



## Recreational Parks: Practices and Challenges in Hawassa City

Yeshewazerf Gebrewold Hailegiorgis\*

School of Hotel and Tourism, Hawassa University College of Business and Economics, Hawassa, Ethiopia

### Abstract

Recreational parks have great values like being an attraction for leisure and recreation contribute for tourism and contribute positively for the economy. In addition to this urban recreational parks have social, environmental, educational and health benefits. However urban recreational parks are underutilized due to poor services and facilities they have. Measures taken to solve the problem were limited due to lack of attention and research. This study is conducted on two recreational parks found in Hawassa city. The objectives of the study are assessing current government authority practices for planning, providing, managing and maintaining urban parks, identifying factors affecting recreational parks service provision and perception of visitors on the service and facilities provided. The study was conducted by collecting data from park visitors and park administration workers (in the city municipality), and by conducting observation on the parks. In analyzing the data descriptive statistic for the questionnaire filled by park visitors and simple qualitative analysis is used for information from key informant interview and observation made on parks. Results indicated that services and facilities at the parks are poor and poorly maintained. Lack of finance, professional human resource and absence of policies and guidelines for service provision are the main problems resulted in poor service and facility. Therefore, to improve service and facilities and achieve intended objective government/the city's municipality and specific work unit working on city recreational parks should review its policies on park management to enable allocation of more resources and the system of management and financial sourcing and involve all stakeholders in the system are recommended.

**Keywords:** Recreation; Leisure; Parks

### Introduction

Recreation is an important part of the life of every person throughout his entire lifetime [1]. It is an integral part of the life of every society. Torkildsen [2] and William [3] state that recreation has many meanings and means many things to people. The use of time for amusement, entertainment, participation and creativity is often called "recreation". Traditionally, society has suggested that recreation takes place during "leisure time", and therefore it closely associated with the concept of leisure. The researcher also believes that recreation is linked with specific types of activities, such as games, arts, crafts, outdoor pursuits sport and leisure activities in which people participate to restore themselves.

Edginton et al. [4] maintain that leisure is one of life's greatest gifts - an important dimension influencing the quality of an individual's life. Finding satisfaction within one's leisure experiences promotes a greater sense of well-being and increases one's sense of self-worth. For society as a whole, leisure provides an ideal medium for the transmission of historical, social and cultural values that promote desired norms, social orientations, and customs.

People's leisure and recreation is made possible through a wide range of providers, through powers and duties invested in government and through natural and man-made resources, services, facilities, and management. A range of services and programs is required to meet the diverse needs and demands of individuals, families, groups, clubs, societies, agencies and large and small organizations [2]. One of the places where urban residents of a country spend their leisure time is an urban park. Urban parks are a type of urban open space. Traditionally they are defined by their horticultural design, recreational value and open access to the public. Urban parks often provide play and sports areas, recreation facilities and entertainment.

There is a dual view of urban parks, the conventional and the new. The conventional view considers them as providers of recreational activities and opportunities. The new view exceeds the conventional

value of parks and considers the broader contributions the urban parks can make to the vitality and wellbeing of communities and their residents and focuses on how policymakers, practitioners and the public can consider parks as valuable contributors to larger urban policy objectives such as job opportunities, youth development, public health, and community building [5]. Recreation, in a variety of forms, is vital to urban life and has an important role to play in many societies, more or less developed. Given the increasing psychological stresses of contemporary life in all societies, the importance of recreation continue to grow and urban public parks will rise in importance for their role in providing public recreation. Urban parks with different facilities, services and kind of environment in which nature is involved, have great value for people leisure and recreation needs. Walker [5] states as parks have great recreational benefits and provide a place to enjoy fresh air and exercise. Urban parks provide opportunities for a wide range of formal and informal, passive and active leisure, sport, and recreational activities and play [6].

Currently more sedentary lifestyles are encouraging people to be overweight, risking the onset of chronic diseases, such as Diabetes, earlier in life. Urban parks in their design and development include aesthetic beauty, different facilities and play options as well as vegetation. Thus, leisure and recreation facilities, services and the environment is encouraging people to keep healthy, have fun, feel good, maintain independence in old age, and preventing illness and disease. There is an increasing awareness that health services will not

\*Corresponding author: Yeshewazerf Gebrewold Hailegiorgis, Lecturer, School of Hotel and Tourism, Hawassa University College of Business and Economics, Hawassa, Ethiopia, Tel: +251 912086235; E-mail: [ygwoldster@gmail.com](mailto:ygwoldster@gmail.com)

Received March 31, 2017; Accepted May 05, 2017; Published May 12, 2017

Citation: Hailegiorgis YG (2017) Recreational Parks: Practices and Challenges in Hawassa City. J Tourism Hospit 6: 284. doi: [10.4172/2167-0269.1000284](https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-0269.1000284)

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be able to cope unless there is a corresponding move to more active lifestyles. Thus, parks are ideal places recommended to take healthy exercise [7-9].

The economic benefit of parks helps to raise property values, create quality town and therefore, build business and community confidence. According to Dierig [10] urban parks and open spaces are valuable resources. They can help improve the quality of life in urban areas, have essential environmental functions and, by increasing the attractiveness of the places in which people live and work, can have economic benefits. Good quality urban green helps to create a favorable image for a place, attracts tourists, skilled labor, and inward investment in the area boosting retail sales and exerting a positive impact on adjacent property values, both commercial and residential. On these grounds, urban green spaces can have a positive contribution to the competitiveness of places and their economic development [7].

Predominantly parks are free or low entrance fee and accessible, they also improve social well-being, providing room for informal interaction of people from different backgrounds [9]. Parks help build and strengthen ties among community residents by bringing people together, including those who are otherwise divided by race or class, and by helping them work together on common projects. These ties-often labeled "social capital"-represent subtle but important assets for a community. They provide avenues through which information, values, and social expectations flow, and they empower people to tackle community wide problems, embark on collective actions, and advocate effectively for their community. Recent research demonstrates, for example, that a neighborhood's collective efficacy people's connections with one another and their capacity to work together to achieve shared goals can reduce crime and disorder, even in very poor communities [5].

The assets children and youth need for healthy development fall into four major domains: physical, intellectual, emotional, and social. And parks can offer programs that are not only fun, but also help kids acquire assets in one or more of these domains [5]. Access to public parks and recreational facilities has been strongly linked to reductions in crime and in particular to reduced juvenile delinquency. The environment of youths in recreation plays a facilitative role in both character development and socialization process. Participation in recreation provides opportunities for youths to interact with others and to expand energies in a positive way. The provision of adequate public recreational facilities has helped in no small way to keep a large number of the idle youths out of the streets by making profession out of the games they learned from the public recreational places in America and Europe [11,12].

Parks are increasingly used as an outdoor classroom for school subjects such as environmental studies and provide valuable venues for research projects. As a result, they can help renew the relationship between urban residents and the natural world. According to Cropton [13], Urban Parks provide an opportunity for research partnerships with universities, scientific and industrial research organizations to examine a wide range of biophysical, economic and cultural issues related to park and visitor management. Urban Parks therefore if well established; can serve as laboratories for biologists, geographers, environmentalists as well as social scientists. In addition to this parks and green spaces have a vital role in helping children and young people learn a variety of skills through play and social interaction [14].

Traditionally urban green spaces were planned and managed for their recreational and aesthetic value. However, a considerable body of research has recently proven the potential of green sites in cities to

sustain biodiversity and to contribute to wider human well-being [8,9]. According to Taylor and Coalter [6] public parks are in high demand in urban environment. They embody the presence of nature in a city. They offer respite from the daily agitation. Urban green protects soils and moderates harsh urban climate for example by cooling the air, removing toxins from the air, reducing wind speed and giving shade [6].

### Statement of the problem

Even if there are a lot of issues that need exploration regarding recreational parks in Hawassa city; this study is limited only to assess park by considering the following points i.e. existing condition of urban parks, perception of users on service and facility of parks, policies and guidelines developed to support urban park development and its service provision and extent of community involvement in urban park development and service provision.

Thus, study is intended to answer the following questions;

- How do users perceive services and facilities provided in recreational parks?
- How parks in Hawassa city are managed?
- How do communities are involving in park development, management and service delivery?
- How well policies and guidelines are supporting parks development, management, and maintenance and service delivery in Hawassa city?
- What are the challenges in recreational park service and facility provision?

### Objectives of the study

**General objective:** The main intention of this study is assessing recreational parks in Hawassa by giving special emphasis to current practices and challenges in parks service and facility provision.

**Specific objectives:** Specifically, this study is intended to:

- Examine the perception of users towards facilities and services of recreational parks in the city.
- Investigate the management system of urban recreational parks in the city.
- Assess the extent of community involvement in park development, management and service delivery.
- Outline policies and guidelines developed to support park development, management, and maintenance and service delivery in Hawassa city.
- Investigate challenges in recreational parks service provision.

### Significance of the study

The importance of this study mainly focuses on staffs, community/visitors, and policy makers. Using this study staffs working in recreational parks can improve their services in order to achieve their goal and satisfy visitors in view of the fact that they can identify their problems; thus visitors can get a good service. The policy makers can get a building input to formulate policy. In addition to this, this study could be used as base for further investigation to enrich the research findings in this area.

## Materials and Methods

### Description of the study area

The Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) is located in the Southern and South-Western part of Ethiopia. Astronomically, it roughly lies between 4° 43'-8°58' North latitude and 34° 8'-39°14' East longitude. It is bordered with Kenya in South, the Sudan in South West, Gambella region in North West and surrounded by Oromiya region in North West, North and East directions.

The total area of the region estimated to be 110,931.9 Km<sup>2</sup> which is 10% of the total area of the country. Based on the 2007 census conducted by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), the SNNPR has an estimated population of 15,042,531, of whom 7,482,051 were men and 7,560,480 women. 13,496,821 or 89.72% of the population are estimated to be rural inhabitants, while 1,545,710 or 10.28% are urban; this makes the SNNPR Ethiopia's most rural region.

The region is a multination which consists of about 56 ethnic groups with their own distinct geographical location, language, cultures, and social identities living together. These varied ethnic groups are classified in to the Osmotic, Cushitic, Nilo-Sahara and Semitic super language families. The region is endowed with various natural, cultural and historical heritage sites including the UNESCO world heritage registered sites of Tiya Stelae in Gurage Zone, Lower Omo Anthropological Site and Konso Cultural Landscape. The SNNPR is amazing region with abundance biological diversity. The region is known for its rich vegetation cover such as, Rain forest, woodland, savannah grassland and wetland vegetation with their common and respective wild animals (mammals and birds). There is a great opportunity to experience a range of outdoor activities, such as caving, hiking, jungle trucking, swimming, boating, rock climbing, river cruising, and bird watching.

Hawassa, the capital city of SNNPRs, is positioned at the edge of Lake Hawassa. Hawassa is located 275 km south of Addis Ababa. It is an attractive town in a beautiful setting. The city has about 306,056 populations (dwellers) including HawellaTulla sub city. Most of the people in the city are followers of Christianity and Islam religion. As a regional capital of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Regional State (SNNPRS), it is a home of more than 50 nationalities with their varied language and cultural practices which make the city an open cultural museum for every tourists.

The great open air marker at the heart of the town is a displaying ground of the wealth, styles of hair, dress and make up's of the people that constitute different culture of the region. Mondays and Thursdays are market days in the city. Tabor hill on the western end of the town towers above the peaceful lake Hawassa to the left and the town stretched below it in all directions.

Mt. Alamura; a small mountain situated at the south western end of the town, Gudumale park (religious and cultural spot in South Western side of the lake), Lake Hawassa the most beautiful lake which attracts thousands of tourists each month, the grand Saint Gabriel church, Masqel square and modern streets of the city are major attractions.

### Study subjects

Subjects of this study are users of Hawassa city parks and local authority agents involved in the park service provision. Basically, the researcher conducted this study by using primary data. Related literatures are also reviewed to support the primary data.

Users (residents and tourists i.e. domestic and foreign) who are readily available in time and place during data collection and local authority officials currently in position are considered as subjects for this research. In addition to this, documents in local authority offices are reviewed to deal with policy and guideline issues.

### Study design

**Research design:** Based on the objectives the research involved descriptive study that uses interview, questionnaire, observation and revision of documents as tools to collect data.

**Types of data and data Source:** Primary data is believed to be the chief source of information for this study, however secondary sources from magazines, previously used data, and statistical bulletins are also used in order to consolidate the primary data. Both qualitative and quantitative information are inputs for the research.

**Population/sample size:** The number of users that will visit Hawassa city recreational parks i.e. Amora Gedel (58,500) plus Millennium Park (1,000) this year is estimated to be a total of 59, the last year's record.

Data collection for this research is proposed to take two months. The number of park users within these two months is considered as the total population of the study. The annual user's number is divided in to twelve months to find the number of users for the two months. Therefore, the number of park users that will visit the parks within two months is estimated to be around 9,916 (9750 users of Amora Gedel Park and 166 users of Millennium park). Being this is the total population of the study; a sample of 315 are taken using the approach developed by Cropton [13] as cited in Taylor and Coalter [6]. The method is presented in the following Table 1.

As we can see from Table 1, the total population lies in the range between 3,201 and 10,000. By considering small and medium sample size variances the researcher decided to take large sample size i.e. as per the range, 315 park users are involved in the study. Since the number of park users in the parks have difference; this number is distributed proportionally to the two parks under study.

To select samples from the total population, the researcher used convenience sampling method.

Those users who are readily available during the time of data collection are involved in the study.

Since there is no data on the age, sex and types (local, other Ethiopian and foreign) of park users 11 based on their availability the researcher incorporated both male and female park users, users of different age groups and types. Regarding the local authority officials;

Population size	Sample size		
	Low	Medium	High
51-90	5	13	20
91-150	8	20	32
151-280	13	32	50
281-500	20	50	80
501-1200	32	80	125
1201-3200	50	125	200
3201-10000	80	200	315
10001-35000	125	315	500
35001-150000	200	500	800

Source: TamratGetahun; Employees' opinion about human resource development practices of national bank of Ethiopia: A case study, August/2007.

Table 1: Method.

only the concerned officials currently available on the position are interviewed.

## Study methodology

**Data collection tools and procedures:** Primary data is collected using questionnaire, key informant interview, and personal observation. Secondary data is collected from published and unpublished materials.

**Site survey:** Based on the research questions; a draft questionnaire was prepared and then translated in to Amharic to gather information from park visitors. The type of questionnaire survey used is site/visitor survey i.e. 315 visitors of the park's facility are surveyed on-site. Pilot study was used to test the precision of expression, relevance, and validity of the questionnaire by allowing visitors to fill the questionnaire in each park under study (10 questionnaires for each park). From the response of the pilot it appeared that the questionnaire is acceptable. Questions that were problematic to understand or interpret and measure were rephrased and deleted.

**Key informant interview:** Unstructured interview is used to collect data from Hawassa City Beautification, Parks and Cemetery development and Administration work unit head. Open-ended questions were used. Experts and officials relatively concerned on the management and administration of parks are selected as key informant.

Thus, an individual interviewed is Hawassa City Beautification, Parks and Cemetery development and Administration work unit head. Specific park's workers were intended to be interviewed but I haven't found any park worker inside the park except guards.

**Observation:** Observation was made by the researcher in order to crosscheck and enhance the data obtained through other methods of data collection. This method was applied to observe services and facilities in parks under study. Thus information obtained through observation included in the research finding.

## Data management and analysis

Data analysis is the process of systematically reaching and arranging the interview transcripts, filled questionnaire, field notes and other material that the researcher accumulates to increase understanding of the respondent's subjective experiences and to enable the researcher to present what has been discovered.

The analysis of the data from observation and interview was started in line with data collection. The qualitative data was consistently organized and presented in the form of narratives. Three hundred fifteen filled questionnaires were analyzed using SPSS (Version 20). First the questions in the questionnaire are coded in the way that would be easy to feed to the computer, and then the data feed in to the cells of SPSS using the code made as a guide.

Finally, data was processed and analyzed. Summary statistics, frequencies and percentages were computed.

## Result and Discussion

### Visitors perception on the urban recreational park service provision

**Characteristic of respondents:** Analysis on the questionnaire survey shows as most of the park visitors are male 207 from 315 respondents which is 65.7% and the rest are female. When we see the age of respondents majority of them 252 from 315 are within 16-34 age range.

**Visit pattern of respondents/visit frequency, time spent during a visit and reason for visit etc.:** Here the main concern is the reasons why some people use urban recreational parks rarely. It also considers some of the improvements that would encourage such people to use urban recreational parks more frequently. Of course it is unrealistic to expect that everyone will want to use urban green spaces, or that everyone will be a regular visitor. But, on the other hand, examination of the reasons why some people do not make much use of them, or use them only seldom, can provide a valuable insight into the types of improvements that need to be made to maximize their use and to ensure that their use is as inclusive as possible. Respondents who come to parks everyday accounts 5.7%; those who come to parks once per week and once per month accounts 57.2%; the rest 37% are those who come to the park once per year and new comers. Even if the facilities and services in the parks are poor majority of the respondents (57.2%) of them come to parks at least once per month.

The survey shows most visitors stay more than an hour in the parks during their visit (77.1%), 14.3 percent stay from 30 minutes to 1hour, 8.6% 16 minutes to 30 minutes.

Most of the respondents answered as they visit parks to admire and enjoy the environment which accounts to about 80% percent; 11.4 percent of them to eat/drink; there are no visitors who come to the parks for reading, exercising/sport reasons, like attending social events (wedding) and other reasons accounts 8.6%. These uses of urban recreational parks are not closely linked to the benefits that parks have to the local community and other visitors.

There are no people who visit urban recreational parks to attend community events and to make physical exercise. This might have different reasons. Absence of community events held in parks and lack of facilities for sport and recreation. Both parks under study do not allow any physical exercise and sport. In both parks under study; there are no community events which are organized in the parks and open for visitors except Amor Gedel Park hosting Fiche Chambalala Sidama New Year ceremony once a year.

### Respondents perception of park service and facilities:

- **Accessibility:** Accessibility is treated in two ways here. The first one is general accessibility of urban recreational parks to visitors i.e. whether parks can easily be reached; without difficult physical barriers on ways visitors get to parks. For example transport to sites can be difficult for those without a car and there might be lack of decent and reliable public transport and, sometimes, difficulties in obtaining a taxi as an alternative and absence of lower floor buses serving physically impaired people. The second one is accessibility of facilities and services (in the parks) for visitors especially for people with disabilities. Some services and facilities might not be accessible for those with physical disabilities while others for those with visual problem.

Majority of the respondents 54.3% indicated that the parks are not accessible; while the rest 45.7% of respondents indicated as the parks are accessible. Based on the observation made on the parks, it is difficult to give comment/make analysis on accessibility of services and facilities of the park since there are no organized services and facilities offered there but I can say that it is easy to get to the park using Bajaj(three wheel taxi). Here it is necessary to inform that there are no people with disability in the respondents, since there are no disabled visitors during the data collection. Thus, all the views are of people other than the disabled.

- **Safety and security:** Safety and security is a major issue that

determines the reputation of parks and visitor satisfaction. In order to keep their visitors with them; parks should ensure safety and security of their visitors. Majority of the respondents (60%) revealed that they always felt secured during their stay in the parks; the rest 40% of them said they do not have sense of security during their stay in the parks. Based on the crosstab made majority of the respondents that felt unsecured are female. As was discovered during field observation and interview made with park administrators there is security problems in the parks mainly theft. The main things that contribute a lot for this problem is absence of fence for parks, limited number of guards in the parks, poor design of parks. Millennium park do not have good fence that can contribute for good security; fences are failed and can be jumped easily; Amora Gedel park's fence is under construction. As stated by park administrators, number of guards in the park is not enough to solve security problems that might happen, parks lack sign post and the design of parks also contribute for such a problem. Parks do not have clear walk ways; locations of different facilities within the parks are not placed based on reasonable design. In addition to these factors in Amora Gedel Park, the presence of residents in the compound of the park made ensuring security difficult for the park guards. As indicated by park administrators robbers can get in to parks as a visitor since the entrance fee is affordable and it is difficult for park workers to identify them from other visitors.

Boat service provided in the park is not safe; there is only one life saver. In addition there is no fence from the lake side, thus, it can be considered as a safety risk. It might not be possible to guarantee the safety and security of park visitors, only reasonable care can be exercised to identify risk factors and create safe and secured environment for visitors. Here a partnership between state, private sector and communities become necessary to ensure that people do not keep away from facilities due to safety and security problems.

- **Availability of services and facilities:** According to Page [15-20], design issues like signposting, seating provision, parking and others present an image of an attraction to visitors and also have an ability to build or destroy a visitor's experience. In general, most of the respondents i.e. 80% of them said both parks do not fulfill minimum services as recreational park. In addition to survey results, observation and park administrators' interview shows the following:

1. **Shelter:** Shelter is considered important because it can provide opportunities for meeting and sheltering from sun or rain. In parks studied; there are shelters particularly meant for wedding. These shelters can be used by other visitors if it is not reserved for a wedding. The condition of shelters in two of the parks is poor. Almost all of the shelters are old and need repair [21].

2. **Toilet:** According to researcher's observation both parks in study do not have functional toilet; the existing ones are all out of order. First of all recreational parks should have restrooms and they should be clean, well maintained and easily accessible for all visitors including for those with disabilities.

3. **Seat:** Visitors want to feel comfortable during their stay in urban recreational parks. According to researcher's observation there are seat in all the parks in study but the design, number and arrangement is poor. Provision of seat, in a variety of forms and arrangement is necessary from comfort and aesthetics point of view. Seats should also be distributed proportionally throughout the parks rather than crowding of seats at the entrance area of the parks and limited seats at the farthest end of parks.

4. **Sport and recreational facilities:** Sport and recreational

facilities like swimming pool, Gymnasium, walking/running trail, basketball court, table tennis etc. doesn't exist in any of the parks under study. One of the benefits of urban recreational parks is of health but all parks in the study fail to fulfill this function of parks.

5. **Sign post and Parking area:** Researcher's observation and response of all the respondents indicated that there is no signpost or information board in the parks. There is no parking area; people park where ever they want to.

6. **Cafeteria service:** In both of the parks under study there is no organized cafeteria service except a small private shop for biscuits, candies and soft drinks.

**Perception of respondents to park workers:** Majority of the respondents i.e. 65.7%, 54.3% and 51.45% of them feel that park workers are welcoming, willing to help and able to answer their questions respectively; while those having the opposite feeling accounts 34.3%, 45.7 and 48.6% respectively. This result shows as parks have a great assignment to work on the competency of their staffs to make their customers satisfied.

**Perception of respondents to fees charged:** One of the functional benefits of parks practice in the parks is economic activity. Parks collect money from entrance fee, by charging for different programs like film making, wedding, and music performance.

There are two types of fees charged in the parks, which are of the park (entrance fee, fee for different functions like weeding) and of private service providers (mostly shop services). Thus the description below is all about fees charged by the park.

Out of the 315 respondents 57.1% of them indicated that fees charged are average; 34.1% of them perceived that fees charged are low; and the rest 8.6% of them perceived that parks are charging higher price. This indicated that majority of the respondents consider fees charged are from average to very low. This in its turn means fees charged are perceived to be affordable.

**Services and facilities that respondents/park users want to see in parks:** Most of the respondents believe that the parks lack basic services and facilities that they expect them to have. Thus they stated as they want the parks to have seat, toilet, walk ways/for disabled too/, children's play area, different sport areas, food and drink outlets, attractive landscape design, shelters, different recreational activities.

**Things that respondents want to see avoided from parks:** Some of the things that park users want to see avoided from the park are chewing chat, smoking, kids who mistreat and beg users in the park, sexual activities, disposing different waste in the park.

#### **Perception of respondents about volunteer service provision**

Out of the total sample respondents most of them (57.1%) reported that they didn't have any volunteer service for urban recreational parks and 40% they said they are not asked so far. As discovered from interview with park administrators there is no system or space established to incorporate these volunteers in the parks service provision system.

#### **Policy governing service provision of urban recreational parks**

A policy is meant to be one of the referral documents to be used as a guideline for service provision. Interview made with park administrators shows that absence of guidelines for urban recreational park service provision is one of the problems seen with regard to policy.

This resulted in poor service provision and failure of the work unit (Beautification, Parks and Cemetery development and Administration work unit) to meet its objectives.

In 2001 E.C, the agency has developed standard of parks and green areas development and service provision but this standard is not well implemented due to financial and other problems of the agency.

Policies/guidelines that clearly states duties and responsibilities of different stakeholders (the agency, private sector, non-profit organizations and the community), ways of cooperation and involvement of the agency with these stakeholders and source of finance to accomplish the agency objectives doesn't exist.

### **Challenges of beautification, parks and cemetery development and administration unit**

**Human resource:** Interview made with park administrators and service providers clearly indicates that urban parks do not have adequate and professional human resource. For example one of the tasks of the parks agency is designing parks but the agency does not have any architect and landscape designer to accomplish its task. This is not the only problem that the agency encountered; since it doesn't have autonomous status to use its resources and have financial deficiency it is unable to bring these professionals from outside and get works done. The head of the work unit stated as hiring these professionals and retaining them for a long is a serious problem.

**Finance:** The insufficient financial resource of the municipality for development of new facilities and maintenance of the destroyed facilities is one of the reasons that parks become less attractive to the users. First, due to lack of attention given to parks/without considering diverse contribution of urban parks i.e. for social, economy, environment, personal development and health of the community and visitors and other benefit of parks/ the budget allocated is low. Secondly, due to lack of clear alternative ways and effort made to solve such financial problems the unit does not have ample financial resource to meet its objectives. There are a lot of alternative ways to manage and administer urban parks in order to provide quality and variety of services and facilities. But the work unit has failed to develop and implement effectively alternative management system that can make parks meet their intended objectives. The park work unit has a trend of letting some parks to private administrators and service providers but fail to work on necessary control and inspection tasks.

**Cooperation with stakeholders and marketing activity:** As discovered from interview made with park unit head, there are no much works done to involve the community and different stakeholders in park development and service delivery. There is no significant work done by the city tourism bureau on urban recreational parks by considering them as tourism attraction. In addition to this the agency does not have a clear guideline and structure to participate these stakeholders. Regarding marketing activities done, park administrators themselves admit as it is not enough. There are few promotional works done using meeting and brochures but these are very insignificant. Thus due to this reason parks are not well developed and used by the community and other visitors.

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

**Conclusion:** The objective of this study is to assess the current situation of urban recreational parks of Hawassa City using key informants interview, observation and studying visitors' perception in general. Thus, Urban Parks are generally underutilized with both the

parks under the study, they are being poorly attended. There seem to be a relationship between park facilities, maintenance and the number of people visiting the park because parks with more facilities and activities attract more users and achieve their intended objective.

Most respondents 85.7% of them indicated as parks are not well developed and maintained. While majority respondents indicated as parks lack basic facilities like toilet, shelter, and different facilities for active leisure and recreation; i.e. sport facilities, different participatory programs, play options and children friendly activities and facilities. Thus here it can be concluded that public recreational parks lack basic facilities that parks should provide for its visitors and are not in good condition due to lack of maintenance, new development and lack of attention as other attractions in the city.

Among the functional benefit of parks; economic activity is somehow common i.e. by collecting entrance fee, by charging for different programs like film making, wedding, and music performance. Therefore it can be concluded that even if it's not in well-organized way; the parks perform somehow economic than social, cultural, educational and environmental functions.

Regarding the management and administration of parks, under-investment in urban parks by the government, financial constraints and failure of the park work unit to develop alternative way of coping out this problem, lack of clear policy and guideline for park service provision, inability of the work unit to enjoy autonomous status to manage and administer parks, lack of cooperation of the agency with different stakeholders, lack of ample and professional human resource, poor marketing and awareness creation are some of the problems identified.

### **Recommendation**

Based on the findings of the study the following general recommendations were drawn to enable optimal utilization and sustainable development of urban parks in Hawassa City.

- Increased and better quality of resources are needed to provide quality leisure and recreation services. Here finance, equipment, human resource should get better consideration and the park work unit should work on this. While developing facilities and services; it should be in the way to serve all visitors from residents to tourists and vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, elders and children).
- Government should review its policies on park management to enable allocation of more resources and establish good system of management; since urban parks have great contribution for tourism by being an attraction and by making cities green and attractive to its residents and tourists.
- Degenerated and underutilized parks should be refurbished through the initiative of the park work unit, collaborative efforts and contributions of environmentalist, cooperate bodies, NGOs, educational institutions, donor communities and the local community who should also be empowered on effective urban park utilization and management.
- The park work unit should take serious responsibility of the parks by enacting service provision guidelines and standards that enable it to maintain parks properly and provide basic facilities and services.
- Social marketing principles should be implemented by

the work unit. It is essential to market services to attract skilled personnel and users, since lack of information hinders participation. Here different channels of communication should be applied.

- The park work unit ought to look at implementing alternative methods of public leisure service management, for example leasing some of its facilities or entering in to partnership with other stakeholders in order to offer a variety of sustainable services and on the way making the community beneficiary. Management of public leisure and recreation facilities can be shared by various agencies and organizations. The challenge is for the park work unit to ensure that the management of public leisure facilities and services meet park work unit objective.
- Forming professional associations and friends of parks. These are individuals and organizations legally separate from parks, but support the parks by giving time and money to help parks to achieve their ambition. Moreover having professional association help park workers to share information, provide continuing education, and advocate for parks. In addition to this, these associations provide guidance to their members on professional practices such as fundraising, sponsorship, organizing volunteers, and accommodating disabled visitors.

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**Citation:** Hailegiorgis YG (2017) Recreational Parks: Practices and Challenges in Hawassa City. *J Tourism Hospit* 6: 284. doi: [10.4172/2167-0269.1000284](https://doi.org/10.4172/2167-0269.1000284)

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