

PARK USER'S PERCEPTION TOWARDS THE UTILITY OF AN
URBAN GREEN SPACE – A CASE STUDY OF CUBBON PARK,
BENGALURU



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ABSTRACT:

Present lifestyles are exerting various stresses on urban dwellers. Apart from the financial and social pressures which need to be dealt at the individual or at the family level, environment related pressures are in the rising. Urban green spaces such as parks play a vital role in managing these pressures. The present study was carried out in order to ascertain the utility of the park in terms of ecological services it offered, along with the perceptions of the park users with reference to available facilities and needs by adopting Subjective Well-Being (SWB) questionnaire method. A total of 183 respondents were interviewed out of 102 were men and 81 women. Age distribution pattern showed that the age group of 19-35 of both the genders visited the park frequently. The preference of visiting time indicated that males did not show any specific pattern, women preferred afternoons. Frequent male visitors travelled to the park from about 5 kms, women chose to limit their travel to 2 kms. Though the users have no significant comments



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on the park plan there is a strong opinion about the maintenance of toilets. A strong objection was recorded with reference to the entry fee. The concludes that occasional visitors tend to derive only the benefits of this urban green space and do not essentially show any regard to park management, whereas regulars show a feeling of belongingness/ownership. These are the people who matter when it comes to people-government interaction in park planning and management.

Key words: urban green spaces, park management, user perception, Cubbon Park.

INTRODUCTION:

Globalisation has lead to an increase in income as well as increase in poverty, inequalities, regional disparities, and above all environmental stress of various types. Environmental problems and urban deterioration are the products of short comings in urban planning, management process, institutional frameworks and governance (Rishi and Khuntia, 2012). The massive movement of people from



rural to urban areas rise concerns over urban sustainability; and urban agglomeration has resulted in an environmental stress due to pollution and increased human densities.

Urban green spaces such as public parks play a vital role in mitigating a few stress factors of urban areas by providing easy access to fresh air, open space, aesthetics and biodiversity resources. Since these spaces are in public domain, they are accessible to people irrespective of their backgrounds.

Protected areas such as parks are interpreted differently by different groups. For conservationist, they are effective measure of protecting biodiversity (Kumssa and Bekele, 2014). For urban planners, parks are spaces that provide relief in landscape, improve human health, foster socialising and a relaxation space for young and old alike. For urban managers, protected areas possess high biological value while sustaining high human densities in spite of facing pressures from growing commercial interests (Karanth and Nepal, 2011). The people-park relationship is a term used to describe the interaction between local populations and protected areas. It includes the meaning ascribed to parks by local people and their attitudes towards the management of these areas (Panwar et al., 2014). The present study was carried out in order to ascertain the utility of the park in terms of ecological services it offered, along with the perceptions of the park users with reference to available facilities and needs.

STUDY AREA

Bengaluru has been drawing attention of urban planners and urban ecologists alike owing to its rapid transformation from a garden city to a bustling business. Along with gaining a tag of being one of the fastest growing urban agglomerations, it is exerting significant pressure on the available natural resources. The part of the city that experiences an increased pressure is the Central Business District. This area which houses the prominent business centres, a high density of educational institutions, courts and the administrative offices draws a large number of individuals from within the city and outside (Sudhira, et al., 2007).

Cubbon park (CP) (12.97000N, 77.60000E), (officially known as Sri Chamarajendra Park) is large urban green space available in this area is like an urban oasis catering to a host of ecological services and struggling to absorb the pressures of urbanisation. The park that is in existence since 1870 has an area of about 300 acres (1.2 km²), houses over 6000 trees/plants and is preserved area since 1979 under the provision of Karnataka Government Park (Preservation) Act, 1975 (Nagendra and Gopal, 2011).

Due to its location, the park offers its services a large number of visitors – locals, regulars and occasional outsiders. As automobiles are permitted between 8:00am and 10:00pm on all days except Sundays, there is a high density of vehicular traffic often resulting in jams during peak hours.

METHODOLOGY

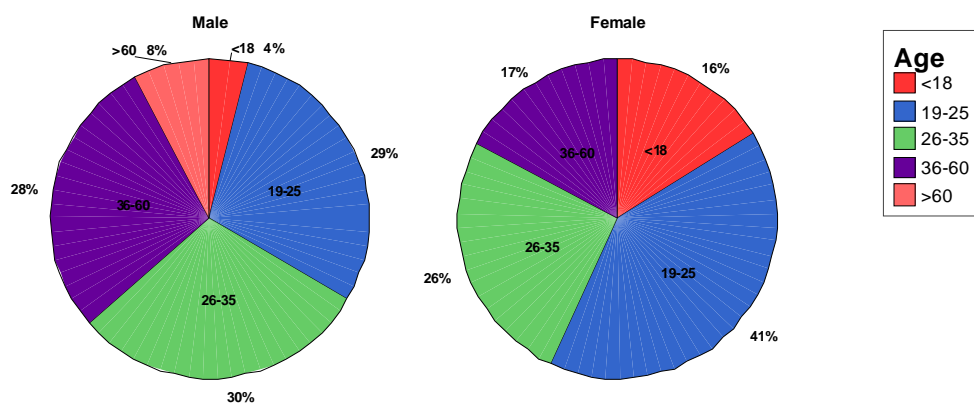
The present is an applied descriptive study. A questionnaire based survey method was followed to collect the data by adopting Subjective Well-Being (SWB). Subjective Well-Being consists of people's own evaluations of their lives (Rishi and Khuntia, 2012). The questionnaire was developed by the researchers; a trial run carried out and the improvements incorporated. Responses of 183 (102 males and 81 females) visitors to the park were collected, descriptive and inferential statistics were used in data analysis. Though respondents were interacted with, across the park; areas around the High Court, State Central Library, Jawahar Bal Bhavan, Vishveswaraya Industrial and Technological Museum, Chinnaswamy Stadium and Tennis Pavilion were focal points.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire focussed on identifying the utility of the park and hence seemingly utility influencing parameters were considered. Parameters such as gender and age of the visitor, reason for visit, frequency of visit, travel distance and accessibility were considered as chief parameters; facilities provided in the park, perceived threat and park planning were considered as factors promoting the utility of the park.

The total number of respondents stood at 183, out of which 102 were males and 82 females. This amounts to 56 and 44 percent of representing males and females respectively.

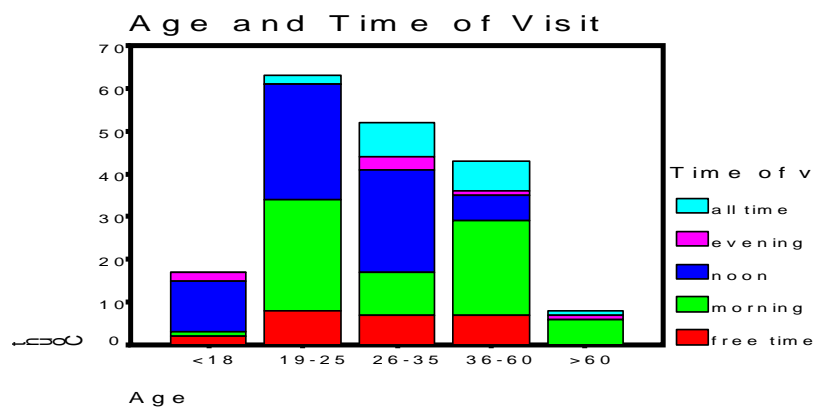
The profession of the respondents showed a diversity of 52 occupations, out of which students and government employees, private employees, home makers, teachers and businessmen comprised over 47%. 18% of the sample population consisted of retired employees, vendors, drivers, nurses and journalists. Rest of the respondents were spread across 42 professions.

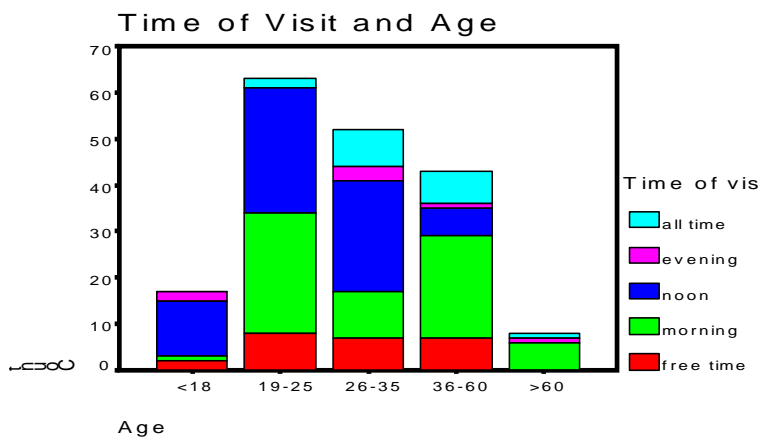
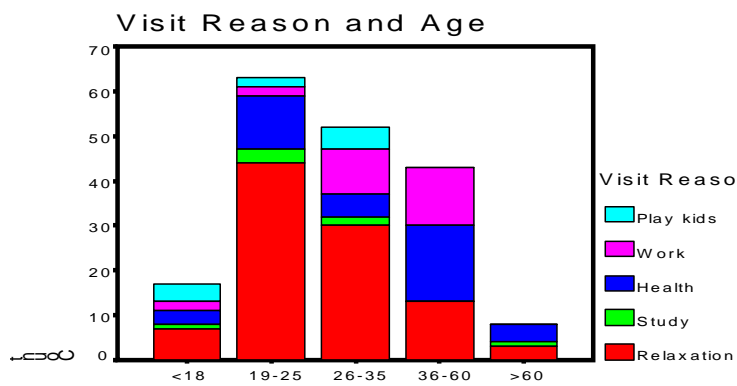
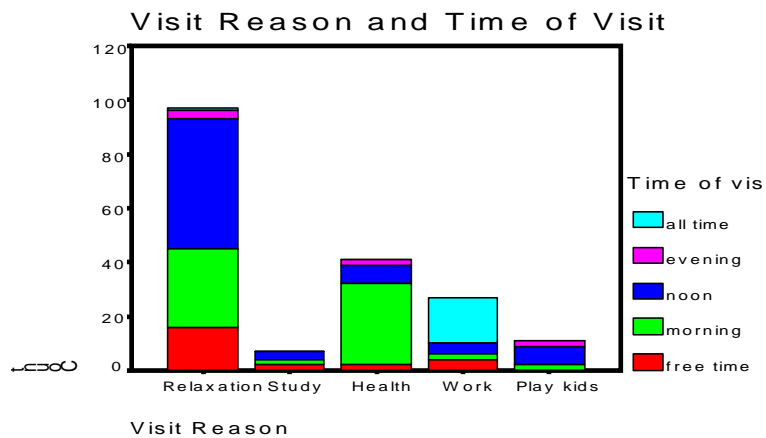
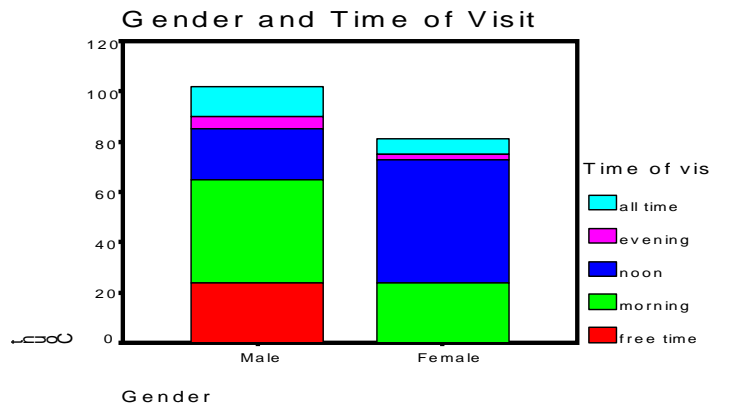


Gender and age wise distribution of respondents

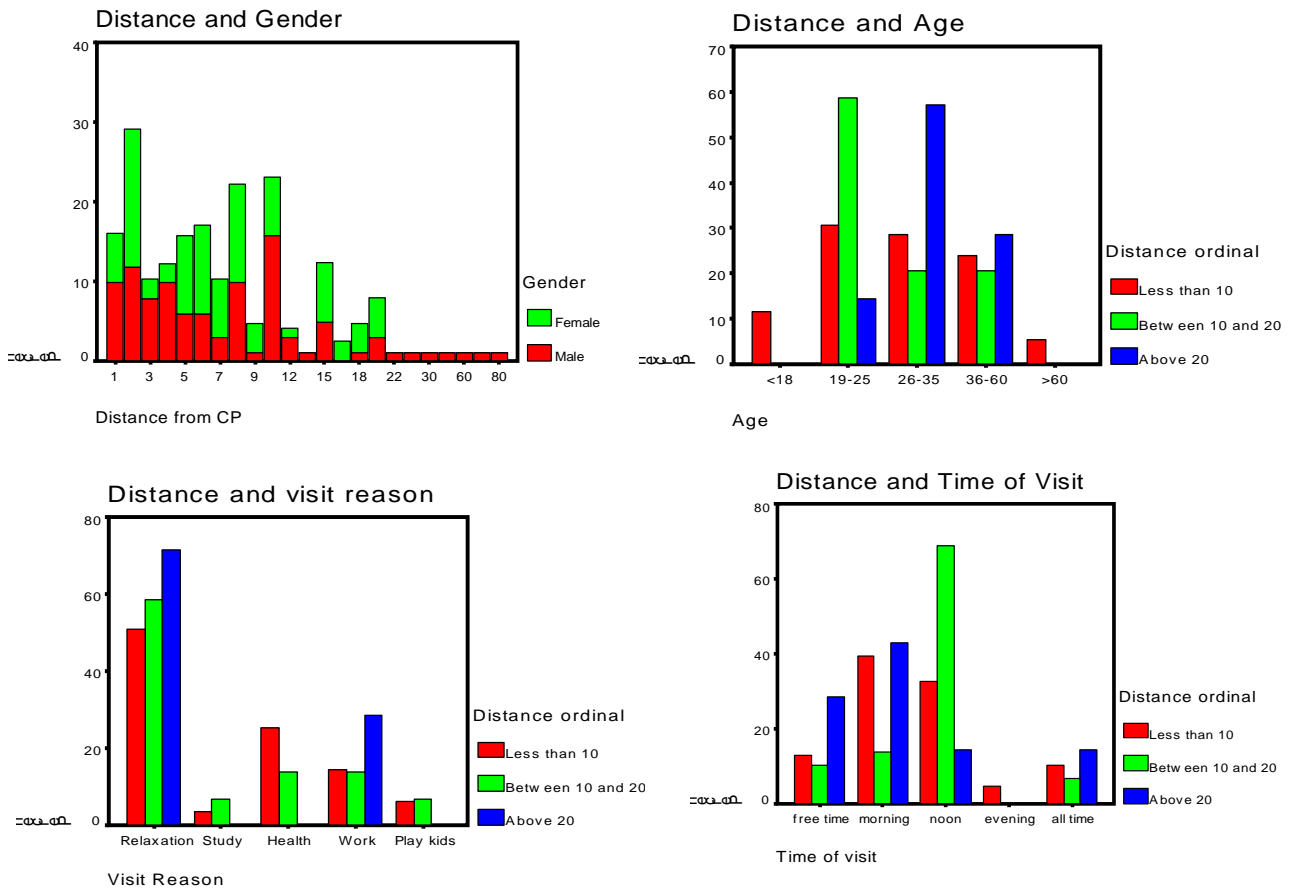
Respondents in the age category of 19 to 60 visited the park more frequently than others. 57% of women in the age group of 18-25 visit the park as against 31% men in the same age class. It is noteworthy that women under the age of 18 years make up to 16% as against a mere 4% men. Another interesting observation is the number of women over the age of 60 years is negligible whereas men the same age group comprise about 8%.

The above pattern has a number of variables such as age and gender of the visitor, time of visit, reasons for their visit and distance they travel to reach the park. The following representations throw some light on these attributes. As they are explanatory, a commentary is avoided.



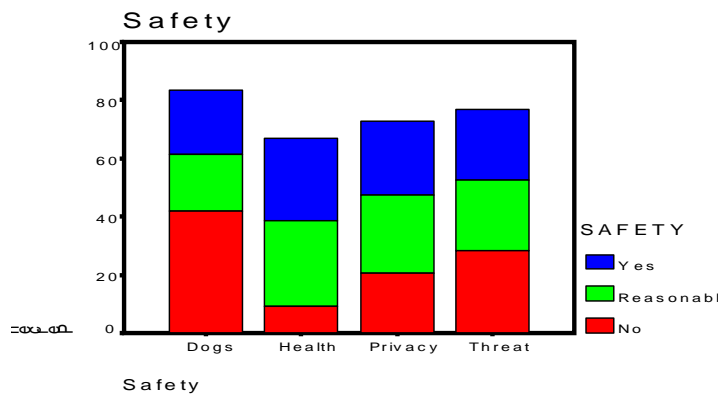


In bringing people to the park, and allowing them to stay there for a specified period of time, distance seems to play a vital role as signified in the following figures.

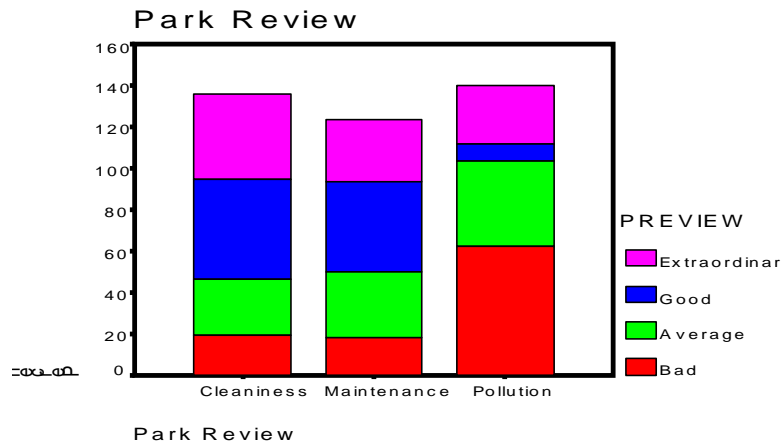


Among the key questions asked, the first was about safety. The safety attribute had four divisions

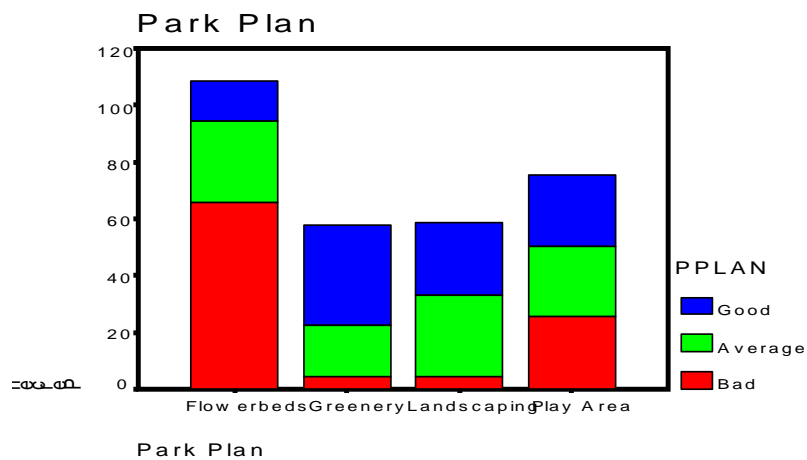
1. Threat from other individuals – Theft, physical and verbal assault
 2. Health impacts due to pollution as traffic is allowed in the park
 3. Dog menace
 4. Privacy – which could be disturbed due to vehicular movement and number of visitors
- The analysis of these revealed the following trend.



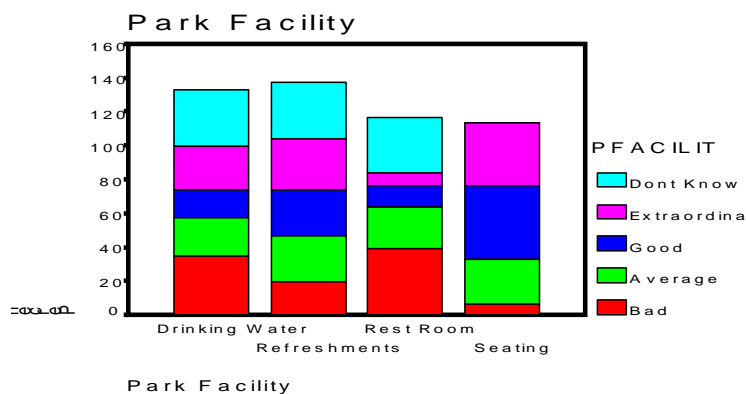
The second key question referred to Park review which addressed issues like cleanliness, park maintenance and pollution. The outcome of the survey on this was as follows:



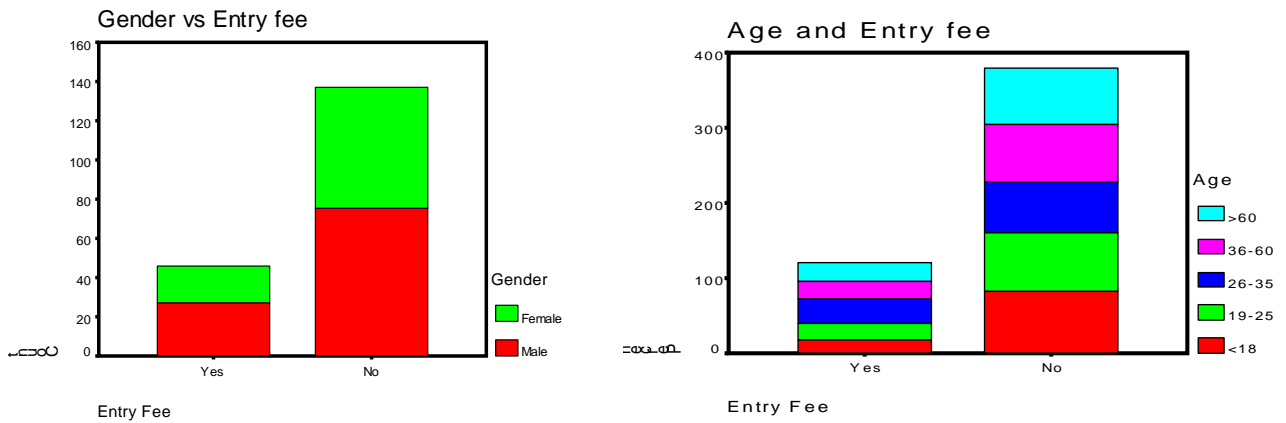
The third question was on park planning which considered the landscaping, greenery, flower beds and the play area. The data collected projected the following details.



The fourth issue to be enquired upon was with reference to the facilities available in the park. The details that were revealed were as under.



The responses with regards the willingness to pay the entry fee was as follows;



CORRELATIONS (Pearson's Correlation) for Variables

Pearson's correlation	No of weekly visits	Duration in hours	Distance from CP
No of weekly visits	1	.005	.052
Duration in hours		1	.043
Distance from CP			1

Of the correlations between the number of visits, duration of stay in the park and travel distance from their point of origin(home or work place) there seem to no significant correlation

CORRELATIONS (Rank Correlation) for Attributes

Rank Correlation	Gender	Age	Visit Reason	Days of visit	Time of visit
Gender	1	-.287(**)	0.004	.274(**)	.299(**)
Age		1	.182(*)	0.042	-0.064
Visit Reason			1	.244(**)	.209(**)
Days of visit				1	.194(**)
Time of visit					1

When the correlation between gender, age, visit reason, days of visit and time of visit were considered, significant correlation was found between gender v/s age, age v/s visit reason, days of visit v/s time of visit gender v/s days of visit, visit reason v/s time of visit, visit reason v/s days of visit and gender v/s time of visit.

CONCLUSION

Cubbon Park is a well-known for its planted diversity and public buildings such as state central library, tennis pavilion, Karnataka High Court and Vishveswaraya Industrial and Technological Museum among others. Its proximity to Vidhana Soudha and residential localities invites both occasional and regular users. In addition, it is the only park in Bengaluru where traffic is allowed to pass through. Consequentially, the pressures experienced by the park are varied in variety and intensity.

Occasional users find the park a relaxing place; a location scattered with eateries and recreational facilities like Bal Bhavan. This results in vandalism and irresponsible one-time consumption leading to damaged facilities and defaced vegetation. On the other hand, there seems to

be a feeling of belongingness/ownership among the regular visitors. These are the people who matter when it comes to people-government interaction in park planning and management.

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