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Overtourism: Concepts, Drivers, Impacts and Management Responses - A Narrative Review

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ABSTRACT

Overtourism is no longer an issue that has appeared in tourism news from time to time but is now gaining main roles in tourism studies and in policies related to tourism destinations. It is a term used for situations where the number of visitors, the concentration of visitors, or the behaviour of the visitors will cause unacceptable harm to the residents, environments or the experience of the visitor if such a place did not have enough capacity. This review summarises the key themes of the literature published since the term became part of academic discourse in the late 2010s. It highlights the heritage of the notion in earlier studies on resident irritation, the tourism area life cycle, and on carrying capacity, and it considers the application of the theory of social exchange and perspective of socio-psychological theory in explaining response of the residents' attitude changes. It then looks at the major factors contributing to overtourism: low-cost flights, peer-to-peer housing, cruises, the social media and growth marketing agendas of destination managers, and the economic, social and environmental impacts of overtourism. Venice, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Dubrovnik, Maya Bay in Thailand and Bhutan are examples of and illustrations for these pressures and responses. The review benchmarks the actions taken by destinations to address the issue of overtourism, covering the imposition of caps, price increases, visitor dispersion strategies, resident participation and calls for degrowth as well as evaluating how overtourism can be measured. Overtourism is not just a problem of numbers, but one of distribution and governance, and requires multiple tools in order to be effective and permanent, it concludes, alongside constant involvement of stakeholders and improved data.

Keywords: Overtourism, Review, Destination, Over-Tourism

1 | INTRODUCTION

Tourism has always been considered as source of income and job and as medium of socio-cultural exchange. Throughout its more recent history destinations have revolved around the goal of increasing their arrivals and the volume of tourists coming to a holiday spot is regarded as a measure of their success. The governments, destination management organisations and enterprises amassed in general, have embraced the

belief that ‘the more the merrier'. In the 2010s, however, various protests in some of the biggest cities in Europe, like Barcelona, Venice and Amsterdam, gained international publicity for the expenses of tourist development. Residents complained about the rising rents and overcrowded streets, noise and the disappearance of local shops and services. These situations consequently started to be referred to as ‘overtourism' and began to be discussed in policy and academic discourse (Goodwin, 2017; Milano et al., 2019).

The word itself is new, but the worries to which it refers are not. Concepts such as carrying capacity, the destination life cycle (Butler, 1980) and resident irritation (Doxey, 1975) have been discussed by researchers since decades ago in order to address the issue why and when tourism development cannot continue. The things that have changed in the 2010s are the speed and their visibility of growth – with cheaper travel, new ways of staying, and the great influence of social media. These forces attracted high densities of visitors to a few "hot spots" and to specific seasons of the year. Meanwhile, the locals have new avenues on which they expressed concerns - such as social media platforms and community groups.

This is reflected by the growth of the overtourism literature. Soon, edited books, special issues, policy reports and literature reviews (Capocchi et al., 2019; Dodds & Butler, 2019; Milano et al., 2019; Peeters et al., 2018) soon followed the popularisation of this term in a few years' time. How literature spreads has been widened to include various disciplines such as tourism studies, urban geography, sociology and environmental management. This diversity is one thing, but it is equally responsible for the fact that the same word can mean many things for diverse purposes.

This review is aimed at giving an organized overview of the overtourism literature. It's designed for answering 5 questions. What is meant by 'Overtourism' and what does it have to do with former theories? Secondly, what theoretical frameworks have been employed to understand it? Thirdly, what are its key drivers and impacts? Fourthly, how different destinations have reacted and responded to overtourism? Fifth, what management responses have been taken, and based on the evidence, how are they being effective? The review is not systematic, nor is it new theory, it is designed to be a easy to read review for students and practitioners.

2 | APPROACH OF THE REVIEW

It's a narrative review. It synthesises peer-reviewed academic journal articles; books and reports from international organisations that are relevant to the areas of definition, causes, outcomes and management of overtourism. A special effort is made to highlight some of the more often cited works and to review some of the work that has charted sections of the field. For each type of case construction, a "destination" was chosen that illustrated a different type of context, either through being a historic city, coastal and island destinations, or having a specific policy to cap the number of visitors in a mountain country. Official announcements and trustworthy newspaper reporting were used to obtain information about recent policy measures.

Some limitations of a narrative approach. Searches are not based on a specific protocol and the sources used are chosen by the authors. The review is thus not meant to be comprehensive. It aims to encapsulate the

key ideas present in the literature in order to give the reader an idea of the connections among them and ways to further explore them.

3 | DEFINING OVERTOURISM

3.1 | Early Definitions

There is no single agreed definition of 'overtourism'. Goodwin (2017) describes it as a situation where hosts and guests, locals and visitors, feel there are too many visitors and that quality of life or of the experience has deteriorated unacceptably. The UNWTO (2018) gives a similar definition with a focus on how tourism affects the perceived quality of the residents' life and the quality of tourists' experiences. These both highlight perception – overtourism isn't simply about numbers; it's about how those numbers are experienced by residents and visitors.

A study commissioned by the Committee on Transport and Tourism of the European Parliament adopted a broader perspective that defined overtourism as a condition that occurs when tourism impacts surpass the thresholds of physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological and political capacities in certain times and places (Peeters et al., 2018). This definition is helpful because it acknowledges that capacity can be multi-dimensional and the issue may be local and/or temporal in nature, not ubiquitous throughout a destination.

3.2 | Criticisms of the Concept

There have been a number of questions on whether the term contributes to much. According to Koens et al. (2018), the notion of overtourism is used loosely and the issues linked to overtourism can simply be caused by wider urban issues including, but not limited to, gentrification and the commercialisation of city centres, to which tourism is just one part. They are wary of devising policies which have only tourism-based solutions and do not address these other drivers. In a review of previous studies, Capocchi et al. (2019), make the similar observation that boundaries and measurement of the concept remain unprecise.

Others have suggested that the term is a slogan in the making. As it is a highly emotive issue it can galvanise anti-tourism sentiment without being specific as to what is wrong with tourism and who is being affected. Given these criticisms, this concept has however, been beneficial in raising awareness of the uneven cost and benefits of tourism, and in questioning the destinations approach to growth (Milano et al., 2019).

3.3 | Overtourism and Carrying Capacity

Overtourism is similarly related to the older concept of carrying capacity which relates to the maximum number of visitors to a destination before any negative impacts become unacceptable. There are physical, ecological, social and psychological aspects to carrying capacity. However, it has had limited use, as acceptable limits are site-specific based on local values and management decisions—and not on hard thresholds. However, Wall (2020) suggests that the discourse has been reframed with a different focus from carrying capacity to overtourism, but with many of the components of previous capacity literature holding true.

3.4 | Sustainability and Socio-Psychological Perspectives

The concept of overtourism has more recently been contextualized under various headings. Mihalic (2020) sees overtourism from a sustainability point of view, conceptualising it as the inability to limit tourism within the economic, socio-cultural and environmental boundaries; and considers it to be linked to endogenous political and governance drivers in the respect of whether these boundaries are considered or respected. Consequently, it does not consider overtourism as its own - it relates it to the ongoing discussions on sustainable tourism.

Gössling et al. (2020a) provide a conceptual framework based on the social psychology. They state not only objective numbers (e.g., the number of visitors per site) shape perceptions of overtourism but also residents' sense of place, perceptions of control and the social norms and values that influence shared space. In this sense, the same number of visitors can be experienced very differently in different localities, or by different groups within the same locality. This is one reason that overtourism is so hotly disputed and why simple numerical limits rarely resolve it.

4 | THEORETICAL LENSES

4.1 | The Tourism Area Life Cycle

According to the tourism area life cycle model by Butler (1980), a tourism area goes through life cycle phases of exploration, involvement, development, consolidation and stagnation culminating either in a decline or rejuvenation phase. When the carrying capacity of a destination is reached, the issue of congestion arises, as will problems of environmental damage and diminishing satisfaction of visitors. This model enables the scientists to understand why overtourism is likely to be a problem in destinations that have seen accelerated development and commercial success at a later stage. It also points to the fact that the result is not an inevitability: Management activities can help to determine whether a destination is renewed or declines.

The generality of the life cycle model has been criticized, as well as the notion that the path of development is linear. Not all destinations are the same in size, structure and governance, and parts of the same destination can be at various degrees. However, it is still a good model to consider in thinking about the endogenous dynamics of tourism growth and when growth threatens and begins to overcome the characteristics that make it attractive to visitors.

4.2 | Resident Irritation

The irritation index for residents-proposed by Doxey (1975) – has the potential of illustrating the possibility that residents' attitudes to tourists vary with tourism growth. Residents are greeting the visitors with euphoria in the early period. This leads over time to mere apathy, annoyance, and opposition. While the model is criticised for its simplicity in considering a single path, and for its lack of consideration of heterogeneity of individuals in the model, it is indicative of many of the responses encountered in overtouristed cities, such as protests and anti-tourism slogans.

Subsequent studies have revealed that residents' attitudes are more complex than indicated by Doxey's model. There are some residents who directly profit from tourism with jobs or in owning businesses, but others

who don't receive any benefit from the tourism but who do incur its costs. Important relationships presented are length of residence, and vicinity of tourist areas as well as personal values (Sharpley, 2014), as this all has an effect on attitude. The irritation index is therefore more like a picture of an actual story line to be read but not a law.

4.3 | Social Exchange Theory

Tourism Research has formed its backbone on social exchange theory, which becomes the most prevalent theory to explain the attitudes of residents in relation to tourism (Ap, 1992; Sharpley, 2014). It believes that residents assess tourism based on the hypothesized benefits and costs, and that they engage positive when they are perceived that benefits of tourism to them are greater than costs. Gursoy and Rutherford (2004) and Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011) respectively found that perceived economic benefits positively influence the support level and vice versa for social and environment costs. The importance of trust in the institutions and a sense of power to residents in determining their support is also emphasized by Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2011).

Social exchange theory also supports the argument why a rise of resistance and criticism can arise when the negative side effects of tourism, such as rising housing prices, and the crowding effect fall on residents not realizing the commensurate economic gains. The literature of residents' perceptions in overtouristed areas indicates that negative perceptions may help to determine a destination's social carrying capacity. Gonzalez et al. (2018) conducted a study of a small Catalan heritage town which revealed that residents' perceptions of tourism's impacts could be used to determine when the social limits are approached.

4.4 | Temporal Overtourism and Resilience

The time aspect of overtourism has been highlighted by Cheer et al. (2019). They believe many places do suffer overtourism, not on a 24/7 basis, but at certain times of the year, like summer seasons, festivals or holidays. Even though sometimes these numbers of visitors seem to be fairly low per year, they are met with great difficulty by the communities. Cheer et al. (2019) link this temporal thinking to the topic of community resilience and implement the question of how communities can cope with and bounce back from successive periods of intense pressure.

This is one reason why it is important for management, since this means that attempts to lower the number of visitors per year may not have the same impact as attempts to smooth the demand over time. It also serves a reminder that a destination can be over-touristed at certain times without being stuck in that condition.

5 | DRIVERS OF OVERTOURISM

5.1 | Low-Cost Aviation

The phenomenon of overtourism has come about thanks to several intertwined reasons. The first is the massive expansion of cheap air travel, which has made short city breaks affordable for a much larger population. Low cost flights have boosted frequency of repeat visits to the popular cities and more intensively concentrated visits during weekends and holidays. This has been reinforced in many areas with increase in airport size.

5.2 | Peer-to-Peer Accommodation

The second factor is the growth of P2P rentals. These have led to the rising availability of short-term lettings in residential neighbourhoods and their impact on the need for land use in these areas, bringing visitors into neighbourhoods where they were traditionally the home of residents. Gutiérrez et al. (2017) analysed the spatial location of hotels and peer-to-peer accommodation in Barcelona, drawing a conclusion that peer-to-peer accommodation was beyond the traditional hotel zones and had expanded into residential areas. The tourist experience of the residents is altered, as tourists interact with the people in the buildings and the streets themselves.

Housing pressures have been identified as another association with short-term rentals. Wachsmuth and Weisler (2018) for example have documented how platforms create a new ‘rent gap' in NYC, with individuals perceiving themselves to be able to make more money by renting to visitors of these platforms than by renting to long-term tenants. This will incentivize turning housing into tourism, hence decreasing the housing supply and fuelling gentrification. Globally, the rentification of long-term housing units has been linked to rent increases in many urban areas, and replaced local households, leading to increase in resident opposition (Milano et al., 2019).

5.3 | Cruise Tourism

There's cruise tourism as the third driver. A large cruise ship may be able to transport several thousand people to a port city in a matter of hours that causes a significant "spike" of capacity in the historic centre areas. Cruise tourists typically spend only a few hours on land and their larger meals within the vessel has the potential to be less meaningful to the local economy as compared to the stress they put on the local environment. Venice has emerged as an emblem of the paradoxical dynamics engendered by the rise of cruise traffic: a city with a falling resident population whose tourism-based economy is growing (Seraphin et al., 2018).

5.4 | Social Media

Social Media is also the fourth driver. Certain perspectives, roads and settings have become recognisable across the platforms, encouraging visitors to seek out the same locations for photographs. This can focus visitors in very small locations, even those which were not intended to accommodate large crowds. Film and television locations have had a similar impact: people look for destinations mentioned in the film and/or television series that they have watched on screen.

5.5 | Destination Marketing and Policy

Last, but not least, destination marketing and planning has had an impact. Over many years, the hallmark of success for a destination management organisation (DMO) was the number of arrivals and expenditure from those visits. However, with poor consideration for the distribution and impact of marketing campaigns for growth, visitors became concentrated in already popular places (Dodds & Butler, 2019). Public policies intended to attract tourism investment usually had a positive rationale (economic development, for example) but few policies had provisions for handling the impact of success.

6 | IMPACTS

6.1 | Economic Impacts

Overtourism can be broken down into three main categories: economic, social and environmental. Economically, tourism growth brings income and employment, but these rewards are not evenly distributed. There is often an increase in cost of living in places that are overtouristed, and local businesses are replaced by ones that cater for tourists, and the economy may be based on a single industry. It is also important to note that there is a risk of shocks when bearing dependence on the tourism activity, like the COVID-19 experience showed.

6.2 | Social Impacts

Socially, residents complain of overcrowding, noise and lack of control at common property. Removing people from city centres can sever links in the community and alter the character of neighbourhoods. Trading, city transportations and actions like shopping can be more challenging during peak hours. As time goes by some of the neighbourhood residents may feel that their neighbourhood now serves tourists rather than residents.

This also has an impact on visitors. These above pressures affect the quality of the experience available at the attraction, and can eventually be damaging to a destination's reputation. Visitors who come to a site to experience the authentic character of the place can discover that this character has also been lost as the place has become more popular.

6.3 | Environmental Impacts

Visitors have an impact on infrastructure, water resources and waste services. Overuse may result in damage to vegetation, unwanted changes to wildlife populations and overcrowding on trails in natural areas. Coastal intensive use may lead to the harm of coral reefs and beaches. In historic cities, large group of foot traffic and cruises' emissions may play roles in the degradation of buildings and air pollution.

6.4 | The Uneven Distribution of Impacts

Collectively shared in the literature is the belief that the effects of overtourism are not equally felt by everyone. Costs are likely to be concentrated among those that rely on local services, renters, and older people, while benefits flow to the property owners and businesses, and in some cases on outside investors. The unevenness can also account for overtourism being a political issue as well as a management problem (Milano et al. 2019; Mihalic, 2020).

7 | DESTINATION CASES

7.1 | Venice

Venice is perhaps the best-known example of overtourism. Many people visit the historic city during the day and a significant portion of them come from cruise ships; its local population decreased in the last several decades (Seraphin et al., 2018). In 2021, the Italian government prohibited big cruise ships from entering the city centre of the lagoon. In 2024, Venice introduced a trial access fee of five euros for day visitors on selected peak days. In 2025, the scheme was extended to more days, and visitors who booked late paid ten euros. The

fee has been a subject of debate yet, its backers say it will help control peaks; but its critics say it treats the city like a theme park, and it doesn't do much for the housing crunch.

7.2 | Barcelona

Barcelona has been one of the key battlegrounds against residents' protest against tourism. Concerns have focused on problems with housing and crowding in central neighbourhoods, as well as on impacts of short-term rentals (Gutiérrez et al., 2017). In 2024, the city's mayor stated that the city would not renew the licences of about 10,000 tourist apartments with the goal of phasing out the use of these by 2028 so that they can be returned to the housing market. The measure is a visual example of the extent to which overtourism has been become synonymous with wider questions on housing affordability.

7.3 | Amsterdam

Amsterdam has adopted various measures to regulate tourism, such as campaigns to discourage some kinds of tourist behavior, limiting the short-term rental sector and the number of new hotels in the city. In 2023, the city council decided to shut down their city centre cruise terminal to sea cruise ships for overtourism and environmental reasons. The Amsterdam example shows that cities are ready to restrict specific types of tourism instead of tourism itself.

7.4 | Dubrovnik

The 2010s have seen Dubrovnik's historic old town become very crowded due to increased cruise numbers and its popularity as a location for filming. In response, the City's “Respect the City” programme to reduce the number of cruise ships in port at the same time and the number of cruise passengers each day was launched. The case also illustrates the capabilities for coordination between city authorities & cruise operators to help defuse peaks, although their effectiveness depends on enforcement and on the behaviour of other visitor groups.

7.5 | Maya Bay, Thailand

Maya Bay, on Phi Phi Leh island, made it to the international fame and later had thousands of visitors daily as a film area. In 2018, the bay was closed by the Thai authorities due to damage to both the coral reef and the marine environment. In January 2022, it was reopened, but now it is accompanied by restrictions on the number of visitors, visits by time and even a prohibition on swimming in the bay. It has been suggested that Maya Bay could be a good example of how temporary closure can lead to environmental recovery; and of the need for strong measures once a site re-opens.

7.6 | Bhutan

The contrasting case of Bhutan is that of a country that has made a conscious effort to reduce tourism in the country following its "high value, low volume" policy. A Sustainable Development charge is payable when visiting. The fee increased to 200 US dollars in 2022 but was lowered to 100 US dollars in 2023 to support the tourism sector's recovery. In the Bhutan case we see the potential of pricing to manage demand traveler numbers, but also the economic risks and challenges of pricing, in that the higher the price for visitors, the more their numbers might be diminished than anticipated.

7.7 | Lessons from the Cases

Together, these cases illustrate destinations' responses to overtourism, shaped by their particular set of pressures and the instruments that are accessible to them. Historic cities have focused on regulating cruise tourism and short-stay rentals and on access fees. Closures, visitor restrictions have been implemented in natural sites. In Bhutan, pricing has been their way to go. In each instance, their effectiveness has been challenged, and their long-term impact are still unclear. The cases highlight too, that overtourism is seldom due to any one thing. Combining of cruise tourism, day visit and the popularity of the historic centre, particularly the cities of Venice, Dubrovnik. Short-term rentals also played a dual role in Barcelona and Amsterdam, in the light of the phenomenon of housing scarcity and the boom of the city-break culture. At Maya Bay, film-induced fame combined with a fragile marine ecosystem. Instead, effective responses need to target the particular combination of pressures in each location, not some prescriptive solution which can be lifted from another remote and distant community.

8 | MANAGEMENT RESPONSES

Overtourism has become an issue on which destinations have taken a variety of steps. These can be categorized into regulatory methods, economic methods, spatial and temporal methods and participatory methods (Peeters et al., 2018; UNWTO, 2018).

8.1 | Regulatory Measures

Restrictions are put in place, such as limiting visitor numbers at certain locations, prohibiting new hotels and short-term rental properties and regulating access to cruise ships. These could help to relieve stress on specific sites, but could be hard to implement and can cause leakage of stress to neighbouring sites. They may also be subject to legal proceedings, especially if they result in a loss of freedom of movement or property rights.

8.2 | Economic Measures

Economic measures are taxes imposed on tourists, entrance fees and differential pricing. These can generate finances for local services and could also have the effect of decreasing demand during peak periods. They are effective to the extent of the charge and usage of the revenue. Where the local people perceive value in the resulting revenue tourism support can be expected to be higher, in line with social exchange theory. If the fees are too high, however, they can alienate low income guests and if the fees are too low, they will have little impact on behaviour.

8.3 | Spatial and Temporal Measures

Spatial and temporal measures attempt to level the distribution at different locations and at different times. Destinations highlight off-the-beaten-path neighbourhoods and attractions, offer travel incentives to do so outside of peak hours and offer timed entry at popular destinations. These strategies help to minimise crowding, but can also be associated with existing and potential impact of tourism beyond the direct affected area. Smoothing peaks might be of special importance in the temporal context used by Cheer et al (2019).

8.4 | Participatory Approaches

In participatory approaches residents are engaged in the decision-making process related to tourism. Trust can be fostered and plans will be co-designed with the locals and include resident advisory boards. From a literature review, it can be uniformly established that a meaningful level of resident involvement is important for long-term legitimacy; however, it is difficult to practically implement this (Koens et al., 2018). There also need to be trust in the institutions; residents with high trust in local institutions tend to be more supportive of tourism (Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011).

8.5 | Degrowth

A more radical response is to question the goal of growth itself. Advocates of degrowth argue that overtourism issues can't be solved by better management alone, because they are rooted in an economic model that depends on ceaseless growth. Higgins-Desbiolles et al. (2019) ask for a paradigm shift in tourism that puts the rights and welfare of local people ahead of the interests of the tourism industry. Some have questioned the viability of the degrowth approach in destinations with high levels of tourism dependency and its potential negative impact on the jobs and businesses. However, the degrowth debate has led some researchers and policy makers to question whether some destinations might be better off with fewer – rather than more – visitors.

8.6 | Combining Instruments

No one method is effective alone. To promote sustainable tourism through effective policies, UNWTO (2018) suggests a mixture of strategies adapted to the local context and enhanced understanding of visitor arrivals and resident perceptions. The solutions to overtourism clearly cut across all of the above and involve a reorientation of the metrics used to evaluate success in tourism. Instead of growth in the number of arrivals, addressing overtourism requires measuring success by the quality of life, benefit distribution and environmental sustainability of tourism (e.g. Milano, et al. 2019; Dodds and Butler, 2019).

9 | MEASURING OVERTOURISM

Detection and measurement of overtourism is a multi-layered process, as it is based on target values and perceptions from both the objective and the subjective perspectives. Indicators used include tourism intensity (such as visitors or overnight stays per resident) and tourism density (such as visitors per unit area). All these are measures which can be used to compare tourist destinations, but not to show how tourism is experienced. Providing residents are benefitting from visitors, a high tourism intensity place may not fall into 'overtourism'.

Resident surveys yield a range of perceptions information and can also help to detect when social limits are approaching (Gonzalez et al., 2018). Information gained by mobile phones, ticket attendance and social media activities can be used to gain detailed spatial and temporal information about the distribution of visitors. This data can also be useful for destinations to define hotspots and to: assess the impact of management actions. But there are privacy considerations, and concerns about who has access to the information, when using such data.

A combination of indicators, reflecting the levels of visitors, perceptions by the local community, environmental conditions, and economic benefits (Peeters et al., 2018) is proposed. To establish and sustain

these indicator systems, preparations must be made and efforts coordinated, a process that many destinations may not be able to manage and afford.

10 | DEBATES AND CRITIQUES

There are several debating issues in the overtourism literature. The first is about the fact that overtourism is a tourism issue or an urban issue. Many of the problems traditionally said to be related to tourism are also related to other processes, according to Koens et al. (2018), and tourism policy alone cannot fix them. This indicates that overtourism needs to be dealt with by general urban planning and Housing policy.

The second debate is about the role of the residents. There is a significant amount of literature discussing how residents are victims of tourism, but residents can also be hosts, workers, business owners and sometimes tourists as well. Categorising residents as one homogeneous group may mask significant and relevant variation in some of their interests and experiences (Sharpley, 2014).

The issue of literature geography is the third topic of discussion. The studies on overtourism have been conducted and published mainly in European cities, where the term gained its popularity. Overtourism is a phenomenon also observed in other geographical areas such as natural sites in Asia, island destinations and mountain areas, but where less studies have been addressed. Of course, the concepts of overtourism can vary from place to place – as seen with the case of Maya Bay in Thailand and Bhutan.

The fourth issue is whether it is fair: Restrictions on tourist numbers, including entrance fees and/or high daily charges, can help to mitigate crowding, but can also make travel less affordable to lower income visitors. This dichotomy can be seen in Bhutan's policy that requires a high fee, which benefits tourism by bringing in fewer, but more lucrative visitors, but will also limit who can visit. Likewise, caps and reservation systems may favour visitors who can plan far in advance. Critics argue that such measures risk turning popular places into exclusive destinations, while supporters argue that some form of rationing is almost inevitable when demand far exceeds what a place can absorb. The literature has not resolved this tension, and it is likely to grow as more destinations introduce charges and limits.

The fifth debate is about the terminology used, relating to the 'phenomenon'. Residents protests are referred to by some commentators as "tourismphobia", implying an irrational hostility towards visitors. This is a perspective which many researchers will oppose, as they will state that that typically opposition will focus on specific aspects of the situation — say housing pressure, crowding, etc. — and not the tourists themselves (Milano et al., 2019). Use of terms can influence problem analysis and the apparent solution(s) to the problem.

11 | COVID-19 AND AFTER

Many of overtourism's pressures have been temporarily overcome by the COVID-19 pandemic. Travel restrictions meant visiting numbers plummeted and in certain cities, residents experienced their city without mass tourism for the first time in years. Gössling et al. (2020b) believe that the Covid-19 crisis served as a chance to rethink the growth agenda of tourism, and to re-imagine the tourism sector in a more sustainable direction.

In reality, the recent boost in demand following the pandemic has led many destinations to once again fall back into earlier tourists' habits, and in some countries, tourist numbers are even above pre-pandemic levels. Several measures were introduced after the pandemic, including an access fee in Venice and a decision on tourist apartments in Barcelona, indicating that overtourism is definitely an issue. That pandemic also made the trend of economic diversification more crucial because of the fragility of destinations which rely much on tourism.

12 | STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES

12.1 | Residents

The people who are typically talked about when there is an issue of overtourism are the residents, and there is a significant amount of literature that focuses on residents' perceptions and reactions. Residents' attitudes are shaped by the perceived benefits and costs, by their level of trust in institutions and on their sense of place (as outlined above: Gössling et al., 2020a; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). The influx of visitors could be welcomed by residents who make a living from their local tourism, and their own local businesses, while those who do not benefit may experience the same conditions as an intrusion. The citizens are also active. They have established neighbourhood associations and social movements in some cities, who campaign for a restriction of tourism, housing protection, and a greater voice to be given in planning decisions (Milano et al., 2019).

12.2 | Businesses

There is mixed interest in the tourism businesses. Hotels, restaurants, tour operators and retailers rely on the income from their customers - and have been against measures that could dampen demand. Businesses also rely on the long term destination attractiveness. Businesses can see a long-term impact of damage to environmental reputation and hostility from residents due to overcrowding. Several businesses have thus supported works to control the flow of visitors, or to enhance the visitor experience. Short-term rental platforms have also sparked conflicts between the short-term rental owners and traditional hotel owners, with the latter preferring to have stricter rules in place about how short-term rentals are run.

12.3 | Destination Management Organisations

What do you do when destination management organisations are tasked with a tricky job? Traditionally they have been a means of ‘marketing the destination' and have been evaluated on the basis of numbers of arrivals. However, this role is thrown into confusion by overtourism and necessitates that organisations assume a role in oversight of visitor numbers, in involving the local community and safeguarding the destination's attributes. Within the nature of service provision, some services have started to move away from a marketing into a management-based approach, for instance by promoting off-peak travel, discouraging certain visitor behaviour and working with residents to identify problem areas (Dodds & Butler, 2019). Yet, many organisations do not have the legal authority and means to directly control tourism.

12.4 | Visitors

Visitors are often considered as the main cause of overtourism but they are victims of it as well. Quality of the visitor experiences is degraded due to crowding, lines in front of stores and increasing prices. Visitors often don't realize the pressures associated with their visits either, perhaps if they only stay a couple hours and focus on the few popular sights that are available. This is based on the assumption that as long as a visitor is aware of the consequences of his or her actions, he or she will respond to the communication with a positive action for change in behaviour – respecting residential areas, avoiding peak times etc. The results of such campaigns are not guaranteed, and will be a subject of further research.

12.5 | Governments

Tourism is the object of national and local government planning and regulation, as well as taxation and investment. Overtourism leads one to question the responsibility for managing tourism and the relationships between tourism and policy in other areas, like housing, transport and environmental protection. Mihalic (2020) points out that politics is at the heart of overtourism, because decisions about growth and its limits weigh the interests of many players. Coordinated action across policy and sector and across jurisdictions is thus needed for effective responses.

13 | IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

From the literature several implications arise that have practical applications. First, there is a need to improve the availability of information on where and when visitors are arriving at the destination. However, data that only has an annual total is not sufficiently detailed to show hot spots when and where. Monitoring systems, such as visitor numbers, mobile data (Peeters et al., 2018) and resident surveys can be installed and combined with visitor counts to support destinations in identifying hotspots and then targeting interventions more effectively.

Second, destinations should look at multiple instruments as opposed to one only. Each of the regulatory limits, pricing, dispersal and communication has advantages and disadvantages and works best when combined. All of the solutions mentioned in the preceding cases relate to a particular pressure amongst others, but not to overtourism at large.

Thirdly, it is important to engage residents in tourism planning from early in the planning process. Incorporating participation can help gain local knowledge about the issues, strengthen political, social and psychological acceptance, and enhance the legitimacy of decisions made by the management (Koens et al., 2018; Nunkoo & Ramkissoon, 2011). It also plays a role in achieving greater social equity in the benefits accrued from tourism, as the social exchange theory would argue is key to continued support.

Fourth, the policy of tourism should be linked with other policies, namely housing and transport and environmental management. Tourism policy is not the only solution to many of the issues faced by overtourism, including increased rents. This requires coordination between departments and/or levels of government.

Fifth, the destination should re-think the fundamentals of success. Growth-based metrics encourage strategies that can create additional overtourism. Indicators other than money, such as how well residents are doing, benefit distribution, satisfaction of visitors and the environment could be a more solid foundation for decision-making (Dodds & Butler, 2019; UNWTO, 2018).

14 | DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

Based on the reviewed literature there are proposed some ways into the further investigation. Although most research conducted on the concept of overtourism have explored European urban areas, further research is required in other parts of the world such as Asia, Africa, Latin America and small island states. This type of work could also help to identify the extent to which the ideas that have emerged in the European context can be used in other parts of the world or must be refined.

In addition, there is also a need for additional longitudinal studies. Many studies offer only a snapshot, but overtourism evolves over years and can change rapidly due to events such as the pandemic. Longitudinal studies would enable monitoring of resident attitudes, visitor numbers and management activities over time.

Further research is needed on the effectiveness of management measures. A large number of measures have only been implemented more recently and few studies exist on their long-term impacts. Comparisons of destinations with and without specific interventions and evaluations of the outcomes before and after an intervention is put into place would give policymakers evidence they could rely on.

Lastly, research could take advantage of new sources of data, like those of mobile phones or social media content, to learn more about visitor behaviour on a topographical and temporal level. Ethical considerations of the use of these data such as privacy and consent should also be targeted in the research.

15 | CONCLUSION

Overtourism is one of the current hot topics in tourism. This review has demonstrated that whilst the term 'overtourism' is relatively new, it draws on old ideas including ‘carrying capacity', ‘the tourism area life cycle' and ‘resident irritation'. Social exchange theory is useful to assimilate the residents' dissatisfaction regarding tourism if they are facing higher costs and lower benefits, while sustainability and socio-psychological perspectives help explain why overtourism manifests differently in different places.

Overtourism factors are low-cost airfares, P2P, cruise travel, social media and growth marketing. They have economic, social and environmental impacts and are not borne equally. Regulatory, economic, spatial and temporal measures, as well as participatory ones and attempts at ‘degrowth’ have been taken by destinations. Data and experiences indicate that it is more effective to take a holistic approach, that combines in some cases various measures and is supplemented by participation from local residents than to use the individual measure alone.

In general, overtourism is less a problem of absolute visitor numbers than of distribution and governance. It will take a balancing act for destinations to take care of it by redefining success in a way that includes more

than growth, and by balancing the interests of visitors with the interests of the resident and/or business community.

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