

DISSERTATION

TESTING A MODEL OF CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SATISFACTION OF A
LUXURY WINGSHOOTING LODGE EXPERIENCE

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

TESTING A MODEL OF CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SATISFACTION OF A LUXURY WINGSHOOTING LODGE EXPERIENCE

This paper explores the application of a customer service and satisfaction model from the outdoor recreation industry to a luxury wingshooting destination. Specifically, it investigates the possibility that domain-level satisfaction will mediate the specific relationship between customer service components and the guests' overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience. Data were collected via quantitative self-administered surveys (n=525 completed surveys) that measured three levels of visitor satisfaction (26 individual service items, three service domains, and overall satisfaction), which were administered to guests at a luxury wingshooting destination over four South Dakota pheasant preserve hunting seasons (2017 - 2020) which run from September 1 until March 31 of the following year.

This research tested the extent to which satisfaction across three domains (hunting, customer service, & facilities) mediated the influence of 26 individual service items in predicting overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience. The 26 service items represented certain areas of satisfaction (domains),

and the mediation analysis was limited to those specific domains. Results indicated that satisfaction with each of the three domains partially mediated the relationship between overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience and the individual service items. Next, I combined all of the significant individual service items and their three satisfaction domains into one single regression model, with overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience as the dependent variable. Of the ten significant service items and three service domains, only five variables proved to be significant, accounting for 76.8% of the explained variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

With the colonization and founding of the New World, hunting was primarily a food-producing activity that also allowed for some recreation for the predominantly rural population. However, over the past century and a half, and with the increasing urbanization of the United States, hunting has become a recreational field sport for a diverse population. Pheasants are among the most popular game birds to hunt in the United States (Frey et al., 2003), and they, along with farmers and hunters, are an integral component of South Dakota agriculture. The first season for pheasants in South Dakota was in 1919, and 200 of the estimated 100,000 birds were harvested. By 1943, the pheasant became so recognized and prevalent across the state that it was made the official state bird of South Dakota (Errington & Gewertz, 2015). As with anything in nature, bird and hunter numbers fluctuate yearly. For the 2020-2021 South Dakota pheasant hunting season, 121,331 hunters spent just under \$219.7 million and harvested 1.11 million pheasants (2020 Pheasant Economics, 2021).

Since customer satisfaction can rarely be attributed to one single aspect of service (Lim et al., 2018; Rezaei et al., 2018), providing hunters with a high-quality experience requires that management understand what elements and to what extent they combine to provide high overall satisfaction (Hammit et al., 1990). Hunting has been researched as a source of income and evaluated on its ecological impact (Komppula & Gartner, 2013), and many articles have been published

evaluating factors determining the overall satisfaction of hunters (Brunke & Hunt, 2007; Frey et al., 2003; Hayslette et al., 2001; Hazel et al., 1990; Schroeder et al., 2006; Tynon, 1997; Vaske et al., 1986; Vaske & Roemer, 2013). While research evaluating hunter satisfaction supports the belief in multiple factors affecting overall satisfaction (i.e. satisfaction is a multi-dimensional concept) (Hazel et al., 1990; Hendee, 1974; Vaske et al., 1986), research is lacking that directly addresses the overall satisfaction of hunters enjoying a luxury hunting experience composed of high-end, resort-style amenities, phenomenal customer service, and deluxe accommodations. I selected this specific topic and research location because of this particular gap in the research and the impact this could have on the commercial hunting lodge industry as a whole. As the industry becomes more and more competitive, findings from this project could provide industry guidance on how to best manage their facilities. This research was aided by my unlimited access to guests at a 5-star wingshooting lodge in South Dakota, thanks to the interest and support of the management and owners of Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge.

An Abbreviated History of Hunting Lodges

Many would say the historical precursor to today's commercial hunting lodges in the United States was the sporting lodges/estates found in Scotland, Ireland, Spain, and the United Kingdom. The first lodges built in the Royal forests during Norman and Medieval times were to provide shelter for the monarch and his select noblemen while they hunted deer, wild boar, pheasant, grouse, and other species of their choosing (Hobson & Jones, 2013; Sykes, 2007). These lodges were

few and far between until the early 19th century. The Game Act of 1831 removed the restrictions on game hunting imposed by Henry VIII, leading to the boom in lodge building around the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland (Hobson & Jones, 2013; Wightman et al., 2002).

Of all the sporting lodges/estates, the most researched have been those in the Highlands of Scotland because they are the most deeply rooted in the history of shooting (Hobson & Jones, 2013; MacMillan et al., 2010). The sporting estates in the Scottish Highlands are comprised of large tracts of land, mostly hill grounds, and are managed primarily for stalking deer, shooting grouse, and fishing for trout and salmon (MacMillan et al., 2010; Sykes, 2007). Their emergence in the mid-nineteenth century was due to three main factors. First, large tracts of cheap land were available due to the collapse in land value for grazing sheep. Second, Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert (of German birth) was an extremely enthusiastic hunter, and industrial magnates were becoming wealthy and wanted to obtain social status by purchasing land solely for sport. Queen Victoria purchased Balmoral Estate (originally about 6,400 acres), for example, primarily for sport. Finally, over the next 50 years, many sheep farms changed hands and were converted into sporting estates. Anyone who was anyone wanted a Highland sporting estate (Hobson & Jones, 2013; Wightman et al., 2002). Before WWI, around 4.5 million acres were managed for sport (Bryden, 1976; MacMillan et al., 2010).

During this same time in the United States, northern sportsmen started developing a strong interest in recreational hunting. This was limited before 1850

but then began experiencing a large and devoted following. By the 1870s, hunters increasingly put pressure on wildlife populations, and game populations declined, leading to conflict between sport and market hunters for good shooting grounds (Giltner, 2020; Tober, 1981). Sport hunters began to buy and lease land for their exclusive use to protect it from development while ensuring their access to, and ability to manage, wildlife. These lands often became hunt clubs, enabling members to pool resources, secure good hunting grounds, implement habitat management, and reserve the wildlife for their pleasure (Herman, 2001; Tober, 1981). Initially relying on existing structures, clubs eventually built new lodges, stables, and kennels to ensure their members' comfort and access to good hunting grounds, allowing their guests to focus on their reason for being on the property (Giltner, 2020).

These are the historical roots of the hunting lodge industry, where a lodge became more than just a place to hunt wildlife for aristocrats and royalty. The modern commercial hunting lodge was born with quality experiences and customer service in mind, offering comfortable lodging, plenty of food and drink, caretakers to see after the property, staff to cater to guests' needs, and abundant wildlife. Lodges have continued to evolve as consumer demands change year to year and must continue to evolve to ensure a prosperous future for themselves and the industry.

Study Site

Data were collected at Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge throughout the 2017, 2018, 2019, & 2020 South Dakota pheasant preserve hunting seasons which run

from September 1 until March 31 of the following year. The research property is located 24 miles North of Pierre Regional Airport in Pierre, South Dakota and managed by High Adventure Company from Acworth, Georgia, on behalf of the owners (the Weinreis family), who have owned property in the Dakotas since 1900. Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge, a first-class hunting facility steeped in rich history and modern luxuries, offers some of the finest pheasant hunting in the country, paired with high-end, resort-style amenities and luxurious accommodations. Their bedrock is private rooms, refined wines and premium liquors, stellar cuisine, custom-made furnishings, and superior guest service. Being well known for its plentiful upland bird hunting, generous daily bag limits, extended season, diverse landscapes, and well-maintained habitat has led to awards confirming the reputation of this facility. Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge is the first hunting venue ever to receive a Beretta Trident Award and was named the 2017 “Hunting Lodge of the Year” by Sporting Classics Magazine. The Beretta Trident program is the first and only program to rate shooting sports venues instead of simply endorsing them. Tridents are awarded based on industry superiority, similar to Michelin® stars for restaurants. Less than five percent of destinations merit even one Beretta Trident, and Cheyenne Ridge has been awarded two (*The Beretta Trident Program*; Greenstein; Painter, 2017; *Signature Lodge Awards & Press*).

Problem Statement

Researchers were contacted by Sean Finley of the High Adventure Company, who manages Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge on behalf of the Weinreis family. The owners and lodge management sought to understand better who their guests were, where they came from, and what components of the Cheyenne Ridge experience were most important in determining their overall satisfaction. The research conducted at Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge will establish and encourage additional research on understanding factors that influence customer satisfaction in the luxury hunting industry, a unique and to-date little-researched area of the commercial hunting industry.

Study Purpose

There is a significant gap in the research regarding travel and tourism services, and what has been learned from the sale and use of tangible goods cannot be transferred directly to luxury tourism services (*Luxury Tourism*, 2020; Wirtz et al., 2020). An example of that gap is that there is a lack of research addressing the overall satisfaction of hunters enjoying a luxury hunting experience paired with first-rate amenities, dining, customer service, and accommodations.

The purpose of this study was to take what has been learned in the luxury goods market and build upon it to better understand if any individual service items and domains can and to what extent explain the variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

In the beginning, concepts of hunting satisfaction were primarily based on successful harvest and the number of days recreating. The limits of these approaches became evident and eventually led to the multiple-satisfaction model of hunting (Hazel et al., 1990). This model suggests there are several aspects of hunting satisfaction, and those related aspects make up ‘dimensions’ of the hunting experience that affect the hunt positively or negatively (Hayslette et al., 2001). Additional studies have shown that hunters seem to experience a combination of harvest-based and non-harvest-based satisfaction from their hunting experiences which supports the multiple-satisfaction model of hunting (Decker et al., 1980; Hammitt et al., 1990; Manfredo et al., 2004; Sanyal & McLaughlin, 1993; Vaske et al., 1986).

Literature regarding hunting satisfaction has moved beyond counting the number of days in the field or how many animals were harvested to attempting to understand the components of the hunting experience and how they relate to overall satisfaction (Hazel et al., 1990).

This chapter lays out the framework for this study in five sections. The first section presents information regarding the definition of luxury and how it applies to this study. The second section discusses the correlation between service quality and

satisfaction. The third section discusses how the multiple satisfaction approach for hunters was developed. The fourth section presents a model of how service quality and satisfaction models have been combined in other studies and applied here. Finally, in the fifth section, the four research objectives for this project are presented.

Defining Luxury and Luxury Destinations

Luxury has been a long-standing part of society and is not a new phenomenon (Cristini et al., 2017). One of the most fundamental issues in studying luxury is its correlation to necessity, and luxury is often defined as something you don't need but still want (Csaba, 2008; Swarbrooke, 2018). The American Heritage Dictionary (2016) defines luxury as 'something inessential but conducive to pleasure and comfort. Expensive and hard to obtain.' In Japanese, luxury is 'to use money or things for a certain purpose above the necessary level. Not to spare money' (Carr, 2013). Luxury is a phenomenon comprised of objects or commodities and includes practices and services whose value is not measured by necessity or utility (Hofmeester & Grewe, 2016). For consumers, luxury has varied definitions but for many, it means rarity, quality, or refinement. One of the major traits of luxury has always been how it compares to ordinary (Bellaiche et al., 2010).

People's perceptions of luxury vary, and their definition often depends on what they value individually (Brun & Castelli, 2013; Csaba, 2008; Kauppinen-Räsänen & Grönroos, 2015; Silva, 2020; Swarbrooke, 2018; Thomsen et al., 2020). When discussing luxury in current terms, some feel it is no longer as inaccessible as

it once was (Bosshart et al., 2020; *Luxury Tourism*, 2020; Silverstein & Fiske, 2005), and some attribute this feeling to the emerging shift in focus from ‘having to being and from owning to experiencing’ (Cristini et al., 2017; Thomsen et al., 2020).

In the minds of many, excellence is always attached to luxury (Cristini et al., 2017). Excellence implies that something is better than ordinary and often conveys superiority, greatness, and possibly approaching perfection (Kauppinen-Räsänen & Grönroos, 2015). Numerous publications and research papers written by academics and industry experts have attempted to define luxury, and the many uses of the term in the literature make it difficult to come up with a standard definition of the concept (Brun & Castelli, 2013; Ko et al., 2019).

One of the more current definitions of luxury indicates that it is ‘a state of great comfort or elegance, especially when involving great expense’ (Swarbrooke, 2018). The Merriam-Webster Dictionary (2002) offers that luxury is: ‘a condition or situation of great comfort, ease, and wealth’, ‘something that is expensive and not necessary,’ and ‘something that is helpful that is not usually or always available.’ These definitions focus on comfort and price, which fit well with how tourism sectors tend to see luxury, but some parts of the hospitality and tourism industry suggest that luxury may be changing. Younger generations may be more likely to consider exceptional experiences, no matter where or when they happen, as luxurious experiences (Swarbrooke, 2018). ‘Experiential luxury is growing fast and will account for two-thirds of the core luxury segment by 2024, increasing its share from the current 50%’. The main drivers of this change will be high-end

gastronomy, luxury accommodations, and experiential vacations (Bosshart et al., 2020).

The literature on luxury often fails to focus on tourism-related services and experiences, which has left a void regarding an accepted definition (Bosshart et al., 2020; Correia et al., 2020; Piispanen, 2021; Swarbrooke, 2018; Wirtz et al., 2020). Recent history has seen increased interest in luxury as an experience as opposed to ownership of goods (Bosshart et al., 2020; Cristini et al., 2017; Holmqvist et al., 2020), and luxury experiences are the fastest-growing segment of the luxury goods and services industry (Dykins, 2016; Iloranta, 2019; Müller-Stewens & Berghaus, 2014; Piispanen, 2021). There is a need to better understand how tourists define luxury tourism experiences (Correia et al., 2020). Sukmawati et al. (2018) and Armoni et al. (2018) point out that luxury tourism is less about materials and more about experience and service. Johnson (2013) states that luxury tourism is all about authentic experiences where comfort is essential, as well as high standards for accommodations and culinary experiences. According to Bakker (2005), luxury travel has changed from five-star resorts and hotels to a mixture of exclusive and unique experiences. The most crucial component for many people having a luxurious experience is being able to relax and enjoy that experience while the hassles of daily living are taken care of by someone else (Bakker, 2005; Mossberg, 2007; Piispanen, 2021). Each experience and individual participant has their own standard for luxury. Luxury in the context of wildlife safaris, for example, is not about marble vanities or gold-plated flatware, but perhaps about having a hard

floor tent, indoor plumbing, and refrigeration (Sukmawati et al., 2018).

Fitzsimmons (2017) suggests that luxury tourism is less about materials and more about customer service and the overall experience. Quality customer service is not an option but often rather a necessity for businesses to succeed in luxury tourism. High-quality customer service offers a competitive advantage that can be difficult to duplicate (Armoni et al., 2018). Operating a luxury tourism business necessitates creating a lasting memory for guests, with a dedicated staff of housekeepers, servers, gourmet chefs, etc., who are constantly pursuing progress and perfection in their services (Strong, 2006). While there doesn't seem to be a definition of a luxury destination, people can name places they consider luxurious (Swarbrooke, 2018).

Service Quality and Satisfaction

Research suggests that service quality and customer satisfaction are strongly correlated (Bitner & Hubbert, 1994; Koc, 2020), and both are significant components of a tourism business's success (Padlee et al., 2019). In their eternal quest to provide satisfactory experiences for their clients, providers have increasingly relied on measuring and improving the quality of their services (Graefe & Burns, 2013). Service quality and guest satisfaction are essential in every sector of the tourism industry, but nowhere is it more critical than in a luxury property (Lu et al., 2015) because quality service in the luxury tourism industry is no longer a choice but has become a standard requirement (Armoni et al., 2018). When evaluating service quality in relation to customer satisfaction, several elements

should be considered, including employee behavior, the physical appearance or environment of the facility, and food quality (Padlee et al., 2019).

While the hotel industry has become increasingly competitive, high-quality staff has become a significant area where properties can distinguish themselves from their competitors (Rao & Sahu, 2013). Employees are the principal point of contact with all guests and are a significant determining factor in customers' perceptions (Gazzoli et al., 2013). In their research, Turkay and Sengul (2014) focused on employee behaviors that significantly influenced customer satisfaction. They identified three positive behaviors: 'being polite and cheerful', 'making the customer feel special', and 'being knowledgeable enough to answer questions.' Other researchers, Kuo and Hsaio (2013), found that customer satisfaction increased when employees dressed neatly and were well-groomed, showed enthusiasm for their work, and were courteous and friendly when interacting with guests and fellow employees. This leads us to believe there is a correlation between employee behavior and customer satisfaction (Padlee et al., 2019).

Guests also consider room quality and the facility's overall appearance to significantly affect their satisfaction (Zhang et al., 2011). Regarding the room, cleanliness, attractiveness, and the décor are primary dimensions that can positively impact their satisfaction and willingness to recommend the facility to others (Dortyol et al., 2014). Karunatene and Jayawardena (2010) investigated the factors contributing to customer satisfaction, and they found that room size and furniture quality influenced overall customer satisfaction the most among various

factors they examined. Room comfort, amenities, and accessories also increase customer satisfaction (Carev, 2008). Overall appearances have been shown to significantly impact customer satisfaction as well (Suki et al., 2013). Marković and Janković (2013) found that the general appearance and equipment, along with cleanliness, resulted in a positive effect on overall satisfaction. These findings suggest that the physical environment can positively affect customer satisfaction (Padlee et al., 2019).

Customers looking for an overall quality experience often consider food quality when choosing a destination (Padlee et al., 2019). Pimonsompong (2007) found that quality food and beverage services provided happiness and joy during consumption and positively affected guests' satisfaction. In another study looking at service quality and satisfaction, Al-Tit (2015) showed that 66.4% of customer satisfaction was explained by food quality which agreed with Haghighi et al. (2012). Naseem et al. (2011) showed specifically that taste and a variety of flavors and textures impacted customers' happiness and fulfillment. The findings show a positive relationship between food quality and overall customer satisfaction (Padlee et al., 2019).

Multiple-Satisfaction Approach for Sport Hunting

The multiple-satisfaction approach began to emerge in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Gigliotti, 2000) and is based on understanding why people choose to do or enjoy something, that is, their motivations. The term “motivation” is defined in this context by Manfredo et al. (2004) as “a specific force directing an individual’s

behavior to satisfy a goal.” Motivations for hunters may be to harvest an animal for meat, to spend time outdoors, or to spend time with friends and family, but they also extend into the social, psychological, emotional, and physical benefits of participating in an activity (Hrubes et al., 2001; Watkins et al., 2018).

Hendee (1974) explained that hunters seek to meet several benefits or satisfactions by participating in hunting activities. These benefits and satisfactions may differ from person to person in terms of where the action occurs and what method of hunting they are employing. In developing his multiple-satisfaction approach for sport hunting, Hendee (1974) introduced six basic tenets:

1. Satisfactions are direct products: Aspects of the hunting experience produce several diverse satisfactions that hunters achieve (shooting, using their skills, harvesting game, displaying success, etc.)
2. Satisfactions differ from benefits: Satisfactions are more specific and immediately gratifying, while benefits are general and are longer lasting.
3. Success is only one satisfaction: While harvesting game may be the obvious thing hunters seek, the more important “harvest” might be other satisfactions they achieve and the human benefits they lead to.
4. Quality is measured by satisfaction: For each hunter, the quality is determined by the extent to which they find the kinds of hunting experience they seek.

5. Conditions affecting satisfaction can be managed: By working together closely, all parties involved in managing the experience (hunt master, culinary team, hospitality team, guides, etc.) can enhance the hunting experience.
6. Hunting-dependent satisfactions should be stressed: Some satisfactions are specific to hunting and are not available any other way (outsmarting game, watching a bird dog work, bringing home game, etc.), and these satisfactions must be met if at all possible.

People participate in outdoor activities chasing individual outcomes and how well their expectations are met is how they ultimately evaluate their experience (Bradshaw et al., 2019; Graefe & Burns, 2013). The most basic principle of the multiple-satisfaction approach is the need to provide hunting experiences that assist hunters in meeting their satisfactions, which vary from hunter to hunter (Woods & Kerr, 2010). Facilitating hunter satisfaction increases the likelihood of continued participation (Brunke & Hunt, 2008; Hendee, 1974; Manfredo et al., 2004), and whether it is for purposes of generating conservation dollars or commercial revenues, with the continued decline in hunting license sales, hunter retention, recruitment, and reactivation are crucial (Gude et al., 2012; Hinrichs et al., 2021; Larson et al., 2014; Ryan & Shaw, 2011). Much of the literature regarding hunting satisfaction, as well as the broader literature on outdoor recreation, has moved past only counting days afield or counting the numbers of animals harvested to understand better the array of components of the hunting experience and how

those components affect overall satisfaction (Bradshaw et al., 2019; Hazel et al., 1990). Some examples of these diverse components include testing one's hunting skills, learning, accommodations, food and drink, customer service, number of animals seen, and opportunities for solitude or social interaction (Brunke & Hunt, 2008; Gigliotti, 2000; Hazel et al., 1990; Heberlein, 2002; Hinrichs et al., 2021; Manning, 2011; Vaske & Roemer, 2013).

Limitations to previous concepts measuring satisfaction led to developing a multiple-satisfaction approach, which suggests numerous components of hunter satisfaction (Bradshaw et al., 2019; Frey et al., 2003; Hayslette et al., 2001). Some examples of satisfaction components include testing their hunting skills, harvesting game, learning, accommodations, food & drink, customer service, number of animals seen (Brunke & Hunt, 2008; Gigliotti, 2000; Hazel et al., 1990; Heberlein, 2002; Hinrichs et al., 2021; Manning, 2011; Vaske & Roemer, 2013). Today, the multiple-satisfaction approach is commonly used to determine hunters' overall satisfaction (Hammitt et al., 1989). In this approach, related elements of satisfaction can be grouped into 'dimensions' of the overall experience which enhance or detract from overall satisfaction. These dimensions can be based on both harvest-based satisfactions and non-harvest (Gigliotti, 2000; Hammitt et al., 1990; Hazel et al., 1990; Vaske et al., 1986).

Based on a study conducted by Baker and Crompton (2000), Howat et al. (1996) developed their own model that focused on indicators more directly applied to recreation, building on the work of Parasuraman et al. (1991; 1988) and reducing

the number of tangible components from five to four. These components represent items management could manipulate to satisfy their clientele better (Burns, Graefe, & Absher, 2003). In a recent study focusing on forest recreation quality, Graefe and Burns (2013) utilized 22 items to measure service quality. Participants were asked to rank the quality of six different domains (information services, natural environment, staff responsiveness, facility condition, safety and security, and cleanliness). From these responses, they created a variable of overall service quality by developing an index of the six quality service measures. Their findings showed that the 22 service quality items explained 28%-50% of the variance within their customer service domains and 71% of the variance in overall perceived service quality (Graefe & Burns, 2013).

Combination of Service Quality and Satisfaction Models

Previous studies have shown that satisfaction in outdoor recreation can be understood by looking at satisfaction in relation to individual elements of the experience (Graefe & Fedler, 1986; Wynveen et al., 2005). A simplified model of recreation satisfaction, examined by Graefe & Fedler (1986), posits that ‘situational factors are filtered through subjective evaluations’ (Graefe & Burns, 2013), with the latter having a more powerful effect on overall satisfaction (Fig.1).

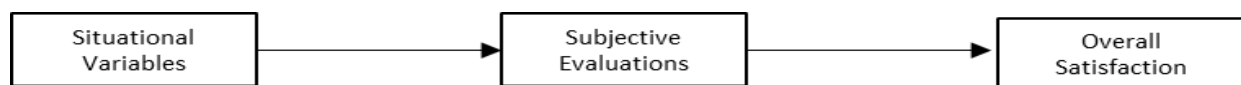


Figure 1. Conceptual Model of Satisfaction in outdoor recreation. (Graefe & Burns, 2013)

This study builds on previous customer service and satisfaction research by integrating the two into a single model (Fig. 2) based on the model tested by Graefe

and Burns (2013). This model suggests that three areas of satisfaction, or ‘satisfaction domains’ (luxury hunting experience, customer service, and facilities) will mediate the relationship between individual customer service items and overall satisfaction of the luxury hunting experience at Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge.

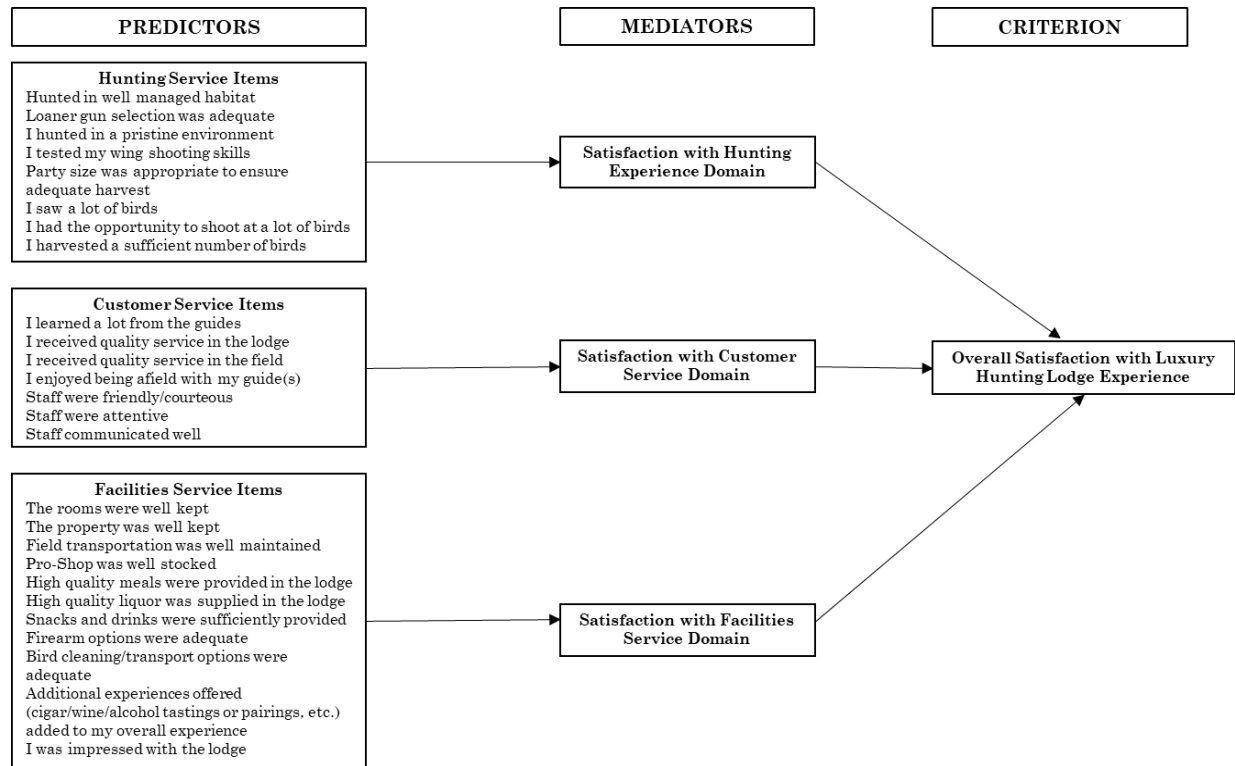


Figure 2. Three-domain conceptual model of customer satisfaction (adapted from Graefe & Burns, 2013)

Research Objectives

We examined how service items (i.e., the detailed aspects of a client’s hunting experience, customer service experience, and experience with facilities) affect one’s overall satisfaction with their luxury hunting lodge experience, and the extent to which measures of satisfaction for the three domains mediate that relationship. To do so, three research objectives were developed as follows.

Research Objective 1

To determine the extent to which satisfaction with the hunting experience mediates the relationship between the service items related to the hunting experience domain and overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

Research Objective 2

To determine the extent to which satisfaction with the customer service mediates the relationship between the service items related to the customer service domain and overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

Research Objective 3

To determine the extent to which satisfaction with the facilities mediates the relationship between the service items related to the facilities domain and overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

Research Objective 4

To combine the previously determined statistically significant individual service items and domains into a single regression model focusing on predicting overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience as the ultimate dependent variable.

Definitions

Heat Zone Map – a color coded map showing the density of data from green at its least dense to red at its most.

Luxury hunting lodge experience – the all-inclusive experience at a luxury hunting lodge which includes hunting, lodging, food, drink, service, guides, transport once on property, etc.

Mediation – identifying if a third variable affects the relationship between an independent and dependent variable and to what extent.

Wingshooting - the act of shooting at game birds in flight.

CHAPTER III

METHODS & PROCEDURES

Introduction

This chapter discusses the steps taken to develop and implement this research project. The first section discusses the development of the survey instrument based on previous research and input from industry stakeholders. The second section presents steps taken during the sampling process and data collection. The third section discusses the strategies for data analysis for each of the research objectives.

Survey Development

The survey instrument measured three levels of satisfaction: (1) satisfaction with 26 service items representing three satisfaction domains; hunting experience (8 items), customer service (7 items), and facilities (11 items); (2) satisfaction with each of the three domains of satisfaction; and (3) an overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience. The satisfaction domains and service items were derived from previous research on customer service and outdoor recreation (Dortyol et al., 2014; Graefe & Burns, 2013; Padlee et al., 2019; Vaske et al., 1986), as well as the input of highly respected professionals specializing in luxury wingshooting clientele and the operation of such destinations (Finley, 2017; Kuhn, 2017).

Table 1 presents the 26 service items organized by the three satisfaction domains. On the survey instrument, these items were listed randomly within their

respective domain to limit potential item-order effects. A 6-point Likert-type response scale was used for each item, ranging from “not at all” (0) to “strongly agree” (5). Guests were then asked about their general level of satisfaction with each domain and their Overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience utilizing the same 6-point Likert-type scale.

Table 1. 26 Individual Service Items

Service Items in Each Satisfaction Domain		
Hunting Experience	Customer Service	Facilities
Hunted in well-managed habitat	I learned a lot from the guides	The rooms were well kept
Loaner gun selection was adequate	I received quality service in the lodge	The property was well kept
I hunted in a pristine environment	I received quality service in the field	Field transportation was well maintained
I tested my wing shooting skills	I enjoyed being afield with my guide(s)	Pro-Shop was well stocked
Party size was appropriate to ensure adequate harvest	Staff were friendly/courteous	High quality meals were provided in the lodge
I saw a lot of birds	Staff were attentive	High quality liquor was supplied in the lodge
I had the opportunity to shoot at a lot of birds	Staff communicated well	Snacks and drinks were sufficiently provided
I harvested a sufficient number of birds		Firearm options were adequate
		Bird cleaning/transport options were adequate
		Additional experiences offered added to my overall experience
		I was impressed with the lodge

Sampling and Data Collection

Convenience sampling was utilized to minimize the impact of data collection on the quality of guest experiences and the work requirements of management and

staff. Surveys were available throughout the season so that respondents could complete the survey at their leisure. In addition to the on-site convenience sampling, digital links were emailed to guests at scheduled times following their visit.

More specifically, data were collected in three distinct ways utilizing the same instrument. First, written paper-based surveys were self-administered during the guests' stay at the lodge. Surveys were placed in guests' rooms, and lodge management made an announcement at every evening meal explaining the reason for the survey and asking them to complete it in as much detail as possible. Surveys were returned to drop boxes near the main bar and at the front reception desk. Some guests left their completed surveys in their rooms, which were later placed in the drop boxes near the bar when found by housekeeping staff. Second, cards were placed in guestrooms explaining they should either fill out a paper-based survey or submit it digitally. The cards displayed a Quick Response (QR) code that took the user to an online version of the paper survey (programmed in Qualtrics) when scanned on their smart-phones or other devices. Third, guests were emailed by the Lodge shortly after their stay, thanking them for their business and asking them to complete the online version of the survey if they hadn't already done so via a link that was provided in the email. An email reminder with the link was sent two weeks later. Out of 1,926 potential respondents, 525 completed and submitted surveys. A year-by-year breakdown can be seen below in Table 2. It is important to note that this property has a very high percentage of repeat customers annually,

which could in part explain the lower response rate obtained in later years (2019 and 2020).

Table 2. Year-by-Year Survey Completion

Season	# of Hunters	# of Completed Surveys
2017	454	153
2018	480	163
2019	522	142
2020	470	67
TOTALS	1926	525

Data Analysis

Research Objectives 1 through 3

To test the proposed mediation models for research objectives 1 through 3, it was necessary to conduct a series of linear regressions (Graefe & Burns, 2013). When one variable accounts for any or all of the relationship between two other variables, said variable is considered a mediator (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

Baron and Kenny (1986) state that several conditions must be met to demonstrate mediation. First, the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables obtained in an initial regression analysis must be statistically significant. Second, the relationship between the predictor and mediating variables obtained in a second regression analysis must be statistically significant. Third, for mediation to be present, the relationship between the predictor and criterion variables

obtained in a third regression analysis must significantly decrease (partial mediation) or become insignificant (full mediation) as a result of the mediating variable being included as a second independent variable. Analysis for each of the research objectives is described below.

Research Objective 1:

The first research objective is to determine the extent to which satisfaction with the hunting experience mediates the relationship between the service items related to the hunting experience and Overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience. To examine this research objective, a mediation analysis was conducted. Service items related to the hunting experience were the predictor variables, the satisfaction domain related to hunting experience was the mediator, and Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience was the criterion. There are three steps to conducting this analysis.

- Regression a: Regress Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience (criterion) with the hunting experience items (predictors).
- Regression b: Regress the satisfaction with the hunting experience domain (mediator) with the hunting experience items (predictors).
- Regression c: Regress the Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience (criterion) with both hunting experience items (predictors) and satisfaction with the hunting experience domain (mediator).

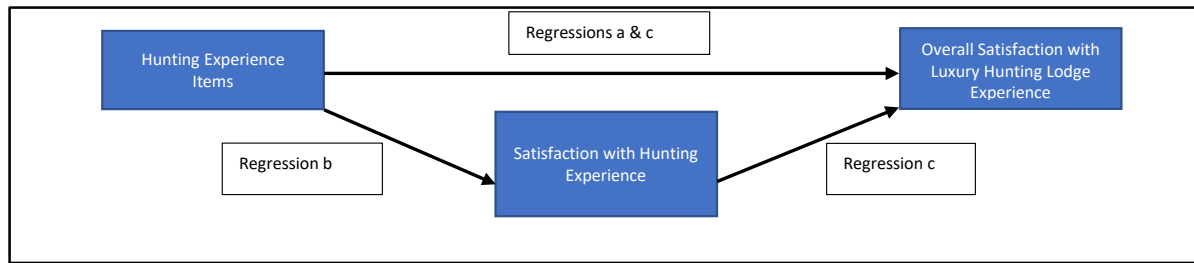


Figure 3. Analysis for Research Objective 1

Research Objective 2:

To determine the extent to which satisfaction with customer service mediates the relationship between the customer service-specific items and Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience. Service items related to customer service were the predictor variables, satisfaction with the customer service domain was the mediator, and Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience was the criterion. Again, three steps included,

- Regression a: Regress Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience (criterion) with the customer service items (predictors).
- Regression b: Regress the satisfaction with the customer service domain (mediator) with the customer service items (predictors).
- Regression c: Regress the Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience (criterion) with both customer service items (predictors) and satisfaction with the customer service domain (mediator).

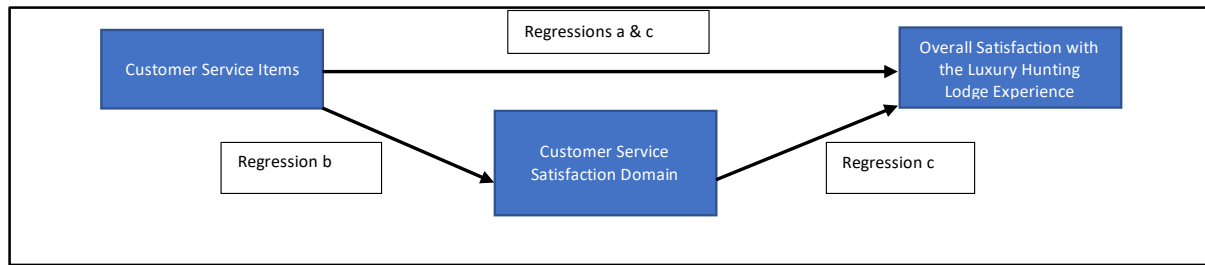


Figure 4. Analysis for Research Objective 2

Research Objective 3:

To determine the extent to which satisfaction with the facilities mediates the relationship between the facilities' service items and Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience. Service items related to facilities were the predictor variable, satisfaction with the facilities domain was the mediator, and Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience was the criterion. The three steps included,

- Regression a: Regress Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience (criterion) with the facilities' service items (predictors).
- Regression b: Regress the satisfaction with the facilities domain (mediator) with the facilities items (predictors).
- Regression c: Regress the Overall Satisfaction with the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience (criterion) with both facilities items (predictors) and satisfaction with the facilities domain (mediator).



Figure 5. Analysis for Research Objective 3

Research Objective 4

The fourth research objective is to combine the previously determined statistically significant individual service items and domains into a single regression model focusing on predicting overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience as the ultimate dependent variable.. Traditional multiple regression analysis examined this research objective and based on the results of the mediation analyses for research objectives 1 through 3, selected service items related to hunting, customer service, and facilities, as well as satisfaction for the three domains, were included as independent variables in a single regression to predict overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the data analyses. The first section presents descriptive statistics describing the sample population. The second section presents the results of the mediation analyses for research objectives 1, 2, and 3, related to the three satisfaction domains (hunting experience, customer service, and facilities experience). The last section, Objective 4, combines the results from the first 3 research objectives to test a complete model that includes all three satisfaction domains (research objective 4).

Descriptive Statistics

The average age of study participants was 56, while the median age was 57. When looking at the entire group: 4% were in their 20's, 11% were in their 30's, 17% were in their 40's, 25% were in their 50's, 26% were in their 60's, 15% were in their 70's and 2% were in their 80's. Participants were asked their primary zip code, and those responses were entered into a spreadsheet created by the United States

Postal Service to determine the city and state of residence. A geographic representation of those locations is shown in Figures 7 and 8. The colored circles change from green to yellow to red based on the number of responses in that geographic region. The most concentrated areas can be found in and around

Houston, Atlanta, Austin, Dallas, Denver, Nashville, Knoxville, and Pittsburg.

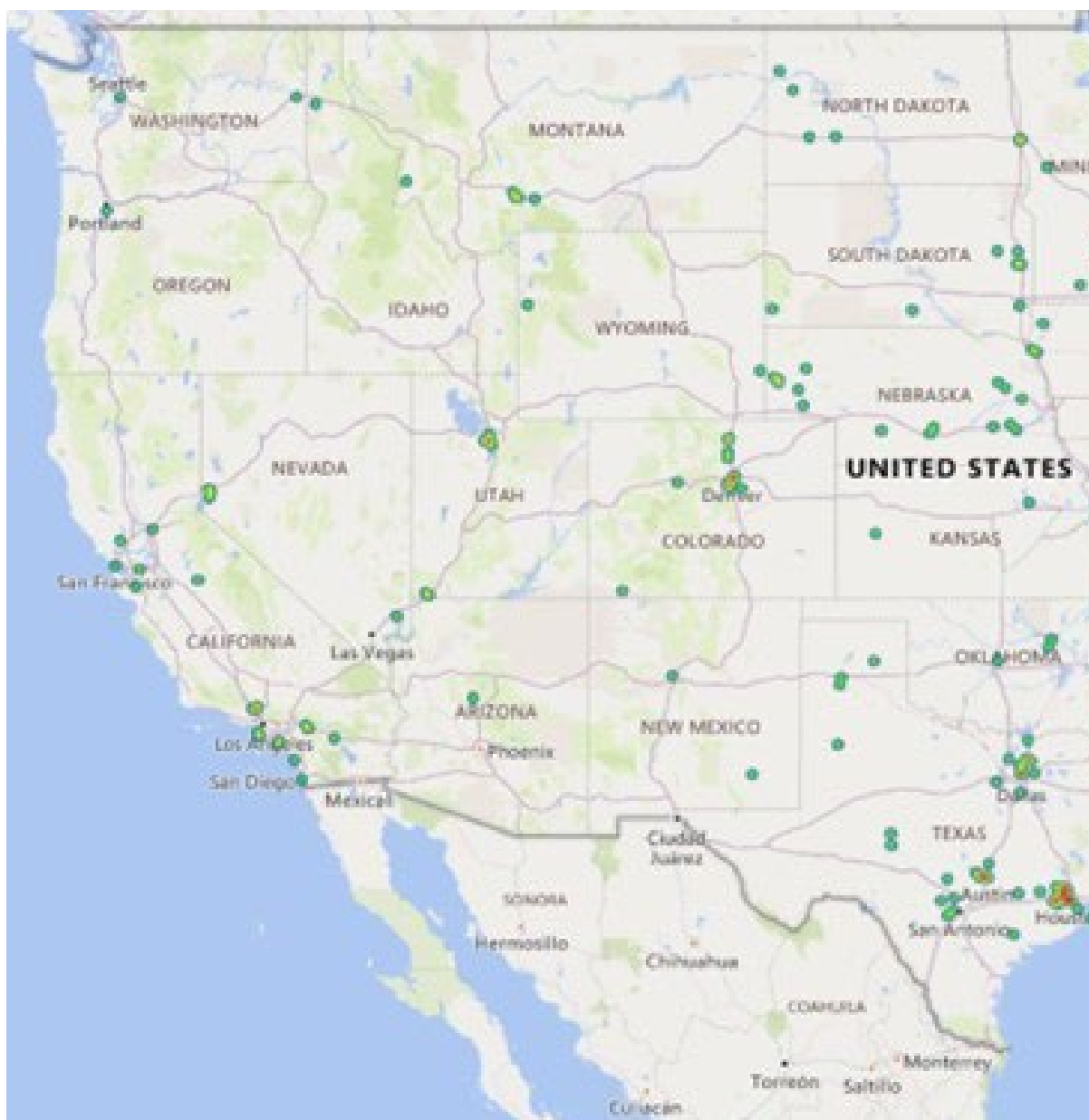


Figure 6. Heat Zone Map by Zip Code

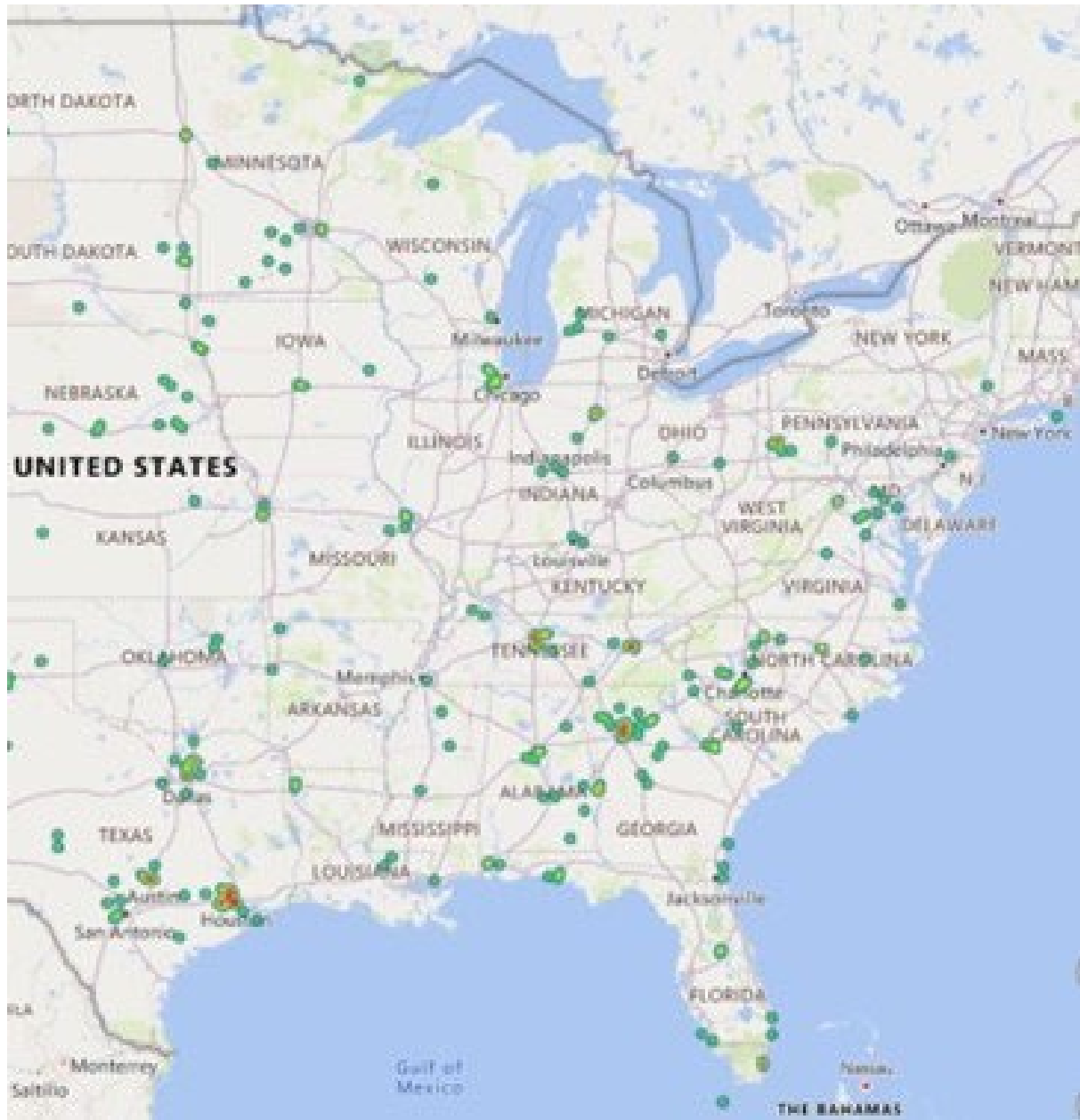


Figure 7. Heat Zone Map by Zip Code

Zip code locations were also sorted according to the generally accepted geographic regions of the United States. Those regions and the percentages of participants of the study from those regions are shown in Figure 8. Just under one in ten participants (9.5%) did not provide their zip code.

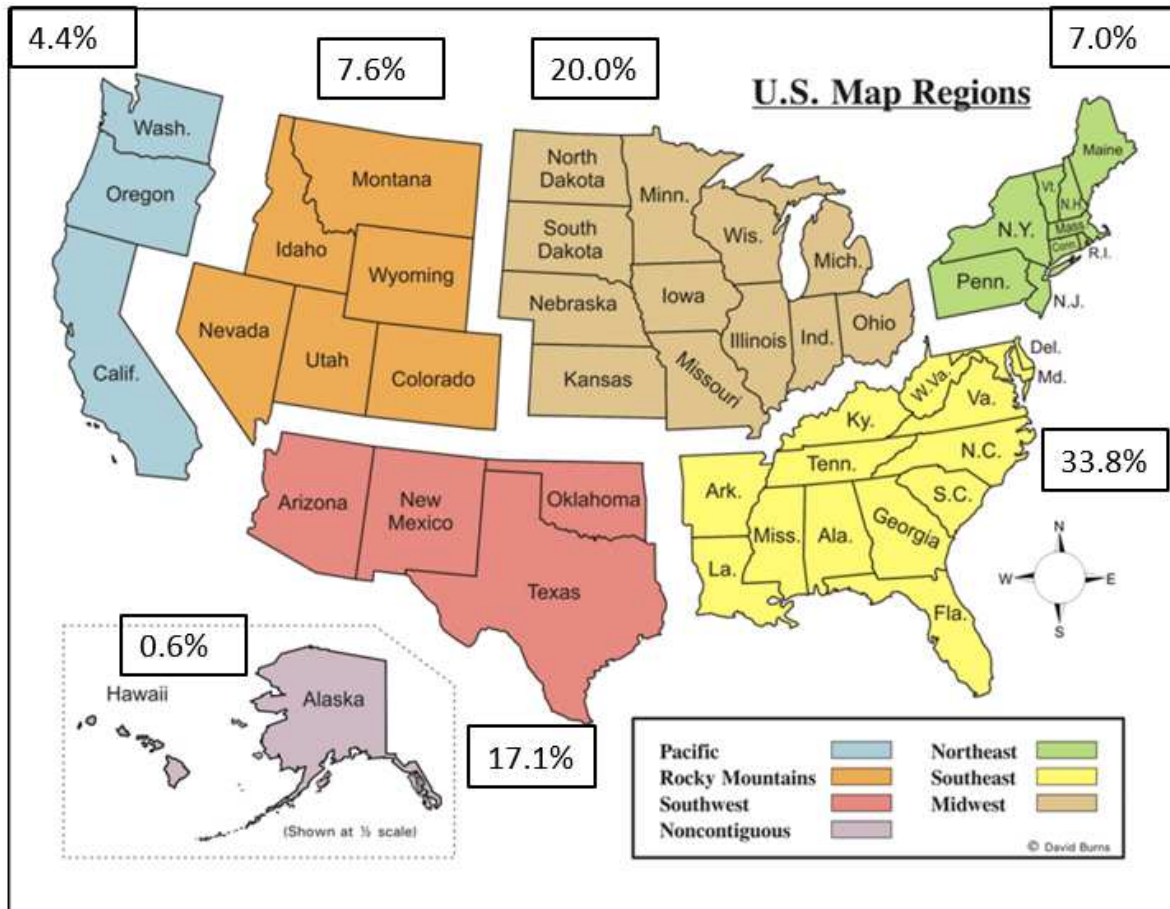


Figure 7. Responses by Geographic Region

As expected, when researching the hunting industry, a very high percentage of respondents were male. Nearly all (95.8%) identified as male; 3.4% identified as female; and .8% did not indicate their gender (Table 3).

Table 3. Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	482	95.8
Female	17	3.4
I would rather not say	4	.8
Total	503	100.0

Respondents were asked the highest level of education they had completed; 7.9% completed high school or attained a GED, 36.3% were college graduates, and 32.2% achieved a graduate degree or beyond (Table 4).

Table 4. Completed Education

Education	Frequency	Percent
Some High School	6	1.2
High School Graduate or GED	39	7.9
Some College	88	17.9
College Graduate	178	36.3
Some Graduate School	22	4.5
Graduate Degree or beyond	158	32.2

As one might expect when conducting research at a luxury hunting destination, annual household incomes tended to be higher than the national median of \$68,703 (Bureau, 2020). For this study, 6.1% of participants earned less than \$100,000, while 25.5% made \$500,000 or more (Table 5).

Table 5. Household Income

Annual Income	Frequency	Percent	Annual Income	Frequency	Percent
Less than \$100,000	32	7.9	\$450,000-\$499,999	16	4
\$100,000-\$149,999	59	14.6	\$500,000-\$549,999	3	0.7
\$150,000-\$199,999	51	12.6	\$550,000-\$599,999	9	2.2
\$200,000-\$249,999	34	8.4	\$600,000-\$649,999	10	2.5
\$250,000-\$299,999	30	7.4	\$650,000-\$699,999	1	0.2
\$300,000-\$349,999	24	5.9	\$700,000-\$750,000	7	1.7
\$350,000-\$399,999	9	2.2	Over \$750,000	104	25.7
\$400,000-\$449,999	15	3.7			

One part of the business model at Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge is that many of their guests are guests of other customers. They often do not pay for any or

all of their trip, and sometimes they only cover gratuities or a certain percentage of the costs. We asked guests what percentage they covered themselves, which ranged from 0% to 100%, as shown below in Table 6. Just over one-half (54.5%) of the respondents paid for 10 percent or less of their trip. About three in 10 (29.6%) paid for their entire trip.

Table 6. Percentage of Trip Paid for by Respondent

% Paid	Frequency	Percentage
0%	108	28.6
10%	98	25.9
20%	28	7.4
30%	7	1.9
40%	2	.5
50%	12	3.2
80%	4	1.1
90%	7	1.9
100%	112	29.6

When asked to quantify their skills as a pheasant hunter/shooter, 341 of the 526 participants responded (64.8%). While 4.4% considered themselves experts, 19.9% felt they were purely novices. Just under half (46.9%) of the respondents saw themselves as average in skill level (Table 7).

Table 7. Self-Identified Hunting Skill

Skill	Frequency	Percentage
Novice	68	19.9
Average	160	46.9
Intermediate	45	13.2
Advanced	53	15.5
Expert	15	4.4
Total	341	100.0

The management of Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge indicated that they have approximately a 75% customer repeat rate based on their internal reservation records. This may explain the finding that more than four in 10 (41.3%) survey participants indicated they had visited the property previously. Of that group, 21.8% had visited five times or more. Fewer, 8.8%, reported having visited ten times or more, and around 2% had visited 20 times or more (Table 8).

Table 8. Number of Previous Visits to Cheyenne Ridge

# of Visits	Frequency	Percentage
1	42	28.6
2	27	18.4
3	23	15.6
4	23	15.6
5	7	4.8
6	4	2.7
7	4	2.7
8	2	1.4
9	2	1.4
10	3	2.0
12	3	2.0
15	3	2.0
18	1	.7
20	2	1.4
25	1	.7

Mean Service Item and Domain Scores

Below is a table of all 26 service items, 3 domains, and their mean scores (0-5). These scores are on par with properties such as the Ritz-Carlton and Four Seasons resorts around the world, which are known for their impeccable service and attention to detail.

Table 9. Service Items and Mean Scores

Service Item	Mean	Service Item	Mean	Service Item	Mean
I hunted in a well maintained habitat	4.91	I recieved quality service in the field	4.91	High quality liquor was supplied in the lodge	4.95
Loaner gun selection was adequate	4.40	I enjoyed being afield with my guide(s)	4.91	Snacks and drinks were sufficiently provided	4.92
I hunted in a pristine environment	4.82	Staff were friendly/courteous	4.98	Firearm options were adequate	4.55
I tested my wing shooting skills	4.79	Staff were attentive	4.98	Bird cleaning/transport options were adequate	4.80
Party size was appropriate to ensure adequate harvest	4.86	Staff communnicated well	4.94	Additional experiences offered (cigar/wine/alcohol tastings or pairings, etc.) added to my overall experience	4.78
I saw a lot of birds	4.85	The rooms were well kept	4.84	I was impressed with the lodge	4.94
I had the opportunity to shoot at a lot of birds	4.83	The property was well kept	4.89	I was extremely satisfied with my hunting experience	4.92
I harvested a sufficient number of birds	4.81	Field transportation was well maintained	4.70	I was extremely satisfied with my customer service experience	4.97
I learned a lot from the guides	4.47	Pro-shop was well stocked	4.24	I was extremely satisfied with my facility experience	4.93
I recieved quality service in the lodge	4.97	High quality meals were supplied in the lodge	4.94	I was extremely satisfied with my overall experience	4.94

Analysis of Research Objectives

Consistent with Graefe and Burns (2013) and Baron and Kenny (1986), the mediation analyses were run separately for each of the three domains in the study: hunting experience, customer service experience, and facilities experience. The following sections summarize the results of the three domain-level mediation tests, followed by a test of the overall model focused on predicting overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

Research Objective 1

The first step in the mediation analysis (regression a) was to determine if there were significant relationships between overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience and individual hunting service items (Table 10).

Table 10. Results of multiple regression of hunting service items on overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience (regression a)

Dependent variable	Independent variable (hunting service items)	β
Overall Satisfaction with Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience	I hunted in well-maintained habitat	.103*
	I tested my wingshooting skills	.124*
	Party size was appropriate to ensure adequate harvest	.113*
	I had the opportunity to shoot at a lot of birds	.318***
	I harvested a sufficient number of birds	.203***
	Loaner gun selection was adequate	.029 ^{ns}
	I hunted in a pristine environment	.037 ^{ns}
	I saw a lot of birds	.144*
	F=17.704***, R² =.260	
*** Significant at $p < .001$		
** Significant at $p < .01$		
*Significant at $p < .05$		
^{ns} Not significant at $p > .05$		

In this instance, there were six individual hunting service items that were significantly related to overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience: *I hunted in well-maintained habitat* ($\beta=.103$; $p < .05$), *I tested my wingshooting skills* ($\beta=.124$; $p < .05$), *Party size was appropriate to ensure adequate harvest* ($\beta=.113$; $p < .05$), *I had the opportunity to shoot at a lot of birds* ($\beta=.318$; $p < .001$), *I harvested a sufficient number of birds* ($\beta=.203$; $p < .001$), and *I saw a lot of birds* ($\beta=.144$; $p < .05$). *Loaner gun selection was adequate* ($\beta=.535$; $p > .05$), and *I hunted in a pristine environment* ($\beta=.484$; $p > .05$) were not significant predictors of

Overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience and were therefore removed from subsequent analyses. Hunting service items accounted for 26% of the variance in Overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

The next step of mediation analysis (regression b) examined the relationship between the hunting experience satisfaction domain (the potential mediator) and individual hunting service items that were significantly related to Overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience from regression a (Table 10).

Table 11. Results of multiple regression of service items on satisfaction with hunting experience domain (regression b)

Dependent variable	Independent variable (hunting service items)	β
Satisfaction with hunting experience domain	I hunted in well-maintained habitat	.148***
	I tested my wingshooting skills	.095*
	I had the opportunity to shoot at a lot of birds	.077 ^{ns}
	I harvested a sufficient number of birds	.279***
	Party size was appropriate to ensure adequate harvest	.049 ^{ns}
	I saw a lot of birds	.131*
Hunting domain model	F=38.573***, R² =.570	
*** Significant at $p < .001$		
** Significant at $p < .01$		
*Significant at $p < .05$		
^{ns} Not significant at $p > .05$		

In this step (regression b), the hunting service items explained 57% of the variance in the hunting satisfaction experience domain. There were four individual hunting service items significantly related to satisfaction with the hunting experience: *I hunted in well-maintained habitat* ($\beta=.148$; $p < .001$), *I tested my wingshooting skills* ($\beta=.095$; $p < .05$), *I harvested a sufficient number of birds* ($\beta=.049$; $p < .001$), and *I saw a lot of birds* ($\beta=.131$; $p < .05$). *Party size was*

appropriate to ensure adequate harvest ($\beta=.049$; $p > .05$), and *I had the opportunity to shoot at a lot of birds* ($\beta=.77$; $p > .05$) were not significant and were therefore dropped from further mediation analysis.

Table 12. Results of multiple regression of satisfaction with hunting domain and individual hunting service items on overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience (regression c).

Independent Variables	Step c1	Step c2
	β wo/Mediator included	β w/Mediator included
Satisfaction with hunting experience domain (mediator)		.652***
Individual Item/s		
I hunted in well-maintained habitat	.177***	.069*
I tested my wingshooting skills	.110***	.044 ^{ns}
I saw lots of birds	.047 ^{ns}	.080*
I harvested a sufficient number of birds	.355***	.157***
Satisfaction with Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience Model	F= 46.351 ***, R²= .275	F= 124.273 ***, R²= .560
*** Significant at $p < .001$		
** Significant at $p < .01$		
*Significant at $p < .05$		
^{ns} Not significant at $p > .05$		

The first part of the third step (regressions c1) in the analysis for the hunting domain was to test the relationship between the individual service items (predictor variables) and Overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience (criterion variable) without the mediator (satisfaction with hunting experience) (Table 11). The analysis was limited to those items showing significance in predicting the hunting satisfaction domain in regression b. Analysis indicated that 27.5% of the variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience was explained by the included predictor variables. There was statistical significance for three of the four variables: *I hunted in well-maintained habitat* ($\beta=.177$; $p < .001$), *I tested my wingshooting skills* ($\beta=.110$; $p < .001$), and *I harvested*

a sufficient number of birds ($\beta=.355$; $p < .001$). *I saw lots of birds* ($\beta= .047$; $p > .05$) was not significant.

The second part of this step (regression c2) examined the potential mediating effects of satisfaction with the hunting experience (mediator) on the relationship between individual hunting service items (predictors) and overall satisfaction (Table 11) *I hunted in well-maintained habitat* ($\beta=.069$; $p < .05$ compared to $\beta= .177$; $p < .001$ in step c1), *I tested my wingshooting skills* ($\beta=.044$; $p > .05$ compared to $\beta= .110$; $p < .001$ in step c1), *I saw lots of birds* ($\beta=.047$; $p > .05$ compared to $\beta=.080$; $p < .05$ in step c1), *I harvested a sufficient number of birds* ($\beta=.157$; $p < .001$ compared to $\beta=.355$; $p<.001$ in step c1), and *Satisfaction with hunting experience domain* (mediator) ($\beta=.710$) accounted for 56% of the total variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

The influence of three of the four predictors was smaller, although still significant, when satisfaction with the hunting experience domain (mediator) was included in the model than when it was not. Since the four predictors were still significant after including the mediator, these results meet the Baron and Kenny (1986) criteria, indicating that the satisfaction with hunting experience domain partially mediated the relationship between overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

Research Objective 2

The second research objective was to determine the extent to which Satisfaction with the customer service domain mediates the relationship between the customer service items and overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

The first step in the mediation analysis (regression a) determined if there was a significant relationship between overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience and individual customer service items.

Table 13. Results of multiple regression of customer service items on overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting experience (step a)

Dependent variable	Independent variable (service items)	β
Overall Satisfaction with Luxury Hunting Experience	I learned a lot from the guides	.210***
	Staff communicated well	.243***
	I received quality service in the lodge	.058 ^{ns}
	I received quality service in the field	.058 ^{ns}
	I enjoyed being afield with my guide(s)	.079 ^{ns}
	Staff were friendly/courteous	.002 ^{ns}
	Staff were attentive	.095 ^{ns}
	F=63.211***, R²=.197***	
*** Significant at $p < .001$		
** Significant at $p < .01$		
*Significant at $p < .05$		
^{ns} Not significant at $p > .05$		

The customer service items explained 19.7% of the variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience. Two individual customer service items were significantly related to overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience: *I learned a lot from the guides* ($\beta = .210$; $p < .001$), and *staff communicated well* ($\beta = .243$; $p < .001$).

The second step (regression b) examined the relationship between the customer service satisfaction domain (mediator) and individual customer service items that were found to be significant in regression a (Table 13).

Table 14. Results of multiple regression of service items on customer service domain satisfaction (regression b)

Dependent variable	Independent variable (service items)	β
Satisfaction with the customer service domain	I learned a lot from the guides	.295***
	Staff communicated well	.198***
	F=41.509 *** , R²=.142	
*** Significant at $p < .001$		
** Significant at $p < .01$		
*Significant at $p < .05$		
^{ns} Not significant at $p > .05$		

The two individual customer service items that were significant in the first regression were also significantly related to satisfaction with the customer service domain: *I learned a lot from the guides* ($\beta=.093$; $p < .001$), and *staff communicated well* ($\beta=.198$; $p < .001$). These two customer service items accounted for 14.2% of the variance in customer service domain satisfaction.

The first part of the third step (regression c1) in the analysis for the customer service domain was to test the relationship between the individual service items (predictors) and overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience (criterion variable) without the mediator (Table 15). The analysis was limited to those items showing significance in regression b.

Table 15. Results of multiple regression of satisfaction with customer service domain and individual hunting service items on overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience (regression c).

Independent Variables	Step c1	Step c2
	β wo/Mediator included	β w/Mediator included
Satisfaction with the customer service domain (mediator)		.710***

Individual Item/s		
I learned a lot from the guides	.235***	.151***
Staff communicated well	.285***	.099***
Satisfaction with Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience	F= 46.368***, R²=.155	F= 265.273 ***, R²=.611
*** Significant at $p < .001$		
** Significant at $p < .01$		
*Significant at $p < .05$		

In regression c1, the same two independent variables were significant: *I learned a lot from the guides* ($\beta=.235$; $p < .001$) and *Staff communicated well* ($\beta=.285$; $p < .001$), accounting for 15.5% of the variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

The second part of this step (regression c2) added satisfaction with the customer service domain to determine overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience and its impacts as a potential mediator (Table 14). Inclusion of the inclusion of the mediator (regression c2) were: *I learned a lot from the guides* ($\beta=.151$; $p < .001$ compared to $\beta=.235$; $p < .001$ in regression c1), *staff communicated well* ($\beta=.099$; $p < .001$ compared to $\beta=.285$; $p < .001$ in regression c1), and *Satisfaction with customer service domain* (mediator) ($\beta=.710$; $p < .001$ in regression c2) accounted for 61.1% of the total variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

The influence of the predictors was smaller, although still significant, when satisfaction with the customer service domain (mediator) was included in the model. These results meet the Baron and Kenny (1986) criteria overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience for partial mediation.

Research Objective 3

The third research objective was to determine the extent to which satisfaction with the facilities domain mediates the relationship between the service items related to the facilities and overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

The first step in the facilities domain mediation analysis (regression a) was to determine if there was a significant relationship between overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience and individual facility service items (Table 16).

Table 16. Results of multiple regression of facility service items on overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting destination experience (regression a)

Dependent variable (satisfaction domain)	Independent variable (satisfaction items)	β
Overall Satisfaction with Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience	The rooms were well kept	.182**
	I was impressed with the lodge	.390***
	Pro-shop was well stocked	.105*
	The property was well kept	.045 ^{NS}
	Field transportation was well maintained	.025 ^{NS}
	High quality meals were supplied in the lodge	.070 ^{NS}
	High quality liquor was supplied in the lodge	.039 ^{NS}
	Snacks and drinks were sufficiently provided	.024 ^{NS}
	Firearm options were adequate	.039 ^{NS}
	Bird cleaning/transport options were adequate	.004 ^{NS}
	Additional experiences offered (cigar/wine/alcohol tastings or pairings, etc.) added to my overall experience	.090 ^{NS}
Facilities Domain Model	F=15.258 ***, R²=.285	
*** Significant at $p < .001$		
** Significant at $p < .01$		
*Significant at $p < .05$		
^{NS} Not significant at $p > .05$		

The individual facility service items accounted for 28.5% of the variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience. Three individual facility service items were significantly related to overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience: *The rooms were well kept* ($\beta=.182$; $p<.005$), *Pro-shop was well stocked* ($\beta=.390$; $p < .001$), and *I was impressed with the lodge* ($\beta=.105$; $p < .05$).

The next step (regression b) examined the relationship between the satisfaction with facilities domain and individual facility service items that were significant in regression a (Table 17).

Table 17. Results of multiple regression of facility service items on facility domain satisfaction (regression b)

Dependent variable (satisfaction domain)	Independent variable (satisfaction items)	β
Satisfaction with facilities domain	The rooms were well kept	.183***
	Pro-shop was well stocked	.032 ^{ns}
	I was impressed with the lodge	.608***
Facilities Domain Model	F=138.106***, R²=.465	
*** Significant at $p<.001$		
** Significant at $p<.01$		
*Significant at $p<.05$		
^{ns} Not significant at $p>.05$		

Explaining 46.5% of the variance in Customer Service domain satisfaction, regression b showed that two of the three individual facility service items included in the model were significantly related to satisfaction with the facilities domain; *The rooms were well kept* ($\beta=.183$; $p < .001$), and *I was impressed with the lodge* ($\beta=.608$; $p < .001$)).

The third step (regression c1) in the analysis for the facilities domain was to test the relationship between the individual service items and overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience (criterion variable) without the mediator. (Table 17). The analysis was limited to those items showing significance in regression b.

Table 18. Results of multiple regression of Facilities domain satisfaction and individual service items on overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience (regression c)

Independent Variables	Step c1	Step c2
	β wo/Mediator included	β w/Mediator included
Satisfaction with facilities domain (mediator)		.545***
Individual Item/s		
The rooms were well kept	.187 ***	.126***
I was impressed with the lodge	.606***	.296***
Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience	F= 223.196 *** , R²=.466	F= 318.437***, R²=.654
*** Significant at $p < .001$		
** Significant at $p < .01$		
*Significant at $p < .05$		
^{ns} Not significant at $p > .05$		

Regression c1 showed that both variables were significant without including the mediator: *The rooms were well kept* ($\beta=.187$; $p < .001$), and *I was impressed with the lodge* ($\beta=.606$; $p < .001$). This model accounted for 46.6% of the total variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

Regression c2 examined the effects of the individual service items (predictors) and facility domain satisfaction (mediator) on overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience while including facility domain satisfaction (mediator) (Table 17). Three significant variables: *The rooms were well kept* ($\beta=.126$; $p < .001$ compared to $\beta=.187$; $p < .001$ in step c1), *I was impressed with the lodge* ($\beta=.2696$; p

< .001 as compared to $\beta=.606$; $p < .001$ in step c1), and *Satisfaction with facilities domain* (mediator) ($\beta=.545$; $p < .001$). This model accounted for 65.4% of the total variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

The influence of the predictors decreased but remained significant when satisfaction with the facilities domain (mediator) was included in the regression, meeting Baron and Kenny's (1986) criteria for partial mediation.

Research Objective 4

Analysis of research objective 4 involved combining all of the significant individual service items and their three satisfaction domains into one single regression model, with overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience as the dependent variable. The results of this analysis are shown below in Table 18 and Figure 10.

Only the following variables were included in the final regression analyses:

1. Overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience (criterion)
2. All three satisfaction domains (predictors)
3. All individual service items (predictors) that were significant with the Satisfaction Domains in regression b and were not fully mediated by the satisfaction domains in regression c determined from research objectives 1 through 3

Table 19. Results of multiple regression of satisfaction domains and individual service items on overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience

Dependent variable (satisfaction domain)	Independent variable (satisfaction items)	β
Overall Satisfaction with Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience	I was extremely satisfied with my hunting experience ¹	.173***
	I was extremely satisfied with my customer service experience ¹	.337***

	I was extremely satisfied with my facility experience ¹	.152***
	The rooms were well kept ²	.035 ^{ns}
	I was impressed with the lodge ²	.223***
	I harvested a sufficient number of birds ²	.099***
	I had the opportunity to shoot at a lot of birds ²	.057 ^{ns}
	I hunted in a well-maintained habitat ²	.007 ^{ns}
	I tested my wing shooting skills ²	.029 ^{ns}
	I learned a lot from the guides ²	.028 ^{ns}
	Staff communicated well ²	.048 ^{ns}
	Party size was adequate ensure adequate harvest	.012 ^{ns}
	The Pro-shop was well stocked	.012 ^{ns}
Satisfaction with Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience	F=113.822 *** , R²=.768	
¹ = Mediators in research objectives 1, 2 and 3		
² = Predictors in research objectives 1,2, & 3		
*** Significant at $p < .001$		
** Significant at $p < .01$		
*Significant at $p < .05$		
^{ns} Not significant at $p > .05$		

Five variables (the three satisfaction domains and two service items) were significantly related to overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience in the combined model. The significant satisfaction domains were: *Satisfaction with the hunting experience* ($\beta=.173$; $p < .001$), *Satisfaction with customer service* ($\beta=.337$; $p < .001$), *Satisfaction with Facilities* ($\beta=.152$; $p < .001$) and two service items were; *I was impressed with the lodge* ($\beta= .223$; $p < .001$) and *I harvested a sufficient number of birds* ($\beta=.099$; $p < .001$). In this final model, these six variables accounted for 76.8% of the variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

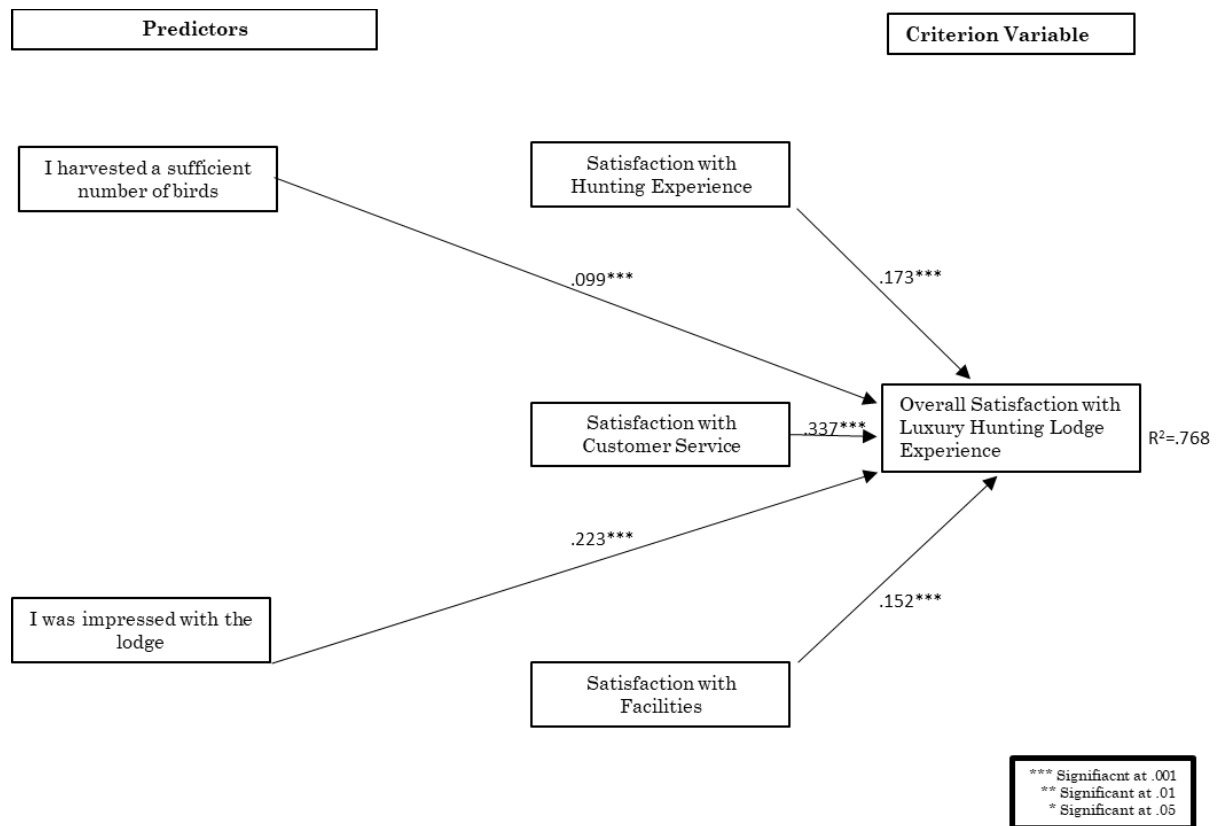


Figure 8: Final model for overall satisfaction

This project began with 26 individual service items (Predictors in the mediation analyses of research objectives 1, 2, and 3) and three service domains (Mediators in the mediation analyses of research objectives 1, 2, and 3). With this final model, we have narrowed that down to five variables accounting for 76.8% of *overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience*. Among the significant individual service items and service domains, *satisfaction with customer service* ($\beta = .337$; $p < .001$) was the strongest predictor of overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience, followed by the service item *I was impressed with the lodge* ($\beta = .223$; $p < .001$). *Satisfaction with Hunting Experience* ($\beta = .173$; $p < .001$),

Satisfaction with Facilities ($\beta=.152$; $p < .001$), and *I harvested a sufficient number of birds* ($\beta=.099$; $p < .001$) were also significant but had a lesser impact.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Hunting is no longer primarily focused on producing food. In most instances, it is now centered on recreation, and food production is one of the side benefits. This means that, for many people, hunting is no longer about how full your gamebag is at the end of the day, but more about your overall satisfaction and the components that contributed to said satisfaction. Literature has shown the evolution of the concept of hunting satisfaction from counting the days in the field and how much was harvested to better understanding the multiple components required to meet hunters' needs. Studies have shown that first-rate amenities, dining, customer service, and accommodations are just as essential as the size of the bag or days afield when it comes to satisfying the current customer. This research strove to better understand the components of overall satisfaction at a luxury wingshooting destination, an area not explored by others. The following chapter will discuss ideas on service quality and satisfaction, the limitations of the research, a summary of the results and recommendations, and present ideas for future research.

Service and Satisfaction in the Luxury Hunting Lodge Experience

In that service and satisfaction are so closely linked (Masinde et al., 2016; Nunkoo et al., 2020; Oh & Kim, 2017; Yolal et al., 2017) researchers have developed many different models to measure service and satisfaction in different industries. SERVQUAL (Ananthanarayanan Parasuraman et al., 1988) was primarily designed

to establish how customer satisfaction can be achieved in the service sector, (Mouzaek et al., 2021), measures five service domains, and has been widely applied in service areas such as hotels, parks, and recreation services (Akama & Kieti, 2003), but scholars have criticized it for not reflecting the many diverse dimensions relative to the hospitality sector (Akbaba, 2006). Due to these shortcomings, HOLSERV and LODGSERV were developed to better reflect the service dimensions of the accommodation sector (Nunkoo et al., 2020). While these are all accepted models of measuring service and satisfaction, they do not adequately measure service in the luxury hunting lodge experience. The luxury hunting lodge experience is a combination of lodging, service, food and beverages, and activities all in one location, hence, no one established model fits such an experience.

Satisfaction is considered a critical component in the competitive tourism industry (Mahmoud et al., 2018; Masinde et al., 2016) and through measurement businesses can make sure they are meeting the needs of their customers and this is just as significant in the luxury hunting lodge experience as any other related industry (Meng et al., 2008). Studies have identified that a major key in maintaining a competitive advantage is providing high quality of service resulting in high guests' satisfaction (Damit et al., 2019; Meng et al., 2008; A. Parasuraman et al., 1988). Guests can express their satisfaction in many ways and in the luxury hunting lodge industry, those that prove to be very helpful are positive word of mouth and long term loyalty (aka, rebooking) (Akama & Kieti, 2003). This research is a step towards determining a method for measuring service and satisfaction by

helping to identify what domains and services to evaluate when determining overall satisfaction within the luxury hunting lodge experience.

Limitations of the Research

It is possible that data collected at such a high-end property could be skewed towards the high end of satisfaction scores, resulting in little overall variation. Scores might vary greater at different levels of facilities based on their services and amenities. If data had been collected from numerous luxury wingshooting destinations, such as similar facilities in the Pacific Northwest, Kansas, Nebraska, or the Southeastern United States, the implications might provide a much broader application. However, this research can still serve as a model for other luxury hunting lodge experiences and similar organizations in assessing overall customer satisfaction with their operations.

This study built upon previous studies in testing a conceptual model of how twenty-six individual service items (Predictors in the mediation analyses of research objectives 1, 2, and 3) and three service domains, including satisfaction with hunting experience, satisfaction with customer service experience, and satisfaction with facilities experience (mediators in the mediation analyses of research objectives 1, 2, and 3) affected overall satisfaction with this luxury hunting lodge experience. Research objective 4 combined the significant individual service items and satisfaction domains from research objectives 1, 2 & 3 into one regression model, with overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience as the

ultimate dependent variable. Research objectives 1, 2, & 3 confirmed relationships between the individual customer service items, satisfaction within service domains, and overall satisfaction. Research objective 4 determined the extent to which the significant individual service items and service domains predicted and, when combined explained the variance in overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience.

In luxury wingshooting, destinations or lodges generally offer a very similar product/service. Finding ways to differentiate oneself and provide the “best of everything” makes it possible to stand out in the industry. This study yielded some possible ideas for management to consider in order to achieve higher overall customer satisfaction.

The finding that satisfaction with customer service was the strongest predictor of overall satisfaction with the luxury hunting lodge experience suggests that providing outstanding facilities and memorable hunting experiences might no longer be enough to satisfy luxury hunters. In many instances, the level of customer service differs from inside staff to those outside and lodge management should strive to do away with this gap in service to ensure the highest satisfaction possible. Management should make sure outside staff understand the level of customer service that is expected by the guests and subsequently management and ownership. While inside staff spend more time in a 24-hour period ensuring the guests are satisfied, the outside staff spend crucial face-to-face time, which can

affect guest satisfaction greatly. That is why there should be no gap in the level of service from inside to out.

How guests feel about the lodge was the second strongest predictor of overall satisfaction in our model, and satisfaction with facilities was also an important predictor. These findings suggest that attention should be paid to how the lodge is perceived from the minute guests arrive to the second they leave and every minute between. Making an impressive impact on guests does not necessarily mean you have to spend lots of money. It is important to pay attention to the little things, as those can add up to an impressive lodge experience.

Hunting experiences in the field were also an important predictor of satisfaction in our findings, which can be a challenge to manage. In this context, it is critical to focus on what *can* be controlled. Weather cannot be controlled, but options for bad weather days preventing outdoor activities can. Offerings like a covered 5-stand, covered rifle/pistol range, or indoor shooting simulators are alternative ways to keep guests entertained and engaged. Cancelling days afield are never ideal, but offering bad weather alternatives shows the guests you are making an effort and can drastically affect their satisfaction and willingness to return.

Doing the best to meet the needs in these four areas that were identified has the potential to increase guests' overall satisfaction with the experience being offered. While addressing all areas of the business operation and subsequent experiences, meeting basic needs is something almost any facility can do. To create a successful business, there is a need to create a complete experience which means

predicting and meeting customer needs better than the competition (Mascarenhas et al., 2006). Customers are looking for a memorable and entertaining experience (Lawrence & Greene, 2020; Milman, 2010) and businesses that want to stay on top, focusing on high-quality customer service and providing that complete experience is where management can differentiate themselves amongst their peer institutions. Guests can express their satisfaction in many ways and in the luxury hunting lodge industry, those that prove to be very helpful are positive word of mouth and long term loyalty (aka, rebooking) (Akama & Kieti, 2003).

Ideas for Future Research

The approach taken in this paper could serve as a model to evaluate satisfaction and customer service for other consumptive or non-consumptive outdoor recreation facilities. The model is based on recreation and consumer behavior theories. Because quail hunting in the south is often made up of shorter trips (1-2 days of hunting as opposed to 3-5), implementing this same approach at a luxury quail hunting facility could prove valuable since most of the service domains and individual service items would likely be the same. Still, the clientele could prove to be different in their geographic composition and party size.

What would be most important is to thoroughly consider the relevant service domains as well as individual service items pertinent to each of the chosen properties. Our results suggest that it is important to measure individual and domain-level satisfaction in future studies to achieve the strongest prediction of overall satisfaction. Understanding satisfaction with the experience domains

(hunting, customer service, and facilities in this study) provides a great deal of predictive validity for the overall luxury hunting lodge experience and including information about specific service items provides specific information as to the types of considerations management should make to be sure to enhance the more general service domain satisfaction.

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APPENDICES

A – Survey Instrument

TODAY'S DATE: _____ / _____ /20_____

- 1. To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about your hunting experience? (Circle one number for each)**

	Not at All	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I hunted in well-managed habitat	0	1	2	3	4	5
Loaner gun selection was adequate	0	1	2	3	4	5
I hunted in a pristine environment	0	1	2	3	4	5
I tested my wing shooting skills	0	1	2	3	4	5
Party size was appropriate to ensure adequate harvest	0	1	2	3	4	5
I saw a lot of birds	0	1	2	3	4	5
I had the opportunity to shoot at a lot of birds	0	1	2	3	4	5
I harvested a sufficient number of birds	0	1	2	3	4	5

- 2. To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about your experience with our customer service? (Circle one number for each)**

	Not at all	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I learned a lot from the guides	0	1	2	3	4	5
I received quality service in the lodge	0	1	2	3	4	5
I received quality service in the field	0	1	2	3	4	5

I enjoyed being afield with my guide(s)	0	1	2	3	4	5
Staff were friendly/courteous	0	1	2	3	4	5
Staff were attentive	0	1	2	3	4	5
Staff communicated well	0	1	2	3	4	5

3. To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about your experience with the facilities? (Circle one number for each)

	Not at All	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
The rooms were well kept	0	1	2	3	4	5
The property was well kept	0	1	2	3	4	5
Field transportation was well maintained	0	1	2	3	4	5
Pro-Shop was well stocked	0	1	2	3	4	5
High quality meals were provided in the lodge	0	1	2	3	4	5
High quality liquor was supplied in the lodge	0	1	2	3	4	5
Snacks and drinks were sufficiently provided	0	1	2	3	4	5
Firearm options were adequate	0	1	2	3	4	5
Bird cleaning/transport options were adequate	0	1	2	3	4	5
Additional experiences offered (cigar/wine/alcohol tastings or pairings, etc.) added to my overall experience	0	1	2	3	4	5
I was impressed with the lodge	0	1	2	3	4	5

4. To what extent do you disagree or agree with the following statements about your experiences as a whole? (Circle one number for each)

	Not at All	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither	Agree	Strongly Agree
I was extremely satisfied with my hunting experience	0	1	2	3	4	5
I was extremely satisfied with my customer service experience	0	1	2	3	4	5
I was extremely satisfied with my facility experience	0	1	2	3	4	5
I was extremely satisfied with my overall experience	0	1	2	3	4	5

5. How would you describe your skills as a pheasant hunter/shooter?

Beginner									Expert
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6. What year were you born? _____

7. What is the zip code of your primary residence? _____

8. What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ I would rather not say

9. What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Please mark one)

☐ Some High School ☐ High School Graduate or GED ☐ Some College

☐ College Graduate ☐ Some Graduate School ☐ Graduate Degree
or Beyond

10. What was your approximate total household income, before taxes this past year?

- ☐ Less the \$100,000 ☐ \$100,001 to \$149,999 ☐ \$150,000 to \$199,999
☐ \$200,000 to \$249,999 ☐ \$250,000 to \$299,999 ☐ \$300,000 to \$349,999
☐ \$350,000 to \$399,999 ☐ \$400,000 to \$449,999 ☐ \$450,000 to \$499,999
☐ \$500,000 to \$449,999 ☐ \$500,000 to \$549,999 ☐ \$550,000 to \$599,999
☐ \$600,000 to \$649,999 ☐ \$650,000 to \$699,999 ☐ \$700,000 to \$750,000
☐ Over \$750,000

11. In regards to this particular hunting trip, what percentage of the overall expenses did you personally pay for?

- ☐ 0% ☐ 10% ☐ 20% ☐ 30% ☐ 40% ☐ 50%
☐ 60% ☐ 70% ☐ 80% ☐ 90% ☐ 100%

12. Have you visited this Cheyenne Ridge Signature Lodge before?

- ☐ Yes If yes how many times_____ ☐ No

13. How did you first learn about this Lodge?

14. Tell me a short story about your time here. What experiences or happenings stand out in your mind? Please give as many details as possible as this is a very important part of my research.

Thank you very much for your time and participation.

Upon completion, please place your survey in the designated location.

B - State by State Breakdown

State	Frequency	Percent
TX	82	15.59%
GA	38	7.22%
TN	31	5.89%
FL	26	4.94%
AL	24	4.56%
NE	22	4.18%
CA	20	3.80%
NC	16	3.04%
CO	15	2.85%
NJ	15	2.85%
SC	12	2.28%
IN	11	2.09%
MN	11	2.09%
SD	11	2.09%
PA	10	1.90%
ND	9	1.71%
UT	9	1.71%
VA	9	1.71%
KS	8	1.52%
MI	8	1.52%
IA	7	1.33%
LA	7	1.33%
IL	6	1.14%
KY	5	0.95%
MO	5	0.95%
MT	5	0.95%
NV	5	0.95%
WY	5	0.95%
MD	4	0.76%
MS	4	0.76%
WI	4	0.76%
HI	3	0.57%
MA	3	0.57%
NH	3	0.57%
NM	3	0.57%
NY	3	0.57%
OH	3	0.57%
OK	3	0.57%

AR	2	0.38%
AZ	2	0.38%
CT	2	0.38%
WA	2	0.38%
DC	1	0.19%
ID	1	0.19%
OR	1	0.19%
VT	1	0.19%
No Response	49	9.32%
Total	526	100%

C – IRB Exempt Submission

Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB)

REQUEST FOR EXEMPTION

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS: Complete this form and submit with all required attachments to the RICRO IRB staff via email at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu. You may also submit the form and attachments as a hard copy. Mail to: RICRO, IRB Team, Campus Delivery #2011; Suite #208; University Services Center. **NOTE:** The form is protected for your convenience to tab through the form. If you need to unprotect the document, please contact the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Title of Project: Determining the factors of overall satisfaction at a luxury wingshooting destination.

Principal Investigator (PI): Dr. Alan Bright **email:** alan.bright@colostate.edu **Department:** Human Dimensions of Natural Resources **phone:** 970-491-5487 (for student projects; PI must be advising faculty member)

Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI): Todd Franks **email:** todd.franks@colostate.edu **Department:** Human Dimensions of Natural Resources **phone:** 806-773-4601

Source of funding: personally funded

If externally funded, include PASS number if known: *enter pass number here*
Please provide a copy of the grant proposal, if applicable.

Indicate the anticipated start for this project: September 8, 2017
Upon final review, the protocol will be valid for three years and then administratively closed; unless otherwise noted.

Rank of PI: ☒ Faculty

Other: *describe here*

☐

Rank of Co-PI:

Faculty ☒ PhD student

Master's Student

Undergraduate

☐☐☐

Other: *describe here*

☐

(for student projects; PI must be advising faculty member)

PART II: PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Provide a brief **lay summary** for all study activities. Please provide a copy of the grant, thesis/dissertation methods section if applicable.

The primary population for this study will be wingshooters who are 18 years of age and older who are actively engaged in bird hunting at luxury hunting destinations. Data will be collected utilizing intercept surveys that will be self-administered starting September 1st, which is the start of the pheasant hunting season in South Dakota and will continue through February 28th, which is the last day of quail season in Georgia.

No data allowing for the identification of the survey respondent will be included in the self-administered survey, ensuring anonymity of the respondents and ensuring they can never be connected back to their responses. Respondents will receive a brief description of the study and will be assured of both the voluntary nature of the participation as well as the anonymity of that participation. It will take respondents approximately 10

- 2. Please address the generalizability of the data.** Do you plan to share the results of this research with the intent to influence behavior, practice, theory, future research designs (e.g., Plan A Master's thesis, Dissertation, manuscript, presentation at a national meeting)? If the results of this research are for internal purposes only, this study is not under the IRB's purview. For more information regarding generalizability, see: <https://vpr.colostate.edu/RICRO/irb/what-is-generalizable-knowledge/>

This project and its results will serve to fill the needs of my dissertation but will also be shared with the data collection sites. It

3. **Describe the participant population, including age range and inclusion/exclusion criteria. State the maximum number of how many participants will be recruited.** NOTE: Please submit all recruitment materials (e.g., flyer, email, verbal script) that may be used. See our website for recruitment requirements and templates: <https://vpr.colostate.edu/RICRO/irb/templates/recruitment-templates-worksheets/>

The survey will be distributed to wingshooters (quail and/or pheasant hunters) over the age of 18 at privately owned hunting lodges across the United States and will be self-administered. Age and willingness to participate will be the only inclusion/exclusion criteria. There is a target of 300 completed surveys. Surveys will be distributed to guests the last night of their trip with instructions to place their completed surveys in a designated locked box near the registration desk or equivalent location as

The following is an amendment to the original submission:

Ownership and management of the two privately owned hunting lodges will be interviewed utilizing open ended questions.

4. **Describe how consent will be obtained from participants.** Participants may not need to document their consent with a signed consent form, but they still must be given information about the research in order to provide their informed consent. Generally, for low-risk research, **documented** consent can be **waived** because: 1) the identity of the participants will not be collected; or 2) personal identifiers will be removed prior to the data being sent to the researcher.

A waiver of documented consent requires that these two criteria be met:

- The research presents no more than minimal risk & involves no procedures for which written consent is normally required outside of the research context.

If a waiver of documented consent is being requested, please be sure that the following consent elements are contained in the consent document (cover letter and/or consent/recruitment text/script):

- that the research is being performed by CSU personnel
- the purpose of the research
- state what participants are being asked to do and for how long
- that participation is voluntary, and what direct risks or benefits exist, if any
- how the information will be held confidential, e.g., no names will be collected and data will reported in aggregate
- contact information for the investigator(s) and for the IRB participant's rights contact, contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board Coordinator at RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu or 970-491-1553."

Please submit your consent document (verbal script, cover letter or signed document) with your Exempt application, and if requesting to waive signed (documented) consent, provide your rationale for this waiver.

We are requesting to waive signed (documented) consent because the identities of the participants will not be collected in either the internet-based nor intercept surveys and the required information from above is included in the header of the survey instrument. Potential respondents to the survey will be asked to read this information prior to completing the survey.

For the ownership and management of the two hunting facilities, they will be asked to sign the consent form which is attached to this submission.

- 5. Describe how data will be collected, recorded, and stored/maintained.** Describe the procedures in place that will protect the privacy of the subjects and maintain the confidentiality of the data. If a linked list is used, explain when the linked list will be destroyed, who will have access to the data, and location of the data. Provide a sample of the code that will be used, if applicable. NOTE:

- a. During active data collection: The IRB understands that the research team may temporarily have data on a laptop or non-CSU

computer. Please protect the data by using a strong password, and encrypt your files.

- b. Do not keep the key to the code in the same file/location as the data.
- c. Cloud storage: Data may be temporarily stored in MS One Drive or Google docs., but the files should be encrypted, and stored on CSU servers once data collection is complete.
- d. CSU Policy: Information Technology and Security:
<http://policylibrary.colostate.edu/policy.aspx?id=492>
- e. Reminder: Federal Regulations require that study data and consent documents be kept for a minimum of three (3) years after the completion of the study by the PI securely at CSU. Student researchers: You may keep a copy of your data.

Data will be collected utilizing intercept surveys. Completed surveys will be stored in locked containers while in the field awaiting my picking them up and transporting them to Colorado State University. Digital data will be stored on a password protected computer owned by and housed on Colorado State University Fort Collins campus while hardcopy surveys will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in the private locked office of the CO-PI Todd Franks. No information identifying specific respondents will

- 6. Describe all study procedures, including topics that will be discussed in interviews and/or surveys. Please attach the interview questions or survey questions, if applicable.**

The survey instrument will be quantitative in nature, making use of 6-point Likert-type questions that rate the different components that determine the overall satisfaction of guests while hunting at the facility (ie., experience in the field while hunting, customer service inside and outside the lodge, and facilities). Proposed demographic data to be collected include year of birth, primary residence zip code, gender, education level, race/ethnicity, and household income. Questions will primarily be closed-ended (where respondents check one or more responses) to limit the amount of time needed to complete the survey. Options to select an 'other' response and/or to clarify and comment will also be provided to ensure that respondents are not forced into any particular answer category that may not best represent their reality. Respondents will be told that any question that they are

7. **Which Exemption category does your study fit? Please review the list of categories here:** <https://vpr.colostate.edu/RICRO/irb/submit-a-protocol/exempt-submissions/exemption-criteria/>

Category 2

8. **If you have selected Exempt #2:** If your data will include identifiers, please address if disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research may place the subjects at risk in the following areas: **criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subject's financial standing, employability, or reputation** (e.g., potential risks associated with recruitment of employees or students).

There will be no identifiers included in the survey data collected.

The identifiers included in the digital recording and subsequent transcriptions of the interviews with hunting facility ownership and management does not pose more than minimal risk beyond that of everyday life.

As the principal investigator, I assure the IRB that all procedures performed under this project will be conducted exactly as outlined in this form and that any modification to this protocol will be submitted to an IRB Coordinator in the form of an amendment for its approval prior to implementation.

Principal Investigator:

Alan Bright _____ 02/05/2018
(typed/printed name) (signature, if paper copy) (date)

WHEN COMPLETE:

Email electronic version from PI's email address to:

the CSU IRB at: RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu; 970-491-1553.

Sent email will serve as electronic signature from PI.

OR Deliver signed original copy to: IRB Team, RICRO, 601 S. Howes, Street, Suite #208, Campus Delivery 2011

Note on Review Timeline: Not providing all associated files with the submission of this form will impact the time it takes IRB staff to complete the exempt determination.