



Relaxation to Recreation: Mapping Visitor Satisfaction at Cantonment Park Abbottabad

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Abstract

This research explores visitor perceptions and needs in Abbottabad's Cantonment Park, highlighting its importance as a well-maintained urban recreational space. The data was collected through a questionnaire by utilizing Convenience sampling techniques with data was analyzed SPSS PASW Statistics 18 from 150 completed questionnaire. Findings reveal diverse visitor demographics, motivations, and areas for improvement in park facilities. Visitor satisfaction and safety are pivotal, with evenings emerging as a preferred visiting time. The study emphasizes the significance of preserving the park's natural environment and provides recommendations for enhancing its value as a vital urban asset. This study underscores the pivotal role of well-maintained urban parks in enhancing visitor experiences, fostering community well-being, and attracting tourism. This research unveils key insights into the multifaceted aspects of park utilization, emphasizing the significance of addressing visitor needs and aspirations to ensure the park's continued success and relevance.

Keywords: Park, Natural Environment, Recreation, Wellbeing, Visitors' Satisfaction

1. Introduction

Public parks and green spaces play a pivotal role in the lives of urban residents, providing an essential escape from the hustle and bustle of city life. One such urban oasis, Cantonment Park in Abbottabad, Pakistan, has been a focal point for relaxation and recreation. This park has a long history and is popularly known as lady garden. Lady Gardens in Abbottabad is well-known attraction located on the main road outside St Luk's Church. It was built soon after the establishment of Abbottabad town in January 1853, primary for the enjoyment of European women and families, but after the country's independence, it was offered to the public. The farewell poem was written by the town's founder, Major Abbott, and etched on a large stone slab beneath a towering cedar tree. In 1904 Allam Iqbal visited this park and wrote the poem Abar (Hazara District Gazeteer, 1884).

However, recent developments surrounding the park have sparked controversy and concern among the public. The Cantonment Board granted a private business the rights to develop 'Euphoria Land' within the park for a five-year period, raising questions about the park's purpose and the impact of these changes. Cantonment Park, situated in the picturesque city of Abbottabad, is the only such resource available for residents and visiting tourists. As the city's population steadily increases, the park's significance in providing greenery and recreational opportunities becomes more pronounced. It not only fosters social gatherings and promotes community integration but also contributes to the physical and psychological well-being of residents, as research by (Somajita Paul; Harini & Nagendra 2017) suggests. Well-maintained parks like Cantonment Park hold a special place in a city's charm, attracting both residents and visitors from nearby areas. Beyond offering leisure and relaxation, these parks play a significant role in the tourism sector, as demonstrated in studies by (Chaudhry and Tewari 2010). The way residents and visitors utilize parks depends on a variety of factors, such as social-demographics and psychographics. The utilization of parks is a subject of great importance and requires careful examination. Researchers have explored various aspects of parks, including their historical significance, accessibility, and more (Byrne and Wolch, 2009). Parks and open spaces hold diverse meanings, from health benefits to tourism and historic preservation, in modern urban settings, their evolving role requires a fresh perspective for continued enjoyment of their advantages. (Brink, et al, 2016).

1.1. Objectives

The study aims to evaluate visitors' perceptions by:

- Analyzing their awareness and understanding of the park.
- Assessing the visitor's satisfaction
- Reviewing the quality of facilities and services offered at Jinnah Park.

2. Literature Review

The literature surrounding public parks, green spaces, and visitor satisfaction offers valuable insights into the dynamics at play in Cantonment Park, Abbottabad. Public Park are important place of recreation and paly of joy for the residents and visitors of the city While providing opportunity for leisure and recreation is basic human right. Parks are essential for community health and well-being, contributing to higher physical activity levels and healthier communities and the presence of parks has been linked to improved overall health and quality of life for residents (Romagosa, et al,

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2015). These green spaces and parks have been recognized for their vital role in urban ecosystems. They provide social, recreational, and mental benefits to urban residents. Public parks, like Cantonment Park, have historical significance that shapes their current role in urban life. The historical evolution of such parks and their cultural significance can influence visitor perceptions (Brockman, 1978). Studies have shown that visitors value parks not only for their aesthetic qualities but also for the positive impact on mental and physical well-being (Paul and Nagendra, 2017). The satisfaction of visitors in public parks is a primary measure of quality in outdoor recreation; Factors such as park cleanliness have been shown to be critical to visitor satisfaction (Fletcher and Fletcher, 2003). Community gardens provide a sense of community, promote sustainability, and enhance the overall urban environment, these spaces contribute to social and environmental well-being (Chaudhry and Tewari, 2009). Understanding the geographic aspects of park use is crucial to assess the socio-spatial variables that influence visitor behavior, the factors like age, race, and socio-economic status play a role in determining how parks are used (Lndy, et al, 2018). Security is a growing concern in public spaces, and the implementation of advanced metering systems and surveillance technologies can enhance safety and visitor experiences (Sandia, 2007; Nazmfar, et al 2020; Cucchiara, et al, 2005).

3. Methodology

This methodology section outlines the data collection process, sampling approach, and the key demographic information of the respondents. It also provides insights into the timing of the surveys and the categorization of visitors to the park based on their characteristics and motivations for visiting. The study is quantitative, The data is collected through a questionnaire. The research questionnaire was developed and consisted of 22 questions, of which 20 were closed-ended and 2 were open-ended. These questions were carefully selected to gather information on respondents' demographics and other relevant data, including gender, education, occupation, place of origin, and monthly income. The face-to-face surveys occurred on weekdays, weekends, mornings, evenings, and other high-visitor times for diverse data collection. a convenience sampling method was employed to gather perceptions, ensuring a fair and random approach. 200 questionnaires distributed, 150 were completed, resulting in a 75% response rate. The collected data was coded and analyzed using SPSS PASW Statistics 18 (release 18.0.0). Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the data, with thematic mean being employed to compare different aspects of the collected data.

4. Results and Discussion

The parks in Abbottabad are vital for providing recreational, social, and psychological benefits to the local population. This research aimed to understand the perceptions and significance of these parks for visitors in the community. With a focus on Abbottabad, known as the world's most beautiful city, the study collected responses from 150 park visitors. The research aimed to ascertain the needs and wants of the park visitors, emphasizing the importance of well-maintained, publicly accessible parks in Abbottabad. The results offer insights into the perceptions and requirements of park visitors, which can inform future park planning and development.

4.1. Social Characteristics of the Visitors

The social characteristics of the respondents provide valuable insights into the demographic composition of park visitors show in table 1.

- **Demography:** The study included a nearly equal number of male (49.3%) and female (50.7%) visitors, with slightly more female visitors. Visitors ranged from 10 to 55 years old, with the highest percentage (30%) belonging to the 16-20 years' age group, followed by those aged 21-25 years (23.3%). Most of visitors were students (42.7%), followed by employed individuals (17.3%), housewives (17.3%), and those with their own businesses (2.7%). The park also attracted professionals such as doctors, engineers, and teachers. The research found that a significant proportion of visitors (48%) were city residents, while others came from nearby areas, such as Mansehra (15.7%), Gilgit (9.3%), and various other locations.
- **Monthly Income:** The study identified a diverse range of income groups among visitors, with 16.7% having monthly incomes between 10,001-20,000, and 14.0% earning between 20,001-30,000. A notable percentage (54.0%) did not disclose their monthly income.
- **Visitors' Purpose and Frequency of Visits:**
 - **Purpose of Visit:** A substantial portion of visitors came to the park for entertainment (37.3%) and relaxation (34.7%). A smaller number visited for other purposes (16.0%), leisure (6.7%), or exercise (5.3%).
 - **Frequency of Visits:** The majority of visitors (39.3%) visited the park five or more times, indicating that it was a popular destination for frequent visitors. Single visits accounted for 22%, while double (13.3%) and triple visits (13.3%) were also relatively common.
 - **Company:** Visitors often visited the park with family (46%), friends (32.0%), or as couples (12.7%). A smaller proportion visited alone (9.3%).

- **Duration of Visit:** A significant portion of visitors spent two hours (34.7%) in the park, while others spent one hour (20.0%) or three hours (20.0%). Some visitors stayed longer, with 14.7% spending four hours and 10.7% spending five hours or more.

Table 1: Social characteristics of visitors

Aspect	Data: Social Characteristics of the Visitors:
Gender	Male: 49.3%, Female: 50.7%
Age	10-15 years: 0%, 16-20 years: 30%, 21-25 years: 23.3%
Occupation	Students: 42.7%, Employed: 17.3%, Housewives: 17.3%, Own Business: 2.7%, Professionals: varied
Place of Origin	City residents: 48%, Mansehra: 15.7%, Gilgit: 9.3%, Others: varied
Monthly Income	10,001-20,000: 16.7%, 20,001-30,000: 14.0%, Not disclosed: 54.0%
Purpose of Visit	Entertainment: 37.3%, Relaxation: 34.7%, Other: 16.0%, Leisure: 6.7%, Exercise: 5.3%
Frequency of Visit	Single: 22%, Double: 13.3%, Triple: 13.3%, 5 or more times: 39.3%
Company	Family: 46%, Friends: 32.0%, Couples: 12.7%, Alone: 9.3%
Duration of Visit	1 hour: 20.0%, 2 hours: 34.7%, 3 hours: 20.0%, 4 hours: 14.7%, 5 hours or more: 10.7%

4.2. Transportation and Travel Costs

Table 2 give information on mode of transport and travel cost of the visitors.

- **Mode of Transportation:** The study found that visitors used a variety of transportation modes to reach the park, including private vehicles (31.3%), taxis (22.0%), public transportation (21.3%), rent-a-car services (7.3%), and other means (18%).
- **Travel Costs:** The cost of travel also varied, with 45.3% of visitors spending between 1 and 500 units (local currency), while 23.0% reported no travel costs. Others had travel costs ranging from 501 to 1,500 units (18.0%) or above 1,501 units (8.7%).

Table 2: Travel and transport cost

Aspect	Data: Transportation and Travel Costs
Mode of Transportation	Private vehicles: 31.3%, Taxis: 22.0%, Public transportation: 21.3%, Rent-a-car services: 7.3%, Other: 18%
Travel Costs	1-500 units: 45.3%, No travel costs: 23.0%, 501-1,500 units: 18.0%, Above 1,501 units: 8.7%

4.3. Satisfaction with Park Services and Facilities

Referring table, no 3, overview the visitors satisfaction with Park facilities and services;

- **Overall Satisfaction:** Most visitors (54.7%) reported being satisfied with the park's services and facilities. However, a significant proportion (45.3%) expressed dissatisfaction.
- **Specific Dissatisfactions:** Areas of dissatisfaction included washroom facilities (17%), ticketing (16%), food and beverages (8.0%), car parking (2.0%), and other unspecified facilities (2.0%).
- **Information Sources and Perceptions:**
- **Information Sources:** Visitors reported learning about the park through various means, with the highest percentage (42.7%) hearing about it from someone they know. Other sources included newspapers (21.3%), magazines (14.7%), the internet (11.3%), and television (10.0%).
- **Perceptions:** A majority of visitors (62%) were satisfied with the overall environment of the park, while 38.0% expressed dissatisfaction. However, when asked about the availability of space for activities in the park, 56% reported that there was enough, while 44.0% believed there was insufficient space.
- **Security:** 56% of visitors were satisfied with security within the park, while 44.0% were not satisfied.

Table 3: Satisfaction with Park facilities

Aspect	Data: Transportation and Travel Costs
Satisfaction with Park Services and Facilities	Satisfied: 54.7%, Dissatisfied: 45.3%
Specific Dissatisfactions	Washroom facilities: 17%, Ticketing: 16%, Food and beverages: 8.0%, Car parking: 2.0%, Other unspecified facilities: 2.0%
Information Sources	Someone they know: 42.7%, Newspapers: 21.3%, Magazines: 14.7%, Internet: 11.3%, Television: 10.0%

Perceptions	Satisfied with overall environment: 62%, Dissatisfied: 38.0%, Enough space for activities: 56%, Insufficient space: 44.0%
Security	Satisfied: 56%, Dissatisfied: 44.0%

4.4. Preferred Visit Times and Future Intentions

Table No4 shows the visit intention and preference.

- **Preferred Visit Times:** The preferred times for visiting the park varied, with 44.7% of visitors favoring evenings, 30.0% choosing daytime visits, 12.7% preferring nights, and 12.7% indicating weekends as the ideal time to visit.
- **Future Intentions:** A significant majority (65.3%) expressed a desire to visit the park again, while 34.7% did not have intentions of returning.

Table 4: Preference and intention of visit

Aspect		Data: Preferred Visit Times and Future Intentions
Preferred Visit Times	Visit	Evenings: 44.7%, Daytime: 30.0%, Nights: 12.7%, Weekends: 12.7%
Future Intentions		Intend to visit again: 65.3%, Do not intend to visit again: 34.7%

4.5. Visitor Suggestions and Feedback

Table 5 displays the visitors' suggestions and feedback.

Visitor Suggestions: When asked for suggestions, 33.3% of visitors did not provide any, while others suggested the need for proper park maintenance (22.7%), keeping the garden clean and green (12.0%), developing park services and facilities (11.3%), proper sewage and disposal systems (10.7%), and the provision of better food options (10.0%).

Table 5: suggestions and feedback

Aspect		Data: Visitor Suggestions and Feedback
Visitor Suggestions		No suggestions: 33.3%, Proper park maintenance: 22.7%, Clean and green garden: 12.0%, Develop park services and facilities: 11.3%, Proper sewage and disposal systems: 10.7%, Better food options: 10.0%

5. Conclusion

This research has achieved its goals of understanding visitor perceptions in Abbottabad's Cantonment Park. The findings underscore the importance of parks in densely populated cities and their potential to contribute to the well-being of residents and attract tourists. Abbottabad's high tourist traffic, particularly route to popular destinations, makes its parks significant. Ensuring the proper maintenance and utilization of these parks is essential. Visitor satisfaction and experience are key indicators of park conditions. Visitors' satisfaction is influenced by their experiences, whether positive or negative. Developing and maintaining services and facilities is crucial for visitor satisfaction. These amenities should cater to visitors' needs, including washroom facilities and secure parking. The preservation and maintenance of natural environments, especially green spaces, play a pivotal role in attracting and retaining park visitors. Security is a top priority for visitors in Pakistan, and addressing these concerns is vital for promoting park usage.

Evening is a prime visiting time, and park operations and services should be optimized accordingly. For long-term success, parks must offer a variety of recreational activities and maintain high standards of development and safety. Regular maintenance, cleanliness, and the availability of hygienic food are essential for a positive visitor experience. Assurance properties and trustworthiness of the park administration contribute to visitor satisfaction and play a pivotal role in visitors' decision-making processes.

6. Recommendations for Development of the Park

To further enhance the park and attract more visitors, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Ensure consistent maintenance and regular upkeep of the park to create a welcoming environment for visitors. Invest in improvements to park services and facilities, including washrooms, parking facilities, and food options to increase visitor satisfaction.
- Implement security measures to ensure visitors' safety and foster trust in the park's administration.
- Consider extending park operating hours to accommodate peak visiting times and cater to visitor preferences.
- Develop a broader range of recreational activities, particularly for children, and maintain any recreational equipment.
- Preserve and enhance green spaces, promoting the park's natural beauty and environmental benefits. Ensure proper sewage and waste disposal systems are in place to maintain the park's cleanliness.

- Make information about the park more widely accessible and explore marketing strategies to attract visitors.

7. Limitations of the Study

Despite the valuable insights gained from this study, there are limitations to consider: The study's sample size was limited to 150 questionnaires, potentially restricting the generalizability of the findings. Due to resource constraints, interviews with visitors were not conducted, which could have provided deeper insights into their experiences and needs. The study faced limitations related to time and cost, which influenced the extent of data collection and analysis.

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