

Summary:

Theme Parks in Norway 1995

Market Situation and Economic Impact

The Institute of Transport Economics (TØI) carried out a visitor survey in Scandinavian theme and leisure parks in 1989. By initiative of the Association of Norwegian Theme Parks, TØI has completed a 1995 survey in the Norwegian parks TusenFryd, Hunderfossen Familiepark, Telemark Sommerland and Kristiansand Dyrepark. Both the 1989 and the 1995 survey are based on questionnaire interviews collected in the peak summer season, in 1995 during the period 19 June to 13 August. In this period a total number of approximately 940 000 people visited the four parks, and a total of 3 817 questionnaires provide the basis for the survey.

The purpose of the new survey is to update the 1989 picture of the visitors and markets for the Norwegian theme parks, and to review the economic impact of the parks on the local communities. The project is carried out in cooperation with the parks and the Norwegian Industrial and Rural Development Fund.

The theme parks range among the most visited tourist sites in Norway. The four parks in the survey have since 1989 developed both new attractions and a stronger park identity, the main concept of each park remain, however, more or less unchanged. The annual numbers of visitors, which in 1995 was approximately 240 000, 270 000, 340 000 and 430 000, in the four parks respectively, have been relatively stable. The composition of visitors have also been subject to minor changes only.

Visitor characteristics

Visiting theme parks is a joint activity. In both 1989 and 1995 only 10 per cent of the visitors came alone or accompanied by only one other person. The average size of visitor groups is 4-5 persons and half the number of visitors are children. The percentage of visitors under the age of 18 increased from 46 in 1989 to 53 in 1995.

The motivation for visiting were the same in 1995 as in 1989. Experiences together with the children, to adventure a variety of activities and the excitement of the activities are the main motivating factors together with the importance of park visiting as a part of holiday-making. The results from the 1995-survey are different from the previous survey in two matters. One is that swimming and other water activities reached a higher score in 1995 (75 per cent regarded this activity as very or rather important). The other is that the aspect of learning is considered far more important. In 1989 few of the visitors considered this to be of importance, while in 1995 nearly half the number of visitors regarded this as very or rather important. This change is in har-

mony with the general trend in the parks to emphasise development of pedagogic activity centres.

The length of stay inside the park has increased from 1989 to 1995. In 1989 less than half the visitors spent more than 4 hours on one visit, while in 1995 more than 80 per cent stayed in the park for more than 4 hours. However, most visitors still make only one visit in the same park within one year. Most visitors (70 per cent) have visited the same park previous years, and about one fourth intend to visit other parks same year.

The parks mostly come to the visitor's attention through informal channels like relatives, friends and colleagues besides knowledge achieved through own previous visits. Reports in media, particularly television programmes, have also become an important source of information and profilation of the parks.

For many visitors the park visit is an important activity during summer holiday. 45 per cent of the visitors are on a holiday trip of at least three nights spent away from home. 18 per cent are on a weekend trip and 37 per cent are on a one-day trip. The composition of visitors is, however, considerably different at TusenFryd, which is located in the densely populated region of Oslo. TusenFryd has a two thirds majority of one-day travellers. Only 18 per cent of the visitors are on summer holiday. The other three parks, which are located in less populated areas, have a 25-30 per cent share of one-day travellers, and approximately half the number of visitors are people on holiday.

Two thirds of the visitors to Telemark Sommarland, Hunderfossen Familiepark and Kristiansand Dyrepark who are on a trip including night stop(s) seek accomodation in the municipal borough of the park or in the neighbouring municipal boroughs.

Visiting other attractions in the park area is quite common (30-40 per cent) among visitors on weekend or holiday trip. Among one-day trip visitors only 11 per cent also visited other attractions.

A large number of visitors state that the park visit is the major reason for travelling to the area where the park is located. Among visitors who are on a trip including at least one night spent outside their home, this is the case for approximately 50 per cent.

Geographical markets

Most counties in Norway are represented with relatively high numbers of visitors. With the exception of the northern counties Troms and Finnmark, 10 per cent or more of the population in all counties visited at least one of the four parks in 1995. Two thirds of the visitors live less than 300 kms away from the park in which they were interviewed, and few live more than 600 kms away. Visitors on holiday mostly live more than 200 kms away.

The one-day and weekend trip markets reach nearly 300 kms from each park. Thus, there is also for these visitors a considerable overlap regarding the

parks' geographical markets. For instance, three of the parks are located within short trip range of the Oslo area. However, there are indications that the direct competition between the parks is limited. Each park seems to have its own market, as visit frequencies (number of visitors per 1000 inhabitants) are strongly correlated with distance between living area and park. Little disturbance is observed on each corresponding visit frequency by area/distance graph where overlapped by an other park's graph. This may be a reflection of the fact that the parks have their own unique identity or individual appeal. Within the one-day and weekend trip markets the number of visitors per 1000 inhabitants decreases from approximately 4-500 in areas near the parks to 30 in areas 250 -300 kms from the parks.

Impacts on local economies

The report present figures for employment, total yearly sales in the parks and the parks' demand for goods and services from local companies. Furthermore estimates are made for visitor expenditures in park surrounding areas.

The parks provide important seasonal employment. Except for one park, which has an all year open zoo, the numbers of full year employees are relatively low, normally 10 to 15. The number of seasonal workers vary from 150 to 600 and average employment time is 2-2,5 months. All parks employ mainly local workers in the season, of which most are students.

Total yearly sales in the parks range from 40 to 90 million NOK (1994), the amount per visitor varied from NOK 156 to 215. In all parks between two thirds and three quarters of total incomes are spent on wages, purchase of goods and services and other operational costs. Except wages, approximately 20-21 million NOK are annually spent by three of the parks on goods and services for operational purposes, the fourth one spend approximately 40 million NOK. There are not data available to determine the exact share of deliveries by local or regional firms, but most expenditures are believed to have a local or regional impact.

Additional investment related demand is also considerable. All parks frequently make investments in infrastructure and new attractions, and these investments vary from about 5 to 20 million NOK per year (average). In two of the three parks located in rural areas, 50 and 60% of investment costs, respectively, was spent at local companies.

Visitor expenditures *outside* the parks - in the park municipality and in neighbouring municipalities - were estimated on the basis of both survey data from the project and general tourist expenditure data from a 1995 survey carried out by TØI in a different tourism research project. Estimations were made separately for visitors on one-day trips (from home or holiday in other area) and visitors on trips including overnight stay in the defined local area. Another important distinction was made between visitors who stated that the park visit was the major reason for coming to the area and those who stated other main reasons; as the aim was to identify the local economic impact genuinely created by the parks.

53 per cent of the visitors at Hunderfossen Familiepark who stayed overnight in the local area stated that the park visit was a major reason for coming to the area. They spent approximately 107 000 guest nights in the local area, of which 100 000 in commercial accommodation. Their total expenditure outside the park was estimated to NOK 31 million. Visitors stating the park as minor reason spent 57 000 guest nights in paid accommodation, and spent an estimated NOK 18 million outside the park. Visitors stating that the park visit was of no importance for the trip to the area spent an estimated NOK 12,5 million. Visitors on one-day trip (park visit major reason for trip) only spent 3,5 million NOK outside the park. Total incomes in the park was 50 million.

At Telemark Sommarland 50 per cent of the visitors stayed overnight in the local area. More than 80 per cent of these stated that the park visit was a major reason for coming to the area. They spent approximately 210 000 guest nights in commercial accommodation and their total expenditure outside the park was estimated to NOK 63 million. Visitors stating the park as minor reason, represent about 20 000 commercial guest nights, and they spent an estimated NOK 8 million outside the park. Visitors stating that the park visit was of no importance for the trip to the area spent an estimated NOK 4,4 million. The expenditure by one-day trip visitors (park visit major reason for trip) was estimated to 5 million NOK.

In comparison, total incomes in the park was 38 million, park visitors thus spent twice as much outside the park as inside.

At Kristiansand Dyrepark nearly 40 percent of the visitors stayed overnight in the local area. Half the number of these stated that the park visit was a major reason for coming to the area. They spent about 170 000 guest nights in commercial accommodation and their total expenditure outside the park was estimated to NOK 50 million. Visitors stating the park as minor reason, represent 95 000 commercial guest nights, and they spent an estimated NOK 32 million outside the park. Visitors stating that the park visit was of no importance for the trip to the area spent an estimated NOK 29 million. The expenditure by one-day trip visitors (park visit major reason for trip) was estimated to 4 million NOK.

In comparison, total incomes in the park was 89 million.

The TusenFryd/VikingLandet park situated just outside Oslo show quite different local impact figures. The main reasons for these are a high number of local visitors and that relatively few of the visitors staying overnight in the Oslo area consider the park visit as a major reason for coming to the area. As visiting friends and relatives is an important reason for travelling, demand for commercial accommodation is less common than at the other parks.

These visitors spent only approximately 17 000 guest nights in commercial accommodation and their total expenditures outside the park was estimated to NOK 8-9 million. Visitors stating the park as minor reason spent an estimated NOK 10 million outside the park. Visitors stating that the park visit was of no importance for the trip to the area spent an estimated NOK 20 million. The

expenditures by one-day trip visitors (park visit major reason for trip) was estimated to 3 million NOK. Thus, total expenditures outside the park are less than 60 percent compared to the 74 million sales inside the park.

All figures on expenditures outside the parks relate to the period 19 June to 13 August, only.