

The phenomena of overtourism: a review

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Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to examine the emergence of overtourism, outline the issues and contributing factors, as it relates to cities, and to suggest possible mitigation measures that might be taken by policy makers.*

Design/methodology/approach – *This paper draws from a review of literature looking at longitudinal issues of tourism development overtime and what has contributed to the phenomena of overtourism. A discussion of implications is provided from this review.*

Findings – *As tourism is an industry which has historically been poorly managed, greater political will and actual acknowledgement of the problem, as well as action by all levels of government are the necessary first steps to address overtourism.*

Practical implications – *This paper outlines key elements that contribute to overtourism and provides global examples which may help practitioners identify key critical issues in their own destinations and identify appropriate actions.*

Social implications – *This paper identifies issues raised by local resident populations and possible responses.*

Originality/value – *This paper provides a critical overview of overtourism issues, as it relates to cities and discusses potential mitigation and reduction efforts, thereby providing an explanation of why overtourism has become so prevalent.*

Keywords Sustainability, Mitigation, Visitation, Cities, Overtourism

Paper type General review

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Introduction

Overtourism is a new term for an old problem, namely, excessive numbers of tourists at a specific destination that can result in negative impacts of all types on the community involved. While the term is relatively recent, many of the problems involved have a long history, particularly in well-visited urban centres. The art critic, John Ruskin, complained of the presence and impacts of tourists in Venice in the mid-nineteenth century and the transformative effect of heavy visitation on destinations has been noted for well over a century (Butler, 2006). In more recent times, the oft-cited paper by Doxey (1975) is one of the first academic papers which specifically noted negative resident reaction to what were deemed excessive numbers of visitors in the vicinity of Niagara Falls. Other authors (Christaller, 1963; Krippendorf, 1987; Butler, 1980; Boissevain, 1996) have described the changes brought about in tourist destinations by increasing numbers of visitors. These changes have included negative reactions by residents, undesired physical change and damage to resources (natural and cultural) and general overcrowding. In many cases, these problems are exacerbated by the seasonal nature of much tourism, resulting and, as Milano *et al.* note, in:

[...] the excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents suffer the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourism peaks, which have enforced permanent changes to their lifestyles, access to amenities and general well-being.

Thus, the phenomenon of overtourism has existed for a long time in specific tourist destinations. Many of these destinations are urban centres, as major cities offer a wide range of attractions and facilities, often including iconic and unique features such as the Eiffel Tower in Paris, the Temple of the Emerald Buddha in Bangkok and Times Square in New York. The presence of such specific attractions often makes it difficult to persuade potential tourists to visit other locations and thus forego seeing what are world-famous sites and sights.

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Origins and causes of overtourism

Overtourism has resulted from a combination of a number of factors, which together have created a “perfect storm” of visitors to specific sites. Although many forces have existed for years, many other influences have increased the issue to a tipping point and this phenomenon has spread to many more destinations apart from solely cities. As destinations have grown in visibility over time, they have always been seen as attractive to potential visitors and the tourism industry has responded by making it feasible for tourists to travel to such places. Negative reactions to tourists are long established. For example, tours organised by Thomas Cook in the nineteenth century were criticised for bringing tourists to Egypt and to other less remote places (Butler, 2006). In the modern era, there are a number of clearly identifiable factors that have combined to increase tourist numbers to current levels of over a billion travellers a year (UNWTO, 2018). In the first case, there is an ever-growing world population, which would inevitably give rise to an increased number of tourists, but this situation is exacerbated by the fact that a number of factors are making it easier for more people to become tourists than ever before. In a city context, the World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC, 2018) claim that, of the 1.4bn overseas trips in 2018, 45 per cent (630m) were city breaks. Of the places where visitors are rising the fastest, over 80 per cent of them will be in the Middle East and Asia (Istanbul, Delhi, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, Cairo, Jakarta, Mumbai, Bogota, Bangkok, Beijing, Shanghai and Moscow). Bangkok, as an example, became the most visited city in the world in 2018, attracting 22.5m visitors – more than the population of many countries (Van *et al.*, 2018). This growth is partially due to increased cheap air fares and Thailand being one of the first countries to receive Approved Destination Status for Chinese visitors.

Travel is also decreasing in relative, and in some cases, absolute cost, allowing more people to travel, both domestically and internationally, regardless of the environmental impact of travel and the implications for climate change. More tourists can now travel more widely, to a greater number of destinations and more frequently. Allied to this have been the technological advances, both in travel itself and in communications, allowing travel to be more easily arranged and undertaken with greater flexibility and freedom. This has allowed potential users to have a short-term focus in both arranging and undertaking travel, thus travelling at short notice to a wide range of destinations. In turn, new markets have emerged, of which the largest is that of China, but in many countries, the creation and expansion of the “middle class” has seen the emergence of new groups of people with the ability and potential to travel. This middle class is forecasted to increase by 160m over the next five years (Brookings Institute, 2017) and for China alone, the number of passport numbers is expected to double from 120m in 2017 to 240m by 2020 (Bloomberg, 2018 in Han and Cheer, 2018).

The great dissemination of information through social media (Instagram now has more than 1bn users) and the World Wide Web has allowed many people to become aware of, and informed about the many tourist attractions and how to reach them. This has increasing potential and fulfilled demand, often free of the limitations of having to use intermediaries such as travel agents and tourist boards. Low-cost airlines (Lawton, 2017) and more competition amongst modes of travel, including high-speed trains, have reduced travel time to destinations, making it possible for short-period trips to be made to an ever-increasing range of destinations, particularly urban centres. For example, according to Dodds and Butler (2019), low-cost carriers have driven growth through a 175 per cent increase in direct routes globally. Technological shifts are also prevalent in consumption of the tourist experience. These factors have created the potential for almost any major city to be the site for weekend visits, weddings and other related social events, some of which have little to do with traditional and conventional tourism but which see large numbers of travellers to specific attractions.

On the supply side, many destinations find themselves relatively powerless to stem such inflows of visitors, even if they wished to do so. Control over air travel often rests with air companies, national governments and privately owned airports. A similar situation exists for many seaports, where cruise shipping is controlled by the cruise companies and sea port owners. Even where some control over visitor numbers may be feasible, many cities are faced with the situation that attitudes towards visitor numbers are varied with many of the enterprises engaged in tourism concerned with promotion and achieving additional numbers of visitors. This is contrary to resident groups and others opposed to increased or even existing tourist numbers yet they may be relatively powerless and ineffective in opposing continued promotion of tourism or in introducing mitigation measures.

For example, Barcelona has faced many of these issues and has attempted some good mitigation attempts, yet arrivals are still increasing (Goodwin, 2019). Thus, in general, factors enabling the continued increase in tourist numbers to cities and elsewhere are far more powerful than forces wishing to limit or reduce visitation to affected communities.

In addition, a very significant set of factors relate to policy and planning approaches adopted by those agencies responsible for tourism development in destinations and at larger scales. The overwhelming support, even if sometimes understated, for continued growth by such agencies, has allowed the expansion of tourism and subsequent overdevelopment and excessive visitation of destinations, particularly cities (Pinke-Sziva *et al.*, 2019; Vianello, 2017; Smith *et al.*, 2017). The private sector has traditionally been in favour of continuous growth, and only in recent years have any significant numbers of operators adopted a more sustainable approach. It is, therefore, the absence of willingness to control and manage growth in tourism by the public sector, at all scales from municipal to national, which has allowed the generally unlimited expansion of tourism throughout the world. Weber *et al.* (2017, p. 199) note that “the way tourism is managed has a direct impact on carrying capacity and the resilience to overtourism”. That the current situation exists, despite global adoption of the principals of sustainable development and widespread political support for the concept of sustainable tourism, even by pro-growth bodies such as UNWTO (UNWTO, 2018), reveals how shallow the support for the concept is in practice and implementation. Therefore, overtourism has been allowed to occur in an increasing number of locations because of unwillingness by relevant authorities to accept the fact that there can be a situation in which tourist numbers are excessive and that there is a responsibility to correct such a situation. This was clearly outlined in a recent report which outlined that the “hidden” costs of housing, energy, water and waste from tourism are often eight to ten times higher than those from local consumption (Gössling and Peeters, 2015 in Epler Wood *et al.*, 2019).

Overtourism as a recent phenomenon

While, as noted above, the problem of too many tourists in any specific location has been acknowledged for many decades, the problem has only attained widespread recognition in recent years. Understandably, to some decision makers perhaps, residents of tourist destinations, particularly cities, complaining about there being too many tourists in their community would seem to be illogical, when many such destinations have supported destination marketing organisations (DMOs) promoting their amenities in order to attract tourists for many years. DMOs and similar organisations, even if now being seen by some as outmoded (Dodds, 2010; Dredge, 2016), have long been charged with enticing ever-increasing numbers of tourists to destinations and generally have been encouraged to promote rather than manage tourism in their communities. To complain that they have been too successful may seem unfair, but also suggests, possibly incorrectly, that DMOs are responsible for excessive numbers, when, in fact, the considerable number of exogenous forces noted above has almost certainly exerted more influence over tourist numbers than those organisations. The relatively sudden appearance of large numbers of tourists in small and medium sized urban centres such as Munich, Germany (Namberger *et al.*, 2019), Budapest (Pinke-Sziva *et al.*, 2019) or Prague, Czech Republic (Miroslav, 2019) almost certainly owes more to the promotional efforts of low-cost airlines and compliant airport owners in those towns and cities than promotion by local agencies.

Allied to all of these factors is the influence of the World Wide Web and the various forms of social media (Gretzel, 2019) which have served to draw attention to specific locations, which in turn has led to an apparently insatiable desire amongst social media participants to visit and be seen in such places. Hong Kong's Quarry Bay neighbourhood, for example, has been turned into a mass attraction and even warning signs against taking photos or disturbing residents has had little effect (Agence France-Presse, 2019). This growth has also been supported by the entertainment industry which has publicised the locations of films (Beeton, 2016) and television programmes, including music videos, locations to which large numbers of fans and media-conscious individuals also want to visit. Not all of such setting are in cities, places like the Isle of Skye in western Scotland, Maya Bay's *The Beach* in Thailand (Hess, 2019) and locations in Northern Ireland used in the making of *Game of Thrones*, or used in the *Harry Potter* films also have seen rapid increases in numbers of visitors. Small urban centres such as Culross in Fife have been settings for the *Outlander* television

series, and Dubrovnik has seen its number of visitors increase beyond recognition after “starring” in *Game of Thrones*. Media influence, therefore, has been able to not only create massive publicity for locations with a resulting high awareness factor but also translate that visibility into visitation on a large scale, in some cases to places ill-prepared and undesiring to cater for such demand. This combination of traditional promotion efforts, at various levels from local to national and international, and the unpredictable, or at least unanticipated, impacts from media attention have allowed tourist numbers to increase rapidly and massively in specific locations with the resulting negative effects, now portrayed as overtourism.

Clearly, not all locations affected are unhappy with such a situation. In some cities, agencies, enterprise owners and some residents have been delighted to see large numbers of tourists, particularly so in those urban destinations which may have been facing a decline in numbers of traditional visitors. Such a situation is again not new. It has long been recognised that in any location, there will be winners and losers from tourism development and that some residents will be supportive of increased tourism and some opposed (Butler, 1975; Young, 1973). The traditional arguments over economic benefits vs social and environmental costs have long been debated in the tourism (and other) literature (Mathieson and Wall, 1982) and in most cases the economic arguments have won out. In reality, life is not as simple as the example of Doxey's (1975) Irridex, and resident attitudes do not necessarily change consistently and uni-directionally with increasing tourist numbers (Brougham and Butler, 1981; Butler, 1975), but sudden large increases in tourist numbers are very likely to produce negative reactions, particularly if they result in perceived increased disturbance and loss of quality of life for residents.

All of the above does not necessarily explain the relatively sudden occurrence of overtourism and its popularity in many forms of media. It is a phenomenon particularly noted in urban centres: Venice, Barcelona, Rome, Dubrovnik and Prague are all places in which headlines have been recorded protesting at tourist numbers (Dodds and Butler, 2019). What such places have in common, with many other cities, is a relatively high proportion of educated and articulate residents many of whom are not involved or who do not benefit, at least directly, from tourism and are likely to be vocal in opposition to excessive numbers of visitors. To some, if not many of them, tourism and tourists are at best an economic necessity, and in some cases, a very real inconvenience and nuisance, competing for road and parking space, for service in shops and offices, for accommodation (for rent for holidays and purchase for second homes) and contributing litter, congestion and noise to the urban landscape. Such a situation in cities has been compounded by the growth of web-based accommodation platforms such as AirBnB, which it is argued, are not only in competition for residential units with local residents, but also allowing and tacitly encouraging illegal and unlicensed rental of accommodation, sometimes with anti-social results (Gutiérrez *et al.*, 2017). Protests in cities such as Edinburgh, Palma and Paris have resulted in local government action or threat of action to control and limit such accommodation enterprises in response to such protests.

It is, perhaps, within a certain size range that these situations arise. There are far more tourists in London, New York or Mexico City than in any of those centres listed above, yet complaints of overtourism have not appeared widely to date in major metropolitan centres. This may be because in the very large cities, the majority of tourists are focussed in relatively small parts of these large metropolises, such as a small area of central London or Broadway in New York, and focus their activities on a limited number of sites (sights), long accepted as tourist magnets and where local residents from Her Majesty the Queen and Donald Trump simply avoid or ignore the sightseers. Many parts of these large cities are rarely visited by tourists, and if they do experience tourism, it is probably of a niche form, such as visitors interested in cultural or historic features or sites with very limited appeal. In smaller cities and towns, however, it is often much harder to escape and avoid both the physical presence of tourism or the developments associated with tourism such as hotels, eating, drinking and entertainment operations, and transportation links. Thus, residents of Prague (Miroslav, 2019) have to use the Charles V Bridge along with tourists and experience congestion and delays going about their daily business. In Edinburgh, a place of frustration for its residents is transport in the centres of the Old and New Towns even out of the tourist season. This situation is exacerbated in the summer by increased tourists, and during the Edinburgh Festival, parts of the city are next to impossible to access for normal traditional business. What may be small numbers of tourists compared to local populations, particularly in the major urban centres, the effects of these

incomers can be disproportionately large, particularly where such numbers of visitors have grown rapidly, often without corresponding improvement in capacity in services and facilities. Allied with different patterns of behaviour, different social mores, different temporal patterns of social interaction and sometimes unacceptable (to residents) expectations of permissible actions (Weber *et al.*, 2019), it is easy to see how what might be viewed as xenophobic attitudes towards tourists can develop. The appearance of negative graffiti, such as “tourists go home”, or “why is it called tourist season if we are not allowed to shoot them?” indicates increasing dissatisfaction with the apparent mismanagement or non-management of tourists in a growing number of cities. The rise of overtourism sentiment and expression can be seen as a call for action or reaction to the disturbance felt by residents in cities in particular, but despite some years of action in some cities, of which Barcelona is a good example (Goodwin, 2019), the problem still remains and is even increasing.

Mitigation, reduction and prevention

In the future, unless there are radical changes in many of those factors listed above as being responsible for the appearance and growth of overtourism, the situation will become even more problematical. In reality, it is likely that many of these factors will grow in scale and influence rather than diminish unless appropriate actions are taken. The UNWTO (2019) figures show that overall tourism arrivals increased in 2018 compared to 2017, and despite climate change protests in several countries, little action has been taken to curtail travel, particularly flying, and social media continue to exert pressure to visit “bucket list” destinations. A recent coverage of crowds of people waiting to reach the summit of Mount Everest (Brown, 2019) demonstrates that overtourism is not confined to urban centres but is now found throughout the world, and thus calls to limit tourist numbers are becoming ever more common (Koens *et al.*, 2018; Oklevik *et al.*, 2019; Milano *et al.*, 2019). To achieve a reduction in numbers of visitors and still maintain a desirable level of tourism is a complex problem and has rarely been managed. Indeed, Hall (2019, p. 13) rightly pointed out how problematic the notion that tourism can be sustainable solely by exerting greater effort and demanding greater efficiency. To curtail tourist numbers is relatively simple. For example, limiting means of access, e.g. flights, would be likely to be successful, but, in reality, is problematic because of other factors involved. Air travel between countries is subject to international agreements and treaties and arbitrarily reducing services by an urban government such as a city council is unlikely to be legal or acceptable to higher levels of government, or effective. Many airports are privately owned and managed and the governments of these cities cannot reduce the frequency of flights without a national level action at the very least. Similarly, ports are often self-governing and privately owned, so difficulties would be encountered with attempts to limit cruise ship dockings, although such visits are not normally subject to international or national agreements. Some authorities (e.g. Orkney Island Council, Dubrovnik, Amsterdam) have imposed limits on numbers of ships and/or numbers of passengers landed over a period of time, or maximum numbers of ships allowed to dock at any one time. In theory, island cities are better placed to impose such limits, although it has taken Venice many years to exert some level of control over the routing of cruise ships around the city and forcing docking to the periphery of the island. This has not had much noticeable improvement, as illustrated by the collision of a cruise liner with a smaller tourist vessel moored in Venice in May 2019. Cities which receive large numbers of tourists by land are much more vulnerable to unlimited numbers, unless there is a complete ban on non-local vehicles from entering all or part of a city. Some small towns have managed to impose such limits; Medina on Malta is one example and several towns in the Alps are all or partly car-free (Verbeek *et al.*, 2011), while others, such as Lucerne (Weber *et al.*, 2019), are becoming crowded with coaches in the central part of the city. Thus, limits or constraints on numbers accessing cities and other destinations are difficult to effectively impose and manage unless all forms of transportation fall under the control of the respective city authorities. Refusing to approve expansion of capacity of airports and ports, of railways and of roads and parking is more practical but would also have potential negative effects on the operation of the city in other respects and on travel by residents of those communities.

Herein lies a major problem for all cities, namely, that the facilities and services used by tourists are often the same services and facilities needed by local residents and businesses, and support for restricting or reducing their capacity is likely to be met with equally strong opposition from elements in the city with different viewpoints. It is next to impossible to separate locals from

visitors in terms of their use of such infrastructure. Although discriminatory pricing, through different rates for locals by means of identity and loyalty cards for example, is feasible, it is not always without opposition and can elicit negative reactions from the tourism industry and from tourists themselves. In the cases of isolated regions or small islands, priority can be given to local residents needing access for maintenance of everyday activities such as education, business and medical matters, but such a situation is much less manageable in a large city with great numbers of people and multiple linkages and journeys involved. Therefore, if cities are unable to control the means of access by visitors, then the only mitigation measures are either those related to controlling and managing tourists who do arrive, or deterring tourists from wanting to visit in the first place. The latter point is controversial because of the possibility of reducing tourist numbers below an economic and desired level (even assuming such a level could be identified and agreed to), as tourists would begin to feel unwelcome in specific locations and perhaps desert those locations en masse. Most destinations worry more about permanently damaging their reputation and losing tourists than suffering from too much success (which has traditionally been measured in terms of increasing numbers of visitors). DMOs, found in most urban tourist destinations, are normally seen and function as promotion agencies rather than management ones as noted above, and their focus has traditionally been on attracting not deterring visitors, and this is unlikely to change without very strong guidance and control from city authorities.

Amsterdam has recently announced that “demotion” of tourism is to become part of city policy; the intent is not to make Amsterdam unattractive to tourists but not to promote it to attract greater numbers. Success will depend heavily upon support from other agencies involved with tourism and this is far from guaranteed. Individual accommodation enterprises, ranging from international hotel chains to individual AirBnB operators, are unlikely to cease advertising, and thus promoting, Amsterdam. Enforcing appropriate and often existing controls over licensed and unlicensed accommodation providers is receiving much greater attention, as witnessed by actions in Palma (Mallorca), Edinburgh, Barcelona and Venice. Demotion is, theoretically, a much more desirable action as it does not deter those potential tourists with a real interest in visiting a specific city but does deter the opportunistic or purely casual visitor attracted by promotional information only. It has the advantage of not appearing anti-tourist and also of being an appropriate response to citizen protests about tourist numbers. Such actions will not curtail tourist numbers alone however, as media attention and surrogate promotion through videos, blogs and appearance in entertainment outlets (Beeton, 2005), such as film, television and books, for example, will always draw attention of potential visitors to specific locations. Large cities are also newsworthy because of non-tourist events, such as political actions, celebrity visitation, and settings for meetings and conferences, and thus will be highly visible for many reasons.

In all cases, it is the existence of differing views about tourism, its significance, importance and value to a city, and the degree to which disbenefits outweigh benefits which cause the major difficulty in resolving overtourism issues. Those residents not involved in tourism, that is, not employed in or engaged commercially in tourism, often see or receive little direct benefit from tourism and the presence of tourists. They do often experience the congestion, inconvenience, disturbance and changes brought about by increasing numbers of tourists and greater tourism-related developments. To them, a reduction in tourist numbers, if not a total absence of tourists, would appear to be the only way to restore the quality and way of life before large-scale tourism was developed. On the flipside, the presence of a viable and large-scale tourism industry provides not only employment and income in many ways (e.g. direct expenditure, wages, taxes), but also pressure often resulting in enlarged and improved services and facilities, including transport infrastructure and new commercial ventures. Such contradictions have been a part of tourism from earliest times and as a general rule, the economic arguments have won out over social and environmental concerns, as has been the case throughout all forms of economic development.

Specific suggestions for dealing with overtourism have mostly been related to easing the problem in specific cities or specific sites within cities, rather than tackling directly the problem of too many people and too many tourists. Therefore, persuading tourists to visit at less crowded times and to visit less crowded sites or cities have been the most common suggestions. These proposed actions are essentially worthless in the long term or at the global or even national scale. Other efforts at tackling seasonality suggest that having people come at less crowded times does not

reduce numbers at the peak periods but, in fact, increases overall demand and visitation (Butler, 2001). Suggesting, for example, that visitors to Paris do not go to see the Eiffel Tower, in Rome they should avoid the Trevi Fountain, and in London visitors should ignore Buckingham Palace and the Houses of Parliament, or that elsewhere, e.g. Sydney (Opera House), Pisa (Leaning Tower), Cairo (Pyramids), the iconic sites and attractions (Weidenfeld *et al.*, 2015) should not be visited is unrealistic as such attractions are too well known to be forgotten or ignored.

In the media attention given recently to overtourism and related protests, it must be remembered and admitted that not all residents of popular cities are anti-tourism. To support its viewpoint of continued tourism expansion, UNWTO (2019) recently released the results of a survey of some 12,000 respondents from 15 countries showing that “local residents remain largely positive to Urban Tourism”. Such a result is not surprising for the reasons noted above, nor too is the finding that those who are international tourists themselves have a higher perception of the positive impact of tourism than those who do not travel regularly. Potential measures to address growing tourism flows in cities were cited by respondents as “improving infrastructures and facilities” and “creating experiences and attractions that benefit residents as well as visitors”. Worthwhile as such actions may be, they would do little or nothing to solve the problems caused by what are generally accepted as excessive visitor numbers, at least in specific parts of many cities, and serve mainly to justify the continued growth of urban tourism.

Conclusion

Overtourism is complex (Koens *et al.*, 2018). One has to conclude that as long as there is a lack of agreement over the nature of the problem (widely seen as too many tourists) and also disagreement over determining suitable and acceptable levels of visitation, the situation will not improve. At national and often regional levels and even at the municipal level, there is still massive promotion of countries, regions and cities, while economic growth globally allows the potential number of tourists to increase, and technological progress allows more people to travel widely. Barring economic recessions and depressions, economic growth is not likely to stop, tourist markets will continue to grow and technology is likely to continue to make travel easier and cheaper. Actions to reduce climate change may eventually reduce the overall level of flying and travel in general but that would primarily affect international travel in most places, whereas domestic tourism is several times larger than international tourism, so much of the problem of numbers would remain. Reducing or not increasing numbers is key to mitigating overtourism. Un-promotion or de-promotion is the least harmful (in economic terms) of the possible actions to reduce overtourism and its negative impacts as it removes some of the vicarious and somewhat aimless visitation to some locations but does not tell tourists they are unwelcome. Such action needs to be supported by increased management (Pinke-Sziva *et al.*, 2019; Du Cros and McKercher, 2015; Colomb and Novy, 2017; Sommer and Helbrecht, 2017), especially of tourists within cities pre-booking for most or all major attractions and accommodation should be required, which would allow maximum numbers to be set and timing of visitation adjusted to avoid congestion. Such arrangements already exist in cities for major events such as sport competitions, where tickets may be tied to pre-booked packages, and could be linked to visas and travel permits where these already exist. The idea that unlimited and unrestricted travel should be a right and thus available to all who can pay is neither longer acceptable nor compatible with environmental problems, changing attitudes to energy use, increasing concerns over quality of life and the preservation of cultural heritage. Widespread and uncontrolled conversion of residential properties to short-term holiday lets is becoming increasingly undesirable and unwanted, placing appropriate and fair restrictions on such developments is not anti-tourist but pro-resident, and accepts and protects the need for residents of cities to have some security and economic protection for their right to live and work in their own cities. Without such measures, far more anti-tourism and anti-tourist protests, signs and actions are likely to become the norm. As Doxey (1975) noted decades ago, “the natives are getting restless”. It behoves those involved in tourism, in economic development, in transportation, and in government at all levels to admit the existence of the problem of overtourism and to take actions to deal with the problem without permanently damaging tourism, or in the words of the old fable, not destroying “the goose that lays the golden egg”. For the issues of overtourism to be mitigated, greater political will and actual acknowledgement of the problem are the necessary first steps.

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