A Geographical Study on the Weekend Recreation of Parks in Yangon

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Abstract

This study is designed to analyse the weekend recreation of the four parks such as People's Park, Mahabandula Park, Kandawgyi Park and Inya Lake Park in the Yangon by using the quantitative method. These parks situated in Yangon are very prominent, well known and visited by many people. The People's Park is one of the major parks, surrounded by the Shwedagone Pagoda and the former Pyithu Hlauttaw (People's Parliament). The Mahabandula Park is located in downtown of Yangon and surrounded by the Sule Pagoda, Church, Mosque, Yangon City Hall, High Court and Old Buildings of Colonial period. It is a beautiful, small open park and it also has a very interesting historical monument of independence at the centre of the park. The Kandawgyi Park is situated in the east of the Shwedagone Pagoda and surrounded by Yangon Zoological Garden and Natmauk Road. The Inya Lake Park is located next to Yangon University and it is most well known as a popular recreational area. In this study, characteristics of the visitors and the parks, reasons for visiting the parks, and the activities of visitors in the parks were investigated. It also shows that the profiles of the parks are different in terms of the evaluation of the visitors and the spatial characteristics of the parks.

Keywords: Park and recreation, characteristics of parks and visitors, activities of visitors and   reasons for visiting the park.

Introduction

Park is an area of land, where certain types of activities are restricted, to permit individuals to escape the intensity of urban life. Recreation is an activity of leisure, leisure being discretionary time. Recreational activities are often done for enjoyment and amusement, or pleasure. Parks and recreation are resources and services provided for the purposes of leisure, entertainment, and recreational pursuits (www.nrpa.org). There are several amusement parks in Yangon. For the quantitative analysis on the weekend recreation of the parks in Yangon, four parks are chosen as examples namely: People's Park (southern part), Mahabandula Park, Kandawgyi Park and Inya Lake Park (west of the lake). Among these parks the biggest park is the People's Park and the smallest is the Mahabandula Park in the study area. The aim of this research is to analyze the weekend recreation situation in parks of Yangon with the characteristics of visitors, their activities and the reasons for visiting. This paper is presented the perspective of the visitor's side based on the general research question: How do people use parks for weekend recreation in Yangon?

General Characteristics of the Parks

The selected parks are located in the inner urban ring of Yangon and the largest and best maintained parks in Yangon. The location of these parks within Yangon is shown in figure 1.

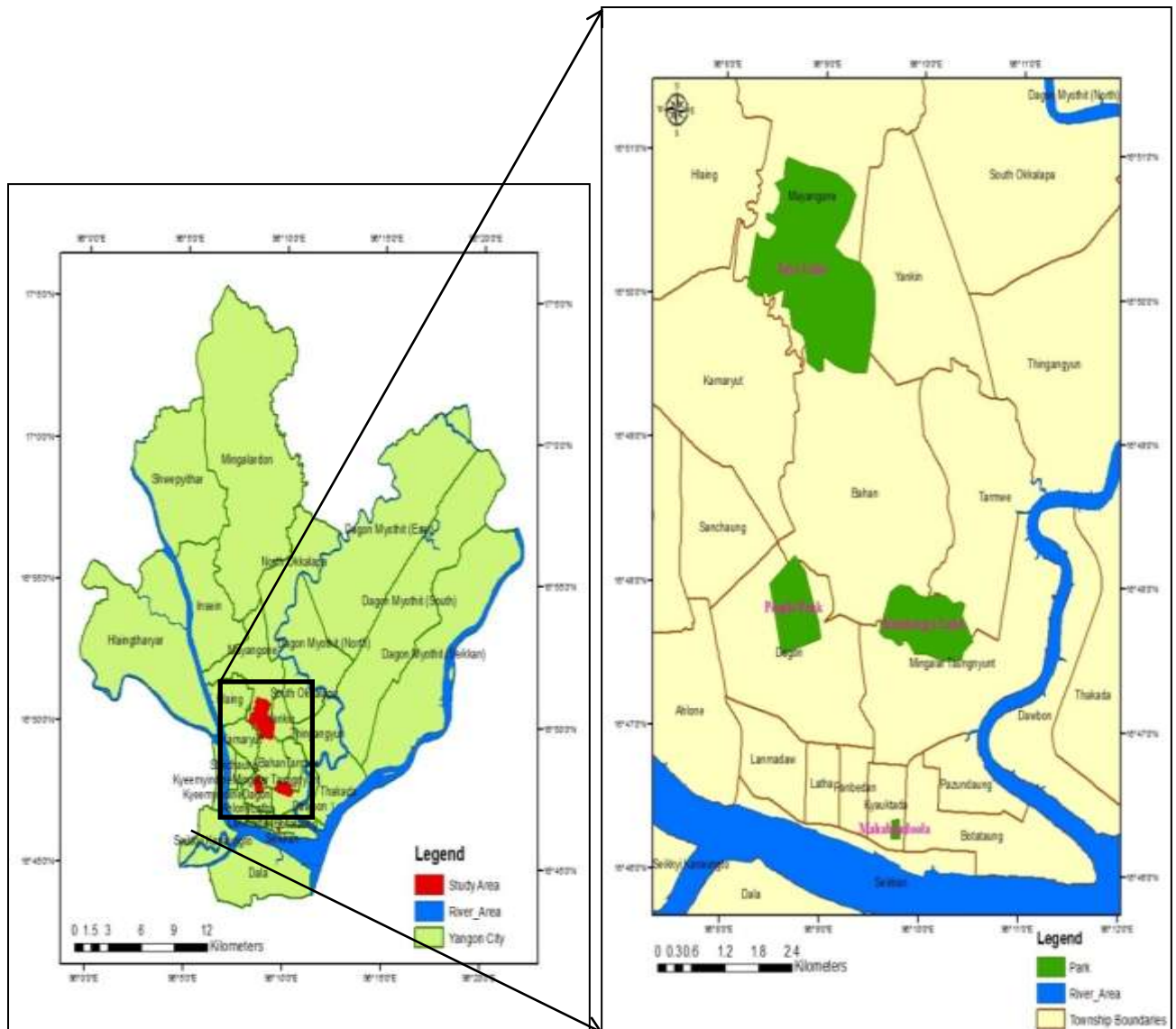[1] Lecturer, Department of Geography, Dagon University, Yangon, Myanmar.

Figure 1. Location of the Study Area
Source: Based on Google Earth (2018)

The **People's Park** is one of the major parks in Yangon. It is located between the Shwedagon Pagoda and former Pyithu Hlauttaw (People's Parliament). The park is subdivided into three parts: northern, middle and southern parts. The study is carried out in the southern part. The **Mahabandula Park** is situated in downtown of Yangon and surrounded by the Sule Pagoda, Church, Mosque, Yangon City Hall, High Court and Old Buildings of Colonial period. It is a beautiful, small open park and it has a very interesting historical monument of independence at the center of the park. There is also a beautiful fountain. So it has very nice views with the old and new buildings around the park. The **Inya Lake Park** is located north of the city center. It is a popular recreational area in Yangon, and a famous location for romance. In the Inya Lake, two parks are located: one at the western side along the Pyay Road and another one at the eastern side along the Kabaraye Pagoda Road. The questionnaires survey is done in the western side. The **Kandawgyi Park** is situated between the western end of the lake and Natmauk Road which leads to the Shwedagon Pagoda.

Material and Methods

Based on the research questions, the questionnaires are created in detail. The first question is related to how visitors arrived at the park from their home (the transport mode). The second part contains questions, what are the reasons for visiting parks. The third part is dealing with the activities carried out by the visitors when visiting the park. The fourth part is related to the evaluation on the parks by their visitors. On the one hand, visitors are asked to give remarks for some aspects such as quietness or relaxing facilities. The remarking is done according to a five level system as: 1 = very good, 2 = good, 3 = satisfying, 4 = bad, 5 = very bad. The last part is some characteristics of the visitors, such as income, age and education, because it is assumed that these characteristics may influence on visiting the parks and doing recreation there.

The field work is carried out on the weekend. On both Saturday and Sunday; questionnaires are done in the time between 12 noon and 6 p.m. The total 6 hours are subdivided into three time periods 12 noon to 2 p.m., 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and 4 p.m. to 6 p.m. The questionnaires are taken within the parks. A total of 428 questionnaires are carried out and distributed over the time periods in the parks. The information of the questionnaires are conducted into the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) system and analyzed with statistical methods using the SPSS software and the Excel software as well.

Results and Finding

Most of the respondents (more than 50%) visit the parks only occasionally and only a few do it every day. A little more than half of the visitors visit the park only on weekend, about 47% of the visitors said that they visit the park not only on weekend but also on weekdays. As transport mode, the majority, more than 80% of the visitors, use transport vehicle, like private car, taxi and city bus. Only the minority of nearby visitors come to the parks on foot and by bicycle.

Table 1. Frequency of Visiting the Park

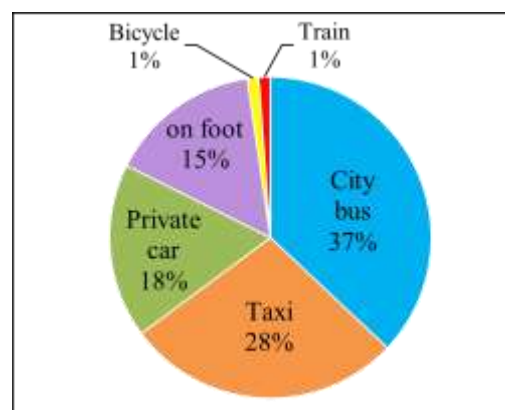| Frequency of Visiting	Respondents	% of Respondents
almost every day	29	6.79
once a week	75	17.56
once a month	88	20.61
only occasionally	236	55.04
Total	**428**	**100.00**

Source: Field Observation, 2018

Figure 2. Types of Transport Mode
Source : Field Observation, 2018

According to the socio-economic aspects, the majority of visitors are fairly young and quite highly educated. More than 75% of the respondents are less than 40 years old with a peak of 40% in the age 20 to 30 years. The education level of the visitors is high. About 90% of the respondents have at least the high school level and the almost 65% are graduated. Regarding profession, high proportions of the respondents are "employed in government

services" (almost 25%), "students" (23%) and "employed in private jobs" (22%). The proportion of retired persons is low with just 3%.

According to the household income, the majority of the households have a medium size income. More than 50% have income in the range between 200,000 and 500,000 Kyats. Very few have a low income of less than 100,000 Kyats (just a little more than 3%) and similarly only a small number of visitors have an income of more than 1 Million Kyats (just 7%). The results show that, in general, the visitors belong mainly to the middle class and are of younger age with a remarkable high education level.

According to the reasons for visiting parks, almost 70% of the respondents have two social reasons: "meet with friends" and "come with family". More than a quarter of the respondents come to the parks to enjoy "natural environment of the park". In contrast, there are only very few respondents who proximity to the park from their home.

For each park, the reasons to visit a park are very much identical; "relaxing in the park" is mostly by 30% to 40% of the visitors and for all parks always less than 5% of the respondents, the reason is "nearby home". Some difference between the parks can be found for the answers with the second highest priority. For the visitors of Kandawgyi Park, the reason is "like natural environment of the park", whereas for the other parks, the answer "meet with friends" is ranked second.
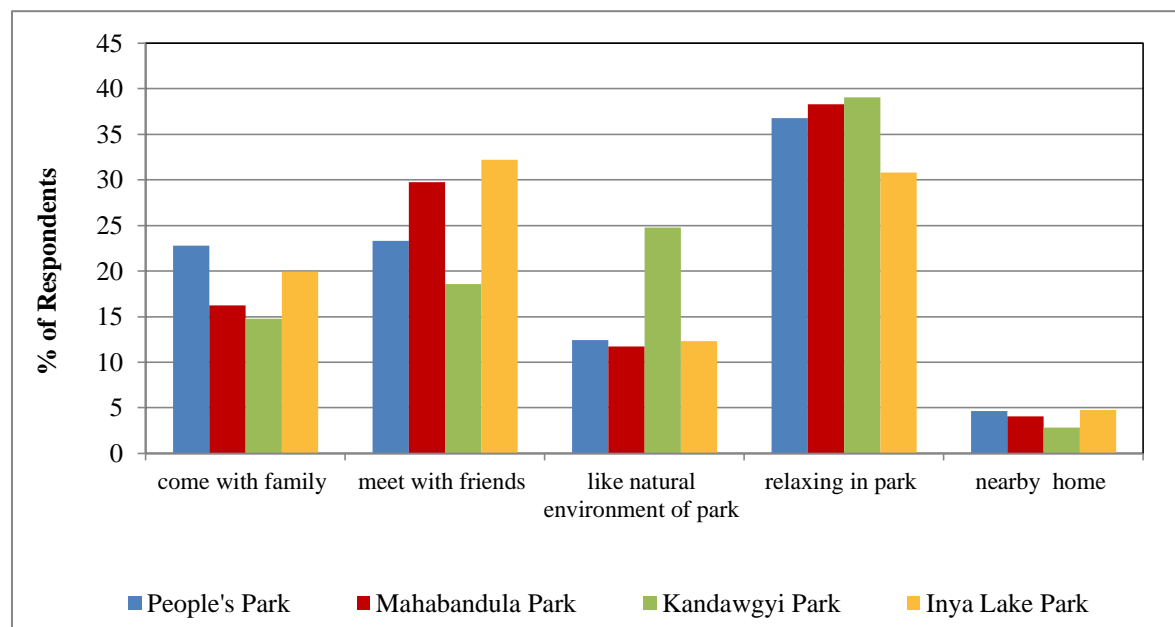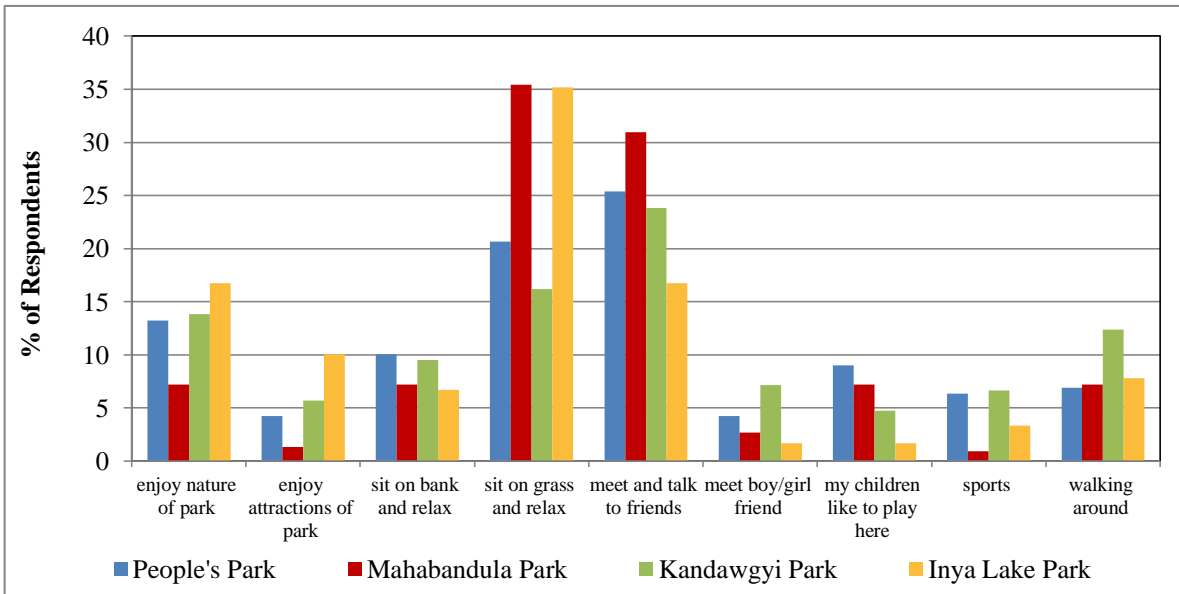

Figure 3. Reasons for Visiting by Park
Source: Field Observation, 2018

Most of the visitors have two activities such as "sitting on the grass and relaxing" and "meeting and talking to friends". The third activity, which is more than 23% of the visitors are "enjoying the nature of the park". Compared to those activities with sports character ("sports", "walking around") are much less. It can be said that relaxing, doing social activities and experiences of nature are the dominant activities when visiting the parks. In all the parks "sitting on the grass and relaxing" and "meeting and talking to friends" are most common. The former is the most common for visitors from the Mahabandula Park and the Inya Lake Park, the latter is the most common for visitors from the People's Park and the Kandawgyi Park. For

the Mahabandula Park both these activities are two third of the answers and all other activities are less than 10% each. In the case of the other parks, the third activity, "enjoying the nature of the park", is more than 13%. And for the Kandawgyi Park also walking around is almost 13%.

According to the time length visitors spend in a park, the results show that the majority of the people (almost two third) spend quite a long time (several hours, at least half a day) in the parks on weekend. Almost a quarter stay just a short time of about an hour there. Not so many want to stay the whole day. The money spent while visiting the parks is in generally moderate. In relation to the age of the visitors, it can be seen that in particular the young and the old age groups spend only little money when visiting the parks. Only a remarkable percentage of visitors in the middle age groups (30 to 50 years of age) spend a higher amount of money.

Figure 4. Activities of Visitors by Park
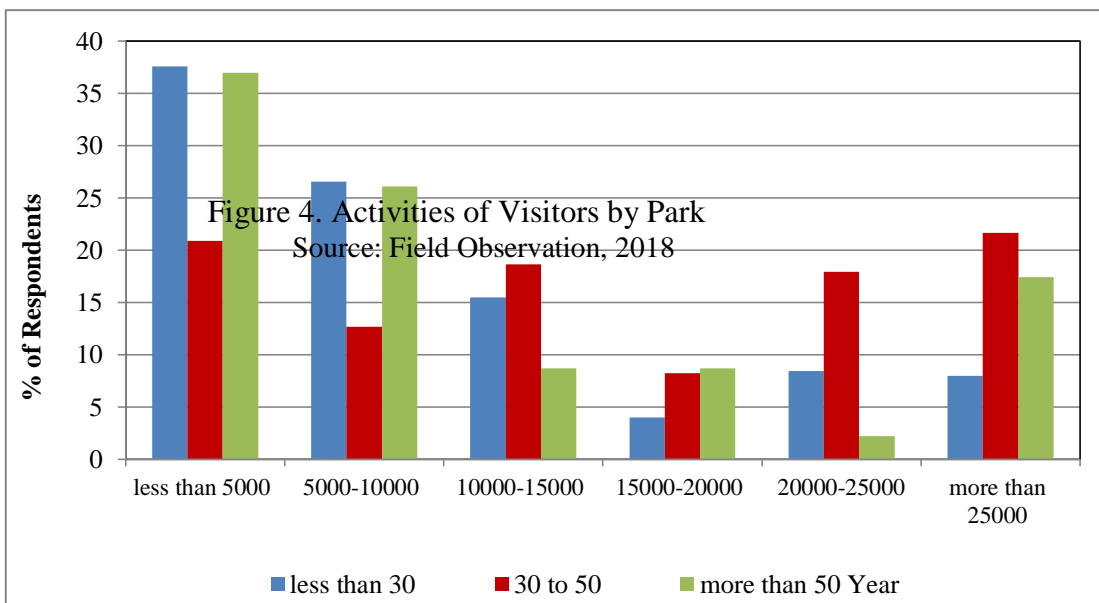Source: Field Observation, 2018

Figure 5. Spend of Money by Age Group when Visiting the Park
Source: Field Observation, 2018

According to the monthly income, the people with a small income spend less money when visiting parks. More than two third of people with less than 200,000 Kyats spends only up to 10,000 Kyats. And also in income group 200,000 - 500,000 Kyats more than half of the people just took only up to 10,000 Kyats. But even quite a number of people with more money spend little money when a quarter of people in these income groups spend only up to 5000 Kyats. Of course, for such people, the proportion spending much money is higher. Between 20% and 30% of people of such income groups spend more than 25,000 Kyats.
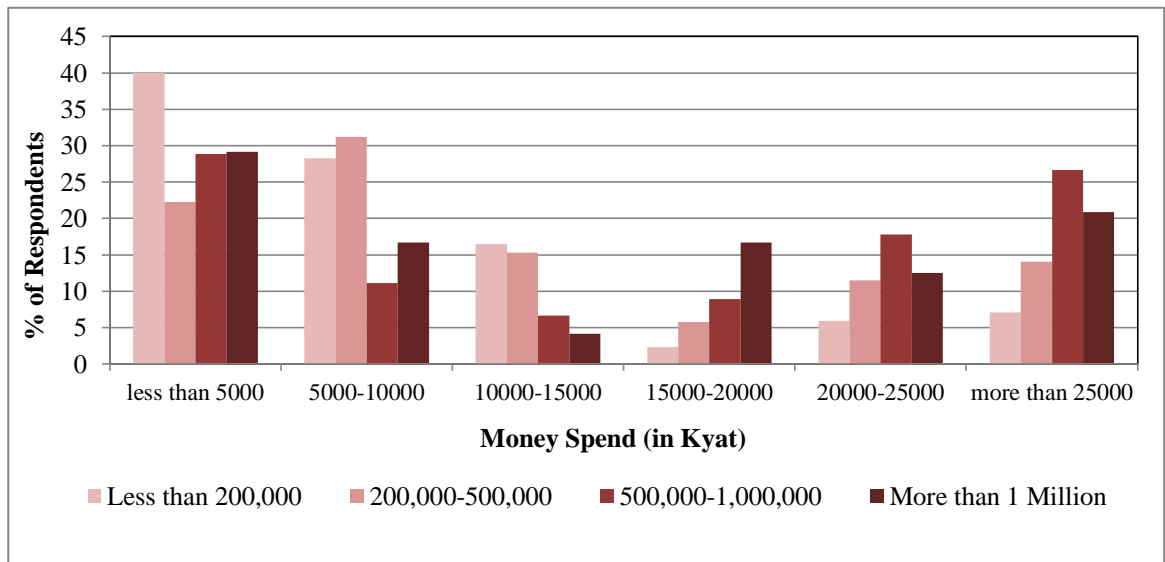

Figure 6. Money Spend of Visitors in the Park by Income Group
Source: Field Observation, 2018

According to the money spend by the visitors in the parks, the visitors of the Inya Lake Park as well as the Mahabandula Park particularly spend only very little money. Between 70% and 80% of the visitors spend up to 10,000 Kyats in these parks. In contrast, only very few visitors of People's Park spend such little money, but more than 50% of visitors spends at least 20,000 Kyats.
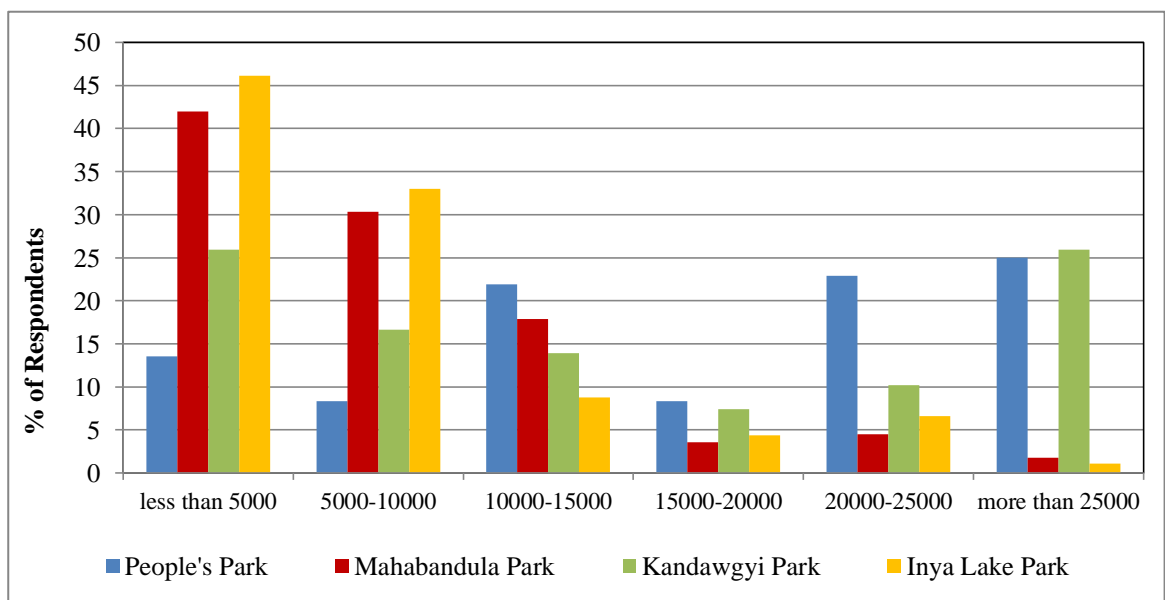

Figure 7. Money Spend of Visitors by Park
Source: Field Observation, 2018

According to the time spend of visitors in the parks, the profiles of the four parks are similar to a greater extent, but differences are existent. The park with most distinct in its profile from the other is People's Park. Comparably very few visitors of this park said that they only stay "just for an hour" and comparably many said that they will stay "at least half a day". The percentage for "at least half a day" is 15% and higher than other parks.
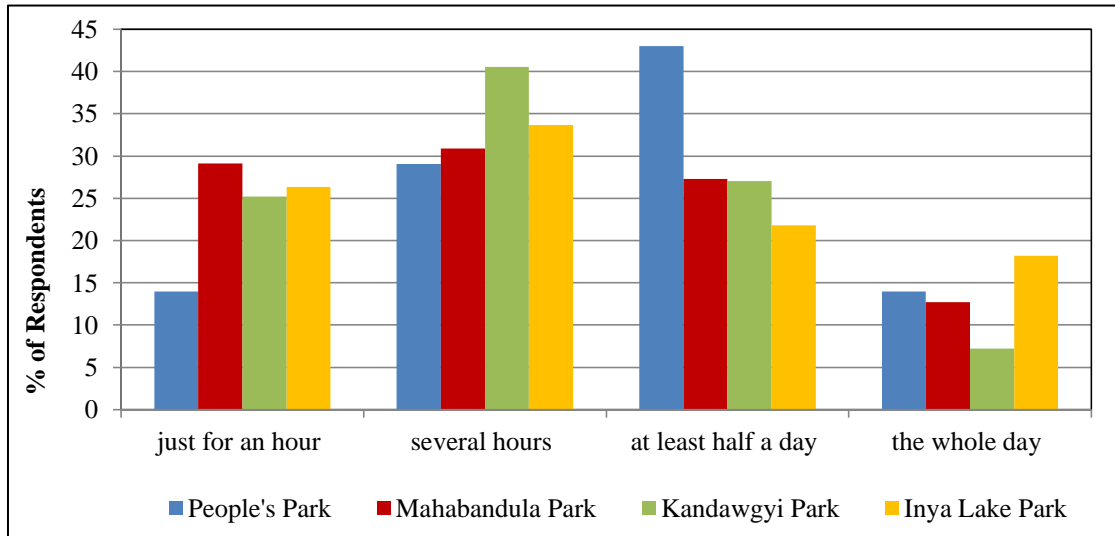
Figure 8. Time Spend of Visitors by Park
Source: Field Observation, 2018

In general, the evaluation on parks according to the different aspects is quite positive. Only the aspects "foods for eating" and "playground" do have quite a number of negative quality, when a little more than 40% of the respondents remark the aspect "foods for eating" negatively and 35% of the respondents do that with the aspect "playground". In contrast, the natural beauty of the parks is evaluated extremely positive: almost three quarters of the respondents give this aspect remark "good". And the evaluation of the aspect "park attractions" is similarly positive when about two third of the visitors give the park good remarks.
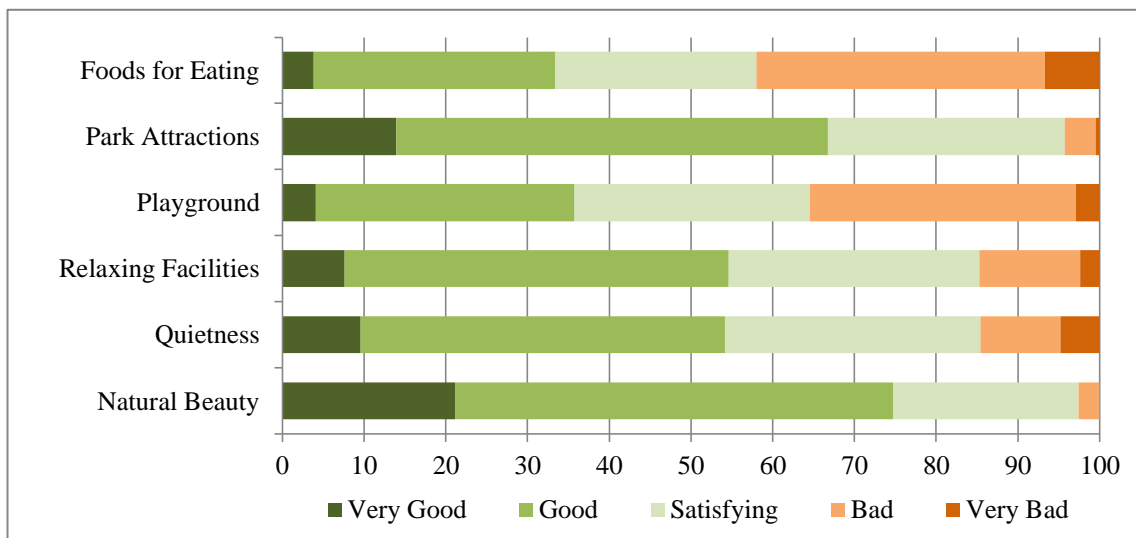
Figure 9. Evaluation on Parks by Visitors
Source: Field Observation, 2018

Conclusion

This paper is related to the weekend recreation in the four parks; People's Park, Mahabandula Park, Kandawgyi Park and Inya Lake Park in Yangon by using quantitative method. These parks are very prominent and they are well known and visited by many people. The time span for the survey (time between 12 noon to 6 p.m.) is chosen because it can be assumed that in this time normal households will have leisure time on weekend. But, it also has visitors, who intend to do various activities, for instance, in early morning for doing some sport, later in the evening for relaxing and meeting with friend mainly young people. The survey represents only the recreation sitation for a specific time during the weekend. The study points out that the visitors are, in particular, young and educated, and belong to the middle income groups. It also shows that the profiles of the parks are different in terms of the perceptions of the visitors, and the spatial characteristics of the parks.

Acknowledgements

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