sustainability is not being considered fully.

6.13 Performance and Identity

It is important to ascertain the performance of the group as a whole. It is also important to ascertain the performance (value) of each link and relationship developed. Is there a need for a quality related certification which is monitored regularly in order to ensure that gardens are of at least a minimum standard? Certainly at a national level programmes such as Optimus highlight performance and standards in tourism. A product-focused approach guided by the tourism authorities in light of findings by Dredge and Jenkins (2003) that regional tourism organisations influence such aspects as evaluation and monitoring in tourism would benefit the sector. It certainly would give a level of confidence in the product both from the perspective of the garden and the visitor. It was evident from the interviews of that performance parameters were not being considered in any structured manner by many of the Garden Owners/Managers. There was little structure in place to assess feedback or performance. Identified parameters that could gauge the level of performance of each individual garden, and the groups, (HCGI) as a whole are required. Performance parameters aid with planning and strategic management of the garden, providing useful comparative information. One garden and one group were exceptions. Both are operated in a commercial manner and there is pressure to perform. In the case of the group, the company uses its performance to sell its operation to potential members and this, along with an executive who has huge experience and knowledge of both tourism and marketing, has created a profitable though small company of over 20 years standing. There is a need to have a measurement system based on profitable retention economics - that is, those relationships that are profitable either financially or otherwise, such as information or expertise sharing.

A broad range of performance parameters needs to be identified, based on benefits and outcomes both for each garden and for the group. These parameters need to be extended from the normal parameters gauging success, for example numbers of visitors, numbers employed and revenue generated. Performance parameters will differ according to the different identities exhibited by the gardens. Performance parameters should be identified for the groups and should not only be focused on the performance of the garden in terms of

revenue and visitor numbers, but also on its connections, co-operative activities and with the group and other relevant stakeholders.

6.14 Towards working together

The use of co-operation, links and relationships was not evident to any greater degree in the group except in an informal manner. However there were certainly links between individuals, though these links were determined by ownership, historical connections and the other identities discussed. There are elements of a kite network (Ilberry and Saxena 2009), through the exhibition of cliques and unequal links (whether by chance or choice). The use of PCNs, some due to historical connections, is evident, but overall these were discreet. Individually, some of the gardens are building their own networks in relation to marketing, although this is driven out of the objective to be viable. Others are divided in their connection to the garden and their need to be more economically sustainable. Tourism networks are both organic and dynamic and develop over time in relation to both organisational and environmental demands (Wilkinson and March 2008). Networks may be used as facilitatory mechanisms to create trust and enhance co-operation in business (Lynch and Morrison 2007).

Is garden tourism a sustainable sector? At present, it can be said that the gardens themselves, unless they have commercialised their experience in the provision of additional facilities and cater for a wide range of markets, are not sustainable in their own right. This is due to a number of factors including size and capacity of the garden and size of the market. However, the confusion in relation to the different identities that they exhibit does not help the process of co-operation which is required to aid these SMEs achieve increased viability. Halme and Fadeva (2001) argue that the co-operation focusing on common goals is necessary between the many actors involved in tourism if the sector is to further sustainable development. Links with such organisation as the Irish Heritage Trust which is working to address a number of the issues relating to historic houses will be of benefit. Gardens need to be developed considering their existing resource capability using local infrastructure and available skills (Sharpley 2007) Benefits gained from working together with all stakeholders could include image improvement, competitive advantage, resource optimisation, an increase in information flows and an ability to (as a group) influence external decision-making.

6.15 Contribution of the Study

This study provides greater insight into the nature of co-operation, links and relationships that are exhibited in gardens open to the visitor. It has explored the relationships, links and connectedness that exist (or not) between gardens, the garden itself and a variety of stakeholders.

No study of garden tourism in Ireland has been undertaken reflecting on the sector in a qualitative manner. This provides insight into the variables that contribute not only to the operation of the sector but also considers their history, their ownership, resources, operation and most of all the identities exhibited by the gardens.

History differs from one area (or country) to another and people have different degrees of involvement with place and history. This study indicated that history and stage lifecycle does have an impact on trust in garden tourism and this together impact on the different goals and objectives of the garden owners and also on the propensity to co-operate. However, although there is little evidence of reciprocity between gardens, there is, between some gardens and the visitor ‘a sharing of passion’ As an increasing number of new gardens which do not have the same number of personal historical connections are developed, a different approach involving greater trust may evolve in the future.

It is important that the diversity of gardens is acknowledged and applauded. There were over 4000 historic houses in Ireland at the beginning of the 19th Century – there are now just over 100 (Dooley 2001). The decline in this aspect of history erodes the Irish identity that is attractive to many overseas visitors. Sixty-four per cent of all visitors in 2008 to Ireland in 2008 considered the heritage and culture aspect of their visit to Ireland as being very important (Fáilte Ireland Tourism Facts 2008).

Over the course of the research, a number of global policy documents relating to tourism and sustainability were published (Davos 2007, Kerala 2008). These documents, which seek to give leadership to those in the industry show a shift away from a financial and economic focus to one that, include socio-cultural and environmental aspects. This research demonstrates that the garden tourism sector provides an attraction that incorporates the key component elements of sustainability.

In a time of increasing competition and uncertainty in the tourism sector, there is a need to explore many different avenues to increase sustainability within the sector. . During the research, Fáilte Ireland launched the TLN initiative. There were no guidelines as to how the proposed networks would operate. Greater understanding was required about: 1. the

resources required and existing networks that precede the development of a network or group;

2. the barriers and benefits that may arise from the development and operation of a co-operative scenario;

3. the use of the value systems required to incentivize motivation and involvement in the process towards a common goal,

4. the need to maximise the potential capacities that exist to provide a sustainable tourism product.

These issues have been explored in this research and provide a level of understanding that will help in the creation of more successful co-operation in the garden and other tourism sectors.

The research has indicated that with many garden, there is more vertical than horizontal networking. However, it is important to build capacities in this comparatively small product sector especially in these volatile economic times. The development of trust, knowledge flows and place based promotion through local/regional activities will help to develop strong horizontal groups of providers who can equally access the other layers of experience development and delivery.

An understanding of the multiplicity of identities and their role in garden tourism requires consideration in both the policy and planning process in tourism.

6.16 Future research

As this was an inductive study, many questions are raised and these form the basis for fertile areas for future research. The tourism industry as a sector provides ripe opportunity to explore and understand people, their identities, place and space. The complexity and cross-disciplinary nature of this work yields many potential aspects that deserve due consideration of further work

The issue of identity and how it is expressed by the garden owners and through the gardens requires further attention. The contested nature of the different identities on the experience provision for the visitor might prove a fruitful direction for further research, and furthermore whether visitors can (or not) relate to these identities would also be of interest. Studies of identity in other sectors and disciplines would provide a depth of literature that could yield some interesting results.

There is a need to research further the changing role that gardens play in tourism provision to the 21st century visitor. A garden is a constructed space. Research into the relationships and connections garden owners and managers have with this space and how this affects their ability to co-operate with other stakeholders in the tourism sector would give greater depth and insight into the provision of the garden experience.

Gap analysis could be used to understand the differences that may exist between the values of the garden as perceived by the provider and the values sought by the visitor. Such an analysis could be undertaken using quantitative methodology and would help to create a more focused vision for garden tourism.

Further research could be undertaken into the contribution of historical connectedness to co-operation and network ties. However, access to meaningful information may prove difficult and even during the period of the study, it was evident that this is a fast changing situation with a number of the houses (and gardens) being sold or developed for other purposes.

A study into the co-operative practices, links and relationships developed by garden owners and managers over the course of the lifecycle of a garden could explore and seek to understand the most suitable tools for the different stages. For example, at the initial stage of product development, the type of contact and frequency that yields the greatest benefit to both the provider and the group could be explored. This would aid in provision of a template in communication practises useful to co-operation and networking processes.

In the provision of a product or service in a competitive marketplace, it is accepted that depth of knowledge and focus on the customer is essential. This is the basis for the provision of a quality product for the customer, leading to excellence in provision and service. It is the foundation for models such as the EFQM model (European Foundation for Quality Management) which has been used by over 30,000 companies to improve their competitive position (www.efqm.org). Optimus, a tourism best practise initiative developed by Fáilte Ireland is linked to the EFQM awards system and over one hundred businesses have joined the programme in Ireland. Further research could involve the extension of such a model to improve better competitiveness for the garden-tourism sector.

Finally, each Garden Owners/Manager interview was an individual place, which operated under a myriad of influences. A number of these could be considered in greater depth and compared and contrasted to provide bench-marked practises that might serve the sector more effectively in the future.

The thesis demonstrated that the perception of the garden is different, not just in terms of it as a tourist attraction, but the way in which people view it as part of their being and their lifestyle. Its value depends on many variables that make up the creator as well as the visitor:

I asked a schoolboy in the sweet summer-tide “what he thought a garden was for?” and he said ‘Strawberries’. His younger sister suggested ‘Croquet’ and the elder ‘Garden-parties’. The brother from Oxford made a prompt declaration in favour of ‘Lawn Tennis and Cigarettes’, but he was rebuked by a solemn senior, who wore spectacles and more back hair that is usual with males, and was told that ‘a garden was designed for botanical research, and for the classification of plants.’

Source: Hole, S.R. (1899: 3) Our Gardens

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Farmhouse Association	www.irishfarmholidays.com
Gardens blogs/ social websites	www.garden.ie www.gardensplanireland.ie
Gardens of Cornwall.com	www.gardensofcornwall.com
Georgina Campbell Gardens	www.gardens.ireland-guide.com
Heritage Island	www.heritageisland.com
Houses, Castles and Gardens of Ireland	www.castlesgardensireland.com acc. 99-09
INTERREG	www.interreg3c.net
Irish Tourism Industry Confederation	www.itic.ie
Irish Co-operative Organisation Society	www.icos.ie
Irish Country Holidays	www.country-holidays.ie
Irish Garden Plant Society	www.habitas.org.uk/igps
Irish Heritage Trust	www.irishheritagetrust.ie acc.09.09
LEADER	www.ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index
Learning English in Ireland	www.mei.ie
Meath Tourism	www.meathtourism.ie
National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens	www.nccpg.com
National Development Plan	www.ndp.ie
National Trust	www.nationaltrust.org.uk
One Big Garden	www.onebiggardens.co.uk

Office of Public Works	www.opw.ie/en/Heritage/HistoricProperties/ acc. 07/09 www.heritageireland.ie
Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew	www.kew.org
Royal Horticultural Society	www.rhs.org.uk
Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland	www.rhsi.ie
Tourism Learning Networks	www.tourismlearningnetworks.ie
Tourism Review	www.tourismreview.ie www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie/pdfs/tourism_review_report.pdf
Town and Country House Association	www.townandcountry.ie
Sissinghurst Gardens	(www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-vh/w-visits/w-findaplace/w-sissinghurstcastlegarden acc.09.09
Society for Word Of Mouth	www.theswom.org/group/tourismswomies
World Tourism Organisation	www.unwto.org/statistics/index acc. 25/05/09, 08/09 www.wto.org continuous www.omt.uned.es 03/09 World Tourism Organisation ; International Monetary Fund accessed at http://www.unwto.org/statistics/index.htm 08.09

Appendices

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Appendix I Market Segmentation of Garden Tourism

This is based on work undertaken considering the market segmentation of another niche tourism area: Geotourism.

Market typologies using market evaluative criteria

<i>Evaluative Criteria</i>	<i>Market 1 Accidental (FIT not drawn specifically because of the site , visit because they are in the area)</i>	<i>Market 2 General (family, day trippers, coach tour school/education market, FIT) Prior decision-making evident)</i>
<i>Method of transport/travel used</i>	Mainly car – self drive FIT	Varied : though mainly car and bus
<i>Expected duration of stay</i>	1-2 hours depending on their interest	1-2 hours depending on the extent of site and variety of things to do
<i>Requirements of visit : physical</i>	Parking, T and P, other things to do e.g. children’s play areas, art galleries, shops, good access- easy to get around and well signposted, leaflets and simple clear interpretation which tells a story that can be remembered	Similar once the visitor is there
<i>Requirements of visit: psychological</i>	Integrated with other products, telling a story Well managed and kept, a sense of achieving something form the visit, perhaps mementoes to take away (map/souvenirs etc)	Similar to 1 Motivations will vary with visitor type and hence there may be a dominant motivation for visit e.g. family group and day trip (things/events to entertain children)
<i>Element of attractiveness (USP to specific market)</i>	Proximity to areas of tourist accommodation, main roads etc.	Geographical proximity to place of population, educational value and interest (curriculum inclusion), things to do, entertaining Capacity to cater for coach tour
<i>Suitable Marketing communication/tools</i>	Signposting and signage The use of visualization	Website, brochures, advertising and word of mouth, tourist offices
<i>Marketing message</i>	Attractive and recognisable signs indicating the nature of the site	A place to be entertained and educated ; a place of interest for everyone
<i>Value of visitor (consideration of impact - economic, physical, social, visual,)</i>	Low	Low- medium

<i>Evaluative Criteria</i>	<i>Market 3 Interested (driven by site)</i>	<i>Market 4 Scholarly</i>
<i>Method of transport/travel used</i>	Car though maybe bus in the case of specialist tours	Car and Bus though access through public transport if available
<i>Expected duration of stay</i>	2 hours plus	May stay in the area – at least a day, may also explore similar local sites (discovery) though there will be a main focus of a specific site
<i>Requirements of visit : physical</i>	A guide with knowledge of the site; this could be replicated by depth knowledge brochure/pamphlet Interpretation – authenticity is important	As close to the original as possible. T and P and parking etc will be discrete. Will not want other facilities a such as shops etc as these will detract from the site A guide with knowledge though again this and discrete interpretation could exist.
<i>Requirements of visit: psychological</i>	Sense of place and ambience associated with the site	Authenticity, ambience, experiential etc. the need to involve strong
<i>Element of attractiveness (USP to specific market)</i>	Authentic nature of the place: a real story that can be told	A sense of place and experience. The visitor needs time and space to engage with the building and site and this could be achieved subtly.
<i>Suitable Marketing communication/tools</i>	Website, books, specialist agents, word of mouth, heritage societies etc	This visitor has considerable knowledge achieved through research. Books and word of mouth Website for opening times/ access etc
<i>Marketing message</i>	A special place of botanical and plant /nature interest	Should link to the site itself and what it portrays. Use of botanical terms
<i>Value of visitor (consideration of impact - economic, physical, social, visual)</i>	medium	medium -high

Appendix II Brief Profile of Participating Gardens in Alphabetical Order

IRELAND

Airfield Gardens, County Dublin

The restoration of 2.02ha (5ac.) of ornamental gardens which are located in the heart of suburban south county Dublin. The whole estate which is 14.15 ha. (35ac.) was owned by the sisters Letitia and Naomi Overend who set up the Overend Trust to manage this garden. This gardens feature the use of a mix of plants and shrubs. There is also a kitchen garden.

Facilities: restaurant, toilets, recitals, events, lectures on both gardening and non gardening topics and seminar facilities

Website: www.airfield.ie

Annesgrove, County Cork

This garden was originally laid out in the 18th century. Additional development occurred during the early 20th century. It features many plants particularly rare rhododendrons, which arrived at the garden as the owners subscribed to the Kingdon Ward plant expeditions which took place in the early part of the 20th century. The cliff-like terrain in places, valleys and river side walks all provide a spectacular backdrop for many unusual species.

Facilities: toilets, plant sales

Website: www.annesgrove.ie

Ballymaloe, Shangarry, County Cork

The gardens at Shanagarry were planted in the early 1800's as many of the perimeter trees date from this time. The Strangman family maintained a garden with full staff up until 1952 and after the death of Lydia Strangman, the garden deteriorated to a wilderness. Tim and Darina Allen came to Kinoith in 1970 and restoration of the garden began in 1983 just after the Ballymaloe Cookery School was initiated. Lydia Strangman was a gifted artist and use of her surviving paintings sided with the restoration process. The ornamental fruit garden was designed by Jim Reynolds in 1990. The Herb garden is a recent addition and is set out in a formal parterre edged with boxwood and gravel paths. The Kitchen garden which supplies the cookery school was created in 1989 on the site of a former haggard.

Facilities: Cookery School, accommodation, recitals.

Web Site: www.ballymaloe.ie

Ballindoolin, Edenderry, County Offaly

The .8ha. (2ac.) walled garden through funding from the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme has been restored to its original 19th C design. There is also a kitchen garden which provides a restaurant with vegetables. The house was built in 1821 and it has been owned by the same family since 1895. There is a 100m herbaceous border, Victorian rockery, a parterre and pleasure gardens.

Facilities: nature trails, craft shop, restaurant, plant sales, children's farmyard and small museum, toilets

Website: www.ballindoolin.com

Belvedere Gardens, Mullingar, County Westmeath

Sited on the banks of Lough Ennell, Mullingar, County Westmeath, Belvedere House and Gardens has had a colourful history. It is owned by Westmeath County Council who with funding from the Great Gardens restoration scheme has developed the walled garden, landscape and arboretum. The area covers about 65ha. (160ac.) and features some fine specimen trees. The house provides interpretation of its history and the stables which are sited under the Jealous Wall folly have an exhibition and gallery area, restaurant and shop. There are 6km of walking trails throughout the parkland.

Facilities: 18th c house, trails, café, gift shop, exhibition and conference areas, toilets, animal sanctuary and children's playground.

Website: www.belvedere-house.ie

Birr Castle, County Offaly

Owned by the Parsons family for several generations, Birr Castle Demesne covers 48.5 ha (120ac.) and is world renowned for its trees of which there are over 2,000 species. Features include a maze, walled garden, water gardens and lake and science museum (the galleries of Discovery). There is also a great telescope built in 1845 which was the largest telescope built in the world at that time. The garden restoration has been aided by the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme.

Facilities: plant sales, tearooms, science museum, toilets, gift shop

Website: www.birrcastle.com

Bunratty/Knappogue, County Clare

Bunratty Castle was built by Thomas de Clare in the 13th Century on a site which was part of a Viking settlement dating from 950AD. Lord Gort bought and restored the castle in 1950's and developed the attraction in the grounds that illustrates the living world of rural and urban life in nineteenth century Ireland. The gardens which are interwoven through this attraction were granted aid through the Great Gardens restoration scheme.

Knappogue Castle is renowned for its medieval banquets. It was built in 1467 and was the home to the McNamara clan. It was restored under the ownership of Hon. Mark Andrews in the 1960's. It is now owned and managed by Shannon Development and the gardens surrounding the castle were granted funding under the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme.

Facilities: banquets shop and toilets, folk park (Bunratty)

Website: www.shannonheritagetrade.com

Enniscoe Gardens, County Mayo

The gardens of Enniscoe house were created in the 18th c. though little is left of the original gardens, they were developed substantially during the period 1840 to 1950. It was these more recent gardens that provided the framework for the recent restoration which has been funded under the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme. The main features are the pleasure grounds and the walled ornamental gardens.

Facilities: 18th Century house offering accommodation, north Mayo family history research centre, museum, restaurant and toilets

Website: www.enniscoe.com/garden

Fernhill, Sandyford, County Dublin

Located in south county Dublin, Fernhill is surrounded on all sides by building and development. It was in private ownership. The garden which has long association with both the Irish and international Botanic Gardens was planted initially over 200 years ago. Features on the 16ha. (40 ac.) of garden include woodland of mainly acid loving plants such as magnolias, camellias and azaleas a rockery and water garden. The house and garden was sold for €40million and bought by a property developer, though it is intended that the garden will remain as a garden.

Facilities: none

No website

Grange, Edenderry, County Offaly

Grange is presently being restored to its original 17th century layout. The tower house is of late 15th c origin and there are 2.4ha (6ac.) of parklands, walkways, a walled garden and a recently constructed labyrinth. The restoration work has been aided by the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme. It is operated and managed by the Tyrell Trust.

Since the research has been undertaken, the OPW have funded and restored the tower house and the kitchen garden.

Facilities: tearooms, toilets, guided tours

No website

Japanese Gardens, County Kildare

This garden was laid out by Tasa Eida between 1906-10 and tells the story of life and the many paths it can take. The gardens are particularly colourful in spring and autumn when the Azaleas and spring flowers are in bloom and in the autumn for the autumn colour of the *Acers* species. St. Fiachra's garden created as a Millennium garden in 1999 is a contemplative garden sited on the bank of a river with lakes and a recreated beehive hut housing Waterford crystal. The gardens are attached to the National Stud. It is in public ownership.

Facilities: restaurant, gift shop, interpretation in the horse museum, trails and toilets

Website: www.irish-national-stud.ie/tourism/saint-fiachras-garden

Kensington Lodge, Dun Laoghaire, County Dublin

A hunting lodge located in south county Dublin succumbed to development pressures and was sold for €7million. The garden had been created by the owners who specialised in alpine plants and large range of these could be seen located on the .8ha (2ac.) site. The garden no longer exists.

No website

Kilmokea, Campile, County Wexford

This 2.8ha (7ac.) garden is located in the south of Ireland and stands with an 18th stone rectory which operates as a bed and breakfast and restaurant. The garden was created in 1947 and due to its proximity to the coast, is home to a number of tender plants such as certain species of *Camellias*, *Eucryphias* and *Magnolias*. The acidic soil ensures that the ericaceous plants grow well in the woodland garden. There is also a walled garden.

Facilities: restaurant, tearooms, self catering, bed and breakfast accommodation and toilets

Website: www.kilmokea.com

Kilruddery, County Wicklow

Kilruddery which is presently being enveloped by development on the outskirts of Bray, County Wicklow, is home to one of the oldest formal gardens in Ireland dating from 1680. The estate has been in the same ownership since 1618 (the Earls of Meath). The pair of canals are a focus of the garden and this leads to an avenue of lime trees. An Orangery was added to the house in 1852 and the domed roof of this is by Richard Turner who designed the curvilinear range of glass houses in both the Botanic Gardens in Belfast and Dublin.

Facilities: Toilets, guided tours, recitals

Website: www.killruddery.com/gardentour_ireland.htm

Larchill Arcadian Gardens, Kilcock, County Kildare

The uniqueness at Larchill is the ferme ornée, the last remaining style of garden in the British Isles. There are 10 follies located throughout the landscape park and a walk has been recreated around them. Features of this garden include a shell house, ornamental parkland, walled garden, a 3ha (7.4ac.) ornamental lake with island fortress and Greek temple. The owner also breeds rare and exotic breeds of farm animals.

Facilities: Tearooms, gift shop, plant sales, toilets, events, guided tours by arrangement

Website: www.larchill.ie

Lismore Castle Gardens, County Waterford

Lismore Castle is built on the castellum originally built in 1185 by Prince John, Lord of Ireland. It was on an old monastic site which originated from 633AD. The lands consisting of 17,000ha (42,000ac.) were once owned by Sir Walter Raleigh and were sold for £1,500 to Richard Boyle the First Earl of Cork in 1602. Robert Boyle, father of modern chemistry was born in Lismore Castle in 1626. Sir Joseph Paxton, friend of the Duke in 1826, took over as head gardener and was responsible primarily for the creation of the garden as it is seen today. The gardens in Lismore are divided into the upper and lower garden. The upper garden is one of the few Jacobean gardens to survive in its original form. It consists of a central walk between two herbaceous borders, vegetable gardens and herbs. The lower garden has more recently been planted with a wide range of summer and autumn flowering trees and shrubs that join the already resident ericaceous species such as *Rhododendrons*. The castle and gardens are in private ownership.

Facilities: sculptures are strategically located through both gardens

Website: www.lismorecastle.com

Lisselan, Clonakilty, County Cork

This garden which is privately owned is designed in a Robinsonian (informal) manner and covers 12 ha. (30ac.). The main features are the rock garden, shrubbery, water garden and rhododendron garden. There is also a fuchsia garden. The objective of the planting is to provide year round interest.

Facilities: golf course, toilets and snacks

Website: www.lisselan.com

Lodge Park Garden, Straffan, County Kildare

An 18th c walled garden has been restored since 1980. It features fruit, flowers and vegetables which are used for the house and the sections of the garden are divided by clipped box. A rosarie, and walkway of sweet peas are in full flower in the summer months.

Facilities: tearooms, plants for sale, toilets, Steam Museum

Website: www.steam-museum.com/garden

Lough Crew Gardens, Oldcastle, County Meath

A 17th garden which has been recently restored to incorporate water, archaeology and herbaceous borders. The gardens also feature a mediaeval motte and St Oliver Plunkett's Family church and tower house. There are also woodland walks and play areas for children and the creation of a mythical creature's trail with fairies, bugs and insects and more recently an adventure course for team building and groups. The wooden reception also hosts a craft shop and coffee shop. This garden was funded under the Great Gardens Restoration scheme.

Facilities: coffee shop, craft shop, woodland walks, trails, toilets, activity adventure course

Website: www.loughcrew.com/garden

Marley Demesne, County Dublin

This garden is publicly owned by Dunlaoire- Rathdown County Council and consists of over 81ha. (300 ac.) of parkland and walled gardens. The walled Regency and ornamental gardens have been restored with aid from the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme.

Facilities: walks, playground, craft courtyard, tearooms

Website: www.dircoco.ie

Powerscourt, Enniskerry, County Wicklow

Powerscourt Gardens is one of the best known attractions in Ireland and attracts thousands of visitors each year. Over the recent past, Powerscourt has gone from being a house and garden to golf course, hotels, shopping facilities (which are housed in the old 18th c shell of the house after a fire in 1974) and interpretation, and large garden centre offering lifestyle and plants. The main garden is over 20ha (50ac.) and includes a walled garden, lakes, terraces, walks and a Japanese gardens. The restoration has been funded by the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme.

Facilities: restaurants, shops, garden centre, hotel, two golf courses.

Website: www.powerscourt.ie

Ram House, Coolgreany, County Wicklow

A small garden of just under .75ha (1.85ac.) featuring over 70 varieties of *Clematis* sp. A series of garden rooms and compartmentalised areas feature terraces, lawns, mixed borders, ponds and a woodland glade. Privately owned.

Facilities: Toilets, teas and cakes, painting exhibitions.

Website: www.gardens.ireland-guide.com/ram_house_gardens.garden.7105

Rowallane/MountStewart County Down

A garden which is predominantly renowned for its display of ericaceous plants such as *Rhododendron*, azaleas and spring flowers. The walled garden houses a national collection of *Penstemons* and this along with the many herbaceous plants bring specialist plants people to the garden each year. Several plants are named after this garden.

A National Trust property

Facilities: tearooms and toilets, events during the year

Website: www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-rowallanegarden

Strokestown House and Gardens, County Roscommon

During and after the Famine, the estate was the site of turmoil and the house and garden were left abandoned. In 1893, Henry Sandford Pakenham a descendant of the Mahons, returned to Strokestown to restore both the house and the garden. His daughter Olive Mahon inherited the estate and until its sale in 1976, saw the demise of the garden due to the cost of the maintenance. In 1976, three local business people bought the estate prior to auction and on finding significant documentation in the estate offices relating to the famine times, the, Jim Callery, one of the owners decided to set about restoring the estate. The house was opened in 1987 and the famine museum opened in 1994. The restoration of the six walled gardens which features the longest herbaceous border in Ireland and the UK was completed in 1997 and fruit and vegetable garden in 2000. The garden was a recipient of the Great Gardens Restoration fund scheme. It is in private ownership.

Facilities: House, and interpretation, restaurant, famine museum and toilets

Website: www.strokestownpark.ie

Talbot Garden, Malahide/Ardgillan, County Dublin

The Talbot Botanic Gardens, Malahide Castle, and Ardgillan Demesne are both managed by the Parks Department in Dublin County Council. The Talbot Botanic Gardens feature unusual plants which were collected in the southern hemisphere by Lord Milo Talbot between the years 1948 and 1973. The area covers over 8ha (19.8ac.) with 1.5ha (3.7ac.) of a walled garden. Genera include plants such as *Pittosporum*, *Escallonia*, *Azara* and *Olearias*. The garden has benefited from the grant aid allocated through the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme.

Ardgillan is located in Skerries, County Dublin and is home to a well stocked rose garden, glass houses and a walled garden featuring a potagerie. The house is also open to the public and is used for lectures and exhibitions.

Facilities: Castle, teas, toilets, guided tours

Website: www.gardens.ireland-guide.com/the_talbot_botanic_gardens_.garden.7089

www.gardens.ireland-guide.com/ardgillan_castle_and_demesne_.garden.7087

Turlough House, County Mayo

The garden at Turlough Park is owned and maintained by Mayo County Council. The main house built in 1865 and the adjoining buildings house the Country Life Museum operated by the National Museums of Ireland. The garden restoration and creation was granted aided through the Great Gardens Restoration scheme. The features of this garden are the Victorian terraces, the man made lake and free standing glass house. This garden rather than being a garden in its own right was created to compliment the house and museum.

Facilities: restaurant and shop, lecture theatres and interpretation.

Website: www.museum.ie

Vandaleur Walled Garden, Kilrush, County Clare

Located at the very tip of the Loop Peninsula in County Clare, Kilrush town was established by the Vandaleur landlords. This family, one of whom was a plant collector in South Africa sent back species to their home in Kilrush. The house has long gone, but the walls of the walled garden survived and it was around these walls and the old path system that was unearthed, that the garden has been recreated. Due to its proximity to the sea, the climate is mild and walled garden houses many unusual and tender plants including Features include water features, a tree collection and a horizontal maze. The garden was funded under the Great Gardens Restoration Scheme and the garden is owned by Clare County Council.

Facilities: a coffee shop, gift shop, conference suite and toilets

Website: www.kilrush.ie

Woodstock, Inistioge, County Kilkenny

Featuring a magnificent avenue of monkey puzzle trees, Woodstock with its 20 ha. (50 ac.) of formal garden is located above the picturesque village of Inistioge in County Kilkenny. It is owned by Kilkenny County Council who has been involved in recreating the walled garden and landscape to its former glory to the times in the 18th c when the estate was owned by the Tighe family. Woodstock House no longer exists as it was burnt in 1922. The garden features include a walled garden, a series of walks and avenues, a terraced flower garden, a winter garden, a rose garden and number of structures such as a columbarium and ice house.

Facilities: tearooms, toilets and occasional events

Website: www.woodstock.ie

Appendix III Recommendations from ParNetourism Project

ParNetourism: Partnerships, Co-operation and Networking in Tourism

A project entitled ParNetourism was funded under Interreg IIIA and undertaken by the Tourism Research Centre, Dublin Institute of Technology, and the Department of Geography, Trinity College, Carmarthen, Wales between March 2004 and December 2005. The work focused on product providers involved both directly and indirectly with the tourism industry in Counties Wexford and Carlow (Ireland), and Pembrokeshire and Carmarthen (Wales). The research which involved three stages included the use of a questionnaire survey, workshops and training seminars explored the extent and issues surrounding partnerships, co-operatives and networks in the destinations.

The main results concluded that it was the wish to be part of the community that was seen as the greatest advantage to group involvement in partnership, co-operatives, networks. Meeting people and sharing ideas were also seen as advantages. Issues such as the lack of time, the lack of financial resources, and the same people undertaking the work were considered to be the main disadvantages. The main reason why initial contact was made with the group was to seek information, and only one respondent mentioned the process of networking. However, the sharing of information was seen as a major contributor to networking. Contact between people was generally on a monthly basis with the phone rivalling the popularity of email as the method of communication.

Factors for successful networking included co-operation and communication, leadership and direction, with deterrents to success being a lack of involvement, lack of interest and lack of leadership. The reasons for involvement with a group were many, though having an asset and the seeking of information were the two most cited reasons why people became involved.

A series of workshops explored a number of these issues in greater depth, and these were followed by the development of a training manual and an accredited module called '*Connecting to Compete*' which was accredited as a short course by the Dublin Institute of Technology.

Summary of Main Recommendations – Ireland and Wales

On completion of the analysis and evaluation of the findings, a number of recommendations were drawn up by both the Irish and Welsh teams. The following is a summary of these recommendations.

Being part of a group and group dynamics

- the importance of creating group identification
- the importance of creating group differentiation
- group resource delineation and sources essential

Communication

- the importance of personal contact at the initial stages
- the use of integrated marketing communications (IMC) to manage the relationships within the group/network
- the use of speed networking events
- Information Technology - the creation of a trade specific website (four cohesive county specific and interlinked websites)

Involvement

- transparent time requirement and division
- privileges to give status, prestige and sense of belonging to the group
- local focus and benefit highlighted
- Interdependence
- a stepped approach - local before county before regional before national

Vision and Leadership/Power

- clear vision to create confidence
- revolving chairperson to bring energy and ideas

Structure and Size

- the use of web based technology to overcome fragmented nature of business
- the use of task oriented subgroups

Training and Support

- up skilling and training to be made available to groups/networks
- training programmes/course to be practical and work based

Performance

- broad range of measurable performance parameters to be determined
- parameters to be based on benefits and outcomes

Linkages

- awareness of the ability to create and maintain linkages

Lifecycle

- area subgroup assimilation to encourage uni-directional approach and cross fertilisation of ideas

Management

- the use of an annual network/group audit to reaffirm values and approach.

Appendix IV List of Related Postgraduate Dissertation Titles Supervised during the Course of the Research

Student Name	Title	Year
Grainne Murphy	Interfirm Networking amongst marine Tourism Activity Operators in Kilrush, Kilkee, and Carrigaholt, County Clare	2001
Annette McGarry	The Networking of Rural Tourism Co-operatives	2001
Gillian Nevin	A Case Study Investigation into whether Relationship Marketing is the way forward for the Hospitality Industry	2001
Olivia Duff	The Study of Co-operative Networking amongst SME's in the Hospitality and Tourism Sector in County Meath	2002
Jennifer Coffey	A Study of the Effectiveness of County Tourism Co-operatives in Ireland	2003
Maria Giamarelou	Investigation into the Usage of Marketing Tools and Co-operation between Women's Agro- tourism Co-operatives in Greece	2003
Michele Whelan	The Use of Relationship Marketing as a Marketing Tool in the Visitor Attraction sector in Ireland	2003
Caroline Shanley	A Study of Strategic Alliance in the Irish Hotel Industry: Select Hotels of Ireland	2005

Appendix V Themes/Questions– Key Informants (Group 1)

Questions used as Guideline in order to address themes.

Part 1 Classified and Background Information

1. Name and General Information to include age/gender/family background status /education (Training in Garden and business/interests)
2. Name/code/position
3. Organisation
4. Involvement/Role within Organisation

Length of time Involvement

Part 2 History and Knowledge of Gardens / Marketing Co-operatives

5. Define the concept of an Irish Garden
6. What are the strengths of the Irish garden as a tourism product/ experience?
7. What are the weaknesses of the Irish garden as a tourism product/ experience?
8. What are the opportunities available to the Irish garden as a tourism product/ experience?
9. What are the threats to the Irish garden as a tourism product/ experience?
10. How do you view the development of gardens as a tourist product in the past?
11. How do you view the development of the Irish gardens as a tourism product in the future?

Part 3 Marketing

13. What types of marketing is presently being carried out by the Gardens of Ireland Co-operative?
 - By the gardens owners
 - By CEO/ executive
14. What type of marketing should be carried out by the Gardens of Ireland co-operative?
 - CEO
 - By garden owners

	Now	Should be
Membership of Co operative		
Advertising		
Brochure Production		
Promotion		
Tour Ops/Commission		
Familiarisation		
Distribution/Costs		
Internet/web		
Other		

Part 4 Co-operation and Relationship Marketing

15. What are the first word/words that come into your head in relation to Gardens of Ireland Marketing Co-operative (Use of Free word association) ?
16. What does the word co-operation in terms of marketing mean to you?
17. Define the essential characteristics required to undertake successful co-operative marketing?
18. What relationships/contacts are presently being built up by garden owners to maximise co-operation ? Shown the Six Market Model (if required)
19. Why are these relationships being developed /built?
20. What are the levels of involvement?
21. What relationships should be built by the gardens owners to maximize co-operation?
22. Why should they be built up?
23. What methods could be used to develop these relationships?(Prompt communication /awareness/ strategic)

Part 5 The Consumer

24. Outline a profile of the consumer/garden visitor
25. What are the values that these visitor seek in relation to the garden product?
26. What is appealing about the garden group to the visitor?
27. How could additional value be created for the visitor?

28. How can numbers be increased to the gardens working within the co-operative?

Part 6 Auditing and Monitoring

29. Are you aware of any auditing and monitoring procedures being undertaken to assess feedback/satisfaction from:

- visitors?
- garden owners?

30. Any other suggestions regarding this research or other aspects that merit investigation?

31. Comments from self /background info

Appendix VI Themes/Questions – Gardens (Group 2), Garden Owners/Managers (Group 3) Network Coordinators (Group 4)

Classified Information

Name and General information to include age/gender/ family background and status, education.
(Training in gardening/business) interests

Garden name

Ownership

- Family/Private/Public

Length of time in ownership

Are you a member of the Great Houses Castles and Gardens Product Marketing Group?

- Present member
- Past member

Are you a member of any other marketing co-operatives/groups

- Yes/ No
- If yes, please specify

History, Development, Organisation of the Garden

The Product

History of the garden

Year garden originated

Originated by whom

Year first opened to public

Location

- Distance from Dublin
- Other point of access

Size of garden

Soil type

Garden type

- General
- Specialist – please specify

Dominant plant/habitat type

Is the garden associated with any other business/venture?

- Farm
- Stately home
- Accommodation
- Other visitor attractions

What percentage of the total income is derived from the garden?

17 .Reasons for the development of the garden as a tourist attraction

	<i>Mentioned</i>	<i>Ranked in importance</i>
Financial		
Interest		
Meeting people		
Conservation		
Other		

18. From where did the idea originate? Discuss the decision to open the garden to the public

Organisation and Management of the Garden

19.Number of employees

	<i>Indoor</i>	<i>Outdoor</i>
Full time		
Part time		
Seasonal		
Male		
Female		

Ancillary Facilities

	<i>Mentioned</i>	<i>Rank as per importance to overall tourism product</i>
Garden		
Shop (craft etc.)		
Restaurant/Café		
Childrens Play area		
Garden Centre/nursery		
Walking trails		
Animal Zoo		
Other		

Management structure of the business (in relation to employees – manager/owner)

- Flat
- Hierarchical

History and Knowledge of Gardens / Marketing Co-operatives

Define the concept of an Irish Garden

What are the strengths of the Irish garden as a tourism product/ experience?

What are the weaknesses of the Irish garden as a tourism product/ experience?

What are the opportunities available to the Irish garden as a tourism product/ experience?

What are the threats to the Irish garden as a tourism product/ experience?

How do you view the development of the Irish gardens as a tourism product in the future?

Marketing

Could you please indicate as to your total annual marketing budget?

What are the different types of marketing that you presently use to promote this garden?

	<i>Utilised as part of MS</i>	<i>% cost of total spend on marketing</i>	<i>Effectiveness as a marketing tool (in relation to visitor numbers attracted by marketing tool)</i>		
Membership of a co-operative group			1	2	3
<i>Own marketing</i>					
Advertising			1	2	3
Brochure production			1	2	3
Promotion			1	2	3
Tour Ops/commission			1	2	3
Familiarisation			1	2	3
Distribution			1	2	3
Internet			1	2	3
Other			1	2	3

1 – very effective 2 - effective 3 – no difference

What percentage of your marketing budget is directed at?

	<i>% of marketing budget</i>
Overseas Market	
Domestic tourist market	
Local market	
Specialist Market	

Are you happy with the marketing that is presently being carried out?

- Yes
- No

Any changes

What type of marketing do you think garden co-operatives should carry out to promote gardens in Ireland?

Co-operation and Relationship Marketing

33. What are the first word/words that come into your head in relation to garden product marketing groups? (Use of free word association)

What does the word co-operation in terms of marketing mean to you?

Define the essential characteristics required to undertake successful co-operative marketing?

36. What relationships/contacts are presently being built up by you to maximise co-operative marketing and what is the benefit of their development?

Contacts mentioned	Type of contact/medium used/frequency	Rank by perceived importance	Perceived Benefit

What relationships/contacts should be being built up by a gardens product-marketing group to maximise co-operative marketing and what are the benefit and negatives associated with these relationships/contacts

Contacts mentioned	Rank by perceived importance	Benefit	Negatives

What methods could be used to develop contacts/relationships?

(Prompt)
Awareness
Communication

What are your thoughts on co-operative marketing groups at the following different delineated levels?

	Thoughts/comments
Local	
County	
Regional	
National	

The Consumer

What were/are the numbers of visitors to the garden? (increase/decrease)

Market breakdown

Market Breakdown	%
Overseas visitors	
Domestic Visitors	
Local	
Group	
Independent	
Casual	
Specialist	

Is the garden the main reason for their visit to the area?

- Yes
- No

If no, what attracts them to the area?

What are the values the visitors seek in relation to your garden?

How could additional value be created for the visitor by?

- Your garden
- By a garden product marketing group

What value is the garden product marketing group to the visitor?

What methods would you suggest could be utilised to aid an increase in visitor numbers to gardens?

Auditing and Monitoring

Do you use any auditing and monitoring procedures to assess feedback from visitors/others?

What is the general outcome of this feedback?

1 2 3 4 5
v.+ve +ve indifferent -ve v. -ve

Do you undertake any market research in relation to the garden?

50. Any others comments or suggestions

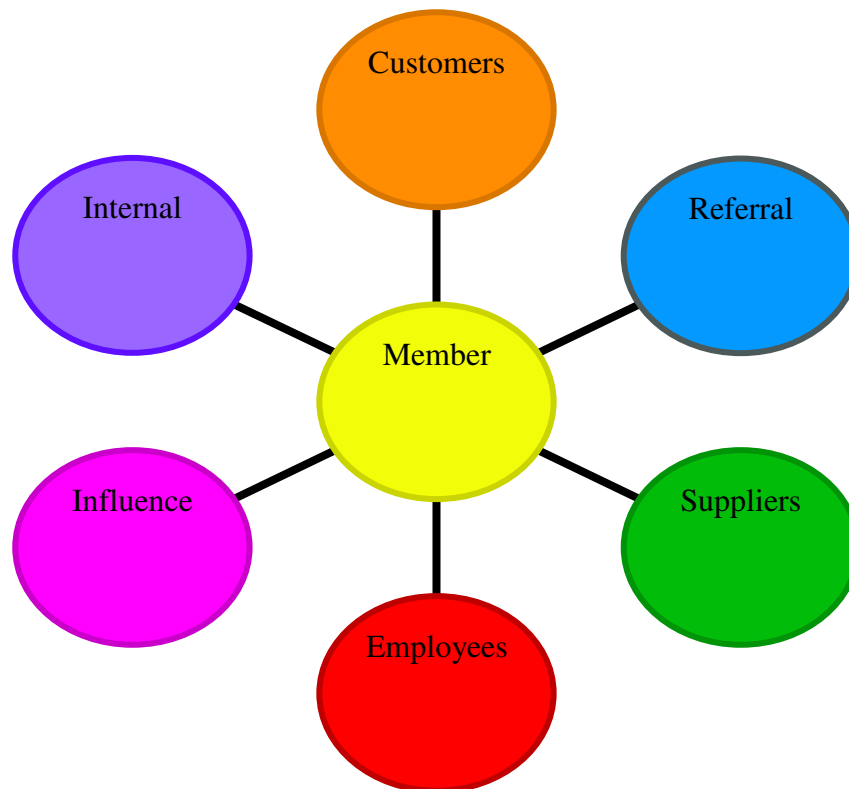
Thank you.

Appendix VII Aids and Prompts Used in the Interviews

a. Adapted Six Market Model (from Peck et al 1999)

- Internal - self/family/ relations/friends
- Referral - those people you know on a day to day basis - banks/places of employment etc.
- Influence - media/tourist office/organisations
- Employee - people working with you
- Supplier - depends on business / milkman/butcher/florist/seed merchant
- Customer – must be defined

Competitors



Source:
Adapted from Peck et al. 1999

b. List of Facilities

	Facilities (please tick)	Rank as per importance to overall tourism product
Garden		
Shop (craft etc.)		
Restaurant/Café		
Children's Play area		
Garden Centre/nursery		
Walking trails		
Animal Zoo		
Other		

Appendix VIII Relevant Publications, Conference Attendance and Work undertaken during the Course of the Research

Date	
January 1999	Irish Geographical Society Doctoral Colloquium, Co. Meath
October 1999	Gorman, C. and Reid, F. (2000) <i>Developing Ireland as a Successful Garden Tourism Destination</i> in Ruddy, Dr. J. and Flanagan, Dr. S. (eds.) <i>Tourism Destination Marketing : Gaining the Competitive Edge</i> : 437-443. Dublin Institute of Technology, Tourism Research Centre
January 2004	Gorman, C. (2004) <i>Relationships and Co-operation in Tourism Product Marketing</i> EIASM Workshop on Relationship Marketing January 27th and 28th 2004 Brussels.
April 2004	Gorman, C. (2004) <i>The Use of Relationship Marketing in Developing Network and Co-operative links within Tourism Product Marketing Groups</i> , ATLAS Conference, Naples 2004.
December 2004	Gorman, C. (2005) <i>Co-operative Marketing Structures in Rural Tourism</i> Chap 7 in <i>Rural Tourism and Sustainable Business</i> (eds) Hall, D, Kirkpatrick, I. and Mitchell, M. Channel View Publications.
March 2004-December 2005	An Interreg funded project 'ParNetourism' which using a similar conceptual framework considered the issues from a geographical perspective rather than from a product perspective (summary and recommendations to be seen in Appendix III)
January 2006	Gorman, C. (2006) <i>The Use of Relationship Marketing in Developing Network and Co-operative links within Tourism Product Marketing Groups</i> , Chapter 10:149-169 in <i>Tourism Local Systems and Networking</i> (eds.) Lazzeretti, L. and Petrillo, C. Elsevier.
February 2007	Gorman, C. (2007) with Tourism Research Centre: <i>The Feasibility of Networks in the East Coast and Dublin Tourism area</i> (confidential)
September 2007	Gorman, C. (2007) <i>ParNetourism - Exploring Partnerships and Networking in Tourism Destinations</i> Conference Paper, Atlas Conference, Valencia, Spain, September 2007.
March 2007-December 2007	Gorman, C. (2007) with Tourism Research Centre, DIT (Jane Stacey, Dr. Kevin Griffin) <i>Monastic Trails and Networks: A Product Development Proposal</i> . Funded by Fáilte Ireland.
September 2007	Gorman, Catherine (2007) <i>Landscape and Geotourism: Market Typologies and Visitor Needs</i> . European Tourism and the Environment Conference: Promotion and Protection, Achieving the Balance, October 2007, Dublin, Ireland
July 2008	Gorman, C. (2008) with Griffin, K. <i>Ecclesiastical Market Segmentation in the Land of Saints and Scholars</i> at ATLAS Annual conference, Brighton UK, 2-4 July 2008

Appendix IX Statements from Findings, Links to Conceptual Framework and Comments from CEO

Embedded Issues	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
In a dispersed marketplace, the closer the product is to the core experience, the less likely it is to appeal to a broader market and be sustainable	Product (Involvement)	I agree with to an extent, but only because the core is the norm – there is a blinkered view in Ireland - we take the easiest route to the market
Privately owned gardens lack the management expertise or experience however compensate with product expertise and interest	Ownership (Involvement)	I totally agree – but in the world of today that it is not enough – they will not survive - need to follow the idiot’s guide of how to do everything – multi-tasking
Ownership dictates sustainability	Ownership (Sustainability)	I wouldn’t totally agree with that – we have rescued totally unsustainable products in [the destination] ... management and expertise dictate sustainability – it is not the ownership – it is how you use the management of resources and sometimes community groups are brilliant
The county co-operative approach is the least effective approach due to the continuous pull on resources	Geography (Combination of resources)	Totally agree – just too small to matter – in the dot in Ireland. As late as last Thursday - I argued with a region to stop giving them grants as I had seen no results for the last year - very slow cut – almost last bastion – they will not make the cut – no one is prepare to show me the evidence Not all politics. Fear of bad regional tourism – this is the only thing we can control – we don’t trust power - little quasi independence. Yes, county councillors - Leadership has never been shown anyway. Performance parameters – don’t come into it – Leadership is not there
Products linked to a history or story are more marketable	History (Sense of identity)	Yes, people aspect, human interest, regardless of what country you are in – once you don’t overdo it – there is a tendency to over - academics history ... work with the local history may not be 100% at all times –

Embedded Issues	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
		getting it from the heart.
Previous positive development and operation of gardens is linked to low levels of social capital and a lack of social awareness	Family/religious links (Social Capital)	Yes -I suppose Powerscourt is an exception – there is the odd exception where the real commercial world has the value in the garden Lord Rosse (Birr Castle) to some degree in terms of the broader heritage and crossover designs Yes but I haven't seen huge amounts of over successful either
In product based co-operation, the social capital gives greater value to the provider than the development of the product as a business (only 3 cited social reasons as to why they opened the garden	Social Capital	I agree and disagree – there's both – the capital happens and the beneficiaries are the tourist board and the industry of that group co-operating and sharing... Being more open does help... though not sure of gardens.... Why do businesses open up ...primarily themselves – they want their business on their lifestyle choices and their customers on their lifestyle – that what comes first Brilliant quote from a woman – I did not want the type of tourist Bord Fáilte wanted me to have

Perception of Product	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
If the basic perception of the product is not universally understood, there is a lack of vision and co-operation is more problematic	Values (Vision)	Yes most definitely - its an area we are not good at communicating ...
More recently developed gardens have a greater ability to co-operate as they	Lifecycle	Disagreed with this saying that on the heritage side, the old model of business worked better than the triple bottom line approach 'no body

Perception of Product	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
view themselves more as a business.	(Trust)	Goes into it for the money – it's a passion ...gardens are not viable'
There is a need for external positive influence in order to create and develop opportunities	SWOT (Vision/Management)	Definitely – the external is always what does Too internalised and too focused on business You need the neutral factor, they won't take it from one of their own ... you have less risk of being ineffective ... conferences, they are saying that it is always the external influence of the innovator that starts the drive, that starts think people will change and come on board
Increasing the number of facilities is seen as a method of creating additional value for the visitor rather than creating additional value for the garden	Facilities (Value)	Yes though additional, I think less is more, less but better developed product - a flagship in each county - at the moment very unequal.
Values need to be linked to strengths in order to consolidate vision	Value (Vision)	Essential but what drives a business is not communicated. People don't know what values/benefits are being delivered – to themselves, the gardens or to the visitor When you meet that type of person – comes across totally - Do not know how to communicate it. New generation – Electric Picnic – old generation were involved with it. Gardens open to the public – locals not realising they are open it as they are linked to the local history

Importance of Product	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
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Importance of Product	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
Ready access to a market (population) acts as a major catalyst to opening a garden to the public	Marketing/opening	I don't know – look historically some of them in the of the most isolated place - existing stock in Ireland - if that was the case in Meath, Kildare, Louth would be full of gardens and it is not - back to the value of the owner whether they do or don't want to share. I think if it is good enough they will travel. It is such a specialist market and people will travel
Lack of confidence in the product leads to a lack of co-operation	Identification of value/benefits (Confidence)	Said that some of the gardens had too much confidence - feeling that they were too good to co-operate. They did not think logically, they had a fear of sharing and that someone else might do better than them
The objectives of the garden owner dictate the multivariate ways in which a garden attracts visitors	Different objectives (Identity)	I really can't agree with that – depending on – two sides to it – if you take the standard person who looks at a garden - if you look at the whole plethora of events – whether the owner agrees or disagrees – Lough Crew and the opera - the people come for the Opera – different reasons
Those gardens with smaller capacity attract more specialist groups giving them a better sense of control	Size (Bonding)	Agree
Developing a link with domestic and local visitors help to create value for both the garden and local economy (sustainable approach)	Development of markets (Creation of local capital)	Yes – its a resource most people don't realise

Importance of Product	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
The use of different communication tools changes over the lifecycle of a relationship within the context of a co-operative	Communication tools (Lifecycle)	Yes I think – it does they all go through lifecycles – what we find what it is people, people, people, love to meet and talk
Membership of a co-operative marketing group is considered the least effective method of marketing as being a member lacks the sense of ownership required to make decisions (reactionary)	Group type (Identity)	I agree with this 90% of the time. We don't set up networks based on action, based on commitment - but it takes time - 3 year
Relationship marketing/co-operative links do not feature strongly as part of marketing tactics used by garden tourism attractions.	Marketing	I suppose I have to agree – you have all these national marketing groups and they know each other much better than someone in the next parish or someone at the next cross roads because the structures have not been there – you cannot blame them - again yesterday One big bash for the trade – once a year to meet Fáilte Ireland – and that we have to listen – cannot always blame the trade. Always said you need a person and all our feedback has always come back, if a person isn't always organising it, they don't believe it is sustainable – they are all too busy - a few organisations can have the funding to facilitate that – in generally- it takes time.

Co-operation and Relationships	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
Garden tourism attractions display a divided attitude to the process of co-operation	Level of co-operative involvement (Identity)	I think that's normal – I would see the same beginning to happen with the good food circle – depends on the motivation as to why these things were set up – if you look at Heritage Island – for profit...

Co-operation and Relationships	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
Overall the garden tourism product has a general understanding of the requirements required for co-operative practices.	Awareness values (Associated with co-operation and relationships)	Totally disagree- because tolerance is the biggest thing that people need to have. We put people into these groups as we want a box to fit everyone – we want everyone to have a box for the same 10 things – we don't promote our diversity – the same sameness and the method of communication doesn't enhance diversity – often it comes to much from their perspective – from the product rather than from the consumer They think its what people want to hear Instead of can I bring my kids here to wreck the place?
Key Informants (support) play a policing /dictatorial rather than supportive role with the group.	Organisation type (Leadership)	I would have to agree – historically - yes, there is a lot more confidence in products now that they will not take it to some degree – the weariness of old products groups – that they are not at the races nowadays
Key Informants (support) are not aware of the extent of the links and relationships being developed by the garden owners.	Awareness (Leadership)	Yes I would have to agree – they are not aware currently, though they are aware they should be – thing that bothering them is the process, like some of the examples with stuff we are hearing with the TLNs - it really doesn't matter if the process of getting them all networked works, that they are not looking at another measurement at the end of it - that's what I am sensing that it is the process...that's bothering them - the value of I - even internally with themselves they need to be out with the trade
The nature and degree of involvement with the product dictates the propensity for co-operation and building relationships.	Involvement	'I have seen the benefit of coaxing and cajoling - so I disagree - 'the use of the 'mammying' approach. If the right training programme/ incentive in place. 90% will go that way if they have the product at heart, if they see the product benefiting from it'

Co-operation and Relationships	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
State organisations including TIOs are seen as priority links to be developed by both the garden attractions and the group coordinators.	Links/Leadership	This has recently changed; the TIO system is being reviewed and technology is used as well as referral systems. Fáilte Ireland are still considered an important link though only deal with groups rather than individuals (efficiency)
The gardens co-operative group of which they are members is not seen as a priority link by the gardens and therefore demonstrates lack of commitment of the group	Identification of value and benefit (Commitment)	You will get what you put in - likened it to 'throwing the membership out the window otherwise. Membership based groups narrow the ability to cross sell. If the members are left to their own devices, do not have the maturity to think strategically, however this is being addressed with training teaching strategic leadership
The garden attractions know how to network but only choose to network with certain other gardens based on historical connections and factors exhibiting limited trust	History (Trust)	Disagreed with this statement as they felt there had been very few opportunities available to the group, whereas in England there were huge opportunities. However opportunities do exist in Britain as there is a far greater and ready market available - time had moved on and that barriers relating to the historical nature of the place were being eroded and that it was often the support organisations that create these barriers
Brochures and the use of personal contact are more frequently used than email or other methods of contact (this may have changed) used by the garden attractions.	Communication	Between garden and visitor -getting comfortable - perhaps age profile and in fairness the visitor of the garden is not logging on to a website, they are looking at a guide book, magazine
Barriers to co-operation involve the people themselves rather than the product or the process	Embedded issues (Values associated with co-operation)	A bit of all three – because if you think if your garden is better or its all year round, the product affects who you want to be in bed with – I think it s about of all three if the person has the capacity and willingness to co-operate

Co-operation and Relationships	<i>Link</i>	<i>CEO Comment</i>
There is little understanding of the value of co-operation to the customer and to the product provider	Product/market (Value and benefit)	As a product it is not well developed, you go to a garden, ([they would not recommend] you must go to this place for dinner, you must go there etc. I would never instinctively think of going to a garden to find out information - whereas you might go to a historic house or castle and talk to the person and get referral - again it's the customer service
There are few structured methods of monitoring or customer feedback in place	Goals (Performance parameters)	Yes I do agree ... It wouldn't surprise me
Overall the garden attractions operate as islands with many in isolation indicating little trust and they not integrated into the local tourism fabric	Values associated with co-operation/relationship management (Trust)	Generally agreed with this statement, though said it was because of a combination of factors including history. The Irish do not generally value gardens. The value system in general is for example, in Ireland the GAA or such like. However, it is changing with the modern garden, as long as they perceive modern with the old. Go back to what the customer wants and see if they can give them something they want.
That a network approach involving both horizontal and vertical networks would serve the gardens attractions sector better and lead to a more sustainable product	Co-operation = Networks = Sustainable approach	Yes agree – but I think the model needs to be independent from the very beginning...we have never sold to networks in Ireland Yes [to interdependence and ownership} That it exists beyond the funding, exists beyond ... but we have never said that up front

Appendix X

Reference Case Interview Contacts: Sample from OneBigGarden. Wales

National Botanic Gardens, Wales Public/Charity – Millenium Find Project

This garden is in its infancy being a project which was funded under the millennium trust in the UK. An idea of creating a Botanic Garden was the idea of William Watkins and together with supporters such as Ghillean Prance, Director of RBG Kew set up a charitable trust which raised funds for the venture. They succeeded in gaining funding from the Millenium Commission and the garden was created as a Millenium project. The gardens were developed on Middleton Hall Farm Estate and they seek to balance having a National Botanic Garden with the operation of an organic farm. The Botanic Gardens have a glasshouse, a bog garden, a mirror pool and other features that differentiate it as Welsh garden.

Facilities: events, exhibitions, art, restaurant, garden shop, education, wedding and corporate venue

Website: www.gardenofwales.org.uk

Picton Castle and Gardens, Pembrokeshire, Wales – Private Garden

Picton Garden is primarily a woodland garden and covers 16 ha.(40 ac.). Due to the acidic nature of the soil, *Rhododendron* and other ericaceous species thrive. Feature in the garden include a maze planted in the mid 1990's and maturing well, the avenues with two *Sequoiadendrons*, the ice house, the walled garden, Peach house walk and woods, bluebell walk and the peep in walk. Te Peep in walk is where over fifty species of conifers have been planted over the last four years supplied by the Conifer Conservation Project based in the Edinburgh Botanical Gardens. Many of these are unique to the garden in Britain.

Facilities: shop, garden nursery, a restaurant, toilets, picnic area, a gallery with lecture theatre, guided tours, and a venue for weddings and conferences.

Website: www.pictoncastle.co.uk

Chairperson of the Regional Tourism Marketing body with specific focus on Gardens	UK regional
The person who was to be met (the Marketing Manager) was ill. The participant had a strong, dominant personality who said what they wanted to say rather than answer the question. Good at promoting themselves and the group though. He had significant recent experience in the industry though his PhD was in Pharmaceutical Science (Oxford).	