

Visitors' Satisfaction With Entrance In Soraksan National Park

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Understanding aspects of the use of Korean representative Soraksan National Park and investigating the factors affecting visitors' decision-making, this study aims to suggest a positive development plan for the rational use of the national park.

The questionnaire is for those who have visited Soraksan National Park more than once.

This research shows that most of the visitors wish 'entrance congestion' to be solved by introducing a 'previous reservation' system and a non-polluting shuttle bus; therefore there is a chance that they could be introduced for the settlement of the existing problems.

Key words : Soraksan National Park, Previous reservation system, Degree of visitors' satisfaction

1. Introduction

Chirisan National Park, designated in 1967, was so designated one century after the first national park was designated in the United States, may be the origin of our natural park system. However, the government treated the designation of the national park as part of regional development, and the competent ministry of national parks was the Ministry of Construction, which, then, delegated the management of the parks to the cities and the provinces. Most of the cities and provinces, then, focused their efforts on developing the parks with an aim to revitalize the regional economy. However, as mentioned earlier, development-centered policies produced serious environmental problems such as destruction of nature, scenery and the ecosystem, and damage to the mountain paths and littered garbage brought by the surge in the number of the visitors became social problems. With an aim to resolve such problems, the National Park Authority of Korea was established under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Construction in 1987, as part of the policy

implementation efforts policy balanced between its protection agencies and use by the general public.

The Ministry of Environment directly manages 18 out of 20 national parks, while Gyeongju National Park, Hallasan National Park and Odong district of Hallyeo National Marine Park are managed by local autonomous entities. Soraksan National Park, which is the subject of this research, was designated as Natural Monument No. 171 (a 163.4 square meter natural reserved area) in 1965 and was designated as National Park No. 5 in 1970. Afterward, the park was designated as a only Biosphere Reserve in Korea under the Plan for Human Beings and Biological World of UNESCO in 1982 and has been designated as a Natural Reserved Area by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. As noted above, although the conservation aspects of Soraksan National Park have been emphasized in various ways subject to the value of the resources, the surge in the number of visitors has damaged various elements of the resources and the visitors themselves have been dissatisfied with the concentrated use of the area.¹⁻¹⁰⁾

The purposes of this paper's plan is to minimize destruction by the visitors of the park and to ensure satisfactory use by the visitors of the park by understanding the modes of use of the National Park through opinion polls.

The goals necessary to attain such purposes are as

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follow.

First, we will attempt to establish, through research, a theoretical system modelling the modes of use of national parks, research the relevant documents, and utilize this system as the standard to be referred to.

Second, we will attempt to inquire into the correlation between the types of the visitors and Soraksan National Park.

Third, we will attempt to inquire about new means of transportation on account of the crowd congestion at the entrance to Soraksan National Park.

2. Method

2.1. Subject and Outline

Soraksan National Park is located in Young-dong. It is administratively bounded by Sokcho-si on the east, Inje-gun on the west, yangyang-gun on the south, and Gosung-gun on the north. We have set the entrance area, the subject of this study, between the entrance to region Sorak C and the small park (3.8 km). On the other hand, there are regions Sorak B and C, shopping areas, hotels, camping grounds and four parking lots around the National Park entrance. A bottleneck phenomenon occurs in Mokwooje where Sorakro and trip-road meet and become a narrow one-lane road (Fig. 1).

2.2. Method

A field investigation was conducted for 2 days from the 10th of November to the 11th of November

in 2002, in Soraksan National Park and a questionnaire, based on the experience of visitors who have visited there more than once, was written.

We have chosen the questionnaire method, or Self-administered Questionnaire Survey method, which means the volunteer simply marks the sheet of a written list of questions according to the directions. This questionnaire is divided into 3 main part.

First, we made a lists of evaluation factors for entering the park by through the entrance.

Second, we prepared the contents in order to evaluate visitors' satisfaction with the entrance.

Third, lists regarding entrance improvements (new means of transportation), and other personal opinions about that issue were determined to be taken. As for the data analysis, 100 pieces of data were taken out of 124 pieces in all, excepting 24 pieces deemed unfit for the questionnaire.

3. Results and Consideration

3.1. Classification of visitors

In this survey of 100 visitors, 64% is male and 36% is female, which means men are relatively preponderant. With regard to age, the twenties and thirties amounted to 35% and 36%, respectively, followed by the forties which formed 19% of the respondents. According to jobs, professionals ranked first at 22%, followed by businessmen at 16%, workers at 15%, housewives at 14%, students at 13%, and government officials at 11%.

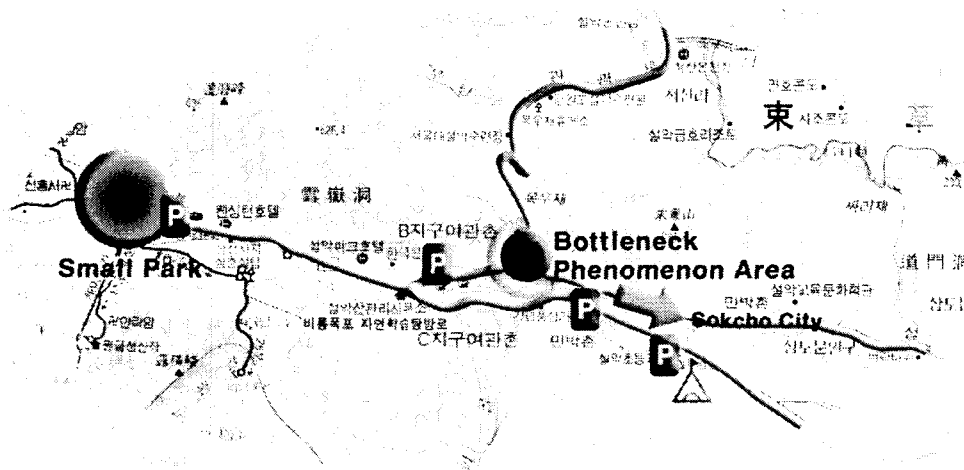


Fig. 1. Entrance of Sorak National Park.

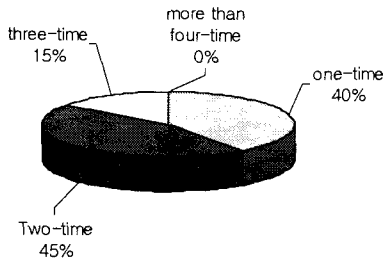


Fig. 2. Use Frequency.

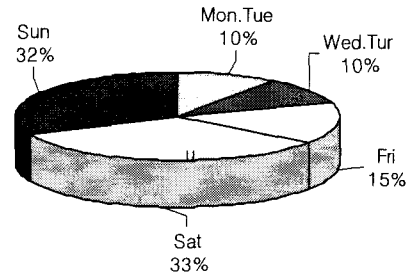


Fig. 3. Visit Weekday.

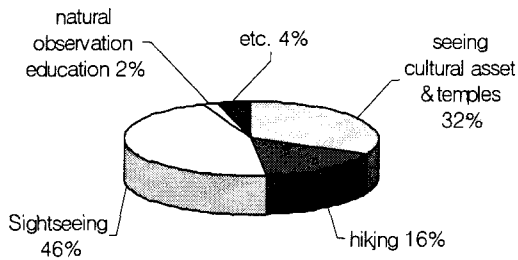


Fig. 4. Visit Purpose.

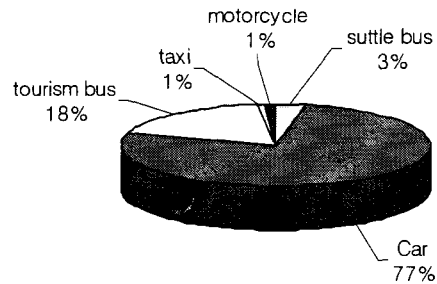


Fig. 5. Transportation.

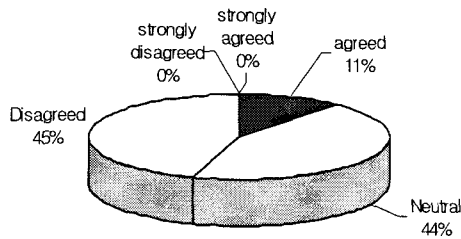


Fig. 6. Topography Satisfaction for Entrance.

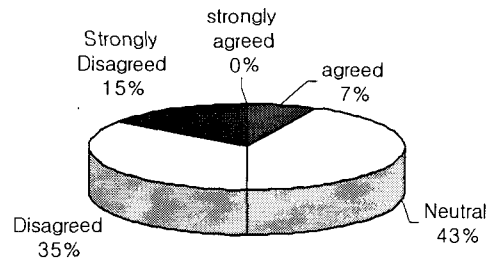


Fig. 7. Width Satisfaction for Entrance.

By educational level, high school graduation accounted for 34% and university graduation stood at 32%.

3.2. Modes of use

Regarding visitors' frequency of use, most of the visitors have visited twice or more, which group formed 45%. One-time visitors stood at 40%, two-time and three-time ones at 45% and 15%, respectively. No visitors have visited four times or more and visits are concentrated when the annual rush (the autumnal tints season) starts (Fig. 2).

While visits were mostly paid over the weekend, weekday and weekend visits were 35% and 65% of the total visits, respectively. Utilization frequency was high on the weekend. Especially, the partial change to a five-day workweek seems to be an influential factor (Fig. 3). Most of the visitors use their own

cars as a means of transportation, and the purpose of their visits is mainly sightseeing. But they also visit for other various reasons, to see cultural assets, visit temples, go hiking, and for natural observation education. At this time they use personal transportation rather than public transportation, and so we can understand that a personal unit visit is relatively high (Fig. 4, 5).

3.3. Satisfaction

In terms of topography, width and satisfaction with the use of facilities, 'entrance satisfaction' is mostly expressed as dissatisfaction or only average satisfaction. Most people were not satisfied with the entrance and expressed their dissatisfaction with it, which lacks consideration of the narrow width and topography. And they also said that an improvement plan is needed for the entrance problem caused by

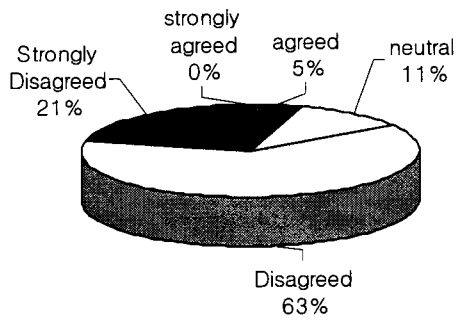


Fig. 8. Use Satisfaction for Entrance.

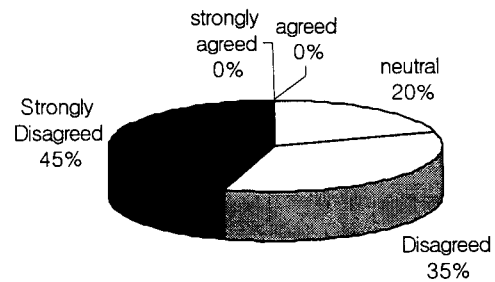


Fig. 9. Area Satisfaction for Parking Lot.

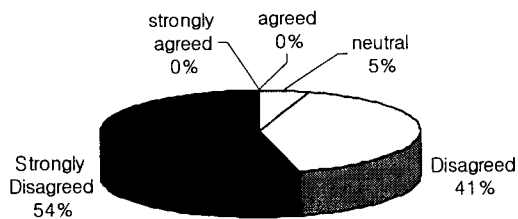


Fig. 10. Use Satisfaction for Parking Lot.

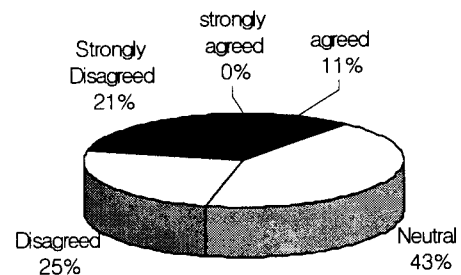


Fig. 11. Location Satisfaction for Parking Lot.

the narrow two-lane road into which visitors are crowded in the high-demand season (the autumnal tints season) (Fig. 6, 7, 8).

Regarding the scale and location of the parking lot and satisfaction with the use of the parking lot, people were mostly dissatisfied or considered it to be only of average adequacy. They were dissatisfied with the entrance congestion due to the unsuitable location and small scale of the parking lot; therefore an improvement policy is necessary since the parking lot is in a state of extreme accommodation capacity owing to use of visitor's own cars or large-sized buses (Fig. 9, 10, 11).

3.4. An improvement plan

According to personal opinion, most visitors complained about complications and congestion when asked why they were dissatisfied with their use of the parking lot. There have not been many responses to the question about entrance inconveniences, but the minority opinion suggests that an advance reservation system is necessary to get rid of the confusion around the entrance. On a question regarding an entrance improvement plan, out of worry about more traffic congestion, most people were interested in new

means of transportation which can deal with the congestion. Especially, they had a great interest in a non-polluted monorail and shuttle bus.

Concerning a forecast of new transportation usage, most people said that they would use the new system. Unexpectedly, not a few respondents answered that they had not yet decided whether or not to use the new system, but, again, the majority of them responded, that they would use that new transportation if it becomes available (Fig. 11).

Whereas most people would prefer to use the monorail and unpolluted shuttle bus, there are many people who would choose to walk. Many of these people were also interested in new transportation systems which could make the park less polluted and less crowded (Fig. 12).

4. Conclusions

We have to create a pleasant road environment as part of the Soraksan National Park entrance improvement plan. Therefore, we need to control vehicles at the entrance, and establish new transportation. The installation section is 3.8 km, ranging from region Sorak C to the small park, and

some intermediate stations will also be established in

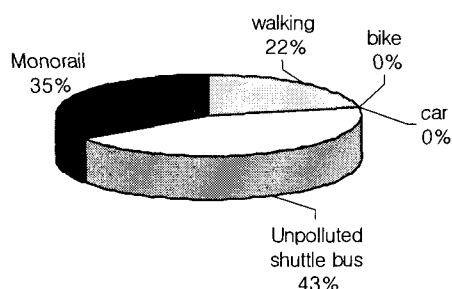


Fig. 12. Preference of Approach by New Transportation.

regions Sorak B and C.

According to vehicle control, we will also build a large-sized parking lot which can accommodate a sightseeing bus and any kind of car used as a means of transportation in and around region Sorak C, to raise visitors' satisfaction level and put the road environment in a good condition and provide those who would like to walk with an atmosphere of comfort. So, unpleasantness resulting from traffic jams will disappear by controlling vehicles at the region Sorak C, and then visitors can move to the small park on foot or by new means of transportation.

The transport capacity of the shuttle bus and monorail is an average of 5,000 people per hour. However, the maximum number of visitors to Sorakdong reaches 60,000~70,000 per day. They usually gather in the early morning, so the maximum is about 20,000 people per hour. The new system having a carrying capacity of 5,000, may remind one of rush hour in Seoul. Besides, since visitors are expected to increase, potentially, due to like the new five-day workweek, it will be necessary to devise a counterplan to extend the accommodation capacity of new transportation, parking lots, and the small park. The counterplan can be a visitor reservation system.

Currently, Soraksan National Park has been severely troubled by excessive complex district development and the establishment of all kinds of sports facilities and roads. Moreover, the fact that the ecosystem is destroyed by visitor and traffic congestion in a specific season is recognized as a more serious problem. We have investigated the modes of visitors' use of Soraksan National Park, the most preferable resort of city-dwellers, and have

understood those aspects of users, so we have

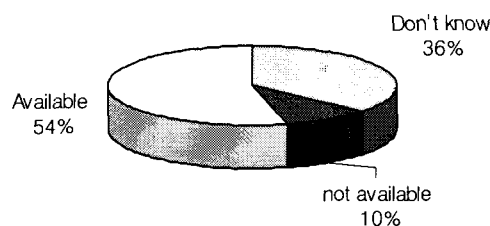


Fig. 13. Forecast of New Transportation Usage.

presented an improvement plan for the entrance which may achieve cause the maximum level of visitors' satisfaction.

This study has presented an improvement plan to increase the degree of satisfaction regarding the use of the entrance to Soraksan National Park. But the study has some limitations in that it does not consider seasonal factors and did not classify volunteers according to peak holiday season, off season, weekend, holiday or weekday, in the questionnaire survey process. We need to have our research divided into three parts next time. The categories will be determined as follows: First, is it a weekday or a weekend? Second, what season is it? Third, is it the peak holiday season or the off season?

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