

# Examining Visitation to the Gyeryongsan National Park

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## Abstract

Understanding visit motivation to parks is important when attempting to improve visitor satisfaction and their intentions to revisit and recommend. The objective of this study is to not only examine the impact of visitors' motivations on their satisfaction, but also study the effect of their satisfaction on their behavioral intentions. This objective will be fulfilled using regression models populated with data from the Gyeryongsan National Park (GNP). Onsite surveys were collected during April and May 2017 at the Donghaksa, Gapsa, Cheonjeong, Sinwonsa, Sangsin, and Sutonggol information centers of the GNP (N=224). The results of this study indicate that the visitors' motivations influenced their visit satisfaction, which, in turn, impacted their behavioral intentions. The study's findings will help park managers and policy-makers establish effective park management strategies and enhance visitors' experiences.

**Key Words:** motivation, satisfaction, behavioral intentions, Gyeryongsan National Park

## Introduction

Visitors have various motivations to travel to different destinations, and their behaviors, satisfaction, and intentions are influenced by these motivations (Funk and Bruun 2007; Kitouna and Kim 2017). Previous studies have shown that motivations are closely related to satisfaction (Lee 2000; Lee and Lee 2001; Lee et al. 2004), and satisfied visitors are more likely to revisit (Crompton and McKay 1997; Baker and Crompton 2000) recommend destinations to others (Anderson and Mittal 2000; Lee et al. 2016; Schuett et al. 2016). Understanding visit motivations to parks is important when attempting to improve visitors' satisfaction, thereby lead to their behavioral intentions (Yoon and Uysal 2005). Thus, the objective of this study is to not only examine the impact of visitors' motivations on their satisfaction, but also study the effect of their satisfac-

tion on their behavioral intentions. This objective will be fulfilled using regression models populated with data from the Gyeryongsan National Park (GNP).

In 1968, the GNP was designated the second national park in South Korea. The park's total area is 64.71 km<sup>2</sup> and ranges across Daejeon, Gongju, and Nonsan in the Chungcheongnam-do Province and Daejeon City. This park draws around 1.7 million visitors each year because of its proximity to a major city and the natural resources that it contains, including 1,121 species of plants, 1,867 species of insects, and 645 species of animals (Korea National Park Service 2017).

## Materials and Methods

Onsite, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 224 visitors at the below GNP information centers during April

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and May 2017. The KNPS staff collected the data using a systematic random sampling from the Donghaksa, Gapsa, Cheonjeong, Sinwonsa, Sangsin, and Sutonggol information centers at the GNP. The sample size was determined based on the monthly sample distribution of the park’s visitation statistics from previous year (2016). The staff of the KNPS briefly introduced the objective of the study to the survey participants. The participants were selected when they met the following criteria: 1) willing to participate in the survey and 2) having visited the GNP.

This study included such variables as visitation behavior (i.e., length of visit, group type, transportation, proximity, and motivation), satisfaction, behavioral intentions, and socio-demographics. The measurement items related to visitation behavior, motivation, satisfaction, and behavioral intentions were adapted from previous studies of Korean national parks (Lee et al. 2016; Schuett et al. 2016). It should be noted that, in this study, some refinements were made to the questions about the visitors’ motivations in order to create items designed for this particular context. These measurement items were assessed using a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Other demographic and behavioral vari-

ables were also included in this study. The data were analyzed using SPSS statistical software version 21.0.

## Results

As shown in Table 1, the respondents were more likely to be male (53.6%) than female (46.4%). The majority of the respondents were between 40- and 59-years-old. About half of the respondents had an average monthly household income of over 4 million won. More than half of the respondents came from Daejeon City and 97% of the respondents stayed less than 24 hours. The majority of the respondents visited with family members (45.8%), friends (32%), or alone (20%) and used private cars.

The top three motivations for visiting the park were improving health (mean = 4.24), utilizing the relaxation/healing forest walking program (mean = 4.23), and experiencing natural/cultural assets (mean = 4.16). The lowest scoring motivation was participation in volunteer and park programs (mean = 2.34). The mean score for satisfaction was 4.03 and the mean scores for intention to revisit and recommend to others were both 4.24.

This study conducted a regression model to examine

**Table 1.** Respondents’ socio-demographic and tripographic characteristics

Characteristics		N	%	Characteristics		N	%
Gender	Male	131	58,5	Type of company	Alone	45	20,3
	Female	93	41,5		Family	103	45,8
Age	10s	5	2,2		Friends/Colleagues	72	32,0
	20s	23	10,3	Sports club	4	2,0	
	30s	37	16,5	Length of stay	Day visit	209	93,5
	40s	51	22,8		Overnight visit	15	6,5
	50s	64	28,6	Proximity	Less than 1 hour	126	56,2
	60s	39	17,4		1-2 hours	58	26,1
	over 70	5	2,2		2-3 hours	28	12,4
Monthly household income	Under 1 million won	6	3,9		3-4 hours	9	3,9
	1-2 million won	22	14,4		Over 5 hours	3	1,3
	2-3 million won	23	15,0	Transportation	Private vehicle	180	80,4
	3-4 million won	26	17,0		Chartered bus	6	2,6
	4-5 million won	31	20,3		Public transportation	29	13,1
	Over 5 million won	45	29,4		Other	9	3,9

the relationship between the visitors' motivations and their satisfaction. The regression model was statistically significant ( $F = 9.882$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with a relatively low adjusted  $R^2$  (0.089). As shown in Table 2, the results of the regression model indicate that the three motivations of experiencing natural/cultural assets ( $\beta = 0.129$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), promoting health ( $\beta = 0.89$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), and utilizing the relaxation/healing forest walking program ( $\beta = 0.091$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) had positive effects on the visitors' satisfaction. Furthermore, experiencing natural/cultural assets was found to contribute to the highest level of satisfaction, followed by promoting health and utilizing the relaxation/healing forest walking program.

This study also performed regression models to examine the relationships between the visitors' satisfaction and their intentions to revisit and recommend. The regression models were statistically significant ( $F = 46.562$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $F = 34.595$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) with adjusted  $R^2$  s of 0.231 and 0.181, respectively. As shown in Table 3, the results of the regression model indicate that the visitors' satisfaction positively influenced both their intentions to revisit ( $\beta = 0.424$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and intentions to recommend ( $\beta = 0.373$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ).

## Conclusion

The objectives of this study were to investigate how visitors' motivations influence their satisfaction which, in turn, affect their behavioral intentions at the GNP in order to enhance visitor satisfaction and improve the quality of services provided by the national park's management. The results showed that the visitors were mostly satisfied with their park experiences. The results also showed that motivation had a significant impact on the visitors' satisfaction and that experiencing natural/cultural assets, health, and relaxation were significant motivations in regard to providing satisfying experiences.

This study also found that visitors' satisfaction influenced their behavioral intentions. As shown in this study, visit motivation was an important issue for the visitors as their motivations are closely related to their satisfaction (Lee 2000; Lee and Lee 2001; Lee et al. 2004). These notions were consistent with past research that showed that satisfied visitors were more likely to support and revisit (Crompton and McKay 1997; Baker and Crompton 2000) and recommend destinations to others (Anderson and Mittal 2000; Lee et al. 2016; Schuett et al. 2016). Thus, park

**Table 2.** Regression model of testing the relationship between visitors' motivation on satisfaction

Dependent variable	Independent variable	$\beta$	Std. error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Satisfaction	Promoting health	0.089	0.037	0.120	2.394	0.017
	Building friendship	-0.044	0.027	-0.080	-1.616	0.107
	Experiencing natural/cultural assets	0.129	0.042	0.177	3.088	0.002
	Relaxation/healing forest walking program	0.091	0.046	0.118	1.970	0.049
	Participation in volunteer/park programs	-0.046	0.026	-0.081	-1.777	0.076
$R^2=0.099$ , adj $R^2=0.089$ , $F$ -value=9.882, $p=0.000$						

**Table 3.** Regression model of testing the relationship between satisfaction on behavioral intentions

Dependent variable	Independent variable	$\beta$	Std. error	Beta	t-value	Sig.
Intention to revisit	Satisfaction	0.424	0.062	0.485	6.824	0.000
$R^2=0.236$ , adj $R^2=0.231$ , $F$ -value=46.562, $p=0.000$						
Intention to recommend	Satisfaction	0.373	0.063	0.432	5.882	0.000
$R^2=0.186$ , adj $R^2=0.181$ , $F$ -value=34.595, $p=0.0002$						

managers should be more aware of their visitors' motivations. In other words, they should develop programs that promote health, reduce stress, and help visitors to appreciate park resources in order to increase visitors' satisfaction as it is related to returning to the GNP. The findings of this study could help park managers and policy-makers establish better park management strategies for sustainability by enhancing visitors' experiences. This study has one limitation in that the results of this study may not be generalized because of the limited sample size and short period of data collection. Therefore, future research should collect data for longer field periods and increase the sample size.

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