

The Effect of Services and Facilities on Seniors' Visitation Experiences in Seoraksan National Park, Korea

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Abstract

This study examined visitor use of Seoraksan National Park in Korea by seniors. The objectives were to analyze the effects of services and facilities on satisfaction and behavioral intention (to revisit and recommend to others) and explore gender differences. This study was conducted onsite in 2014 and data were collected from seniors (> 60 years old). The study variables included travel behavior, visitation experiences, service and facility preferences, and socio-economic characteristics. Study results (N=186) showed 50% male and 50% female respondents, visitors came mostly with family or friends; stayed at the park less than 24 hours, and visited 1–2 times a year. The major purposes of their visits were hiking, sightseeing, and health. Results showed that visitors are mostly satisfied with their national park experience and significant predictors of satisfaction included: size of the parking lot, well-maintained trails, and convenient rest areas; intention to recommend the park to others and intention to revisit were predicted by trails. Gender differences were found on five variables: trail, hiking information center, visitor center, camping site, and shelter, with female satisfaction scores lower on each of these items. This research contributes to a better understanding of senior national park visitor preferences and provides needed information so park managers can improve services and facilities and meet the future needs for a growing and active population of seniors in Korea. Future research should examine a more representative sample of seniors at Korean national parks and assess the benefits of time spent in the natural environment.

Key words

gender differences, Korean national parks, satisfaction, seniors, physical activity

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Introduction

Past research on participation in recreation activities for older adults has identified numerous benefits: improved physical health (Paganini-Hill, Kawas, & Corrada, 2011), social interaction and friendship development (Dionigi & Lyons, 2010), and psychological well-being (Cohen, 2004), as well as helping with the transition to retirement (Kleiber & Linde, 2014). The recreation activity of older adults (>60 years of age) has significant impact on individuals staying active and healthy, but also contributes to the positive formation and development of local communities (Kim & Lim, 2011). The importance of recreation for older adults is especially significant considering future population projections in Korea. The number of older adults, those who are 65 or older, in Korean society has grown from 540 million (11%) to 610 million (12.2%), a gain of 1.2% from 2010 to 2013 (Korea National Park Service, 2014). The senior population is expected to increase to 15.7% in 2020, 24.3% in 2030, and 40.1% in 2060 (Statistics Korea, 2015), when the baby boomers become seniors.

Korean government data show that seniors' leisure activities occur primarily in the house (36.2%), senior community centers (29.3%), neighborhood parks or in the mountains (17.1%). Although leisure activities can have an important impact on the quality of life of seniors, the most common activity during weekends and holidays is reportedly watching TV (71.4%). Not surprisingly, their satisfaction rate for leisure activities was only 37.7%. This level of satisfaction may be due to limited choices because data show that they would prefer additional leisure facilities including more city parks, amusement parks, and sports facilities (Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, 2012).

In examining the benefits of physical activity for Korean seniors, many of the research studies have focused on physical benefits (Park, Elavsky, & Koo, 2014) and physiological impacts such as depression and demographic factors (Cha, 2009; You & Won, 2010). Healthy aging has been shown to be impacted by depression, leisure participation, perceived health condition, and self-esteem (Han, Lee, Gu, Oh, Han, & Kim, 2015). Several studies have also identified the importance of access to activities so seniors can stay active. These studies have shown that the Korean government needs to offer more facilities and programs for providing more leisure opportunities and reducing mental health problems (Hyun, 2003; Ahn et al., 2014).

Although there has been some research done on seniors' leisure participation, not much is known about seniors and their use of national parks. According to the Korea National Park visitor studies from 2010 and 2014, the rate of participation by visitors in their 20s through their 40s has declined (20s has declined from 21.8% to 18.1%; 30s from 25.4% to 24.7%; 40s from 27.4% to 26.6%), yet the rate of visitors in their 50's has increased from 17% to 21.4%, and for those 60 or older, increased from 8.5% to 9.2% (Korea National Park Service, 2010, 2014). These figures on park visitation may be linked to an aging and more active senior population. To plan for this aging population and potential visitation to national parks, the Korea National Park Service (KNPS) is implementing specific policies to better meet the needs of this growing market segment. However, current information is limited for park management about what services and facilities seniors prefer, how males and females differ with their park experience and how to best develop park amenities for this user group.

Literature Review

Since 1967 Korea has had a system of national parks featuring mountain and coastal areas and historic sites (Korea National Park Service, 2010). Almost all of the Korean national parks nationwide are managed by the Korea National Park Service, excluding Hallasan National Park in Jeju Special Self-Governing Province (Korea National Park Service, 2010). According to the Korea National Park Service website, "National parks of Korea are considered areas that represent the natural ecosystem and cultural scenes of the Republic of Korea. They are designated and managed by the government of the Republic of Korea in order to protect the areas and ensure sustainable use" as a destination in Korea (Korea National Park Service, 2010).

Visitation at Korean National Parks

Parks and protected areas are ideal places for those who want to escape from urban areas. Korea's population is just under 50 million people (Statistics Korea, 2015) and it has some of the largest and most densely populated cities in the world. As of 2012 the population of Seoul was 10.4

million (Seoul Metropolitan Government, 2012). According to *World Bank Indicators 2012* (World Bank, 2012), 82% of Korean citizens reside in urban environments. As Korea becomes more urbanized, national parks will become an important natural destination providing natural, cultural, psychosocial and economic resources for millions of residents and local businesses, especially those in the recreation and tourism industries (Shin, Yeoun, Yoo, & Shin, 2010).

In 2003 the government reduced the workweek from six days to five. This decrease in the workweek and “extra” leisure time may have contributed to some of the growth in annual park visitation numbers. Additionally, in 2007 the government made a decision to eliminate park entrance fees, which resulted in an upsurge in visitation (Siderelis, Moore, & Lee, 2011). In examining some of these figures, visitation increased in 2006 from 27 million visitors (26,786,258) to 38 million visitors (37,976,815) in 2007, and then up to 43 million (42,658,154) in 2010. Of these park visitors, most were from South Korea because visitor composition is overwhelmingly local, with only 1% of visitors coming from abroad (Heo et al., 2010).

Given the volume of park use in the last decade, only a limited number of studies have investigated the use of national parks and protected areas in Korea. For example, Shin, Jaakson, and Kim (2001) identified how resource characteristics influence the recreation experiences and achievement of benefits delivered by visitors to Seoraksan National Park in Korea using a benefits-based management framework. Lee and Han (2002) examined the economic values of natural and cultural resources of five Korean national parks using a contingent valuation method. Kim, Lee, and Klenosky (2003) examined push and pull factors that affect decisions to visit Korean national parks. They found that key push factors were focused on several areas including natural resources, escape, health, and family, while the pull factors were tourist resources, information, convenience of facilities, and transportation. More recently, Park and Njite (2010) investigated the influence of destination image and visitors’ future behavior in Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, which is home to “Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes,” a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in Korea. Siderelis et al. (2011) identified the relationship between park attributes and the choice of visitors (e.g., length of trail, aesthetics) to predict future visitation to national parks in Korea.

Seniors and National Parks

Thus, research on national park experiences has focused on a range of variables from economics to motivational factors, yet this body of literature is still in a nascent stage when it comes to seniors. Current research has only scratched the surface in identifying the behaviors, motivations, needs, and resource preferences of seniors. In reviewing some of this literature, Lawton (2002) examined the use of eco-lodges in Australia by seniors (65 and older). She found that seniors prefer natural environments, educational programs, and sustainable practices. However, she also identified the importance of comfortable facilities and an environment that does not pose physical risks for this group. In one of the few articles on seniors and national park use in Korea, Lee, Lee, and Sim (2015) examined visitation to three national parks: Bukhansan, Seoraksan, and Wolaksan. They found that the seniors' main reasons for visiting these parks were for day hiking and sightseeing. When they examined visitors' levels of satisfaction, it differed by park in several areas including parking lots, toilets, campgrounds, and visitor centers. As the literature points out, satisfaction is critical for determining quality visitor experiences and impacts future visitation (Manning, 2011; Sievänen, Neuvonen, & Pouta, 2011; Roemer & Vaske, 2014). Given the growth in the number of older adults in Korean society, park managers have to plan effectively to meet the needs of this growing market segment, ensuring that visitors have a satisfying experience, and protect the resource for future generations.

Senior Gender Differences and Physical Activity

Increased longevity, better health care and nutrition, and improvements in retirement/insurance plans have enabled seniors to experience successful aging by participating in physical activity (Adams, Leibbrandt, & Moon, 2011). These experiences have been shown to improve personal growth, minimize depression, enhance socialization, and thus contribute to the well-being of seniors (Baker, Cahalin, Gerst, & Burr, 2005). In exploring gender differences for seniors, earlier research by Cutler and Hendricks (1990) found that women are likely to be involved in socio-cultural and home-centered leisure activities; men prefer travel, sports, and outdoor activities. More recently, Lee (2005) examined differences between seniors' gender and physical activities, and found that women are less engaged in

physical activities than men, more involved in household activities. In a detailed review of many studies on gender differences and physical activity, Lim, Jones-Kayser, Waters, and Yoo (2007) identified several barriers to physical activity participation including lack of motivation, bodily pain, and social discomforts. Overall, women perceived their health more negatively than men. Tsai, Lo, Yang, Keller, and Lyu (2015) revealed that there are significant gender differences in factors that motivate recreational sports participation. Men are more interested in physical appearance and personal interest while women are more motivated by international competition.

Although there are numerous studies that have examined seniors' participation in recreation and leisure activities, few studies have examined seniors' use of national parks and even fewer have investigated this age group in Korean national parks. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine visitor use of Seoraksan National Park in Korea by seniors. The objectives are twofold: a) to analyze the effects of services and facilities on satisfaction and behavioral intention (to revisit and recommend to others); and b) to explore gender differences.

Method

Data Collection

Data for the study were obtained from September 2014 to October 2014 in Seoraksan National Park. Data were collected from seniors through a face-to-face, self-administered survey using a combination of convenience and systematic sampling. The Korea National Park Service staff obtained these data via questionnaire placed at various locations such as Sogongwon of Seoraksan Mountain National Park and the entrance of Sinheungsa Temple. According to the Korean Welfare of the Aged Act, seniors are defined as people over 65 years old. However, the National Pensions Act allows seniors to receive full retirement benefits when they reach the age of 60. This study used a definition of seniors as people 60 years or older who meet their institutional retirement age and receive a public pension.

Survey Instrument

The questionnaire contained items on experience characteristics, use patterns, services, facilities, satisfaction, behavioral intention to use the national

park, and socioeconomics. Specifically, three items measured senior visitor's experience characteristics: length of stay, number of visits, and motivation. Nine items assessed setting/park attributes and use of services and facilities: parking lots, trails, toilets, rest areas, observatory, the hiking information center, visitor center, camping sites, and shelters. One item measured overall satisfaction. Behavioral intention was assessed by two items: intention to revisit and intention to recommend to other. Three items assessed socioeconomic characteristics, i.e., gender, age, and monthly household income. These data were analyzed using SPSS Version 21.0.

Results

Senior Visitors' Profile

A total of 186 individuals responded to the questionnaire and all were over 60 years of age. The seniors were 50% male and 50% female (Table 1), 61.3% of respondents were 60–64 and 27.4% of them were 65–69 years of age. Just over one quarter of respondents (25.3%) reported an average monthly household income of around U.S. \$3,000–4,000 dollars.

Table 1.
Percentages for Respondents' Socioeconomic Characteristics

	Item	N	%
Gender	Male	93	50.0
	Female	93	50.0
Age	60–64	114	61.3
	65–69	51	27.4
	70–74	17	9.1
	75–79	–	–
	over 80	4	2.2
	under US \$1,000 ¹	17	9.1
Monthly house hold income	US \$1,000–2,000	27	14.5
	US \$2,000–3,000	39	21.0
	US \$3,000–4,000	47	25.3
	US \$4,000–5,000	26	14.0
	over US \$5,000	30	16.1

Note: ¹ USD 1 is equivalent to 1,200 Korean Won. A monthly income of USD 3,000 – 4,000 is a middle-income level in Korea.

In terms of their social group when visiting, over half (51.6%) went to the park with family, while 22% went with friends (Table 2). The largest percentage (40.3%) went to the park for day use and just over 1/3 (35.5%) stayed one night. Frequency of visitation was mixed with the largest number going 1–2 times per year (44.6%). Favorite activities in the park were climbing (33.3%) and sightseeing (24.7%), with the top two motivations being socialization (16.1%) and health (10.8%).

Table 2.
Percentages for Respondents' Park Use and Visitation Behavior

	Item	N	%
Social	Alone	4	2.2
	Family	96	51.6
	Friend	41	22.0
	Coworkers	8	4.3
	Club	35	18.8
	Local residents	2	1.1
Length of stay	Day trip	75	40.3
	1 night 2 days	66	35.5
	2 nights 3 days	35	18.8
	3 nights 4 days	6	3.2
	Over 4 nights 5 days	4	2.2
Number of visits	Daily	–	–
	Weekly	18	9.7
	1–2 times a month	30	16.1
	3–4 times in 6 months	13	7.0
	3–4 times a year	42	22.6
Motivation to visit	1–2 times a year	83	44.6
	Climbing	62	33.3
	Tracking	16	8.6
	Visit temple	5	2.7
	Sightseeing	46	24.7
	Health	20	10.8
	Socialization	30	16.1
	Hobby	4	2.2
	Camping	3	1.6

Services and Facilities

When we measured senior's level of satisfaction with services and facilities, we found that respondents were fairly satisfied with seven items: observatory ($M=3.99$), trail ($M=3.91$), hiking information center ($M=3.83$), visitor center ($M=3.80$), toilet ($M=3.74$), rest area ($M=3.70$), shelter ($M=3.65$), and a bit less satisfied with two items: camping site ($M=3.57$) and parking lot ($M=3.08$) (Table 3). The overall mean score for satisfaction was 3.95. The mean score for intention to revisit was 4.23 and intention to recommend to others was 4.06.

Table 3.
Mean Scores for Respondents' Satisfaction with Services, Facilities, and Behavioral Intention

	Item	Mean ¹	SD
	Parking lot	3.08	1.22
	Trail	3.91	.947
Convenience of facility/services	Toilet	3.74	1.07
	Rest area	3.70	1.10
	Observatory	3.99	1.02
	Hiking information center	3.83	.945
	Visitor center	3.80	1.00
	Camping site	3.57	.970
	Shelter	3.65	1.039
Satisfaction	Overall	3.95	.814
Behavioral intention	Intention to revisit	4.23	.645
	Intention to recommend	4.06	.800

Note: SD=Standard Deviation. ¹ Items were measured on a 5-point scale: 1=*very dissatisfied*; 2=*dissatisfied*; 3=*neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*; 4=*satisfied*; and 5=*very satisfied*.

Next, we examined the overall relationship between the independent variables (services and facilities) and the dependent variable (satisfaction, intention to revisit and recommend to others) using regression analysis (Table 4). Upon review of the correlation matrix, the Durbin-Watson statistic, values of tolerance, and the variance inflation factors (VIF), no multi-collinearity issues were identified (Lin, 2008). The amount of variance (R^2) ex-

plained by the independent variables, and the results of the significance test used in the regression model ($R^2=.596$, $F= 21.008$, $p=.000$) accounted for 59.6% of the variance in visitor satisfaction. The analyses revealed that the amount of variance explained by the independent variables (R^2) was 26% for intention to revisit and 31.1% for intention to recommend to others. The results of the F -test revealed statistically significant values of 21.008 ($p=.000$) in visitor satisfaction, 5.002 ($p=.000$) in intention to revisit, and 6.412 ($p=.000$) with intention to recommend to others.

Table 4.
Model Summary and the Analysis of Variance Report

Dependent variable	Visitor satisfaction	Intention to revisit	Intention to recommend to others
R	.772	.510	.557
R^2	.596	.260	.311
Standard error of estimate	.520	.525	.710
Durbin-Watson	2.101	2.129	2.006
Sum of squares	51.127	12.385	29.102
Degree of freedom	9	9	9
Mean square	5.681	1.376	3.234
F -value	21.008	5.002	6.412
Significance	.000	.000	.000

In examining the predictor variables, the results showed that the parking lot ($t=2.957$), trail ($t=2.862$), and rest area ($t=2.282$) had significant impacts on senior visitors' satisfaction. Intention to revisit was predicted by the trail ($t=2.126$) and intention to recommend to others was also influenced by the trail ($t=2.437$) (Table 5). The convenient nature of services and facilities was important to seniors as it is tied to age, health, and amenity accessibility.

Table 5.

The Effect of Facilities and Services on Respondents' Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention

Dependent variable	Independent variable	B	Std Error	Beta	t-Value	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
Visitor satisfaction	(constant)	1.232	.259	-	4.751	.000	-	-
	Parking lot	.147	.050	.241	2.957	.004	.473	2.114
	Trail	.195	.068	.208	2.862	.005	.596	1.678
	Toilet	-.023	.066	-.030	-.347	.730	.419	2.389
	Rest area	.182	.080	.245	2.282	.024	.274	3.652
	Observatory	.134	.071	.167	1.877	.063	.399	2.509
	Hiking information center	-.010	.093	-.011	-.106	.916	.277	3.605
	Visitor center	.105	.086	.126	1.226	.222	.298	3.357
	Camping site	-.145	.087	-.178	-1.667	.098	.278	3.598
	Shelter	.146	.078	.191	1.875	.063	.305	3.274
Intention to revisit	(constant)	2.838	.262	-	10.850	.000	-	-
	Parking lot	.043	.050	.094	.851	.397	.473	2.114
	Trail	.146	.069	.209	2.126	.035	.596	1.678
	Toilet	.006	.067	.011	.092	.927	.419	2.389
	Rest area	.064	.080	.115	.791	.430	.274	3.652
	Observatory	-.007	.072	-.012	-.096	.924	.399	2.509
	Hiking information center	.017	.094	.026	.181	.857	.277	3.605
	Visitor center	.109	.086	.176	1.266	.208	.298	3.357
	Camping site	.005	.088	.008	.058	.954	.278	3.598
	Shelter	-.002	.079	-.003	-.023	.981	.305	3.274
Intention to recommend	(constant)	1.904	.354	-	5.376	.000	-	-
	Parking lot	.086	.068	.135	1.263	.209	.473	2.114
	Trail	.227	.093	.232	2.437	.016	.596	1.678
	Toilet	.085	.091	.107	.942	.348	.419	2.389
	Rest area	-.130	.109	-.167	-1.189	.237	.274	3.652
	Observatory	.125	.097	.149	1.279	.203	.399	2.509
	Hiking information center	.069	.128	.075	.538	.592	.277	3.605
	Visitor center	.145	.117	.167	1.243	.216	.298	3.357
	Camping site	-.220	.119	-.258	-1.851	.067	.278	3.598
	Shelter	.176	.106	.220	1.654	.101	.305	3.274

Gender Differences

The results of the *t*-tests revealed statistically significant values for five national park facilities. Gender differences were observed for satisfaction levels with the trails ($p=.047$), hiking information center ($p=.020$), visitor center ($p=.045$), camping sites ($p=.003$), and shelters ($p=.015$); females reported lower levels of satisfaction for these items (Table 6).

Table 6.

Gender Differences for Facilities and Services, Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention

Item	Gender	Mean ¹	SD	t-Value	Sig
Parking lot	Male	3.24	1.312	1.822	.070
	Female	2.91	1.106		
Trail	Male	4.04	.925	2.001	.047*
	Female	3.76	.954		
Toilet	Male	3.88	1.072	1.762	.080
	Female	3.60	1.063		
Rest area	Male	3.80	1.160	1.299	.196
	Female	3.59	1.033		
Observatory	Male	4.00	1.075	.155	.877
	Female	3.98	.981		
Hiking information center	Male	4.00	.906	2.351	.020*
	Female	3.65	.957		
Visitor center	Male	3.96	.952	2.023	.045*
	Female	3.64	1.038		
Camping site	Male	3.80	1.053	3.005	.003*
	Female	3.33	.812		
Shelter	Male	3.85	1.029	2.451	.015*
	Female	3.44	1.014		
Overall satisfaction	Male	3.97	.814	.270	.788
	Female	3.94	.818		
Intention to revisit	Male	4.22	.640	-.340	.734
	Female	4.25	.654		
Intention to recommend	Male	3.97	.853	-1.565	.119
	Female	4.15	.736		

Note: SD=Standard Deviation. ¹ Items were measured on a 5-point scale: 1=*very dissatisfied*; 2=*dissatisfied*; 3=*neither satisfied nor dissatisfied*; 4=*satisfied*; and 5=*very satisfied*.

* $p < 0.05$.

In a related series of items, senior visitors are willing to revisit Seoraksan National Park if there would be improvements in the trails and slopes (32.3%), providing facilities that seniors can use (22.6%), providing activities by park staff (12.9%), and providing programs for seniors (11.8%) (Table 7). Overall, senior visitors seem satisfied with their park experiences and would revisit the park; however, due to its remote and mountainous terrain, visitors may be challenged by its trails and also feel the visitation programs available are lacking.

Table 7.
Percentages for Improvements for Revisiting the National Park

	Item	N	%
Intention to revisit when park environments are improved	Physical improvements of trails and slopes	60	32.3
	Providing facilities that the senior can use (location/improvements directed towards seniors)	42	22.6
	Providing activities by park staff	24	12.9
	Providing programs for seniors	22	11.8
	Providing visitor information for seniors	21	11.3
	Other	16	8.6
	No intention of revisiting the national park	1	.5

Discussion and Conclusions

The objectives of this study were to examine the effect of services and facilities in Seoraksan National Park on senior visitors' experiences and explore gender differences. An overview of the visitor profile showed gender split evenly, and the vast majority of seniors were aged between 60 and 69, with the largest group between 60 and 64. Seniors primarily go to this national park with family, with the largest percentage staying less than 24 hours. The main activities chosen were climbing and sightseeing; top motivational reasons for going to the park were focused on socialization and health. The profile of the older adult in this study was somewhat similar to past research in terms of motivation to visit natural areas and the convenience of facilities and information (Lee et al., 2015), although there are few Korean national park studies to compare seniors' park preferences.

Satisfaction and Behavioral Intention

The overall level of satisfaction with seniors' park experience was very positive, and visitors agree that they had the intention of revisiting and recommending this park to others. The trail, parking lot and rest area were significant predictors of satisfaction. The trail was also a significant predictor of intention to revisit and recommend to others. As shown in this study, access to facilities and hiking on trails is an important issue for seniors because of their age. As past research has shown, seniors are interested in maintaining their health through physical activity (Orsega-Smith,

Mowen, Payne, & Godbey, 2004; Lim et al., 2007). The use of national parks as a venue to undertake physical activities for Korean seniors has considerable potential, as visitation for older adults seems to be on the rise.

The underlying goal of managing parks and recreation areas is to provide quality experiences to visitors, while preserving nature for future generations (Fletcher & Fletcher, 2003; Manning, 2011). As LaPage and Bevins (1981) point out, “satisfaction monitoring offers a means of quality assurance for the visitor, an approach to performance measurement for the administration, and a rational basis for decision making about use limits and the delivery of recreation services” (p. 6). Thus, satisfied visitors are more likely to support and revisit (Baker & Crompton, 2000) and recommend a destination to others (Anderson & Mittal, 2000).

The level of satisfaction found in this study bodes well for park managers who are continually challenged to satisfy the needs of various user groups yet maintain the optimum condition of its natural resources (Manning, 2011). When we explored the satisfaction of seniors with their park experience, the results showed that the parking lot, rest area, and trail were significant aspects in providing a satisfying experience. These types of amenities are important especially as they relate to returning to Seoraksan National Park. In terms of their intention to revisit, the trail was the one significant indicator predicting a return visit. This finding is further supported because the trail was found to be an indicator to recommend the park as well; intention to revisit was scored higher than recommending the park to others. However, seniors did report that improvements to trails and slopes and providing facilities seniors can use were needed if they were to return.

The health and socialization theme is indicative of seniors who desire fitness and active lifestyles. Staying engaged, maintaining personal relationships, and having convenient access to activities are important for older adults because healthy aging contributes to positive well-being (Everard, 1999). A national park provides a relaxing, natural environment for older adults, which is an especially helpful contrast to a hectic urban area. As mentioned earlier, research on the use national parks as a place for seniors to exercise, relieve stress, and socialize has not been explored in much detail in the national park setting of Korea. The Korea National Park Service has a research program that conducts regular visitor surveys through its National Park Research Institute; however, the research program is still in

a growth stage and does not currently collect comprehensive data from national park visitors on health, social, and psychological benefits (K. Sim, personal communication, March 14, 2016).

National park facilities such as the visitor center, toilets, hiking information center, and the observatory were not predictors of satisfaction and may need to be studied in more detail as managers strive to meet the needs of an older visitor. Managers may need to examine these services and amenities to determine if facilities are clean, provide current information, and are located in convenient locations. Given the fact that over one-third of this study sample stayed overnight, it might be beneficial to obtain more information from seniors because they usually have more discretionary money, and could be a valued segment of visitors to the park.

Gender Differences

In taking a closer look at the seniors in this study, several differences are worth noting. Overall both males and females appear to be satisfied and intend to revisit; however, the scores for females were lower than males on every variable and five of nine were significantly different, i.e., trail, hiking information, visitor center, camping site, and shelter. For Korean women, the camping site and shelter were scored lowest, and this could be linked to issues of safety or comfort. The other variables that were lower for women were information-related, i.e., visitor center and hiking information center. Thus, Korean women may have higher expectations for relevant park information and did not find that material was available or adequate. Also, men were more satisfied with the trail, and this could be related to its condition or level of difficulty. In a related question, a statistically significant difference in the preference of national park visitation by gender was also shown with a higher percentage of males preferring national park visitation over other leisure activities or other recreation areas. Clearly, there are some unidentified reasons why females are less satisfied with their park experience, yet the differences do not seem substantial enough to inhibit future participation.

The body of research on gender differences and physical activity in Korea has examined numerous health, e.g., stress and socialization issues (Lee, 2005; Lee & Lee, 2011; Choi & Lee, 2012; Tsai et al., 2015). The vast majority of studies of gender differences with older adults in Korea

has not examined physical activity in national parks, so little can be gleaned from the existing literature. However, Korean women have specific preferences for their national park experience and are seeking ways to stay healthy, enjoy the natural environment, and socialize with others. Korean park managers will need to learn more about what women are looking for at shelters and camping sites so these amenities can provide a satisfying experience for them. The results of this study are relevant for park managers who need to focus on the “greying visitor” which is likely to increase at Korean national parks. In this study, seniors came to national parks for socialization and health reasons. Providing access to trails that are graded gradually and not difficult for seniors to use is necessary and makes a hike more leisurely and safe. Other key variables for managers to pay attention to include parking lots which need to be located close to all services; facilities should also be well-signed so they can be easily found. The respondents in this study are interested in returning and recommending Seoraksan National Park to others so park managers are effectively managing key aspects of the park facilities and services but still need to identify their shortcomings.

Park managers may want to investigate if seniors would like to become more involved in the types of programs that are offered at the park so they can serve in the capacity as volunteers. Past research has shown that volunteering provides numerous benefits for seniors, particularly women who live in societies that are becoming more modernized and moving away from traditional culture (Mjelde-Mossey & Walz, 2006). Volunteers who have a wealth of experience can be beneficial to park programming and can also augment existing staff in various park locations, e.g., visitor information.

As the number of older adults in Korea increases, additional research on the cultural, social, health, and economic circumstances of seniors is sorely needed (Cohen, 2004) and more explicitly on gender differences (Kim, 2013). Thus, this study aimed to identify the needs of seniors, both males and females, by examining effective services and facilities on visitation to Seoraksan National Park. In order to manage national parks in an aging society, future research should investigate and establish standards of quality for all its services and facilities. The long-term benefits of national park use and time spent in the natural environment by seniors are largely unknown and should be better integrated into the National Park Research Institute. Given the small sample size of this study and the limited body of literature

on seniors and national park use, it is necessary for future investigations to collect data from a more representative sample of seniors and from additional Korean national parks.

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