

Perceived Crowding and Satisfaction among Overnight and Day Visitors on Hallig Hooge – A Visitor Survey in the Wadden Sea National Park, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany

Dennis Kalisch & Axel Klaphake

Technical University Berlin, Germany

dennis_kalisch@web.de
klaphake@imup.tu-berlin.de

Keywords: Perceived crowding, visitor conflicts, satisfaction, survey, expectations, motivations.

Introduction

Although use level in German National Parks increases, there are only a few research activities into social effects of tourism on outdoor recreation. The objective of this survey is the relationship between social effects like perceived crowding and expectations and visitor satisfaction in this special background.

As an example of high use recreation areas there is the Wadden Sea National Park in the north of Germany. It is a very important recreation area with more than 4 million day trips and 17 million overnight stays a year. During the summer months there are several hot spots along the coast and on the islands where user density is very high and crowding occurs. One of the tourist hot spots are the “Nordfriesische Halligen” - small marsh islands in the Wadden Sea which are unique in the world.

The research area Hallig Hooge is a main tourist hot spot at the border of the National Park. Nearly 110 inhabitants live on the small Hallig (ca. 590 ha). It is an important destination for day visitors during summer and attracts up to 3.000 visitors a day. On the Hallig are two different types of day visitors: guided and non-guided visitors. Despite this, overnight stays of visitor groups have an important role. Day and overnight tourism is the main income for the local economy. The Hallig offers different activities like walking, swimming, biking and enjoying nature for the visitors.

Methods

A quantitative survey of 260 visitors of Hallig Hooge was carried out in August and September 2005 to examine crowding and visitor satisfaction on this stressed island located in the National Park.

The research determined crowding and differences in motivation for the trip according to the three sample groups. It also compares perceived crowding, motivations and expectations between guided and non-guided daytrips. To measure crowding a visual approach was used in the survey. A series of five photographs was handed to the visitors. On the picture was illustrated a path on one part of the island with different numbers of hikers. Visitors were asked to evaluate the acceptability of visitor density, perceived visitor density and their expectations before the trip. Several regression methods were used to identify variables which influence the perception of crowding and expectations of the visitors.

Results

Results of the statistical evaluation suggest that there are differences between the visitor groups in terms of their satisfaction of the visit, their evaluation of the different activities, their perception of crowding and their motivations for the trip. In general the study shows that low or moderate levels of crowding and conflicts were reported. 20 percent of the visitors reported some degree of perceived crowding. The survey shows that non-

guided day visitors are the most sensitive visitors (nearly 30 percent report some degree of perceived crowding). In the study, aspects of the perception of crowding and intervisitor conflicts will be discussed in detail. Study data can be used to help local tourist management improve conditions for the different visitor groups on Hallig Hooge.

References

- Fredman, P. & Hörnsten, L. (2003). Social Capacity and Visitor Satisfaction in National Park Tourism. In: Proceedings from the 12th Nordic Symposium in Tourism and Hospitality Research. Stavanger.
- Klug, A. (1999). Bewertung der Erholungseignung und tourismusbedingten Naturraumbelastungen an der Nordseeküste Schleswig-Holsteins mit GIS – Grundlagen für Planung und Küstenmanagement. In: Berichte, Forschungs- und Technologiezentrum Westküste der Universität Kiel.
- Manning, R.E. (1999). Studies in Outdoor Recreation. Oregon State University Press.
- McCool, S.F. & Lime, D.W. (2001). Tourism Carrying Capacity: Tempting Fantasy or Useful Reality? In: Journal of Sustainable Tourism (5/29), p 372-388.
- Shelby, B., Vaske, J.J. & Heberlein, T.A. (1988). Comparative Analysis of Crowding in Multiple Locations: Results from fifteen Years of Research. In: Leisure Sciences (1), p 269-291.