

# Cultural differences in outdoor recreation: A case study of Saklikent National Park in Turkey

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## Introduction

Personal characteristics of the visitors including cultural and socio-demographic background have been found to have an influence on the normative interpretation of outdoor recreation use patterns and perceptions (Manning 2011). In a more technical sense, norms are cultural rules that guide behavior (Sayan et al. 2013). Research in outdoor recreation found that culture and demographics influence peoples' motivations, expectations and preferences in the outdoor recreation (Fleishman et al 2004, Sasidharan et al. 2005, Buijs et al. 2009, Sayan et al. 2013). Culture has generally been addressed by examining similarities and differences among recreationists based on race, ethnicity, and nationality (Manning 2011) and formulated by standards of quality. One branch of normative theory and methods—structural characteristics models—has special application to park management and formulation of standards of quality in particular (Vaske and Whittaker 2004). In the context of park management, this model works by asking survey respondents (e.g., park visitors, residents of surrounding communities, and the general public) to evaluate the acceptability (or other evaluative dimension) of a range of recreation-related impacts to park resources or the quality of the visitor experience (Manning 2011). The resulting data are generally graphed so that impacts are displayed on the horizontal axis and evaluations are displayed on the vertical axis. The resulting line connecting the evaluation scores is often called an impact acceptability curve or simply a norm curve. The point at which the norm curve falls out of the acceptable range and into the unacceptable range (i.e., crosses the neutral point of the acceptability scale) may be considered a minimum acceptable standard of quality. Norm intensity—the strength of respondents' feelings about the importance of an indicator of quality—is suggested by the distance of the norm curve above and below the neutral point of the acceptability scale.

## Study Area and Design

Data for this study was collected in Saklikent National Park in southern Turkey. The park comprises 1,643 hectares of rugged natural landscape including slot canyons which was created by a combination of tectonic movement, karst sedimentation and erosive force of a river. At Saklikent, about 300,000 visitors annually are drawn to the Eşen River which is deeply embedded in the surrounding canyon. The park is heavily used by foreign and Turkish tourists and local people in the summer season. Visitors must walk a short distance on the suspended trail to the canyons where they take photographs, play in the water, and walk upstream when river levels allow. A visitor survey was conducted in 2010. The survey questionnaire included a series of seven photographs showing a range of visitor use levels from no visitors present to 36 visitors. All seven photographs were shown to respondents on one poster. Re-

spondents were asked to rate the acceptability of each photograph on a nine-point scale ranging from -4 (“very unacceptable”) to 4 (“very acceptable”). A response rate of 88 % was attained.

## Findings

All of the visitors examined the same set of photographs depicting a range of visitor use levels from no people to a maximum of 36, and they were asked to rate the acceptability of the scenes displayed. Our findings indicate differences among these groups of park visitors as follows:

- The norm curves of foreign respondents exhibit the typical reversed S-shape in which there is a negative relationship between acceptability and the number of visitors shown in the photographs (Figure 1).
- The norm curve for Turkish respondents is very different: they give negative scores on average to photographs with no individuals (which is the only negative evaluation) and positive scores to photographs with between 6 and 30 people. They represent low-norm intensity.
- A multiple tolerance norm is supposed to exist for Turkish respondents. Since their norm curve crosses the neutral line, for approximately 5 and 36 visitors.

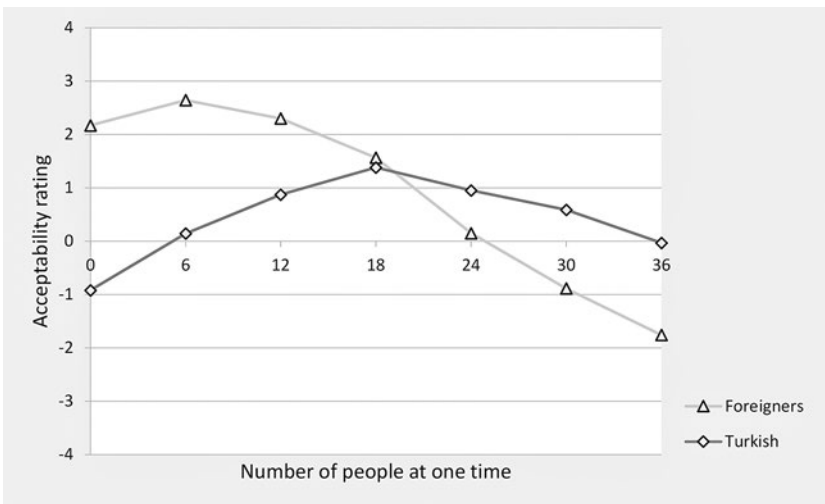


Figure 1. Social norm curve for Saklikent National Park canyons

## Conclusions

There is big difference for the perception of crowding between foreign tourists and Turkish visitors. However norm intensity of foreigners is not so high and Turkish visitors represent quite low norm intensity. Turks are more socially oriented than the foreigners. This could explain why they give lower scores to photographs with few visitors and higher scores to photographs with many visitors as compared with respondents from abroad. The differences in the preferences and perceptions of foreigners and Turkish visitors to Saklikent could be used to develop an integrated management system for that park, in which both resource protection and visitor experience are considered.



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