

## Interpretive Planning Which Is “In Tune” With Visitors Expectations in Nature Park: Case Study in Jogyesan Provincial Park, Jeonnam, Korea

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**Abstract:** This research is based on a visitor survey at Jogyesan Provincial Park in Jeonnam, and its implications for interpretive planning. The research population was the set of weekend and holiday visitors, 20 years of age and older, to Jogyesan Provincial Park in Jeonnam, during the summer of 2003. A questionnaire was offered to every tenth person entering the park on every other weekend day and both holidays (June 1 and September 30). It was obvious that the interpretive program at Jogyesan Provincial Park, to meet the expectations of its visitors, should provide: (1) visitors with opportunities to experience the out-of-doors and learn about the cultural, historical and natural surroundings; (2) opportunities for the visitors to relax and escape from the normal and work environment; and (3) opportunities for the visitors to experience an atmosphere which enables them to achieve and self-actualize. In the area of interpretive programs, expectations are usually priorities, except for mountain climbing and exercise. Enhancing achievement and self-actualization is rarely a consideration and needs more emphasis in the future interpretive programs and plans.

**Key words:** *planning interpretation, recreational activities, expectation, satisfaction*

### Introduction

Tilden (1957) called interpretation a public service “recently come in to our cultural world”. Perhaps he hoped it would be dignified and humane, provoking and delighting citizens to learn about nature and history. Interpreters are increasingly asked to interpret critical resource issues and work with local communities. Nature interpretation in Jogyesan Provincial Park, just as any other form of recreation, should be primarily concerned with providing enjoyable experiences for visitors and management of the resource, such as cultural, historical, and natural resources at the park. Too often, the success of a recreational program is based on the numbers of people who visit the facility or program rather than the quality of the visitors’ experiences. Jogyesan Provincial Park in Jeonnam is one of the heavily used park which attracts a large number of people and can be considered a success, but interpretation there is actually sterile for a large percentage of those visitors. Rather than ask “how many visitors came today, this month, or this year”, what is really important is whether or not the visitors

actually view the exhibits and listen to the programs. Are the visitors expecting nature interpretation at the park? Are they involved at the activities? Does the visitor return and bring relatives or friends along to join the fun activities? These are the kinds of observations which are necessary to actually determine the effectiveness of the interpretation and the amount of visitor satisfaction which is provided.

Satisfaction with recreation has been described as the degree to which the actual recreational experience, such as jogging after work, occurs in nature. Visitors to an interpretive site may have specific expectations of the recreational experience. Various degrees of disappointment may result if interpretation is not “in keeping” with the expectations of visitors. But what does a visitor to a nature interpretation program expect of the experience at the park?

### Literature Review

We have little information concerning the motives of visitors attending interpretive programs while they visit a park. In the interpretation and recreation field, scholars agree that effective recreation programs are provided through evaluation of the programs. Evaluation can be

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defined in a variety of ways. Probably, Connolly (1982) described it best, however: Evaluation is a problem-solving process in which the human being is still left with choice and decisions. Hence, evaluation of the recreation program at the park provides information to be used in the decision-making process. It's ironic that a lack of communication is a major problem with a form of recreation which deals primarily with communicating with people. The tendency is for a one-way flow of information from the interpreter to the visitor, rather than two-way communication with feedback from the visitors back to the interpreter. Site information, including rules and regulations, needs to be relayed in the most effective and efficient manner possible. While face-to-face communication can be the most effective (Myers, 1990), agencies are hard pressed to support the trained personnel to provide information to on-site visitors to the recreation area. Three decades ago, Hopkins (1971) listed the two most urgent recreation research needs: (1) Recreation is a people subject. We need to be must better able to understand recreation visitors, their interest, their motivations, and their perceptions. (2) Outdoor education, interpretation, and communication. The determination of visitor's expectations, or expected consequences, and selecting interpretive methods to meet these expectations, were two of the objectives of a study conducted at Jogaesan Provincial Park, Jeonnam.

## Methods

### 1. Study site

The park was designated as a Jeonnam Provincial Park in December 1979. The park is located in the Songgwang-myeon and Seungju-eup areas of Suncheon City, and centers on the main Janggungbong Peak, Mt. Jogye provides a good resting place for residents. The mountain is filled with exquisite natural views and sites, and the hiking course that stretches from the east to the west is a national parks tour route of with famous mountains. Its thick woods and clear valley, and especially Songgwangsa and Seonamsa temples, make it popular with mountain hikers, tourists, outdoor educators, interpreters and other outdoor activities.

### 2. Research design

The results of the questionnaires distributed to visitors are discussed in this part. The research population was the set of weekend and holiday visitors, 20 years of age and older, to Jogyesan Provincial Park in Jeonnam, during the summer of 2003. A questionnaire was offered to every tenth person to enter the park on every other weekend day and both holidays (June 1 and September 30). For this research, researchers explained about

research purpose, and those who agreed to participate were given a postage-paid return envelop and instructed to complete the questionnaire at home and return it by mail to the researchers. To find out of the recipients of the questionnaires, each sample subject's name and address was recorded on the empty paper. After two weeks, a reminder card was sent to the recipients of questionnaires which were not yet returned to the researchers. Out of a total of 346 questionnaires distributed and 121 (35%) were returned.

The questionnaire was designed to request respondents' socio-demographic characteristics. A respondent profile is a valuable piece of information to have in this survey because the profile gives the researcher an idea of which visitors are represented in this survey sample.

Basis on the experience expectations of each visitors engaged in recreational activities in Jogyesan Provincial Park, ten different expected consequences were identified to be of possible importance for a trip to a provincial park or national park: Cultural Resources Experiences, Natural Resources Experiences, Mt. Climbing, Physical Exercise, Mental Relaxation, Escape-Role Overload, Achievement, and Self-Actualization. To evaluate the relative importance of each of these expectations, two items ["learning culture" and "learning nature"] were selected from the scales because these items were believed to tap the construct "learning park resources" during their visit to Jogyesan Provincial Park. Visitors responded to each of the 20 statements on a five-point Likert-type scale measuring from one to five where 1= not at all important and 5=extremely important. This is because a Likert scale is easy to construct, easy for respondents to complete, and easy to score (Babbie, 1992).

Factor analysis, a correlational statistical method, which clusters items which people respond to similarly (Babbie, 1992), was used to further define the constructs. This is done essentially through the generation of artificial dimensions (factors) that correlate highly with several of the real variables and that are independent of one another. A computer must be used to perform this complex operation.

## Results

This part describes visitors' socio-demographic characteristics, including socio-demographic information, information on type of groups, gender, age, social group variables, mode of transportation, and past visitation information, which were all included in the socio-demographic category.

The Public Area Recreation Visitor Study and the National Park System (PARVS) (Mullins *et al.*, 1991),

**Table 1. Social group of visitors to jogyesan provincial park.**

Type of group(s) visit national park today	f (N=121)	% (100)
Alone	1	0.8
Spouse	23	19.0
Family	29	24.0
Friends or Acquaintances	33	27.4
Religious Groups	7	5.8
Club or organizations	26	21.5
Non-respondents	2	1.6
Number of persons in a group		
1-5	57	47.1
6-10	34	28.1
11-20	17	14.1
21 & more	11	9.1
Non-respondents	2	1.6
Transportation		
Public Bus	35	28.9
Tour Bus	24	19.9
Car	46	38.0
Walk	0	0
Bike	3	2.5
Others: train-city bus, air plane-city bus	9	7.4
Non-respondents	4	3.3
Visiting status		
Have you ever been to this park before? (Yes)	74	61.2
(No)	47	38.8
Primary reason for visit today		
Natural resources	29	23.9
Cultural resources	36	29.7
Mt. climbing	22	18.2
Friendship	11	9.0
Relaxation	18	14.9
Others: family reunion, travel, escape, autonomy	5	4.2
How often (per year)?		
1-3	57	47.1
4-5	32	26.4
6-10	16	13.2
More than 11	15	12.4
Non-respondents	1	0.8

the national-wide study of visitors to U.S. National Parks, reported the socio-demographic characteristics of visitors to U.S. National Parks. The

study reported that park visitors were made up of fifty-six percent (56.4%) males and forty-four percent (43.6%) females. The majority age group was between 29 to 38 years old. The result of the studies showed similarities that can be compared with each other.

Table 1 describes several types of visitor social groups in Jogyesan Provincial Park. The most common social

groups were friends or acquaintances (27.4%), family (24.0%), clubs or organizations (21.5%) and nearly twenty (19.0%) percent were with spouse. The remaining groups, each making up less than ten percent, were religious groups (5.8%), non-respondents (1.6%), and alone (0.8%).

Table 1 also shows almost one-half of the respondents in Jogyesan Provincial Park were in a group of one to five members. Over seventy-five percent (75.2%) of the visitors came to the park in groups of one to ten. The remaining groups, making up less than twenty-five percent, were in a group with eleven to twenty (14.1%) and twenty-one or more in a group (9.1%). Less than two percent of the respondents (1.6%) did not indicate an answer.

The majority of people sampled visited by car (39.0%), public bus (28.9%), and tour bus (19.9%). Less than ten percent of the respondents indicated that they visited the park by other means, for example, transferred from bus to city bus, air plane to city bus, train to city bus, and about three percent (3.3%) of the respondents did not indicate an answer, respectively.

Table 1 shows whether or not respondents have been to this park before this trip. Over sixty percent of the respondents have been the park before (61.2%). Turning to the information in the current visit category, the first question to consider is why people visit the parks. When visitors were asked for their major reason for visiting this time, there were some similarities discovered among them.

As can be seen in Table 1, about thirty percent (29.7%) of the respondents visited the park because of cultural resources; nearly twenty-four percent (23.9%) indicated natural resources, over eighteen percent (18.2%) indicated mountain climbing; about fifteen percent (14.9%) indicated relaxation; and less than fifteen percent responded other, such as family reunion, travel, escape, autonomy and to show the site to children.

Table 1 also shows nearly seventy-five percent (73.5%) of the respondents visited one to five times per year. Nearly sixty percent (86.7%) of the visitors to visited this park one to ten times. Over twelve percent (12.4%) of the respondents indicated that they visited more than eleven times last year. Less than one percent of the responds did not indicate an answer.

As mentioned earlier, factor analysis, a correlational statistical method, which clusters items which people respond to similarly (Babbie, 1992), was used to further define the constructs. Each person was given a score for each expected consequence factor by computing the average response to all the statement which make up that factor. The factor analysis reduced the original ten hypothesized expected consequences to five factors

**Table 2. Importance of expected consequences of jogyesan provincial park visitors.**

Expected Consequences (Five factors)	Mean	S.D.	Range
Cultural Resources Experience	3.5	.96	2.63-4.57
Natural Resources Experience	3.2	1.34	1.84-4.56
Mt. Climbing/Exercise	2.8	1.04	1.76-3.84
Relaxation/Escape	2.5	1.20	1.30-3.80
Achievement/Self-Actualization	2.2	.86	1.34-3.54

(Table 2).

The most important expectation was a combination of the experience culture as an expected consequences. This was surprising for a park type of experience and probably reflected the fact that 29.7% of the respondents came to the park primarily to visit the park (Table 1). Also Jogyesan Provincial Park is left in a relatively cosy condition, which could help to attract people who like to experience cultural, historical, and natural surroundings.

The second most important expectation, natural resources experience, seems more common in the park experience. The high standard deviation (1.34) indicated there was a wide range of responses. This reflects the low importance attached to this expectation by the sample subjects who came to the park for friendship (9.0%), others, such as family reunion, travel, escape and autonomy and the high importance for visitors for visiting the park's cultural or natural resource base.

The third expected consequence, Mt. Climbing/Exercise, is a combination of three hypothesized expectations, Physical Exercise and Mental Exercise. This factor seems to measure the recreationists' desire to exercise at the park and a chance to unwind from the normal week-days environment.

The forth expected consequence, Relaxation/Escape, is a combination of three hypothesized expectations, Physical Relaxation, mental Relaxation, and Escape. This factor seems to measure the recreationists' desire for change, and a chance to unwind from the normal home and work environment. A relatively high standard deviation of 1.20 indicated that some visitors did visit the

park for reasons of Relaxation/Escape. Because the number of such people were few, and because the purpose of the park is to be open for the people, especially during the weekends and holidays, Relaxation/Escape would be of little importance for interpretive program planning.

Expected consequences which were only slightly important were Achievement/Self-Actualization. A very low standard deviation (.86) shows that Achievement/Self-Actualization was of little importance to nearly all visitors.

In summary of these results, it was obvious that the interpretive program at Jogyesan Provincial Park, to meet the expectations of its visitors, should provide: (1) visitors with opportunities to experience the out-of-doors and learn about the cultural, historical and natural surroundings; (2) opportunities for the visitors to relax and escape from the normal and work environment; and (3) opportunities for the visitors to experience an atmosphere which enables them to achieve and self-actualize. In the area of interpretive programs, expectations are usually priorities, except for mountain climbing and exercise. Enhancing achievement and self-actualization is rarely a consideration and needs more emphasis in the future interpretive programs and plans.

It was also found that the visitors' primary reason for visiting Jogyesan Provincial Park was significantly related to the type of experience that was expected (Table 3). Visitors who came primarily to visit Jogyesan Provincial Park were especially interested in learning about and experiencing the temples (SongGwangsa & SunAmsa). People who visited the park primarily for other activities, those who would be more representative of the typical park visitor, were especially motivated by the possibility of experiencing mountain climbing and relaxation within such a gorgeous place. This reinforces the need for considering both physical and mental strength and relaxation motives and learning about cultural natural resources in the park's interpretive programming and planning as park activities in multi-purpose parks.

**Table 3. T-test of the difference in the importance of learn about cultural and natural resources and Mt. Climbing and relaxation for visitors.**

Type of Expected Experience	Reason for visit	N	Mean	T Value	Probability	
Learning Cultural Resources	Jogyesan	31	2.9	2.57	0.5333	
	Other	74	3.2			0.5297
	N/A	16				
Mt. Climbing/ Relaxation	Jogyesan	30	3.9	-2.38	0.4825	
	Other	74	3.2			0.2460
	N/A	17				

Significance Level:  $p < 0.05$ .

## Implications and Discussion

Interpretation can raise the quality of visitor experiences, and it is one way agencies can increase the flow of benefits they provide to the visitors. Interpretation can also increase benefits indirectly by providing an understanding of resources, perhaps leading people to support the management and more prudent use of resources. Interpretation includes talks, exhibits, audio-visual programs, labeled nature trails, brochures, publications, and other facilities and services which are provided to help visitors enjoy and understand the natural and cultural resources of the areas they visit.

The primary thrust of the Jogyesan Provincial Park results is that interpretation, in order to meet the expectations of a large proportion of visitor, must offer experiences which enhance the learning about and experiencing of cultural and natural resources. It is important to offer the experience to learn about natural and cultural experience, which is expected by the people who go out of their way to come to interpretive programs. These people have likely been to more talks, walks, self-guided experiences, and museums at temples than they can count. It is also important to offer the experience of mountain climbing and relaxing, which is expected by visitors who go out of their way to come to activities. These people have likely been to more walks, hikes, and self-guided trails at the park than they can count. Visitors come the park all through the year. Visitors already understand, appreciate, and protest their environment. We should also be concerned with those who are not predisposed to becoming involved. One way this can be done is by appealing to those visitors who just happen to "drop in" on an interpretive program that is occurring in the park they are visiting. These are visitors who seem to be primarily interested in natural and cultural resources at Jogyesan Provincial Park.

### Applications of finding

Clearly, the possibility for Jogyesan Provincial Park interpretation are as varied as the potential sources of knowledge in the park. Given study findings, several interpretive program changes were implemented at Jogyesan Provincial Park to help increase visitor expectations. It was found that visitor participation in the interpretation created the most excitement and understanding of the parks' resources while at the program. Numerous interpretive programs were constructed and were found to be flexible and effective devices for enhancing resources protection. Unfortunately, interpretation often falls far short of its potential for enhancing visitor expectation. Field and Wager(1992) listed the following as the problems diminishing its effectiveness

include:

- (1) Inadequate emphasis on interpretation in resource management agencies-Do resource managers overlook the benefits of interpretation and thus allocate insufficient human and physical resources to interpretive programs?
- (2) Misallocation of effort-Do we interpret at times and places suited to our visitors?
- (3) Mismatching of messages to visitors-Do we recognize the diverse ages, backgrounds, and interesting among our visitors or do we aim at a "standardized" visitor?
- (4) Not monitoring the effectiveness of our efforts-Do we clearly state what we hope to accomplish with interpretation?

Even though research on visitor groups and their expectations on the sites and interpretation is relatively new, results already suggest alternative strategies to management practices. It is convenient to organize some of these alternatives; First, visitors and recreation settings are diverse, and a variety of approaches will be required. Second, visitors anticipate a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere. Third, interpretive information must be readily understood. Forth, interpretive information must be rewarding to visitors. Fifth, feedback from visitors to the interpreter is essential.

The goal and objectives of recreationists are partially shaped by the frequency with which they visit a recreation site. Many of those who are familiar with a specific park seek experiences that build upon knowledge from previous visit. Therefore, interpreters might consider having repeat visitors plan and maintain one exhibit which is changed periodically. A theme might be park history, or park-community cultural and natural events. Interpreters and resource managers responsible for interpretation must understand both visitor behavior and resources sufficiently to inform and enhance experiences for various visitor publics.

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