

Leisure activities in Dutch destinations

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Introduction

The leisure participation among Dutch inhabitants is 98,5% (NBTC-NIPO research, 2009), which indicates that almost everyone undertakes at least one outdoor leisure activity in a year. Besides outdoor recreational activities, such as walking and cycling, this also concerns activities such as shopping, sports, wellness, and visiting monuments, museums, theatres or events.

When leisure activities are concentrated in space and time, visitor flows may negatively affect the destination. The experience quality of the landscape may be reduced (e.g. the countryside becomes 'too touristy') (RPB 2007), the pressure on the biodiversity may be increased when too many people visit a natural park at the same time (Van Marwijk 2009), or the quality of life of people living in city centres may be negatively affected (Van Leeuw 2008, TRN 2002). The challenge is to minimise such negative impacts of leisure activities.

Research question and method

This paper answers the following research question: "What is the character of visitor flows in different types of leisure destinations in the Netherlands?"

In line with the Knowledge Centre for Recreation and Recron (the Dutch association of recreation entrepreneurs) we define three types of leisure destinations:

- 1) Green destinations: the countryside, rural areas, nature areas, forests;
- 2) Blue destinations: sea, beach, lakes, rivers, wetlands;
- 3) Red destinations: city or village centres, city parks.

Of all leisure activities, 39,1% take place in green destinations, 18,7% in blue, and 19,3% in red destinations. Expectantly, these destinations are visited by different visitors. The distance travelled and the transport mode used to reach the destination (table 21, and the temporal concentration of visitor flows in the destinations (table 2).

Quantitative descriptive analyses have been conducted of the CVTO database (Continuous Leisure Research). With Chi-square tests we explored whether the differences in visitor characteristics between the three types of destinations are significant.

Results

Green destinations are primarily being visited by people living in non-urbanised areas and red destinations by people living in urbanised areas (Fig. 1). It is more likely that red destinations are visited by people living in non-urbanised areas than that green destinations are visited by people living in urbanised areas (Fig. 1) (also: Steenbekkers et al. 2008). Furthermore, green destinations are visited by slightly older people compared to red or blue destinations (respectively 47, 43 and 44 years old). The gender- and socioeconomic differences are small.

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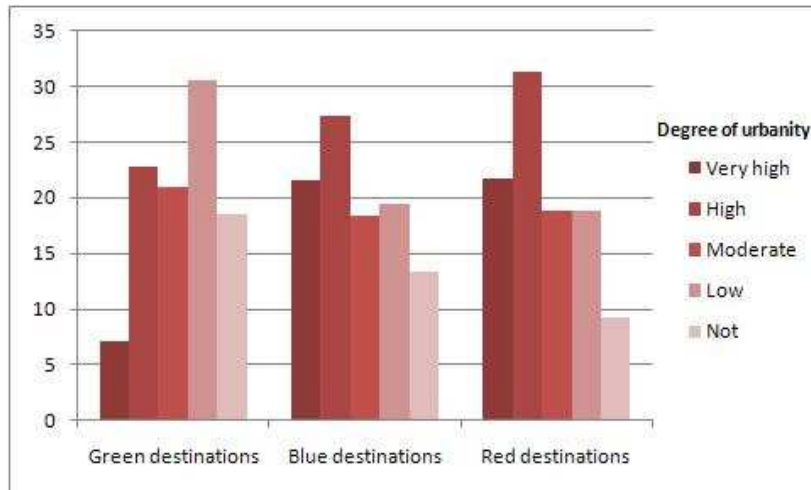


Figure 1: degree of urbanity

Leisure destinations, especially those of the red type, are primarily visited by people in the direct area (0-5 km) (also: Harms 2006). Blue destinations are further away compared to red or green ones (respectively 21, 11 and 12 kilometres), and are arguably typical car destinations. Public transport has a low share in all destinations (Table 1).

Table 1 Leisure mobility

	Green destinations	Blue destinations	Red destinations
Distance travelled (%)			
0-5 km	55,8	46,4	64,7
6-10 km	17,1	17,8	17
11-20 km	13,9	13,9	9,5
21-50 km	9,4	11,6	5,1
> 50 km	3,7	10,3	3,8
Transport mode used (%)			
Car	27,6	41,5	15,2
Public transport	0,7	2,5	3,7
By bike	27,2	19,6	34
On foot	19,7	15,2	24,2
Other	24,8	21,2	22,9

SCP analyses on CVTO 2008/'09

* All significant

The investigation of the temporal concentration of visitor flows illustrates that all destinations show a peak between 10-11o'clock, 13-14o'clock and 18-20o'clock, and a dip during lunchtime. Red destinations are visited slightly later in the morning and until later in the evening (Fig. 2). In all destinations, the visitor flows are concentrated in the weekends, especially blue destinations are typical weekend-destinations (Table 2). Also with respect to the seasons, the size of visitor flows fluctuates most in blue destinations. Blue destinations are summer destinations, whereas red destinations are year-round destinations (Table 2).

Table 2: When is the destination visited

	Green destinations	Blue destinations	Red destinations
<i>Day of the week (%)</i>			
Monday	11,4	10,8	11,1
Tuesday	11,5	10,5	12,4
Wednesday	12,7	12	12,5
Thursday	11,9	10,9	13
Friday	11,2	11,1	11,9
Saturday	17,2	19,4	17,7
Sunday	24,2	25,2	21,3
<i>Season (%)</i>			
Spring	27,1	25,6	27,8
Summer	25,4	36,6	23,5
Autumn	26,4	17,6	24,5
Winter	21,1	20,2	24,2

SCP analyses on CVTO 2008/09

* All significant

ⁱ Leisure activities > 1 hour taking place outside one's home; except social visits to friends and family, except activities undertaken from a holiday address (CVTO definition; NBTC-NIPO Research).

ⁱⁱ The rest took place in people's own neighbourhood (unclear whether this is a green, blue or red type of destination), or in 'other' surroundings.

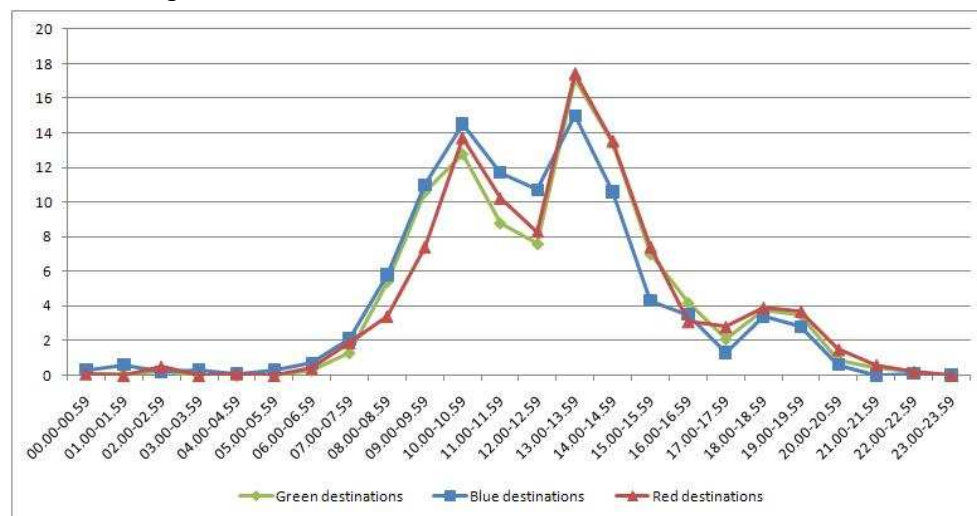


Figure 2: starting time of leisure activities

Recommendations

Gaining insights in the character of visitor flows in different types of destinations may help to adjust and focus recreational policies, tourism policies, spatial policies and leisure mobility policies to these destination-specific visitor flows.

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