

## Abstract

Over the last years the cruise industry has grown significantly. This translates into an increasing number of cruise ships that enter Zeebrugge every year. These tourists are then brought by bus to Bruges where they only stay for a few hours. A lot of people in a short period of time in a relatively small space often leads to crowding in the city as well as on the roads in and around the city.

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the social impact that cruise tourists cause in Bruges. Two questionnaires were used to survey the opinion of both merchants and local inhabitants on various statements related to cruise tourism in Bruges. This in combination with some theoretical models which try to explain the behaviour of local inhabitants as a result of tourism, leads to some cautious conclusions.

The results of the surveys reveal a lot of differences. Especially the inhabitants who live in the city centre experience a large social impact due to overcrowding. However, they experience relatively little discomfort from this. For merchants, tourists are an important source of income, so they experience less of a negative social impact, and have a very positive attitude towards these tourists.