



## Public Demands and Evaluation of Sports Services Offered By Municipalities – Büyükçekmece District Example\*

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### Abstract

**Aim:** The aim of this study is to examine the satisfaction levels of individuals using public recreation areas and their expectations from these areas.

**Methods:** A total of 350 individuals aged between 18 and 61 participated in the study voluntarily. The data in the study were obtained by applying the demographic information form prepared by the researcher and the satisfaction scale of the recreation services of the municipalities developed by Çoban (2002). The obtained data were analyzed in SPSS program.

**Results:** As a result of the analysis; participants generally; are male (57.7%), the age range is concentrated between 35-50 (36.3%), the participants generally have a university education (58.9%), the majority (54.3%) do not do sports regularly, and the services of the municipalities are not sufficient. It was determined that those who did not find it were in the majority (57.1%). It was determined that the average score of the participants' satisfaction scale was  $3.5 \pm 0.6$ . While there was no statistically significant difference in this score when the gender, age range, and working years of the participants were taken into account, it was determined that there were significant differences when the education level and levels of finding the services were sufficient.

**Conclusion:** Based on these findings; It was determined that the participants did not find the recreation areas provided by the municipalities sufficient. According to this, it can be said that this situation can change by arranging the recreation areas in accordance with the purpose and increasing the number of them.

### Keywords

Management,  
Recreation,  
Leisure,  
Public,  
Expectation.

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## Belediyelerin Sunduğu Spor Hizmetlerinde Halkın Talepleri ve Değerlendirilmesi – Büyükçekmece İlçesi Örneği

### Özet

**Amaç:** Bu çalışmanın amacı kamusal rekreasyon alanlarını kullanan bireylerin memnuniyet düzeylerini ve bu alanlardan beklentilerini incelemektir.

**Yöntem:** Araştırmaya yaşları 18 ile 61 arasında değişen toplam 350 kişi gönüllü olarak katılmıştır. Araştırmada veriler araştırmacı tarafından hazırlanan demografik bilgi formu ve Çoban (2002) tarafından geliştirilen belediyelerin rekreasyon hizmetlerinden memnuniyet ölçeği uygulanarak elde edilmiştir. Elde edilen veriler SPSS programında analiz edilmiştir.

**Bulgular:** Analiz sonucunda; genel olarak katılımcılar, erkek (%57,7), yaş aralığının 35-50 (%36,3) arasında yoğunlaştığı, katılımcıların genel olarak üniversite eğitimi aldığı (%58,9), çoğunluğun (%54,3) düzenli spor yapmadığı ve Belediyeler yeterli değil. Bulamayanların çoğunlukta (%57,1) olduğu belirlendi. Katılımcıların memnuniyet ölçeği ortalama puanının  $3,5 \pm 0,6$  olduğu belirlendi. Katılımcıların cinsiyeti, yaş aralığı ve çalışma yılı dikkate alındığında bu puanda istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir farklılık bulunmazken, eğitim düzeyi ve hizmet bulma düzeyleri yeterli olduğunda anlamlı farklılıklar olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

**Sonuç:** Bu bulgulara dayanarak; Katılımcıların belediyelerin sağladığı rekreasyon alanlarını yeterli bulmadıkları belirlendi. Buna göre rekreasyon alanlarının amaca uygun olarak düzenlenmesi ve sayısının artırılmasıyla bu durumun değişebileceği söylenebilir.

### Anahtar Kelimeler

Yönetim,  
Rekreasyon,  
Boş zaman,  
Halk,  
Beklenti.

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## INTRODUCTION

An important part of urban planning is designing open spaces that will please the whole community. With correct planning, a recreational area has the ability to offer a broad array of benefits, such as physical and mental health, social interaction, and environmental sustainability. The latest researches have revealed that the green spaces' access is related to many areas of health, stress level reduction, better mental health, and increased physical activity (Taylor et al., 2002). Thus, green spaces and recreational surfaces have to be created by municipalities, since they are the most important places providing close

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access to nature. As well as having a positive influence on health and wellness factors, recreational spots can also function as critical social spaces that lead to increased participation and interaction among the citizens. In order to achieve this, the places need to have a design which advertises social interaction, public art, seats, and community gardens. Environmental sustainability is also one of the important criteria in planning of recreation zones. Cities should put for a first the utilization of the sustainable materials and houses used for the aim are the permeable pavements, rain gardens, and native landscaping which should be the intention. The success of a recreation area design is a complicated and multi-layered undertaking which calls for an evaluation of a number of interconnected factors, including health, social interaction, and climate sustainability. A way for municipalities to achieve this goal is to set priorities in recreation area development that will leave the society with recreational areas that produce measurable benefits.

Development of planning systems and implementation of functional recreation areas in municipalities is increasingly seen in current urban research discourse. The functions of the properly designed and well allocated recreation areas in the present urban situation where the cities become denser and the green spaces become fewer. The latest research from the fields of urban planning, environmental psychology, landscape architecture and public health suggests very important insights in designing the recreational spaces that are intended to achieve the greatest outcome for the community members. A successful recreation area design involves taking into account different considerations of site, stakeholders, and accessibility, safety, and sustainability of the ecology. A recent study suggests several principles and guidelines that municipalities may adopt so as to create spaces for recreation that are vibrant, inclusive, and welcome to different user groups with the purpose of building positive relationships between people and both the natural and built environment, including:

**Accessibility and Inclusion:** It's really important to know we share the same recreational spaces equally by all members of the community. Researching the subject suggested designing the facilities in such a way that they are accessible for disabled people, and suitable for those of different age, origin, social class, and religion (Arnberger et al., 2022). To achieve this goal, universal design principles that involve barrier-free paths, ramps, and sensory filled landscapes can be included to enhance inclusivity and enable all groups to interact socially (Dalglish, 2012).

**Safety and Security:** Creating a sense of safety and security in recreation areas is important in terms of increasing user confidence and encouraging regular use. Research has shown that well-lit paths, clear sight lines, and strategic placement of amenities can help reduce crime and antisocial behavior, thereby increasing perceived safety and promoting a welcoming environment for recreation (Gilderbloom et al., 2015).

**Biophilic Design:** Incorporating biophilic design elements that aim to mimic natural forms, patterns, and processes in the built environment can increase the restorative potential of recreational spaces and encourage connections with nature (Kellert et al., 2018). Features such as native vegetation, water features, wildlife habitats, and natural materials not only provide aesthetic appeal but also provide opportunities for sensory engagement, biodiversity conservation, and environmental education (Beatley, 2019).

**Flexibility and Adaptability:** Designing recreation areas with flexibility and adaptability in mind allows adaptation to user needs and preferences that evolve over time. Providing multi-purpose spaces, modular infrastructure, and programmable amenities allows communities to use recreation spaces for a variety of activities, events, and meetings, thereby maximizing social and economic values (Hartig et al., 2021).

**Sustainability and Durability:** Ensuring the long-term sustainability and durability of recreational areas requires attention to environmental management, resource efficiency and climate adaptation. Incorporating green infrastructure such as permeable surfaces, rain gardens, and urban forests can help reduce the effects of urban heat island effects, stormwater runoff, and air pollution while also increasing biodiversity and ecosystem services (Gibson et al., 2008).

Healthy and well-designed recreation facilities are a complex endeavor, which necessitates interdisciplinary work, community involvement and evidence-based decision-making. Adopting the accessibility, inclusivity, safety, biophilic design, resilience and sustainability principles is the route that municipalities have to follow when they want to give life to spaces for recreation that will stimulate

physical activity, social interaction, taking care of the environment and general wellbeing of urban residents. Although, translating these principles into action often involves constant monitoring, adaptations, and cooperation among numerous stakeholders, including policymakers, planners, designers and community members. Indeed, envisioning a prosperous future city entails more than just advanced planning but it also is a promise for the existing and coming generations to live more healthily, peacefully, and resilient. Do the people using the areas that are put in place by municipalities end up satisfied? What's their justification for this? The themes are the very dynamic areas that require the exploration of new research results. Therefore, this research attempts to know the public perception and demands towards the recreation areas that are elucidated by the local government.

## METHODS

### *Model of the research*

The study was carried out in a screening model. A research model is an exploratory model that aims to describe a past or present situation.

### *Participants*

The population of the research consists of 2,175 people over the age of 18 who benefit from 6 recreation areas determined as accessible in the Büyükçekmece district of Istanbul. The sample of the research consists of 350 people randomly selected from this universe using the stratification technique. In the study, collection was made from 6 different multi-purpose sports complexes, which were determined as the accessible universe in Büyükçekmece district. Taking into account the criterion of equal inclusion in the sampling from the universe, the stratification technique creates the layers of the sample of 6 different sports complexes selected. When these determined layers are divided into the known universe, the number of participants per layer helps determine the sample from the layers. This sample is selected randomly to ensure that every individual in the strata has an equal opportunity to participate. In this study, every individual who wanted to come to the sports complex and participate in the study was included in the study, regardless of criteria. In sample selection, it was aimed to reach 327 people with a 95% confidence interval. Surveys were distributed to a total of 400 people, and when incorrect and incomplete surveys were removed, a total of 350 surveys were evaluated. The data of individuals who volunteered to participate in the study were collected online via an observation form (Google forms). Data collection started on December 1, 2022 and ended on March 1, 2023. The coaches and managers working in the recreational area that comprised the sample were interviewed and information was given about the content of the study and the number of samples that needed to be collected. In order to find voluntary participants, the coaches interviewed the individuals who came to the facilities, filled out a consent form stating that they participated in the study voluntarily, and provided their e-mail addresses to participate in the online form. A survey was sent via Email and Whatsapp to citizens who agreed to participate in the study, and their information was recorded.

### *Data collection tools*

The survey form titled "Public opinions on recreational services offered by municipalities", developed and created by Çoban (2002) and later updated by Avcılar (2016), was used. The form content is as follows: 7 questions to determine the demographic information of the participants. 1 question with yes/no options to determine whether they find the recreational services offered sufficient or not. 18 questions prepared with a 5-point Likert scale to learn their opinions about recreational services and facilities. Data was collected with 10-choice questions to get suggestions for improving recreational services. The options were determined by taking previous studies and expert opinion. The survey developers determined the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the form to be 0,83. The reliability coefficient of the data obtained in this study was determined as 0,86.

### *Statistical analysis*

The data obtained in the research were evaluated using the SPSS 22 program. Percentage (%) frequency (n) values were used to interpret the findings of demographic data and the answers to the question on which suggestions would be received for the development of sports services. As a result of the normality (Kolmogorov-Smirnow) test of the data, it was determined that the distribution was not normal and non-parametric tests were used for analysis. In pairwise group comparison; Mann-Whitney U Test, when

comparing three or more groups; The Kruskal-Wallis test was used for data analysis. Findings were considered significant at  $p < 0,05$  level.

## FINDINGS

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of the participants

Variable	Group	n	%
Gender	Male	202	57,7
	Female	148	42,3
Age	18-25	75	21,4
	26-34	103	29,4
	35-50	127	36,3
	51-60	39	11,1
	61 and older	6	1,7
Education level	Primary	19	5,4
	High school	84	24
	University	206	58,9
	Master's degree	33	9,4
	PhD	8	2,3
Job	Not working	40	11,4
	Retired	18	5,1
	Employee	94	26,9
	Operaor	32	9,1
	Officer	122	34,9
	Student	44	12,6
Doing sports regularly	Yes	160	45,7
	No	190	54,3
Up to me service is sufficient	Yes	150	42,9
	No	200	57,1
Total		350	100

The demographic characteristics of the individuals participating in the study are shown in Table 1. When the table is examined, it can be seen that the participants are mostly male, they are mostly between the ages of 35-50, in terms of education level, they are mostly at the university level, in terms of their job fields, they work as civil servants with the highest percentage, and most of the participants do not do sports regularly, and finally, the participants They mostly stated that they found the services inadequate.

**Table 2.** Comparison of satisfaction levels with services by gender

Gender	Mean±SD	Z	p
Female	3,5±0,6	-0,243	0,808
Male	3,5±0,7		

Z: Mann Whitney U test; significance:  $p > 0,05$

The results of the Mann Whitney U test analysis, which was conducted to compare the average scores of the study participants from the satisfaction survey according to their gender, are shown in Table 2. Accordingly, there was no statistical difference between the scale scores between genders ( $p > 0,05$ ).

**Table 3.** Comparison of satisfaction level with services according to age ranges

Age ranges	Mean±SD	X <sup>2</sup>	p
18-25 years	3,5±0,7	0,287	0,991
26-34 years	3,5±0,6		
35-50 years	3,5±0,5		
51-60 years	3,4±0,9		
61 years and above	3,5±0,8		

X<sup>2</sup>: Kruskal Wallis test; significance:  $p > 0,05$

The results of the Kruskal Wallis test analysis, which was conducted to compare the average scores of the participants in the satisfaction survey according to their age ranges, are shown in Table 3. Accordingly, there was no statistical difference between the scale scores according to age ranges ( $p > 0,05$ ).

**Table 4.** Comparison of satisfaction level with services according to education level

Education level	Mean±SD	X <sup>2</sup>	p
Primary education	3,3±1,1		
High school	3,3±0,7		
University	3,6±0,6	12,264	0,015
Master Degree	3,4±0,5		
Doctorate	3,9±0,6		

X<sup>2</sup>: Kruskal Wallis test; significance:  $p < 0,05$

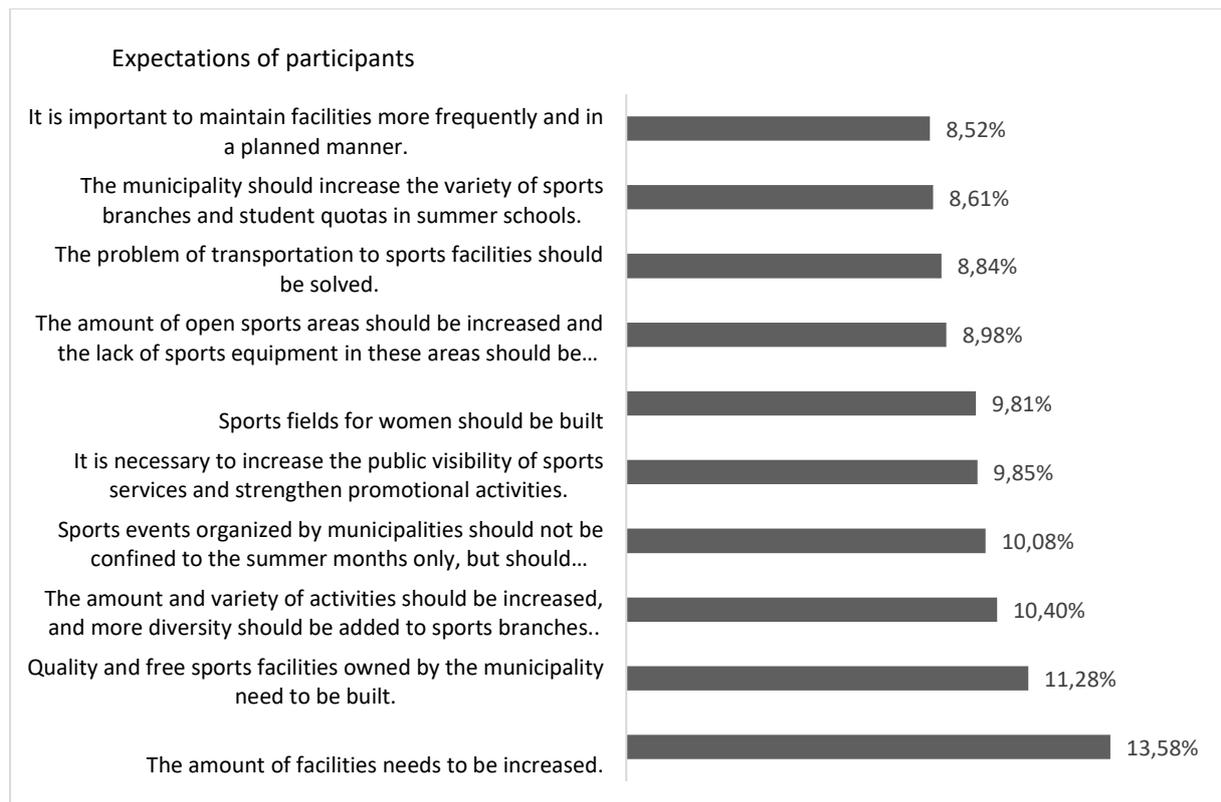
The results of the Kruskal Wallis test analysis, which was conducted to compare the average scores of the study participants from the satisfaction survey according to their education levels, are shown in Table 4. Accordingly, it was determined that there was a statistical difference between the scale scores according to education level ( $p < 0,05$ ). It was revealed that participants with doctoral level education were significantly more satisfied than other individuals.

**Table 5.** Comparison of satisfaction with services according to the level of regular exercise of the participants

Do you find it sufficient?	Mean±SD	Z	p
Yes	3,6±0,6	-3,736	0,001
No	3,4±0,6		

Z: Mann Whitney U test; significance:  $p < 0,05$

The results of the Mann Whitney U test analysis, which was conducted to compare the average scores of the individuals participating in the study from the satisfaction survey according to the category of finding the municipal services sufficient, are shown in Table 5. Accordingly, it was determined that there was a statistical difference between the scale scores within the category of finding their services adequate ( $p > 0,05$ ). Participants who found the services sufficient achieved statistically higher scores in the satisfaction survey.

**Chart 1.** Distribution of participants' expectations

The distribution of the participants' answers to the options asked about their expectations from the services offered is shown in Chart 1. When the chart is examined; Participants stated that they mostly expected the number of facilities to be increased (13,58%) and these facilities to be free of charge (11,28%).

## DISCUSSION

This study was aimed to measure the satisfaction and expectations of citizens for the recreational areas provided by municipal governments. Using survey method the demographic portraits of the people were determined along with the estimation of their satisfaction with the use of such areas. Recreational areas cover a broad scope of natural and artificial environments including rivers, lakes, canals, trails, parks, forests, and beaches where people partake in the recreational activities and outdoor experience. Demographic understanding in these areas is critical in designing effective policies, planning and fair access. Specifically, recreation options are utilised by individuals in a manner that reflects their level of education and income. Mowen et al. (2016) claimed that high-income individuals are particularly engaged in outdoor activities like hiking, camping and boating compared to the people from low-income neighbourhoods. Furthermore; It was found out that the easier it is to get to a destination and the closer it is to recreation areas, the greater number of visits it attracts. People who live in the city centers or the better neighborhoods show higher levels of participation (Wolch et al., 2014). According to Jang et al. (2020), the young people value the excitement and the thrill brought by extreme activities, while the elders look for relaxation and socialization. It is known that women often seek to avoid touch, especially dirty or rough surfaces while men often touch more (Ho et al., 2005). In addition, the customers with high incomes look for more exclusive amenities and services; thus, it has been written that posh spaces are under-used by such individuals (Manning et al., 2000). Moreover, these areas are even less used by the same people. Young people or parents together with their kids may be likely to walk or bike to parks and playgrounds, while the elderly prefer walkways in nature and viewpoints of beautiful sceneries (Deng et al., 2003).

Psychological factors which include personal liking and motivation, as well as considered consequences govern expectations in parks and recreation areas. As Chen et al. (2020) contemplate, the recreation areas that are oriented to the support of the psychological needs of users do this by featuring various activities, skill developing opportunities and social interactions and can consequently meet expectations of the users more effectively. Moreover, it has also been proved that one of the motives for the recreational activities is emotional aspects such as relaxation, excitement or sense of contentment (Scott and Fletcher, 2023). Knowing the basic psychological requirements is fundamental in terms of the design and management of recreational spaces in order to enhance adoption and well-being. Cultural factors such as ethnicity or language among others which influence the demographic characteristics of recreation area users is one of the most vital contributions in the process. Studies have indicated that the frequency of visits and recreation preferences are linked to the culture of a given group, and this is an indication that recreational norms, values, and traditions of a specific group influence recreation behavior (Shinew et al., 2016).

For instance, Chavez et al. (1993) draw the attention to the fact of cultural relevance of programs and interpretation in outdoors. This results in increasing the attractiveness and participation of minority communities in recreation. Besides the barrier of language and societal bias related to nature, non-English speaking immigrant populations may also have some difficulties in access and enjoyment of recreation places (Floyd et al., 2008). Recognition and accommodation of cultural diversity is of prime importance in development of recreational environments that are integral part of our community. Moreover, geographical location and environmental context are determinants for recreation area user's demographic composition too. Researchers found that different residents of various geographical areas may have different use patterns due to the fact that access to green spaces and outdoors activities opportunities are not equal between rural and urban areas (Wolch et al., 2014). Furthermore, on the other hand, demographic changes and population dynamics, like urbanization, migration, and ageing populations, can also influence the demand for recreation services and amenities in particular areas (Allik and McCrae, 2004). Knowing these geographic dimensions are important to good decision-making in the planning of recreational areas, site locations, and resource allocation is in equal measure to grant equal access and meet the user needs which change with time.

As the real and the artificial environments of recreation areas are strongly influencing user expectations and experiences, they are very vital. The investigations stress the role of natural resources like natural landscape, animal diversity and water-accessing points in constructing expectations of visitors. In addition, the quality of the facilities and infrastructure, such as the trails, picnic areas, and restrooms, are taken into account to know how the users perceive the facilities and their satisfaction

level. The environmental factors like weather and seasonal changes also play an active part in developing the travel preferences of visitors; tourists often adjust their activities in conformity with prevailing weather conditions (Mowen et al., 2016). Sustainable management techniques that ensure preservation and better execution of the natural environment as well as the provision of appropriate facilities can be a means to attain users expectations in recreation areas. In the study, it was ascertained that the respondents considered the services provided unsatisfactory, but the overall satisfaction were perceived to be high.

Successful planning and administration of recreation destinations requires a knowledgeable examination of the specific demographics of the users and the factors affecting the number of visits. Demographic information could guide the planning and budgeting processes and the development of targeted outreach programs directed toward groups with low representation rate in outdoor recreation. This increases the diversity and inclusiveness in the domain. Incorporated into this are supporting diversity and valuing cultural differences which serve to enhance the recreational experience of all users and bring in a strong sense of belonging to nature. Therefore, recreational area managers and planners should make endeavor to include various community stakeholders, take in the opinion of the community and adapt the programs to the needs of the locals. Furthermore, creating infrastructure, signage, and interpretation should be focused on accessibility and safety to guarantee that recreational space are tailored to individuals of all ages, abilities, and backgrounds. The research by Carmichael and McCole (2014), points out that the users tend to prefer amenities like trails, picnic areas, and restrooms along with the environmental factors such as cleanliness, safety and natural beauty. Furthermore, the satisfaction of the user; is determined by the availability of facilities, accessibility, and the entire recreation experience quality as well (Mowen et al., 2016).

The findings of research suggest that gratifying experiences such as leisure, effective connection with nature, and happiness are core for having more satisfaction and happy moods. In contrast, difficulties (like overcrowding, litter, and inadequate amenities) can spoil the environment and lower users' feeling of quality (Manning et al., 2000). Sustainable approaches to management together with long term planning and efficient strategies are needed to reconcile varied expectations of multiple stakeholders and maintain sustainability and equitable access. The study of Deng et al. (2003) highlights explicitly the role of stakeholder discussion and participatory planning processes that are vital to understand and fulfill user expectations. Information and signage should be clear, looking after the amenities and ensuring safety are the managerial aspects that produce positive users' experiences. Moreover, the technologies such as mobile mobile applications for information dissemination and visitor to track improved communication and resource allocation are used (Hardy and Aryal, 2020). Adaptive management approaches that offer flexibility and responsiveness to changing user requirements and conditions of the environment are essential in the longevity of nature areas.

Comprehending the demographics or the kind of users in recreation areas is necessary to improve accessibility, inclusivity and sustainability in outdoor recreation. Socio- economic factors, cultural influence and geographical factors vary visitation patterns and behavior of visitation and underscore the necessity in specifying management and planning status. Through the understanding of and response to the needs of different user demographics, the recreation area managers and planners can design recreation areas that are welcoming and inclusive with the aim of meeting the requirements of all, including those with different beliefs, a way of life or those with disabilities, and by doing so, they create the sense of connection, belonging, and stewardship of natural resources for the present and the future. People have several reasons to visit recreation areas, including the desire to relax and relieve stress, partake in outdoor activities and interact with nature. Ryan et al. (2010) show that the intrinsic drivers of participation in recreational experiences are enjoyment, curiosity, and overall development. Besides, social motivations like staying with family and friends or being for group activities are other reasons that increase the appeal of the recreation areas (Kyle et al., 2015). The findings of research indicate a set of factors that may affect the user satisfaction; those include the facilities usability, accessibility, safety and environmental quality (Carmichael and McCole, 2014). The study of (Eckstein, 2020.) enlighten the principle of inclusive design and equal access to recreation sites for all regardless of age, ability or wealth.

The results of the study from Mowen et al. (2016) are suggesting the concept in which the user feedback and stakeholder involvement can be added to the management strategies to improve the

suitability, effectiveness and sustainability of recreational services. A part from this, the findings show involvement of communities, volunteers and stewardship can lead to support for conservation and preservation. This is particularly because of a sense of ownership and responsibility of users (Cheng et al., 2021). The target local community members who took part in this study expressed most of their opinions about which services and facilities they expect from the local government in regard to recreation (13,58%). It was observed that the participants as a whole had a very bad impression of the treatment areas, but were however contented with the services.

## CONCLUSION

Consequently, understanding user perspectives in recreational areas is important to increase user satisfaction, promote inclusivity, and ensure the sustainability of these valuable resources. Users' motivations, preferences, experiences and perceptions influence decision-making processes, management strategies and the design of recreational offers. By incorporating user input, stakeholder participation, and best practices into management and planning, recreation area managers and planners must create welcoming, accessible, and sustainable environments that meet the diverse needs and preferences of individuals.

## SUGGESTION

It can be said that including participants in planning can improve user experiences and support conservation efforts, ensuring that recreation areas are protected for current and future generations.

### Information on Ethics Committee Permission

**Ethics committee:** Scientific Research Ethics Committee of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University Graduate Education Institute.

**Division / Protocol No:** 15/16, 25/08/2022

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## CITING

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