

TOURISTS IN CANSIGLIO FOREST, ITALY: CASE STUDY ABOUT FORESTS VISITORS AND THEIR OPINIONS

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Abstract: The development of the recreational use of forests demands a greater understanding of the profile, preferences and opinions of visitors to these forests. A questionnaire survey was held in Cansiglio forest in northern Italy, which has become a very famous recreational area where many people come to spend their leisure time. The objective of this paper is to ascertain specifics about forest visitors, their preferences of forest structure and shape, and their other opinions, e.g. about regional problems with red deer. Results showed, among other, that almost ¼ of respondents were bikers, the rest were hikers, and the majority was from nearby cities and villages. Most of respondents go to forests from six to eleven times per year, more than ½ of them are satisfied with this frequency of forest visits. Knowing which type of forest visitors generally look for and what kind of activities they want to enjoy there is very important information and useful for management in research areas.

Key words: Respondents' profile; Preference survey; Questionnaire inquiry; reasons; Regional problems with red deer.

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Introduction

Currently, more and more people want to spend their leisure time in nature, especially in forested areas. People use forests for many purposes, a large portion of forested land would be adequate for tourism. Furthermore, one could say that there are only very few forests where people are unable to run tourism. As is pointed out by Lehtinen and Sarala (2006), Sevenant and Antrop (2009) and others, an increasing tourism puts pressure on the land. It requires objective and meaningful measurements in planning, policy evaluation for analysing the consequences of landscape change, and sustainable development of tourist destinations. That is highlighted also by Cunha (2010), who writes that accurate research assessments and adequate indicators for monitoring tourism impacts have to be developed globally. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (hereafter referred to as FAO, 2011) states that the management of forests for social and cultural functions is increasing. That has a great importance, because the lack of political guidelines is the main issue in terms of tourism. It has given rise to serious problems involving

the degradation of the natural environment and a loss of local identity (De Aranzabal et al., 2009). The significance of planning for recreational purposes is highlighted also by Price and Chambers (2000) who argue that in the era of multi-purpose forestry, providing recreational opportunities rightly takes an important place among objectives for forest management. Even though the significance of recreation in forests has continuously increased in recent decades and recreation is one of the most common uses of forested areas, there is scarce data about users and their opinions. Therefore, it was required to identify the social composition of forest visitors as a target group as well as their needs and expectations.

The planning should be supported by adequate information about forest visitors, as is confirmed by many authors, e.g. Herrick and Rudis (1994) who said that to effectively plan for recreation, land managers need data describing the characteristics and preferences of visitors; Šišák (2011) who argues that an objective survey of what forest visitors know about the issues in question is a very important informative source for forest policy and forestry public relations plans and activities; and Drábková (2010) who affirms that knowledge of the composition of the population of tourists and determination of their preferences are the basis for proposals for the improvement and reasonable development of the tourist movement in forests. Font and Tribe (2000) add that the forest

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manager needs to understand the type of forest which visitors wish to visit. All these references indicate that the development of the recreational use of forests demands a greater understanding of the profile, preferences and opinions of visitors to these forests. Moreover, this knowledge could help to prevent the degradation of nature. Heer et al. (2003) agree by saying that it is important to understand the users of recreational forests as thoroughly as possible in order to adjust resource management to prevent or at least minimize possible conflicts and damage. Cunha (2010) argues that mismanagement of tourism activities could intensify the degradation of nature. Sayan and Karagüzel (2010) add that visitor demographics, perceptions and their relationships are investigated to determine the problems and issues for outdoor recreation.

But there are still just scarce data in the hand, especially for forested areas. Sevenant and Antrop (2009) recommend that research on landscape perception and preference is more than justified. Mercado and Lassoie (2002) complement that understanding the tourism market's position and preferences for the natural and traditional cultural environment; there is a clear need for the application of comprehensive surveys to collect primary data to access such preferences. There are many studies (some examples are mentioned in the previous text) about visitors' perceptions and preferences, however, public opinion on forests and forestry is various and changes over time. Carvalho-Ribeiro and Lovett (2011) specify that above all, it is apparent that in addition to the visible patterns of the landscape (landscape context), the social/cultural and personal factors affecting the observer (situational context) can influence public preferences for forests.

Additionally, it very often happens that due to some limitations (natural, cultural, and others) the proposals proceeding from the results are not usable outside of the region or country where the study took place. That is why it was necessary to carry out a new research to obtain data for statistical evaluation. The objective of this paper is to find out answers to questions about forest visitors in Cansiglio forest, namely: Who are people going into the woodland? Why do they go there? What type of forests do they prefer to visit and what do they think about regional problems with red deer? Knowing which type of forest the visitors generally look for and what kind of activities they want to enjoy there is very important and useful information for management in research areas.

Methodology

On-site Survey

The basic survey method was 'on-site' questionnaire inquiry in this case. On-site visits fulfil most of the

criteria for appropriate visualization methods in forest landscape preference research (Karjalainen and Tyrväinen, 2002). Sevenant and Antrop (2009) specify that being on-site implies all senses and not just visual. The best expression is by given the respondents' proximity to the landscape. Karjalainen and Tyrväinen (2002) explain, "Movement of the viewer through the landscape is the typical way of experiencing the environment when enjoying recreation in the forest". Herrick and Rudis (1994) add interesting observation, that because respondents were interviewed at recreational areas, it is suspected that respondents may have been describing scenes in and around the interview site.

Study Area

A survey site was located in Cansiglio Forest in northern Italy. The Cansiglio is a plateau of the Carnic Alps between the provinces of Treviso, Belluno and Pordenone. The main accesses to the plateau are south through the valley of Crosetta from Vittorio Veneto - the Province of Treviso and north of the valley in the area of Campon Alpage - the Province of Belluno (Tragol, 2011). After a consultation with managers of the area and a subsequent field survey, the best location was chosen: a parking lot in the small village of La Crosetta, near the entrance of the Cansiglio area.

The Cansiglio forest is part of the state property of the Veneto region and is managed by Veneto Agricoltura. Living Dolomiti (2011) writes that the state forest Cansiglio, with its 7 000 hectares of land, is the second largest forest in Italy. The forest is dominated by beech (*Fagus sylvatica*); going down in altitude, the beech and spruce entirely disappear in the vicinity of the plain where the climate is cold and moist; in these areas man has created patches of monoculture of spruce or fir (Tragol, 2011; Veneto Agricoltura, 2011). Forest management has a long tradition in this area. Veneto Agricoltura (2011) says more, "In the landscape as one sees it the environment is so well maintained as the result of hundreds of years of forest management. The importance of the area was highlighted particularly by the Serenissima Republic of Venice, which has found in it wood of suitable and adequate quality to replenish its powerful arsenal". Even today, the state-owned forest of tall trees is governed according to a plan of adjustment (Living Dolomiti, 2011). Veneto Agricoltura (2011) continues, "In this area, forestry is still actively practised, both for conservation and production. There are many areas still left to natural evolution, that is, areas that, although not subject to special protective restrictions, are still unused".

Hunting is prohibited here; nevertheless, Cansiglio is the place to see fallow deer and red deer, which here are subject to a re-population program (Living

Dolomiti, 2011; Tragol, 2011). Veneto Agricoltura (2011) specifies that the most representative species is undoubtedly the red deer (*Cervus elaphus*), but you can find also roe deer (*Capreolus capreolus*) and fallow deer (*Cervus dama*); the latter was first introduced using a wildlife fence, and then released into the forest. The whole forest is a Site of Community Importance (hereafter referred to as SCI) according to Directive 92/43/EEC "Habitat" and Special Protection Area (hereafter referred to as SPA) according to Directive 79/409/EEC "Birds", which involves inclusion of these areas in the NATURA 2000. The Regional forest Cansiglio is a part of the SCI and SPA IT3230077 - Cansiglio Forest (Veneto Agricoltura, 2011).

Questionnaire

The questionnaire was made in order to follow Drábková's (2011) research which was held in the Czech Republic (results will be compared in another paper). Drábková (2011) offers detailed description, "The main task of the questionnaire was to acquire data which would help to find answers to questions concerning how often people go to the forest, why and how they perceive different types of forests, and what they think about forest management and the visitor facilities near forest tourist routes. Another important issue was to establish the composition of tourist populations". In compiling the Italian version of the questionnaire, recommendations were included from Veneto Agricoltura (the management of the Cansiglio area) to offset regional problems and issues. The questionnaire was composed of ten closed questions and one open-ended question. Similar to Sayan and Karagüzel's study (2010), a final open-ended question was asked in order to elicit any suggestions or comments respondents might have had. Also, six questions about the socio-demographic characteristics of respondents were supplemented.

Procedure

Questionnaires were filled out during two weekends in June 2011. Potential respondents were all people older fourteen years coming into the study area. As in a study by Herrick and Rudis (1994), due to budget and interview time restrictions, flexibility in the use of additional questions and alternative sampling procedures was limited.

Contrary to many studies using face-to-face interviews, e.g. Mercado and Lassoie (2002), Sayan and Karagüzel (2010) and others, questionnaires were filled out without the presence of an interviewer. This was a recommendation of sociologist prof. Miroslav Disman, who warn that respondents could be influenced by the presence of an interviewer and, in consequence of this, answers could be distorted (Disman,

2009). The exceptions from this procedure were only a few people who asked an interviewer to read the questionnaire aloud because they could not read it themselves (e.g. because they did not have reading glasses with them). Other exceptions were respondents who did not understand because the questionnaire was in Italian. For them the questionnaire was translated into English by the interviewer.

As in a study by Sevenant and Antrop (2009), there was a possibility to talk and hence to consult with other people, even though most of the respondents filled out the questionnaires individually.

Results

To complete the questionnaire respondents needed approximately six minutes. In total, 208 people were asked whether they would like to participate in the survey and only 133 respondents agreed. This means more than 36% of asked visitors refused; making the response rate was less than 64%. That is a relatively low number. In other studies which directly asked tourists on-site, much higher response rates were reached; e.g. Kalivoda et al. (2010) with almost 88%, Mercado and Lassoie (2002) at almost 85% or Heer et al. (2003) with approximately 75%.

Respondents' Profile

Thirty respondents (22.6%) were bikers, the rest were hikers. Participants were 53.2% male and 46.8% female. The average age was 48.46 years, with a minimum of fourteen and a maximum of eighty-two. The most common age was 57.

The majority of respondents had completed high school (30.9%) or some college courses (40.7%). There were 22% of respondents with a university or higher degree of education. Only 5.7% of respondents had only basic school and two respondents (0.8%) were without education.

One interesting fact was that almost 16% of respondents did not mark a professional specialization. This could be due to a lack of very common divisions of specializations. From those who did mark a profession, there was predominance of technical specializations (29.5%). For more detail, see Table 1. Other professions marked the most included: an artisan (7 respondents), a pensioner (3), a student (2), and a housewife (2).

From 123 visitors in total, there were twelve people from Vittorio Veneto, which is the nearest city, nine from Oderzo, nine from Treviso, eight from Pordenone, seven from Venezia, six from Padova, and five from Sacile. There were also four people from these destinations: Castelfranco Veneto, San Fior (the Province of Treviso) and Sarmede.

Table 1. Professional Specialization of Respondents

	% of all respondents in survey (n=133)	% of respondents -profession re- sponded (n=112)
No response	15.8	X
Technical specialization	24.8	29.5
Scientific or medical specialization – excluding agriculture, food industry and forestry	8.3	9.8
Agriculture and food industry	8.3	9.8
Forestry	2.3	2.7
Economics or finance specialization	12	14.3
Humanities or law specialization	12	14.3
Other	16.5	19.6

Three respondents came from New Zealand. Other destinations were represented by two or fewer respondent(s). The results showed that the majority of respondents were from nearby cities and villages (around 60% of them were from the settlement less than 25km away) but there were also some visitors who came from a long distance, e.g. Monza (the Province of Milan), Novellara (the Province of Reggio Emilia) or San Miniato (the Province of Pisa). Respondents from New Zealand came a particularly long distance. A noteworthy fact was that only 17.1% of respondents were enrolled in some naturalistic association.

Frequency of Forest Visits

Results showed that the majority (30.8% of respondents) go to forests from six to eleven times per year. The second most common answer was 'less than five times per year' (21.8%), then 'one to three times per month' (20.3%) and 'one time per week' (18.8%). The answers of 'two to three times per week' and 'four times and more per week' were chosen identically by only 3.8% of respondents. Only one person replied 'never'.

Of the respondents, 53.4% were satisfied with their frequency of forest visits; for 46.6% their frequency of forest visits was marked as, 'Inconvenient – I wish to be in the forest more often than I am'. Nobody choose, 'Inconvenient – I am in the forest more often than I wish'. In cases where the respondent marked the answer 'I wish to be in the forest more often than I am', he/she was asked to indicate reasons why he/she does not go into the forest as often as he/she wishes (with a possibility to indicate more than one reason). The majority (62.2%) indicated 'the absence of the time' while 'the distance between the forest and home' (20.4%) was in second place. Other answers, e.g. 'I don't want to go alone' (7.1%), 'insufficient signposting and increased possibility of getting lost' (5.1%), 'another reason' (3.1%) or 'poor traffic

accessibility' (2%) seemed not to be as important as the first two.

Reasons for Forest Visits

The following question was focused on the importance of reasons for forest visits. Respondents were asked to determine the importance of individual reasons on a scale from one to five, one being very important and five being absolutely not important. Results showed that the most important reasons for going into the forest were 'nature, offering pleasant relaxation' and 'healthy air'. Other important reasons included 'sport' and 'observing and/or photographing wild animals or plants'. Conversely, 'hunting' and 'wood, cone or other fuel collection' were absolutely not important. Curiously, the answer 'picking forest fruits, mushrooms or medicinal plant' yielded the unexpected result of being marked mostly as absolutely not important and not important. There was a big difference among evaluations concerning the importance of 'picnicking'. For the majority of respondents it was a neutral reason. For better comprehension see Figure 1.

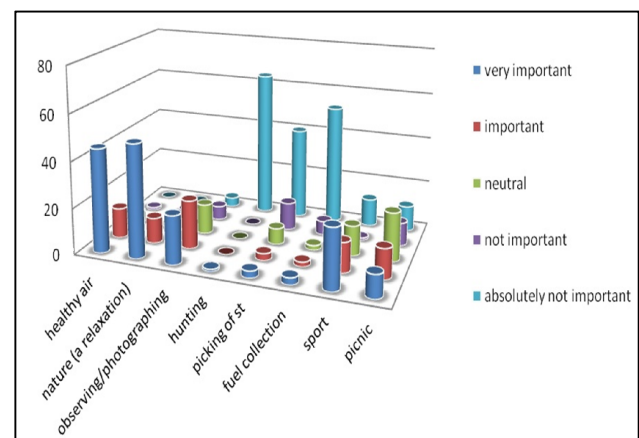


Figure 1. Reasons for Forest Visits

Choice of the Route

A very important question for this research was: 'Do you choose tourist routes based on whether they go through the forest when you are planning your trip?' Results showed that 56.8% of asked people checked 'yes' while 27.3% marked 'sometimes', 11.4% answered 'I don't know / I don't care' and only less than 4.5% said 'no'.

Forest managers could be interested in answers to the question 'How does the presence of dead trees on the ground in the forest (important for biodiversity) affect your choice of the route for your walks?' The majority (48.5%) said 'positively', 38.6% of respondents were 'indifferent' and 12.9% of tourists were affected 'negatively' by the presence of dead trees on the ground in the forest.

Preferences of Forest Structure and Shape

The next question was focused on what kind of forest respondents prefer to visit the most frequently. Concerning the composition of tree species the majority (54.7%) preferred 'mixed forest', 29.7% of answers were 'I don't know / I don't care'. 'Coniferous' forests were preferred by just 9.4% and 'broad leaves' by only 6.3% of respondents. Concerning the ease of passage and visibility the majority (56.5%) preferred forests 'with undergrowth (herbs, brush etc.)', 33.9% answered 'I don't know / I don't care' and forest 'without undergrowth' was marked by only 9.6% of respondents. For the question 'Would you rather go...' only 10% of respondents chose the answer 'to a forest which is almost monotonous or only slightly varied', 73% marked 'to a forest where the areas vary from small meadows to clear cuts to glades, etc.' and 17% didn't know or didn't care.

Foreknowledge of the Level of Protection of the Area

Another necessary question concerns the foreknowledge of the study area, namely if people know the level of protection of the area. In this question respondents could mark more than one answer. The results showed that the most highly marked answer was 'Regional Park' (41.2%). Other answers were checked as follows: 'Nature Reserve' - 24.8%, 'I don't know' - 15%, 'Natura 2000 area' - 11.1%, 'National Park' - 5.2%, and 'none - this area is not protected' - 2.6%. As was written in Capture 2.2. - Study Area, the entire area of Cansiglio Forest is Natura 2000 area.

Problems with Deer

Further questions paid attention to problems with deer. The first of them was: 'Currently, around 2800-3000 red deer live in the Cansiglio area. To what extent, according to you, is this population creating problems for the conservation or regeneration of the Cansiglio forest?' Only 5.3% of respondents thought the red deer was creating 'many serious problems'. The majority (39%) chose 'some problems of medium severity', 19% marked 'some problems of minor significance', 13.6% chose 'no problem', and a high number of respondents (22.7%) did not know. The last "closed" question was a bit complicated: 'In the Cansiglio forest various professionals are involved and the forest is visited by thousands of tourists annually. Considering deer, please evaluate whether the activity of the following figures in the territory of Cansiglio are affected by the presence of this species, and in what way?' Answers showed that respondents thought that the presence of red deer most positively affected the 'nature guide' (86.7% of answers) and the most negatively affected the 'golf player' (27.6%). For other answers in detail see Table 2.

Discussion

Discussion

The results of this survey showed that the majority of respondents (nearly 1/3) go to the forest from six to eleven times per year. More than half of them were satisfied with the frequency of their forest visits. The most important reasons for going into the forest were 'nature, offering pleasant relaxation' and 'healthy air', which is not in accordance with a study by Carvalho-Ribeiro and Lovett (2011), where in addition to being used for collection of timber and non-timber products, forests are also used as recreation sites; traditional activities in forest areas such as grazing and hunting are still important activities in some locations. It could be explained by Herrick and Rudis (1994), who found that variation existed in preferences by principal activity, user characteristics, recreation activity, and sites surveyed, or by Šišák et al. (2003) who argues that in various areas and times, various nations and population groups have had a forest with the same technical, physical, and biological nature but varying values of utility.

Respondents in Italy seemed to be interesting about the nature and some leisure time activities, e.g. 'sport' and/or 'observing and/or photographing wild animals or plants'. Price and Chambers (2000) give a nod that users choose activities that agree with their idea of a good time. One of attractions in Cansiglio area is a possibility to observe the wild deer. Living Dolomiti (2011) specify, "In particular, autumn is the ideal time to listen to the roaring of the deer, which marks the deer's season of love." Hovardas and Poirazidis (2006) argue that the majority of ecotourists, drawn by imagery from sources of environmental information, may be predisposed to focus their visits on featured species.

Table 2. How is the activity of the following figures affected by the presence of red deer?

	Positively	Negatively	Indifferently	I don't know
Forest owner	25.5%	22.4%	28.6%	23.5%
Tourist who comes for a picnic	67.3%	6.1%	22.4%	4.1%
Herdsmen	26.5%	24.5%	25.5%	23.5%
Golf player	15.3%	27.6%	39.8%	17.3%
Mountain bike rider	44.9%	17.3%	30.6%	7.1%
Restaurateur	74.5%	7.1%	13.3%	5.1%
Tourist who comes for a roaring of the deer	74.5%	4.1%	8.2%	13.3%
Excursionist	80.6%	2.0%	13.3%	4.1%
Nature guide	86.7%	3.1%	4.1%	6.1%
Mushroom picker	24.5%	21.4%	36.7%	17.3%

More than 1/2 of asked people chose tourist routes depending on whether they go through the forest. Fyhri et al. (2009) argue that forests have been found to be a favoured type of landscape among some holidaymakers. Font and Tribe (2000) complement that forests are the part of the countryside that visitors enjoy most.

The Cansiglio area is a particular place where people come mostly to enjoy nature. Creative Commons (2011) agree by saying that the whole area is a natural paradise for hikers, being full of fascinating and well-groomed trails. Forests here are extraordinary exciting and hiking through tourist trails is ranked among the best trips in Veneto region. Font and Tribe (2000) add that sports requiring long distances, such as horseback riding, cross-country skiing and running can be better enjoyed in partly forested landscapes. Tragol (2011) corroborates, that there are numerous trails on foot or on horseback.

From the study emerges that respondents prefer most frequently to visit mixed forests and forests with undergrowth. In Cansiglio Forest could be found various kinds of plants. Tragol (2011) particularize that the basin is the realm of the beech tree and in the undergrowth you can see all those plants that love the shade: the fern, the wood anemone and wood sorrel. Veneto Agricoltura (2011) tries to explain nature principles by saying that the undergrowth is closely related to the amount of light that filters through the canopy.

This study also found that almost 3/4 of tourists would rather go to the forest where its areas change from small meadows to clear cuts to glades, etc. This corresponds with findings by Kalivoda et al. (2010) who write that in forests, heterogeneity was found to be interesting for observers. Font and Tribe (2000) supplement that the appeal of forests can be increased by enhancing the variety and contrast in the area with different species contrasting in colour and form, diversity in tree age and structure, smaller clearings and thinning (as opposed to large scale clearings), varying scales of stands and other variations.

From results for the question about fore-knowledge of the level of protection of the study area, it is clear that tourists in Cansiglio Forest were not very well informed. Only around 1/10 of them was able to rightly identify the protection status of the area they are in. This is an interesting finding, because questionnaires were filled out in a locality where a big information board with a map of the area, and other information about the area, was placed. Management of the area (Veneto Agricoltura) tries to introduce Cansiglio as a place for relaxation and immersion in nature, but also learning and awareness. "The objective of management is to promote a conscious use of the environment through various initiatives that are organized in the area. There are many paths with signage, allowing an immersion in nature but at the same time trying to make the visitor understand the complex functioning of the surrounding ecosystem" (Veneto Agricoltura, 2011).

The fact that the population of deer is creating problems for the conservation or regeneration of the Cansiglio forest was perceived by almost 2/3 of respondents. Study by Marchiori et al. (2012) confirmed that high densities of red deer seriously impact on forage production by mountain meadows. But these studies are not very well comparable, because their study aimed at estimating the impact of red deer grazing on the productivity of meadows located in Pian Cansiglio. Marchiori et al. (2012) specify that the study concentrated on the damages to meadows, but it is also important to stress that this problem must be addressed with an ecosystem and holistic approach.

Another important result of this research is the finding that the majority of respondents were from nearby cities and villages; a great deal of significance have also others demographic characteristics. The importance of knowledge of the respondents' profile for managers of the area is highlighted by many authors, e.g. Sayan and Karagüzel (2010) who stated that the demographics and perceptions of visitors (such as perceptions of crowding) at different destinations can

be used for park planning and management and help to identify a range of problems and issues for outdoor recreation; or Mercado and Lassoie (2002) who aimed that it can be expected that tourists' perceptions of sustainable development will influence tourism planners' decisions. Carvalho-Ribeiro and Lovett (2011) conclude by saying that a review of public preferences for forests indicates that these are likely to vary with personal and socio-economic factors such as gender and landownership, professional background and type of recreational activity.

An interesting is also the fact that only less than 1/5 of respondents were enrolled in some naturalistic association. It is essential to find a way how to make the topic of nature protection and sustainable development more attractive, and attract the interest of the public.

An education and environmental teaching seem to be an important element in achieving of sustainability. Gobster (1999) explains that ecosystem management offers new opportunities to help expand public ideas of naturalness, and landscape management programs could incorporate ecological principles explicitly into methods and practices. Heer et al. (2003) add an example

"Former studies have shown that information on the reasons for forest management practices can lead to a higher acceptance among forest visitors. This is especially true if some activities have to be forbidden or the freedom of movement in the forest is restricted, as might be the case when protecting a part of a forest (e.g., to allow regeneration) or when actions are taken to prevent social conflicts (e.g., by directing different visitor groups onto different trails)."

The importance of work with public is underlined by numerous authors, e.g. Hovardas and Poirazidis (2006) speak about the necessity of education by saying that the potential of environmental education calls for enhancing visitor environmental knowledge and prompting change of visitor behaviour. Šišák (2011) points out importance of communication by argument that it is necessary to improve communication between the forestry sector and the public, to support education and objective information about the real socio-economic conception of forest functions and their financing.

Petrosillo et al. (2007) add that the positive development of tourism depends on successful strategies to limit tourist numbers, inform and educate visitors, and manage and control the area efficiently. The solutions is offered by several authors, e.g. Mercado and Lassoie (2002) suggest that one way to work with the public may be to develop facilities in tourist areas that allow tourists to learn in a relaxing environment the importance of responsible management in order to attain sustainable development. Hovardas and

Poirazidis (2006) recommend educational programs which can increase duration of stay at the study area and consequently increase levels of visitor participation in ecotourism activities. The key seems to be in finding a way to make this topic more attractive, and attracting the interest of the public.

Conclusion

Forest visitors' preferences were examined, many interesting information were ascertained. This case study, concerning an onsite questionnaire inquiry in Cansiglio Forest, shows the frequency of forest visits and the satisfaction of respondents with their frequency of forest visits; reasons for forest visits and their importance for respondents were explored; as well as preferences of tourists were discovered. All these information are valuable for planning in the area. Mercado and Lassoie (2002) clarify the importance of those data arguing that in the case of a tourism area, tourists' preferences drive most of the development decisions by tourism planners and managers.

The results also demonstrate tourists' ideas about regional problems in the Cansiglio forest, especially the issue of red deer. One of the most important findings of this research is created visitor's profile. It should clarify tourists' expectations and could present some proposals on how to improve conditions in order to draw more tourists. But we should not forget about the variability of visitors. Assuming that not all visitors have the same expectations and interests, it is important to provide different recreational opportunities in an attempt to satisfy all demands (Múgica and De Lucio, 1996). The solution seems to lie in more research and working with the public, particularly in local (or regional) level.

Because the increased recreational demand for areas of high ecological value implies potential conflicts between conservation and recreational goals (Torbidoni et al., 2005), it is necessary to help to visitors to understand the importance of sustainability, as well as to teach them in which way is the nature influenced by human. Torbidoni (2011) point out that achieving and maintaining an appropriate balance between conservation and use of these areas for recreation, sport and tourism is not an easy task. That is why all recommendations for forest managers should concern not only how to enhance recreational potential for specific areas but should also help them to find the right balance between the level of recreational use and the conservation of nature.

Future research about forest visitors and their expectations is highly recommended, this study could be used as an example for other areas with similar (natural and cultural) conditions.

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