‘Overtourism’? Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions

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‘Overtourism’?

The issue

- 544,000 Google entries + headlines worldwide
- 54% population lives in cities (2015)
- 1.8 billion international tourists by 2030
- + mobility, middle class, affordable transport and accommodation
- 1/10 jobs
- Acceptable change
‘Overtourism’?

Rebuffing myths

1. Tourism congestion is not only about the number of visitors but about the capacity to manage them.

2. Tourism congestion is commonly a localised rather than a citywide issue.

3. Tourism congestion is not a tourism-only problem.

4. Technological or smart solutions alone are important but will not solve the issue of tourism congestion.
‘Overtourism’?

Key conclusions

• Urban tourism makes an important contribution to the socio-economic development of cities and should contribute to create better cities for all.

• ‘Overtourism’ = new buzzword for tourism congestion management and carrying capacity;

• To monitor & manage congestion, carrying capacity and ‘the limits of acceptable change’ consider quantitative & qualitative indicators;
‘Overtourism’?

Key conclusions

• Urban tourism needs to be part of the wider urban agenda

• Tourism congestion needs to be addressed through cooperation: tourism & non-tourism administrations + private sector + communities + tourists

• Measures cannot focus only on tourist numbers & behaviour – they should also focus on local stakeholders.

• Understanding residents’ attitude towards tourism & engaging communities is central.
Residents’ perspectives

8 cities – online questionnaire - 3153 respondents

Residents’
• Direct perceptions (*living environment*)
• Indirect perceptions (*quality of life*)
• Stakeholder perceptions
## Most positive and negative perceptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive (+)</th>
<th>Negative (-)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>greater international touch</td>
<td>increase of price level/affordability of rental houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more events</td>
<td>increase of price level/affordability of private houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more positive image</td>
<td>increase of price level/affordability of taxis</td>
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<tr>
<td>protection of historical parts of the city</td>
<td>increase of price level/affordability of shops</td>
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<tr>
<td>restoration of traditional architecture</td>
<td>increase of price level/affordability of restaurants and cafés</td>
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<tr>
<td>more seasonal jobs in tourism</td>
<td>increase of price level/affordability of public transportation</td>
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<tr>
<td>more cultural supply (museums, cultural activities, etc.)</td>
<td>increase of price level/affordability of leisure facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>greater numbers of tourist accommodations</td>
<td>less housing for residents</td>
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<tr>
<td>more opportunities to share knowledge/culture with visitors</td>
<td>overcrowding of public transportation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more leisure facilities</td>
<td>pollution, littering, noise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increased liveliness</td>
<td>overcrowding.obstruction of streets/sidewalks</td>
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All are direct perceptions: Spatial  Economic  Social
Attitude towards further tourism growth

- 30%: I feel that there should be no limitations to the growth of visitor numbers
- 24-26%: I feel that there is still room for visitor numbers to grow further
- 30%: I feel that there is still room for visitor numbers to grow further, but not in the peak season
- 0%: I feel that there is still room for visitor numbers to grow further, but not in holiday flats
- 24%: I feel that there is still room for visitor numbers to grow further, but not in the peak season
- 0%: I feel that there should be no limitations to the growth of visitor numbers
- 0%: I feel all tourism development should be stopped
- 0%: I feel all tourism promotion and marketing should be stopped
- 0%: I feel the growth rate of visitor numbers should be slowed down
- 0%: In my own neighbourhood
- 0%: In the city

Other, please specify
Visitor management strategies

1. Promote the dispersal of visitors within the city and beyond
2. Promote time-based dispersal of visitors
3. Stimulate new visitor itineraries and attractions
4. Review and adapt regulation
5. Enhance visitors’ segmentation
6. Ensure local communities benefit from tourism
7. Create city experiences that benefit both residents and visitors
8. Improve city infrastructure and facilities
9. Communicate with and engage local stakeholders
10. Communicate with and engage visitors
11. Set monitoring and response measures
Attitude towards visitor mngt strategies

Top 5

- Improve the infrastructure and facilities (e.g. build more roads, parking) in the city
- Communicate with and involve local residents and local businesses in tourism planning
- Communicate better with visitors on how to behave in the city
- Distribute visitors better over the year
- Create city experiences where residents and visitors can meet and integrate
Attitude towards visitor mngt strategies

Bottom 5

Forbid the offering of AirBnB in certain parts of the city

Create stricter rules and controls regarding the opening hours of gastronomy

Attract only visitors from other target groups /with other lifestyles

Prevent visitors from going to certain areas (zoning), by means of transport regulations or activities

Demotivate visitors to go to certain areas (zoning) by means of higher tariffs or tourist taxes
Policy Recommendations

1. Align urban tourism with city’s agenda, UN New Urban Agenda & SDGs
2. Set a strategic long-term plan for sustainable urban tourism
3. Define acceptable levels of impact of tourism through a participatory process with all stakeholders.
4. Set governance models with administrations at all levels, private sector and local communities.
5. Foster communication and collaboration mechanisms among all stakeholders.
6. Enhance the integration of local communities in the tourism value chain
Policy Recommendations

7. Regularly monitor the perception of local communities towards tourism and promote the sector among residents
8. Promote monitoring and evidence-based decisions and planning
9. Invest in technology, innovation and partnerships;
10. Promote innovative products & experiences
11. Plan ahead - strategic foresight and scenario planning.
12. Consider tourists as temporary residents = build a city for all.
Thank you!

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