

# Moving Beyond User Satisfaction to Loyalty: 10 Steps for Initiating Desired Behavioral Outcomes

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**Pat O'Brien**

General Manager

**East Bay Regional Park District**

Oakland, California

(510) 638-0138

Presenters:



**G. Gary Manross, Ph.D.**

Chairman

**Strategy Research Institute**

Fullerton, California

(800) 224-7608

## Abstract

The present research effort was designed to test the notion that public agencies in the Parks & Recreation Industry would be well advised to borrow a page from Corporate America's "book," that allows you to develop an operational model that moves park customers/users beyond **satisfaction** to one that builds a sense of **LOYALTY** toward your Agency. By adopting such an operational model, the Agency could develop even stronger relationships than presently exist between the Agency and its various constituent groups...be it park and trail user groups, the local electorate, special interest groups that attempt to influence the decision-making process at both the policy and operational levels, as well as other stakeholders and/or stakeholder groups. In fact, such an operational model will likely result in a host of desired behavioral outcomes among members of these constituent groups; e.g., acceptance of the need to pay parking and/or entry fees at certain parks and recreational facilities, perhaps voter support for a pending bond measure or tax initiative, litter and/or graffiti abatement, volunteerism, what-have-you.

The notion that underlies the present research effort is that while customer/user SATISFACTION is, indeed, necessary...it's seldom, if ever, sufficient for yielding desired behavioral outcomes, such as those listed above. The "findings" from this study provide compelling empirical evidence that this notion is, in fact, true.

The paper culminates by identifying and discussing **10 specific steps** for a given Park & Recreation agency to consider as it develops policy at an operational level that will lead to building a sense of LOYALTY toward the respective agency among its customers, users, and various constituent groups, organizations, and other stakeholders.

## SITUATION ANALYSIS

Tradition in the private sector has long held to the common sense notion that **customer satisfaction** yields certain desired behavioral outcomes; for example, satisfied customers tell their friends about being satisfied which, in turn, attracts new customers. Conventional wisdom goes one step further by arguing that while “customer satisfaction” is, indeed, necessary, seldom (if ever) is it sufficient...especially in terms of yielding such desired behavioral outcomes as “**Brand loyalty.**” Indeed, conventional wisdom in the private sector holds that no business can reach its pinnacle without developing *brand loyalty*.

Hypothetically, then, there’s every reason to believe that agencies and organizations in the public sector can benefit from such conventional wisdom, as well; thus, public agencies in the Park & Recreation Industry may be well advised to borrow this particular page from corporate America’s book. In other words, by developing an operational model that moves park customers/users beyond *satisfaction* to one that builds a sense of **LOYALTY** toward your Agency, you can develop even stronger relationships than presently exist between the Agency and its various key constituent groups...be it park and trail user groups, the local electorate, special interest groups that attempt to influence the decision-making process at both the policy and operational levels, as well as other stakeholders and/or stakeholder groups.

But, to justify the investment of the time, money, and effort that is inherent to developing an operational model specifically designed to build a sense of customer/user “loyalty,” there needs to be empirical evidence that such an approach applies to the public sector, in general, and to the Parks & Recreation Industry, in particular. The present research effort is intended to test this very notion.<sup>1</sup>

## RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of choice in the present case is “survey research.”<sup>2</sup> The first step in applying survey research in a fashion that will yield the form of intelligence (empirical evidence) needed to “test” the research question(s) inherent to the thesis that underlies the present study is to **identify a specific desired behavior** (dependent variable) that can be measured, thus predicted. In the case at hand, step two involved **developing appropriate measures** comprised of specific dimensions of BOTH customer/user “satisfaction” and “loyalty,” which were then used to create a “satisfaction index” and a “loyalty index.” These indices were intended to function as “independent variables,” or PREDICTORS, of the dependent (outcome) variable. Step three was to **formulate hypotheses** regarding the relationship between each of the two indices and the desired behavior (dependent variable). The fourth, and final, step is to “**test**” **these relationships**.

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<sup>1</sup> The present research effort was commissioned by one of the largest regional park districts in the United States, the **East Bay Regional Park District**, headquartered in Oakland, CA; it was designed and conducted by **Strategy Research Institute**, headquartered in Fullerton, CA.

<sup>2</sup> The **Survey Research Design** employed in the present research effort adheres strictly to The Scientific Method; thus, the “findings” are BOTH **reliable** (accurate) and **valid** (truthful).

## Sample

The sample included over four hundred (N=426) telephone surveys. A “random sample” was drawn from a list comprised of four types of park users:

- (1) Members of the District’s **Regional Parks Foundation**,
- (2) Customers who had reserved East Bay Regional Park District **CAMP SITES** at various times in the recent past,
- (3) Customers who had participated in one or more recreation and/or education **PROGRAMS** sponsored by or through the District, and...
- (4) Using a “Best Practices” model, customers were selected at random while visiting various East Bay Regional Park District facilities (parks and trails) and asked to participate in a **Longitudinal Monitoring Survey** (LMS). Through the LMS, these respondents completed a brief questionnaire. One of the questions asked permission for the District to contact them from time-to-time to secure their input regarding matters that will assist the District in providing the highest quality services possible. Researchers drew a random sample from this database and incorporated this subset of park and trail users in the present study.

Thus, 100% of the respondents in the present research effort are “users” of the District’s regional park facilities and/or programs; some are paying customers and some are non-paying customers.<sup>3</sup>

### Dependent Variable:    **VOTING BEHAVIOR**

Clearly, VOTING BEHAVIOR represents a desired behavioral outcome that is relevant to the Park & Recreation Industry and one that is appropriate for the present research effort. One might assume, for example, that those constituents who are highly satisfied with the number, quality, and level of maintenance of the parks, trails and recreational facilities within a given public Agency’s jurisdiction would, in fact, be inclined to support a tax initiative (a desired behavioral outcome) that might be placed on the local ballot in order to yield the funds needed to provide additional parklands, new recreational programs, and/or to upgrade existing park facilities and programs. In other words, the more satisfied one is, the more likely s/he will be to vote YES.

On the other hand, such an assumption could be flawed. Consider the following scenario, for example:

Seniors represent a relatively large bloc of **HIGH PROPENSITY** voters in any community. Most seniors live on “fixed” incomes. Therefore, they may NOT be inclined to support the notion of increased taxes.

Thus, it could turn out that the more satisfied seniors are with the programs and services being offered through your public Agency, the less likely they will be to vote YES for a new tax. In other words, this high propensity voting bloc may well embrace the notion that:

***If it ‘ain’t’ broke, don’t fix it!***

<sup>3</sup> The be certain that all four categories of park users are sufficiently homogeneous to be representative of a single population, with respect to the thesis inherent to the research question(s) being addressed in the present study, all of the statistical procedures were performed on each of the four population subsets. All of the patterns and behavioral outcomes relevant to the research questions inherent to this study were replicated in all four subsets and within acceptable statistical ranges.

However, if seniors are not only “satisfied” with the number and quality of the park facilities and programs being provided by and/or through your Agency, but **have actually been made to feel a sense of “loyalty” toward the Agency**, and assuming your request for additional funds does NOT exceed their THRESHOLD of *willingness to pay*, those who comprise the senior bloc of voters might well be inclined to support a new tax that was placed before them on the local ballot.

Given that the above scenario is true, then this same logic should hold for any form of desired behavioral outcome, not just voting behavior.

### Independent Variables: CUSTOMER/USER SATISFACTION AND LOYALTY

There is no single determinant of either “customer satisfaction” or “customer loyalty”; both concepts are multi-dimensional. As such, it is necessary to develop an “index” of dimensions for each of the two concepts; further, in the case at hand, these dimensions must pertain to the Parks and Recreation Industry. Each of the two concepts will be discussed separately.

#### **Customer/User Satisfaction**

Historically, the East Bay Regional Park District has received extremely “high marks” when it comes to CUSTOMER/USER SATISFACTION; indeed, SRI has been conducting surveys for the park District since 1988 and, without exception, the District commands high marks across the board. This reality was, once again, confirmed in the present research effort.

For example, when asked whether or not the parks, picnic areas, wilderness areas, and trails represent a **VALUABLE PUBLIC RESOURCE** for all East Bay Residents, 96% of the respondents AGREE in fact, 93% STRONGLY AGREE with this notion (see Figure 1). Virtually everyone, 98%, believes that these same recreational resources IMPROVE the **QUALITY of LIFE** for those who reside in densely populated urban and suburban communities throughout Alameda and Contra Cost Counties, which comprise the District’s geographic service area (Figure 1).

User satisfaction with the **QUALITY** of the East Bay regional parks & trails is high; indeed, 88% of park users are satisfied, with nearly half of these being VERY SATISFIED (see Figure 2A). Approximately the same ratio of park users is satisfied with the number of regional parks & trails (84%), see Figure 2B. When we tested the level of USER SATISFACTION on a half-dozen additional dimensions (see Figure 2C), again the regional park District received high marks.

Thus, on the one hand (from a purely a common sense perspective), one would be inclined to believe that high levels of CUSTOMER SASTISFACTION would lead to a host of desired behavioral outcomes, such as VOTING BEHAVIOR; in other words, high levels of user satisfaction would lead to relatively high levels of support at the polls. On the other hand, consistent with the thesis of the present research effort, one might hold that while satisfaction

may be requisite to such desired behaviors, that (in and of itself) it is NOT sufficient to predict such desired behavioral outcomes.

In order to test this thesis, researchers created an index of eleven (11) dimensions (measures) of user satisfaction.<sup>4</sup> These included the following: **CUSTOMER/USER SATISFACTION** with:

- 1) **NUMBER** of regional parks, trails, etc.,
- 2) **QUALITY** of regional parks, trails, etc.
- 3) **MAINTENANCE** of regional parks, trails, etc.
- 4) **CLASS/PROGRAM** attended sponsored by the EBRPD
- 5) **PUBLIC SAFETY** in regional parks & trails
- 6) **CLEANLINESS** of EBRPD facilities
- 7) **COURTESY** of EBRPD employees/staff
- 8) **PUBLIC ACCESS** to regional parks & trails

### **Customer/User Loyalty**

To make it possible to “test” the thesis that underlies the present research effort, researchers created an index comprised of six (6) dimensions of **CUSTOMER/USER LOYALTY**.<sup>5</sup> These measures included the following items (predictors):

- Credibility** (*Measure*: District officials **DO NOT exaggerate** when they claim that additional funds are needed).
- Trust** (*Measure*: District officials are **trustworthy** and, through the years, have demonstrated high levels of **integrity**).
- Accountability** (*Measure*: District officials **are clear** about how they plan to spend the money when asking voter support for additional funds).
- Always support the District** (*Measure*: I almost always support a reasonable tax increase for the East Bay Regional Park District).

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<sup>4</sup> Reliability analysis for the **Satisfaction Index** yields an alpha score of .74; therefore, this index represents a viable measure of park user satisfaction.

<sup>5</sup> Reliability analysis for the **Loyalty Index** yields an alpha score of .70; therefore, this index represents a viable measure of loyalty to the East Bay Regional Park District.

## Hypotheses

Thus, the following hypotheses were created to test the notion that: (a) customer/user SATISFACTION is necessary, but NOT SUFFICIENT, in terms of yielding desired behavioral outcomes; however, (b) having a sense of customer/user LOYALTY toward the District does lead to desired behavioral outcomes:

H1:	High levels of customer/user <b>SATISFACTION</b> with EBRPD park and recreation facilities <b>DOES NOT</b> lead to a <u>YES vote</u> on a proposed tax measure.
H2:	High levels of customer/user <b>LOYALTY</b> with EBRPD park and recreation facilities <b>DOES</b> lead to a <u>YES vote</u> on a proposed tax measure.

## FINDINGS

As can be seen in the correlation table below (also, see Figure 3), BOTH hypotheses were initially supported in the present research effort.

Predictors	Vote
	Correlation Coefficient
User/Customer <b>SATISFACTION</b>	.10 n/s
User/Customer <b>LOYALTY</b>	<b>.44**</b>

n/s means NOT statistically significant  
 \*\* Correlation is significant at the  $p < .01$

As hypothesized, the above table shows that there is NO correlation (statistically significant relationship) between park user SATISFACTION and VOTING BEHAVIOR; however, having a sense of LOYALTY toward the regional park District does positively correspond with (predict) VOTING BEHAVIOR. More specifically, having a strong sense of loyalty towards the EBRPD significantly corresponds to a YES VOTE on a given tax initiative that might be placed on the local ballot by the District. Furthermore, at .44, the magnitude of the relationship between loyalty and voting behavior is also relatively strong.

While supporting the thesis that underlies the present research, the above *findings* do NOT address one of the elements that is central to this proposition; that being, whether or not customer/user SATISFACTION is, in fact, “necessary” (but, not sufficient) with respect to predicting desired behavioral outcomes? Anecdotally, and from purely a perspective of deductive logic, it would seem reasonable to assume that one cannot become “loyal” without first being satisfied. For example, if one were DISSATISFIED with the EBRPD, why would s/he be

inclined to support a tax measure placed on the local ballot by the District? In all likelihood, they would NOT be so inclined.<sup>6</sup>

The first piece of empirical evidence that customer/user SATISFACTION is, in fact, “necessary,” but not sufficient, can be seen in the following correlation matrix between the Customer/User SATISFACTION and LOYALTY indices, and between the eleven (11) dimensions that comprise the SATISFACTION index and LOYALTY (also, see Figure 4).

<b>Dimensions of customer/user SATISFACTION</b>	<b>Loyalty</b>
	<b>Correlation Coefficient</b>
<b>Customer/User SATISFACTION Index</b>	<b>.36**</b>
Q2.0 <b>Number of Parks, trails, etc.</b>	.06 n/s
Q2.1 <b>Quality of Parks, trails, etc.</b>	<b>.12*</b>
Q2.2 <b>Maintenance of Parks, trails, etc.</b>	.08 n/s
Q5.0 <b>Class/program attended</b>	.11 n/s
Q5.1 <b>Public Safety</b>	<b>.19**</b>
Q5.2 <b>Cleanliness of facilities</b>	<b>.17**</b>
Q5.3 <b>Courtesy of employees/staff</b>	<b>.25**</b>
Q5.4 <b>Public Access to parks, etc.</b>	<b>.17**</b>
Q5.5 <b>Customer Service</b> (reservations/registration)	<b>.16**</b>
Q5.6 <b>Trust &amp; Integrity of professional staff</b>	<b>.42**</b>
Q5.7 <b>One’s past experience</b>	<b>.18**</b>

n/s means NOT statistically significant  
 \* Correlation is significant at the p<.05  
 \*\* Correlation is significant at the p<.01

Customer/User SATISFACTION does, in fact, correspond (.36 p<.01) to LOYALTY . Further insight is gleaned by looking at the relationship of the eleven dimensions that comprise the SATISFACTION INDEX. It turns out that 7 of the 11 dimensions that comprise SATISFACTION are significantly correlated with LOYALTY at p<.01; and one is correlated at p<.05. These findings make clear that customer/user SATISFACTION and LOYALTY are, in fact, significantly related to one another. More compelling evidence of the notion that customer/user SATISFACTION is necessary, but NOT sufficient, is garnered through regression analysis. Figure 7 shows that Customer/User SATISFACTION is, in fact, by itself a modest predictor of voting behavior (standardized regression coefficient =.11, at p<.05). Clearly, however, the most important predictor of voting behavior is customer/user LOYALTY (standardized regression coefficient=.38, at p<.01); thus, supporting the notion that

<sup>6</sup> Of course, some dissatisfied park users may believe that the root problem is a lack of adequate funding. Such park users might be inclined to support a new tax for parks.

customer/user SATISFACTION is, indeed, necessary...but, not nearly sufficient for predicting such desirable behavioral outcomes as VOTING behavior.

This exercise also suggests that one of the dimensions of customer/user satisfaction, *perceived trust and integrity of professional staff* (with a correlation coefficient of .42 at  $p < .01$ , see Figure 4), should be shifted from the SATISFACTION index to the LOYALTY index. Further evidence of this assertion can be seen in Figure 5, which shows that BOTH measures of “trust” are significantly related to VOTING behavior; trust of professional staff, correlation coefficient of .16 at  $p < .01$ , and trust of District officials, .22 at  $p < .01$ . Such a conclusion was affirmed through Factor Analysis (see Figure 6); it turns out that “trust and integrity of professional staff” loads on the first factor, along with all six (6) of the dimensions that comprise customer/user LOYALTY.

Such a conclusion makes perfect sense. One dimension incorporated into BOTH the SATISFACTION and LOYALTY indices involves “trust”; in the former index, we measured trust of the District’s professional staff and in the latter index, we measured perceived trust of District officials. In other words, with respect to “trust,” individuals do NOT make a distinction between “trusting” professional staff vs. trusting District officials (e.g., the Board of Directors). One either trusts the District or they do NOT trust the District.

Perhaps the most telling evidence of the role that customer/user LOYALTY plays in terms of yielding desired behavioral outcomes in the public sector can be seen in Figure 7. We ran a regression where we included a host of demographic variables in the model, along with customer/user LOYALTY and SATISFACTION. These included, for example, one’s age, income, education, whether one owns or rents their place of residency, and ideology (having conservative, moderate, or liberal tendencies). Only two of the demographics were predictors of voting; ideology and income (standardized regression coefficients =  $-.18$  at  $p < .01$  and  $.09$  at  $p < .10$ , respectively). As noted above, customer/user SATISFACTION is a modest predictor of voting, with the regression coefficient =  $.11$  at  $p < .05$ . By far, the strongest predictor of voting is, as hypothesized, customer/user LOYALTY, with a regression coefficient =  $.38$  at  $p < .01$ .

Clearly, the *findings* from the present research effort provide compelling evidence that a **strong predictor** of desired behavioral outcomes among your constituents and constituent groups/organizations is one having a sense of LOYALTY toward your Agency.

## DISCUSSION

We need to stress at this point that the benefits of building customer/user LOYALTY over time extends far beyond voting behavior; we speak to it here simply as one way to demonstrate how important building BRAND LOYALTY can be in terms of eliciting desired behavioral outcomes. This is precisely why the focus in corporate America has moved away from just customer SATISFACTION and on to building BRAND LOYALTY. When successful, the payoff(s) can be huge.

Now that it’s been demonstrated that customer/user LOYALTY is a far greater predictor of behavioral outcomes among key constituent groups than is customer SATISFACTION alone,

the obvious question is: *How can we use this “intelligence” to the advantage of the public Agencies that each of us work for?* Of course, only you can determine this for the respective Agency for which you work; in any case, it might prove instructive to discuss a few ways that the East Bay Regional Park District is capitalizing upon this form of “intelligence.”

Clearly, customer LOYALTY is NOT something that can be developed over night; rather, building customer LOYALTY is something that needs to be factored into the way business is conducted over time and on a day-to-day basis. For example, those who are responsible for placing tax initiatives on the ballot understand the importance of making salient to local voters: (a) the NEED FOR any monies being asked for; AND (b) making certain that the amount of money being asked for does NOT exceed the electorate’s THRESHOLD of *willingness to pay* for such programs and/or services.

Moreover, the present research effort makes abundantly clear the benefits of FOLLOW-THROUGH after voters have approved a given tax initiative. How many of us even think about the need to stay in touch with KEY constituent groups AFTER a given tax initiative is passed? How much effort do any of us put into keeping our constituents informed about how our Agency is spending their tax dollars? One example of how the East Bay Regional Park District has made an effort to stay in touch with the members of the local electorate in East Bay can be seen in a publication entitled: **A 10-Year Report Card: Promises Made, Promises Kept!**

In 1988, the District asked local voters to approve a **\$225 million tax initiative** to make it possible to acquire sensitive properties throughout the East Bay and to develop some of these properties into additional parks and trails for local residents to enjoy. Further, a significant ratio of these funds was to be granted to municipalities within the District’s two-county service area to enhance park and recreation facilities within their respective jurisdictions. Local voters subsequently approved **Measure AA** and, as a result, the District has been able to significantly increase the number of parks, trails and acreage within its domain.

A decade later — in 1998 — the District decided to provide an accounting to its local electorate and to the community-at-large regarding how these monies had been invested. This was accomplished by producing a four-page publication, similar to the informational brochure produced prior to the election a decade earlier, wherein a detailed reporting was provided regarding how these monies had been invested; then, these expenditures were compared to the spending plan that was initially brought forward when the local electorate was asked to support the tax initiative a decade earlier. The theme for this publication was: **‘Promises Made, Promises Kept’**. This publication was mailed to key stakeholders and stakeholder groups and made readily available to the members of the community-at-large, park users and non-users alike. Undoubtedly, it is this very form of follow-through that accounts for the continued high levels of customer SATISFACTION and customer LOYALTY that the **East Bay Regional Park District** enjoys today.

However, as stressed earlier, the significance of building customer LOYALTY in terms of manifesting desirable behavioral outcomes extends FAR BEYOND tax initiatives. All of us have many different STAKEHOLDERS and STAKEHOLDER GROUPS that we deal with on a daily basis. These include our respective Boards of Directors, City Councils, and many different committees and sub-committees; it includes our employees and in most cases their bargaining

agents; it includes many different special interest groups that must advocate the interests of their respective constituents; and many, many more.

Now that it is clear that **desired behavioral outcomes** are, in fact, driven by how **LOYAL** our constituents feel towards our respective Agencies, then it **behooves each of us to figure out what the “determinants” of customer LOYALTY are** as it pertains to our respective Agencies.

The present research effort has provided empirical evidence regarding what the determinants of customer LOYALTY are with respect to the **East Bay Regional Park District**. Thus, the District is now better positioned to take positive steps in implementing and/or reinforcing policies and procedures that will help it realize its long term goals and objectives. However, this very conclusion begs the following question: *What should other Agencies do to figure out what the determinants of customer loyalty are for their respective organizations?*

The most ideal “first step”, of course, would be to commission a research effort that will allow you to develop a CUSTOMER LOYALTY model that is tailored to your Agency’s needs and expectations; but, this may not be an option for some Agencies. For such Agencies, we have developed a model comprised of **10 Steps to Building ‘Customer Loyalty’**.<sup>7</sup>

## **10 Steps to Building ‘Customer Loyalty’**

The **most important** thing to understand, and to keep in the forefront of one’s mind, is that the differences between the determinants of “customer satisfaction” and “customer loyalty” are, in many cases, quite subtle. And, it’s important to understand that, for the most part, the latter (customer loyalty) subsumes the former (customer satisfaction); in other words, by earning one’s loyalty, you are inherently making one satisfied. Thus, when setting policy and/or when involved in strategic planning at an operational level, **priority should be given** to those policies, procedures, mandates, and field activities that will ultimately **lead to customer loyalty**.

With this in mind, we recommend the following 10 steps be taken.

### **Step 1: Identify desired behavioral outcomes**

First, make a list of specific behavioral outcomes that your Agency is interested in among various constituent groups (park user groups, the community-at-large, special interest groups, your local electorate, et al.); for example, litter and/or graffiti abatement, volunteerism, acceptance of the need to pay parking and/or entry fees at certain parks and recreational facilities, perhaps voter support for a pending bond measure or tax initiative.

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<sup>7</sup> Some of the recommended activities that are included in our ‘**10-Steps to Building Loyalty**’ came out of a workshop that followed a presentation we made on this topic during at the **Training Conference**, co-sponsored by the California Park and Recreation Society (CPRS) and the National Recreation & Park Association (NRPA).

**Step 2: Keep the dimensions of LOYALTY at the forefront of your mind as you develop policies, especially at the operational level.**

Review the following dimensions of “customer loyalty” that are reported in Figure 5; in order of priority, these include: Credibility (Agency officials do NOT exaggerate), Trust (Agency officials can be trusted to do what they say they will do), Responsibility (the Agency invests tax dollars in a responsible fashion), and Accountability (Agency officials are clear about what is needed and how the scarce and valued resources available to them will be invested to address these needs; and, further, they make a serious effort to inform constituents that these resources, e.g. committed revenues, were, in fact, invested precisely as promised).

**Step 3: Remain cognizant of, and stay in touch with, BOTH your advocates and your opponents**

It’s imperative to remain cognizant of BOTH your **advocates** and your **opponents**; furthermore, to stay in touch with these stakeholders and/or stakeholder groups as much as possible, in order to adequately speak to their collective interests and concerns. Indeed, you should make a concerted effort to identify and reach out to these people and ask them to tell you precisely what led them to becoming so supportive of, or in opposition of, your Agency?

One thing you will discover by communicating with your strong supporters, for example, is that they perceive your Agency as being accountable, credible and trustworthy; thus, begging the question: *What led these people to such a conclusion?* Once armed with the answer(s) to this critical question, you will be far better positioned than you were before to know what priorities to establish and where to invest your Agency’s scarce, valued, and limited resources.

For example, maintaining PUBLIC SAFETY is of great concern to all four categories tested in the present research effort that use our regional parks and trails on a regular basis; thus, in the case at hand, we need to remind our advocates of the steps we routinely take to keep our regional parks, trails, and recreational facilities safe for public use. We should NOT assume that these facts will remain in the “forefront” of our advocates’ collective mind.

However, you should also communicate in a systematic fashion (wherever possible) with those who are NOT strong supporters. When you do this, you will discover specific areas that merit immediate attention. It’s highly likely, for example, that you will discover that people who are NOT strong supporters of your Agency are NOT AWARE of the very facts that led the first group to become strong supporters. Once you have access to this form of “intelligence” then you can direct your public affairs efforts in a fashion that will, indeed, lead to customer loyalty over time.

**Step 4: Use the ‘intelligence’ secured from Steps 2 & 3 to help guide policy-level decision-making**

Clearly, on the one hand, you will already be aware of much of the “intelligence” you secure from communicating with both your strongest supporters and non-supporters alike. On the other hand, you undoubtedly will become sensitized to certain facts that will be instructive and even surprising to you. This form of “intelligence” can be used in developing public policy

that is truly responsive to the collective desires, perceptions, and needs of the various constituent groups and organizations that your Agency was formed to serve.

**Step 5: Avoid the “trust me” factor**

Whenever and wherever possible, AVOID the “trust me” factor; toward this end, **document**, as much as possible, the NEED when establishing policy and/or addressing the financial concerns of your Agency. The very process of documenting all of your “facts” through an objective mechanism will eliminate the “trust me” factor when dealing with your colleagues and superiors, thus helping you impact the agenda in ways that might otherwise not be possible.

**Step 6: Don’t exaggerate**

Take care **NOT to be perceived as exaggerating** when discussing publicly the needs and challenges facing your Agency.

**Step 7: Be clear how you are investing your Agency’s resources**

Make a concerted effort to be clear to your constituent base precisely how your Agency is investing the scarce and valued resources (funds) within its authority. In fact, create opportunities to share this information with key constituent groups whose members have a vested interest in such matters; much like the East Bay Regional Park District when it created its ***10-Year Report Card***. In short, stay in touch with both the community-at-large and with specific stakeholder groups; make it your business to communicate with these groups and organizations specifically about topics of concern to their respective agendas.

**Step 8: Keep your employees cognizant of their role in building loyalty**

One “common sense” *finding* from the present research effort is that a key determinant of customer loyalty is CUSTOMER SERVICE. Further, the importance of all Agency employees doing their job well is made salient in two additional determinants of customer LOYALTY; (a) the impact of **one’s personal experiences** while using our park facilities and (b) respondents’ collective perceptions having to do with the level of integrity of the District’s elected officials and professional staff, alike.

As obvious as these *findings* may be, we need to share them with our District employees; likewise, it should prove helpful for you to share these particular *findings* with your Agency’s employees. Indeed, specific steps should be taken to reinforce what employees can, and should, be doing in order to provide the best possible customer service to your Agency’s constituents; thus, maximizing the likelihood that your Agency will continue to realize its mission.

**Step 9: Act on what’s important to your constituents**

It’s imperative that you act on what’s important to your Agency’s overall constituency, as well as various stakeholder groups and organizations.

Our model, for example, shows how providing **PUBLIC ACCESS** to the regional parklands within our domain leads to building loyalty to the District. This can have huge implications as our elected officials make decisions having to do with the balance between providing public access and dedicating certain properties to permanent open space, for example.

Whether or not your Agency has the resources available to commission a study similar to the one we presented above, it is essential that specific steps are taken to remain as aware as possible of the collective perceptions and desires of the majority of your constituents, rather than allowing yourself to become embroiled in the agenda items of a limited few. While we are all vulnerable to “greasing the squeaky wheel,” we must take whatever steps necessary to making certain that the *perceived* needs and desires of the majority of our constituents are attended to.

**Step 10: Build in an Annual Review of your Agency’s business practices, using the above nine (9) steps as one of your measures**

It’s far too easy to get caught up in the pressures of the moment and, as a result, lose sight of the fundamental determinants of what has led to your Agency’s success in achieving its goals, objectives, and even its mission. One step toward NOT falling into this trap is to build into your routine a formal annual review of your Agency’s business practices; one element of this review would be to revisit the above nine steps to make certain that there isn’t an additional measure(s) that could, and should, be taken that will allow your Agency to go beyond traditional customer satisfaction to a higher plane...thus, enjoying the benefits inherent to attaining **CUSTOMER LOYALTY**.

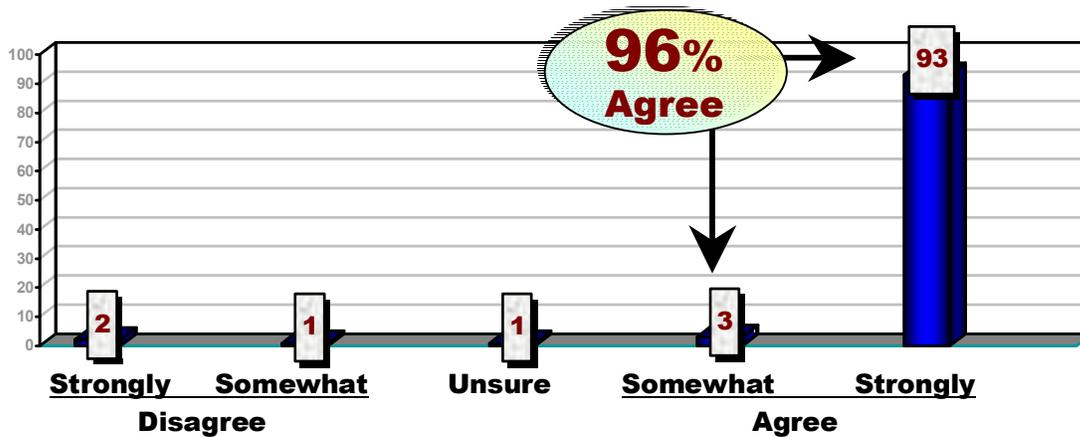
## **SUMMARY CONCLUSION**

We believe that the customer loyalty/satisfaction research presented above represents a compelling case in support of the notion that while customer satisfaction is, indeed, a necessary ingredient in the way all of us need to be doing business, clearly, it’s NOT sufficient. Thus, in order for our respective Agencies to realize their greatest potential, it is necessary to move beyond customer satisfaction to building “customer loyalty.”

Whether or not the **10 Steps to Building ‘Customer Loyalty’** are taken, we hold that park professionals and elected officials alike should at least become familiar with the elements that drive customer loyalty among constituents within the Parks and Recreation Industry; then, make every effort to place a priority on these determinants when investing the scarce and valued resources within their authority.

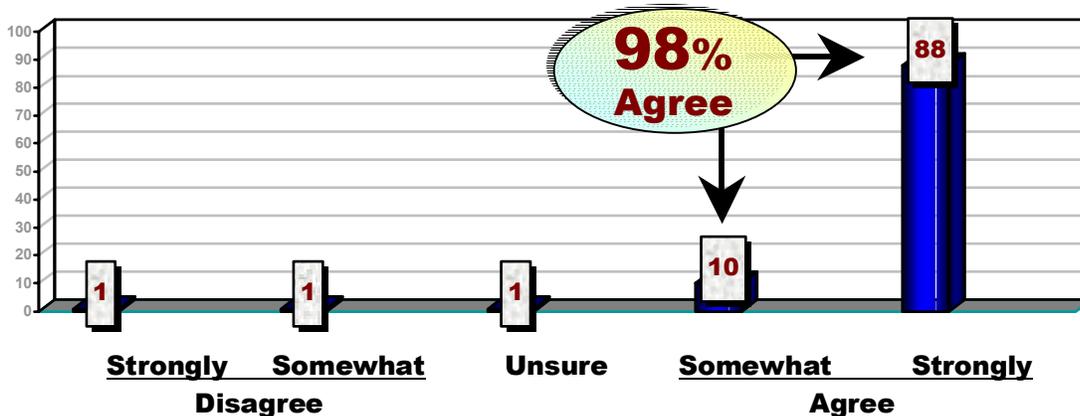
**Figure 1**  
**User Satisfaction/Loyalty Survey**  
 East Bay Regional Park District

**Question 1.1: The regional park system, which consists of recreational parks, picnic areas, wilderness areas and trails, is a VALUABLE PUBLIC RESOURCE for East Bay residents.**



### Improves the Quality of Life

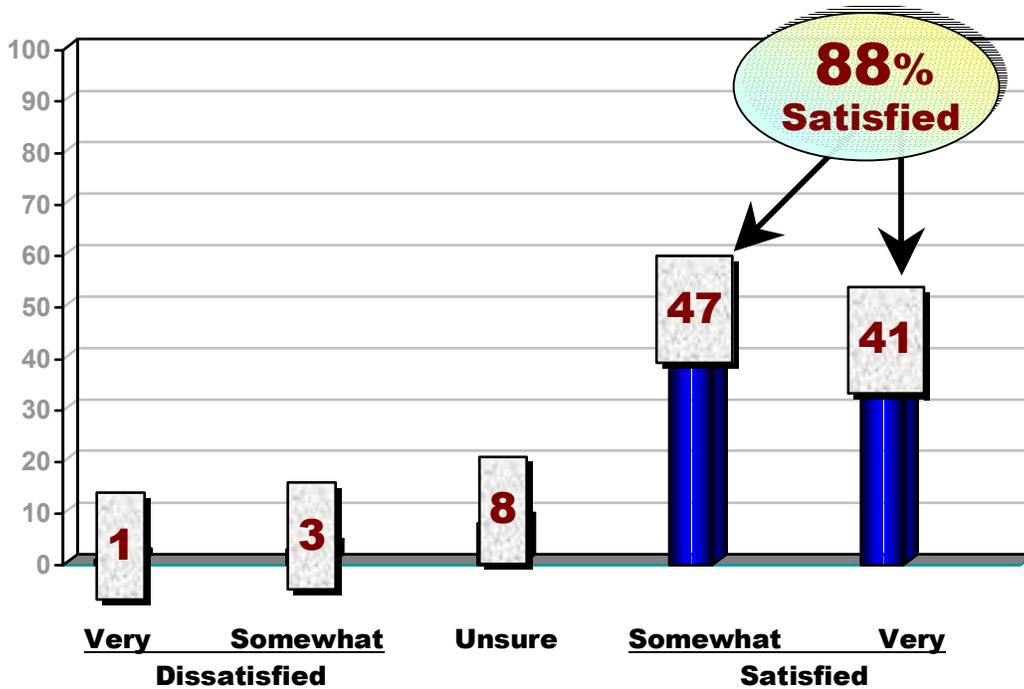
**Question 1.2: The availability of nearby recreational parks, picnic areas, wilderness areas open space and trails IMPROVES THE QUALITY OF LIFE for residents of the densely populated urban and suburban communities in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties.**



**Figure 2A**  
**User Satisfaction/Loyalty Survey**  
East Bay Regional Park District

## **Satisfaction With the Quality of Regional Parks & Trails**

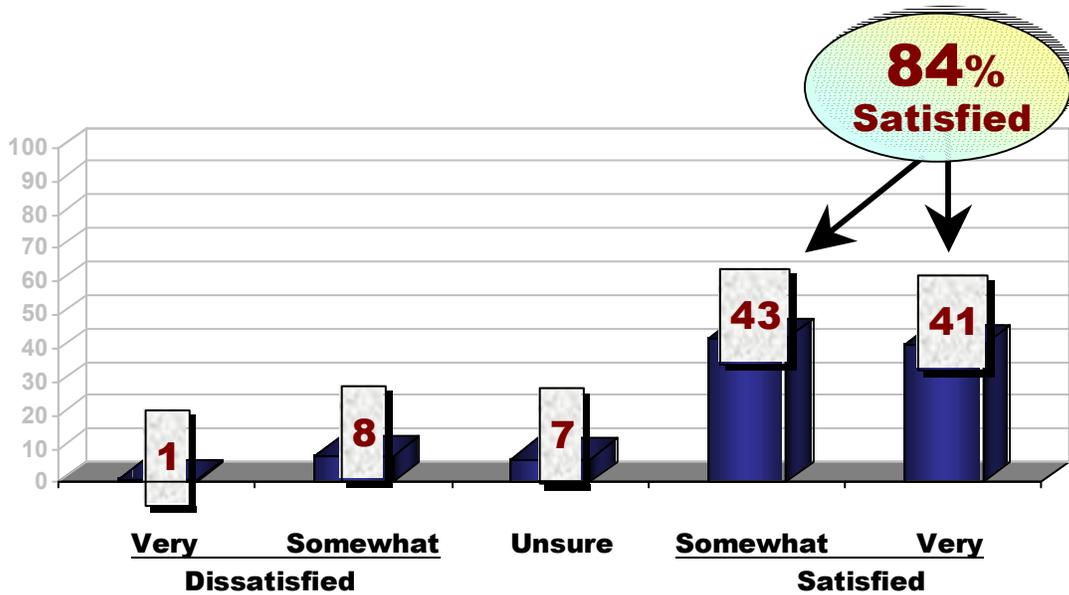
**Question 2.1: How satisfied are you with the present  
QUALITY of the regional parks, trails, and recreation  
facilities in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties?**



**Figure 2B**  
**User Satisfaction/Loyalty Survey**  
East Bay Regional Park District

## **Satisfaction With the Number of Regional Parks & Trails**

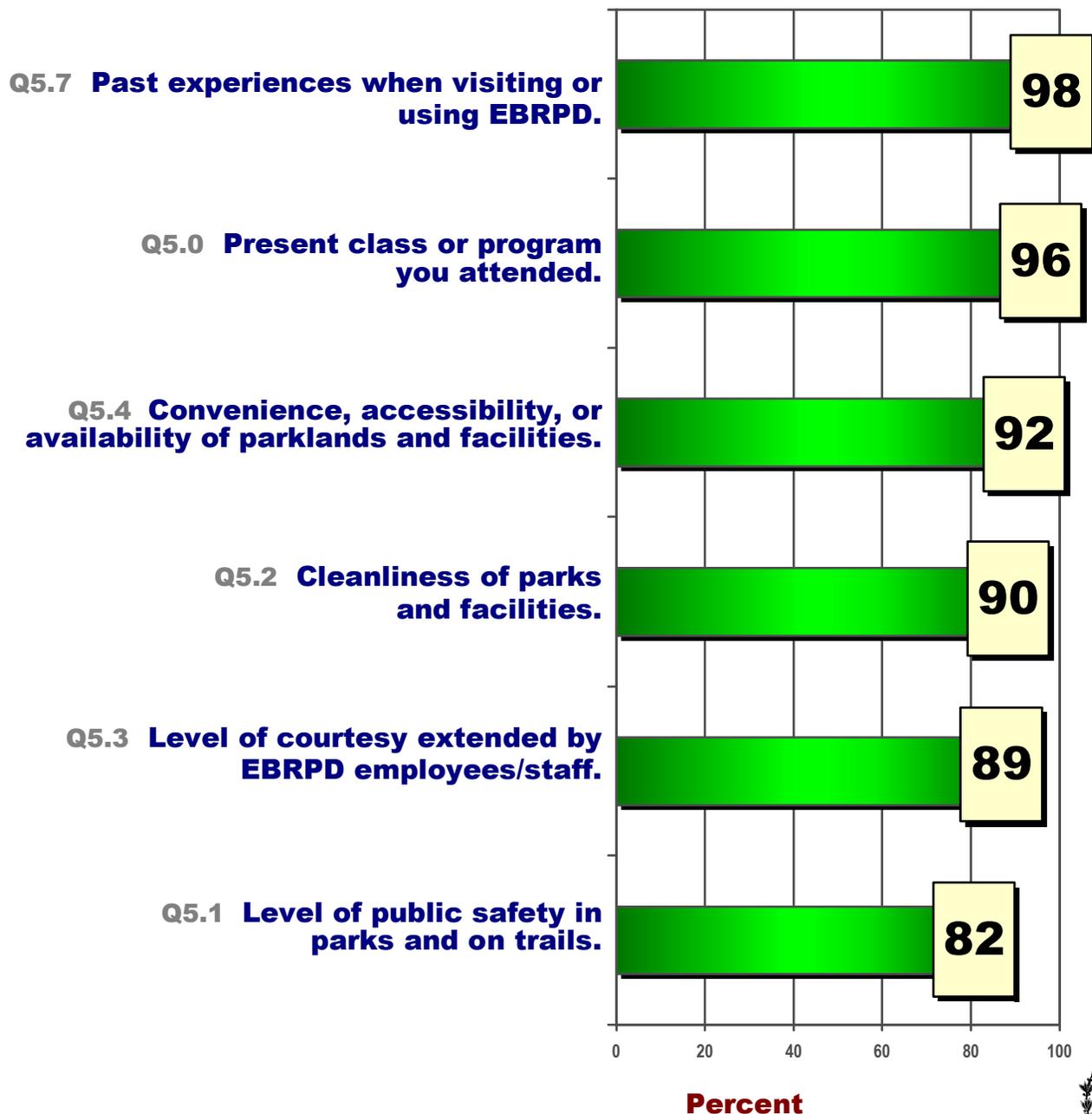
**Question 2.0: How satisfied are you with the present  
NUMBER of regional parks, trails and recreation facilities  
in Alameda and Contra Costa Counties?**



**Figure 2C**  
**User Satisfaction/Loyalty Survey**  
East Bay Regional Park District

## **Satisfaction With EBRPD**

*Very + Somewhat Satisfied*



**Figure 3**  
**User Satisfaction/Loyalty Survey**  
 East Bay Regional Park District

# Significance of... **Loyalty vs. Satisfaction**

**(Original Measures)**

Predictors	Vote
<i>Satisfaction</i> (not significant)	.10 n/s
<i>Loyalty</i> (extremely significant)	<b>.44**</b>

n/s means NOT statistically significant

\*\*Correlation is significant at the p<.01 level



Figure 4  
**User Satisfaction/Loyalty Survey**  
 East Bay Regional Park District

## **RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DIMENSIONS OF CUSTOMER/USER SATISFACTION & LOYALTY INDEX**

*Correlation Table*

<b>Dimensions of Customer/User Satisfaction</b>		<b>Loyalty</b>
		Correlation Coefficient
	<b>Customer/User SATISFACTION Index</b>	<b>.36**</b>
Q2.0	<b>Number of parks, trails, etc.</b>	.06 n/s
Q2.1	<b>Quality of parks, trails, etc.</b>	<b>.12*</b>
Q2.2	<b>Maintenance of parks, trails, etc.</b>	.08 n/s
Q5.0	<b>Class/program attended</b>	.11 n/s
Q5.1	<b>Public safety</b>	<b>.19**</b>
Q5.2	<b>Cleanliness of facilities</b>	<b>.17**</b>
Q5.3	<b>Courtesy of employees/staff</b>	<b>.25**</b>
Q5.4	<b>Public Access to parks, etc.</b>	<b>.17**</b>
Q5.5	<b>Customer service</b> (reservations/registration)	<b>.16**</b>
Q5.6	<b>Trust &amp; Integrity of professional staff</b>	<b>.42**</b>
Q5.7	<b>One's past experience</b>	<b>.18**</b>

n/s means NOT statistically significant

\*Correlation is significant at the p<.05 level

\*\*Correlation is significant at the p<.01 level



Figure 5  
**User Satisfaction/Loyalty Survey**  
 East Bay Regional Park District

## **RELATIONSHIP OF PREDICTORS OF SATISFACTION & LOYALTY TO HOW ONE VOTES**

*Correlation Table*

<b>Customer/User Satisfaction with...</b>		<b>Vote</b>
		Correlation Coefficient
Q2.0	<b>Number of parks, trails, etc.</b>	.01 n/s
Q2.1	<b>Quality of parks, trails, etc.</b>	.03 n/s
Q2.2	<b>Maintenance of parks, trails, etc.</b>	-.02 n/s
Q5.0	<b>Class/program attended</b>	-.02 n/s
Q5.1	<b>Public safety</b>	<b>.14**</b>
Q5.2	<b>Cleanliness of facilities</b>	<b>.08*</b>
Q5.3	<b>Courtesy of employees/staff</b>	<b>.10*</b>
Q5.4	<b>Access to parks, etc.</b>	<b>.12**</b>
Q5.5	<b>Customer service</b> (reservations/registration)	<b>.13**</b>
Q5.6	<b>Trust &amp; Integrity of professional staff</b>	<b>.16**</b>
Q5.7	<b>Past experience</b>	<b>.22**</b>
Q8.1	<b>Responsible</b> in investing tax dollars	<b>.23**</b>
Q8.2	<b>Trust</b> (District officials are trustworthy)	<b>.22**</b>
Q8.3	<b>Credibility</b> (Do NOT tend to exaggerate?)	<b>.29**</b>
Q8.4	<b>Accountability</b> (how \$ will be used)	<b>.23**</b>
Q8.5	<b>Always support tax</b> for District	<b>.50**</b>
Q8.6	<b>Accountability</b> (spend \$ as promised)	<b>.20**</b>

**Legend**

- Satisfaction**
- Loyalty**

n/s means NOT statistically significant  
 \*Correlation is significant at the p<.05 level  
 \*\*Correlation is significant at the p<.01 level



**Figure 6**  
**User Satisfaction/Loyalty Survey**  
 East Bay Regional Park District

## **Factor Analysis**

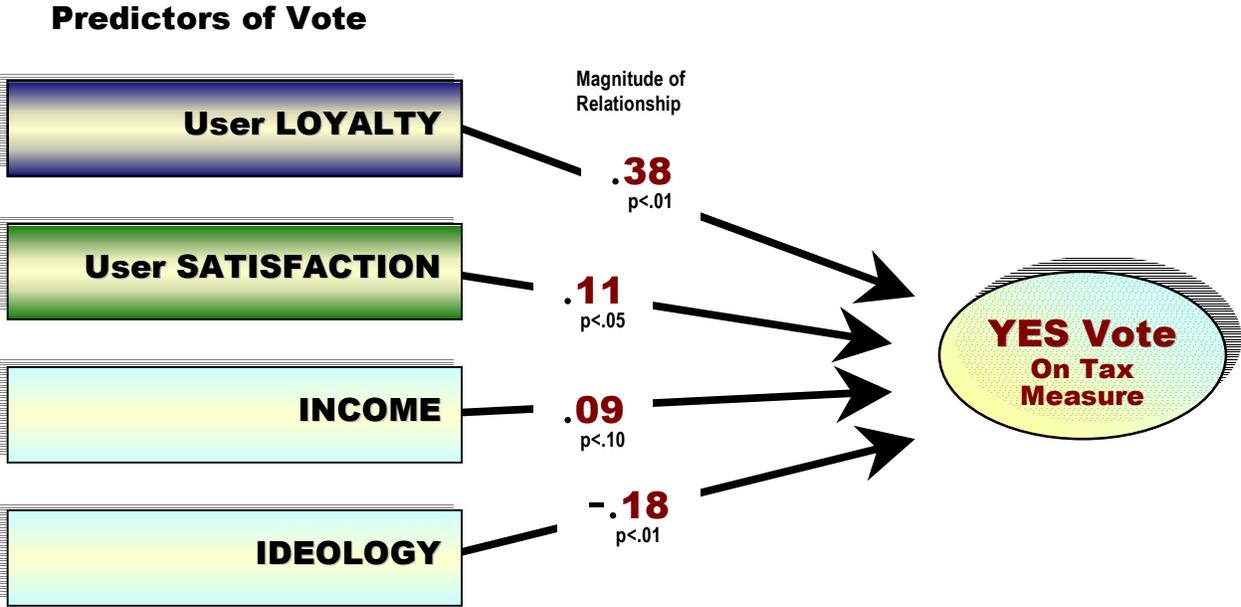
### **Dimensions of Satisfaction & Loyalty**

	<b>Factor 1</b>	<b>Factor 2</b>	<b>Factor 3</b>
(Q5.1) <b>Public Safety</b>	<b>.37</b>	<b>.27</b>	<b>-.14</b>
(Q5.4) <b>Access to parks, etc.</b>	<b>.39</b>	<b>.60</b>	<b>.08</b>
(Q5.5) <b>Customer service</b> (Reservations/Registration)	<b>.34</b>	<b>.44</b>	<b>-.44</b>
(Q5.6) <b>Trust &amp; Integrity of professional staff</b>	<b>.63</b>	<b>.07</b>	<b>-.38</b>
(Q5.7) <b>Past Experience</b>	<b>.36</b>	<b>.62</b>	<b>.43</b>
(Q8.1) <b>Responsible</b> (In spending tax dollars)	<b>.72</b>	<b>-.15</b>	<b>.10</b>
(Q8.2) <b>Trust</b> (District official are trustworthy)	<b>.78</b>	<b>-.20</b>	<b>-.01</b>
(Q8.3) <b>Credibility</b> (Do NOT tend to exaggerate)	<b>.48</b>	<b>-.34</b>	<b>.33</b>
(Q8.4) <b>Accountability</b> (How \$ will be used)	<b>.49</b>	<b>-.20</b>	<b>-.05</b>
(Q8.5) <b>Always support tax for District</b>	<b>.45</b>	<b>-.05</b>	<b>.53</b>
(Q8.6) <b>Accountability</b> (Spend \$ as promised)	<b>.66</b>	<b>-.31</b>	<b>-.28</b>



**Figure 7**  
**User Satisfaction/Loyalty Survey**  
East Bay Regional Park District

**Regression Analysis**  
**Indicators of a YES Vote**



**Note:** In the model tested, while two demographic variables were modest indicators of the outcome variable (YES Vote), those being one's "income" and "ideology" (refer to above regression model), a greater number of demographic variables did NOT predict (indicate) how park users would vote: e.g., **age, education, own vs. rent home**, among others. As hypothesized, the greatest predictor of voting, among the variables tested in the present research effort, is **LOYALTY**.

