

Research shows fishing boats in the harbor haul tourists into Danish hotels

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Credit: Pixabay/CC0 Public Domain

The presence of active fishing boats in local harbors is a boon for Danish tourism, according to a research study from the University of Copenhagen. Indeed, the value of Denmark's commercial fishery

shouldn't just be measured by its catch, but by its amenity value and the indirect income it nets local communities as well. The researchers believe that their study calls for a fine-tuning of legislation with regards to who is allowed to own fishing quotas.

They wake long before the sun's glow yawns across the horizon. And as their vessels' waves lap at the harbor wall, they return with fresh seafood to be sold at the quayside or from the harbor's fish auction by fast-talking, impossible to decipher auctioneers.

It may seem like a relic of a bygone era, when the world was more authentic and seemingly far less complex—when fish came from the cold sea and not from the supermarket cold counter. Fishing is not just about production; it is also a cultural experience.

[A study](#), in *Marine Policy*, that looks statistically at the correlation between fishing boats and hotel guests around Denmark has now demonstrated this in black and white. The conclusion is clear: active fisheries benefit local tourism.

"Our results demonstrate a clear positive correlation between the presence of fishing boats in local harbors and the number of local hotel guests. To a significant degree, tourism is positively affected by having active fishing vessels landing in local seaports," says Max Nielsen from the Department of Food and Resource Economics, who is one of the study's authors.

Specifically, the study shows that when an extra fishing vessel arrives in port, overnight stays in the area also increase by an average of 1.1%, corresponding to roughly ninety extra nights in the area.

Furthermore, the effect of fishing boats is greater when permanently based in a given harbor. When an extra boat is added that belongs to a

harbor in a certain postcode, overnight stays in the same postcode increase by 1.4%, or about 110 overnight stays, according to the study's results.

The study also points out that general fishing activity, not vessel size, is what contributes most in attracting visitors. The researchers excluded the very largest vessels from the data by sorting them out on the basis of catch types, but the study shows that the effect applies to medium-sized vessels.

"Small cutters that sell fresh fish directly to tourists contribute to an authentic experience, while industrial trawlers feed a different kind of fascination. However, it is reasonable to believe that there may be interesting differences in these effects depending on the types of fishing vessels present. We hope that future studies will be able to shed more light on this," says study co-author Rasmus Nielsen.

The research was carried out against a backdrop of decline in Europe's fisheries sector. As one of four studies in the Nordic countries, the study is part of a report supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers, which has been tasked with highlighting possible connections between fishing and tourism in Scandinavia

Fishing quota system: A success with room for improvement

Based on the study, the researchers believe that there is reason for slight adjustments to Danish fishing [quota](#) legislation.

"With an adjustment of the rules, one could imagine a small seaport, in which there is a tourism sector and some eateries, that the town's co-op association joins forces to finance a few fishing quotas. This would

allow for fishing and the sustenance of harbor life, while contributing positively to the tourism sector. This could be of great benefit to small communities and their economies, as well as for the economy created by the Danish fishery as a whole," says Max Nielsen.

Torup Strand in North Jutland is one example of how joint quota ownership can strengthen small-scale fishing and preserve local economies. But these initiatives face a legal hurdle that requires fishing quotas to be owned by fishermen.

"It makes sense to rethink this aspect of fisheries policy with a focus on including stakeholders other than traditional commercial fishermen. The current practice, whereby only fishermen can own quotas, limits the potential of fishing for small coastal communities and for the economy as a whole," says Nielsen.

However, the researchers emphasize that the Danish fishing quota system has generally proved successful. It has created a more sustainable fishing sector with regards to fish stocks, climate and even for the marine environment. And in particular, for the industry's own economic sustainability.

"The quotas have been good for the economic welfare of society and the fishing sector. Prior to the quota system, there were just too many fishermen going after far too few fish. Investments in boats and equipment were risky and there were many bankruptcies. The quotas have regulated the number of fishing vessels to a profitable level because they can be resold all while ensuring that the sea's resources are fully utilized," says Max Nielsen.

At the same time, this has been done within established limits that have been professionally assessed as sustainable for [fish stocks](#), and with fewer boats, resulting in reduced CO₂ emissions.

"Our results don't suggest any major upheaval. On the contrary, adjusting the rules for fishing to benefit small [local communities](#) by opening up joint ownership of a fishing quota by non-commercial fishermen can strengthen local tourism and be a good idea," says Rasmus Nielsen.

More information: Max Nielsen et al, Does fishery activity affect local tourism? Evidence from Denmark, *Marine Policy* (2024). [DOI: 10.1016/j.marpol.2024.106051](#)

Provided by University of Copenhagen

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