

Overtourism – occurrences and effects

Maria Catrinel Drăgan¹, Gabriel Camară^{1,*} 

¹ Department of Geography, Faculty of Geography and Geology, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași. Bd. Carol I, 20A, 700506, Iași, Romania

* Correspondence: gabriel_camara@yahoo.fr

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Abstract: A phenomenon that has been felt for a long time, but which has recently become widely known, captured the attention of the science and of the media with the new term “overtourism”, leading current studies to a timely conceptualization. The present study tends to conceptualizes the overtourism phenomenon particularly through the analysis of existing literature, both academic and from media, with particular attention to its multidisciplinary. The findings suggest that the manifestation of overtourism is determined by excessive promotion of same branded destinations, the low cost of transport, the cruises with pre-arranged and fixed stops, and the short-term rental accommodation system. The overtourism affects the quality of life of local communities, it contributes significantly to the alteration of the cultural heritage and to the loss of the destination’s identity, it affects also the natural environment by waste and by the resources taken, and finally it can contribute to the decline of famous tourist destinations.

1. Introduction

Having the greatest global contribution from an economic point of view, tourism is a continuously developing industry (UNWTO, 2021a). The hotel industry and destinations attract more and more tourists, with the idea of promoting the destination and increasing income. Tourists also contribute to this movement, continuing to choose destinations that are renewed.

“Overtourism is, among other things, the acceleration and growth of tourism supply and demand, the use of tourism destinations’ natural ecological goods, the destruction of their cultural attractions, and negative impacts on their social and economic environments” (Mihalic, 2020). Overtourism in fact highlights the existence of a phenomenon that took root in the world a long time ago, but which has captured consciousness in recent years. The key strategy that tends to dominate the tourism sector can be summed up as “more”; tourist destinations are guided by the assumption of high income by attracting more visitors.

The tourism sector seems to fit into the “global success-local failure” dichotomy of the sustainability discourse (Petrișor et al., 2020). Over time, tourism researchers have insisted on studies related to the impact of tourism on the environment, but gradually, with an awareness of the social impact both for the local community and for tourists, the studies have started to focus on this new concept which only turns pleasure into a phobia.

Although tourism makes a vital contribution to income and job creation, as well as benefits to the economic sector, the limitations of a tourist destination tend to be overlooked by most of the actors involved. Therefore, a chaotic and limitless tourist expansion leads to overtourism.

The stakeholder theory defines the prosperity of a tourist destination through its relationship with multiple groups and individuals: local businesses, government, competitors and even its residents (Sautter & Leisen, 1999; Freeman, 1984). When this relationship is lacking or does not involve all parties, the result can only be represented by overloading both the space in question and the standard of living of the inhabitants. What this very popular concept wants to bring again in recent years is actually the reaction of fear, rejection and disgust that locals feel and practically the formation of two rival camps, tourists and residents. But, this problem is beginning to manifest itself more recently in the consciousness of tourists too, annoyed and irritated by the hellish queues, as well as the general congestion that they have to get rid of during the trip.

Authors like Milano et al. (2019a) capture tourist overexploitation in its socio-cultural forms and at the same time define it: the excessive growth in the number of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents suffer the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourist peaks, which have resulted in permanent changes in their lifestyle, denied them access to amenities and undermined their general well-being.

It's the opposite of responsible tourism which is using tourism to make better places to live and better places to visit. Basically, we are talking about uncontrollable development and an inconsistent attempt to attract as many visitors as possible, without analyzing its immediate and even long-term effects.

The tourist carrying capacity is in fact the power of a tourist destination not to lose its existing values or to suppress its potential, by understanding the resistance of the space. This reality has also been captured by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), insisting on a specific number that each destination must know in terms of bearable capacity: the maximum number of people who can visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic and socio-cultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitor satisfaction (UNWTO, 2004).

However, the term "overtourism" is defined by residents of a tourist destination who face this phenomenon in their daily lives. This is the novelty with which this term comes, an old situation, but which has only now brought frustration and intolerance among the locals.

It becomes very difficult when it is necessary to locate the occurrence of this phenomenon in time and space and this is due to the fact that the tourist agglomeration has manifested itself for a long time in all its forms. Since the onset of mass tourism in the 1960s, most destinations around the world have sought to increase the number of tourist arrivals (Hall, et al., 2008). But, the origin of this phenomenon appears at the same time as the realization of high level that the reputation of a destination, tourist attraction, does not always bring the prosperity of the local population or the national economy.

Over the past five years, the perception of tourism by local populations has changed dramatically. The most intense and observable events were those organized by the inhabitants of the main world destinations. These events aimed at keeping tourists away can be seen to some extent as a culmination of the new phenomenon known as "overtourism".

The factors that lead to tourist overexploitation are multiple, but they vary from one space to another depending on the tourist profile of the destination. Thus, each destination has the power and the right to detect the main factor which leads to the tourist overexploitation of the area and which alone attracts the other threat factors. Consequently, no indicator is able to describe the phenomenon exhaustively.

The phenomenon of tourist overexploitation made itself known on a large scale with the voice of the local population. The term "overtourism" emerged from media discourse without much theoretical basis (Koens et al., 2018), and later it became a common term in the academic sphere, with a series of publications in trade journals starting from 2016-2017. It is quite possible that without these massive demonstrations of a local population who have reached the height of patience, this phenomenon would have

remained in the same academic process, namely the promotion of sustainable tourism. More specifically, the vertiginous negative effects of tourism began to be discussed by researchers in 1960, introducing into international debates tourist concentrations that excessively harm the natural and social environment (Koens et al., 2018).

Overtourism has been analyzed from different perspectives, such as overtourism in cities in general (Goodwin, 2021; Cheer et al., 2019; Eckert et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019a; García-Hernández et al., 2017), in a particular city such as Montreal (Khomsi et al., 2020), Budapest (Kay Smith et al., 2019), or Krakow (Szromek et al., 2020), from a visitor – resident relation perspective (Cheung & Li, 2019; Perkumienė & Pranskūnienė, 2019; Doxey, 1975), or from an European policy response (Peeters et al., 2018); have also been identified and analyzed anti-tourist sentiment (Kim & Kang, 2020), tourismophobia (Matteucci et al., 2021), touristification (Pettas et al., 2021), the effects on environment and public health (Sari & Nazli, 2020), degrowing tourism (Fletcher et al., 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

Mass tourism is seen as the result of the growth and concentration of tourism demand and supply. A specific limit cannot be established, all tourist areas and destinations having their own limit according to environmental and social characteristics, the type of tourism practiced or the degree of development. This uncontrolled tourist congestion which inevitably leads to the formation of crowds, to a waste of time for both tourists and residents, directs this concept of tourist overexploitation towards the path of collapse, where the popularity of a place no longer exists, and transform it into a destination to be avoided.

But there are not many articles that talk about overtourism in general, to have an overview of this phenomenon. The most relevant for the subject of this research is the article on the conceptualization of overtourism (Mihalic, 2020). This research tends to provide a complete picture of the phenomenon of overtourism. This is an essential step to understand what the phenomenon of overtourism really represents, how it manifests itself, what are the causes and who are the parties involved.

2. Materials and Methods

This work uses a conceptual research methodology. This involves both the analysis of already existing theoretical knowledge for the subject in question, namely overtourism (Mihalic, 2020), as well as its related concepts, and a rigorous analysis of current travel trends found on the media via specialized websites. The term “conceptualization” is used to interpret, clarify and combine theoretical concepts (Jaakkola, 2020) with the concepts of causality and manifestation of the new phenomenon “overtourism”.

Academic sources were consulted via platforms holding bibliographic databases such as: Tandfonline, ScienceDirect, ResearchGate, or Google Scholar. Media tourism has also been analyzed through various websites and magazines (Big 7 Travel, Cruise Passenger, CNN travel, Global Travel Industry News, and others) as well as studies and organizational reports such as World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and UNESCO.

Therefore, due to the multiple theoretical documentation that has clarified the phenomenon, concepts related to tourist overexploitation could be sketched out. At the same time, the image of a positive or negative experience, as well as the recommendations related to the time of the visit, could ultimately be correlated with the degree of influence on which the tourist overexploitation of a space decides on its popularity or decline..

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Manifestation of the overtourism phenomenon

The manifestation of overtourism is commonly framed in the form of agglomeration and endless queues (Thi Phi, 2020). Whether this phenomenon manifests itself in urban,

rural or natural areas, in any case, the surrounding space suffers from its load with a number of tourists exceeding the limit. Even remote and hard-to-reach places like Everest are victims of overtourism, with the queues to get to the top of the world already famous. Once the limit is exceeded, the question arises of the level of education and / or knowledge of visitors in relation to the space visited and the need to protect and respect the destination also supported by the residents who work there.

Without a doubt, common spaces (parks, green spaces, museums, art galleries, pedestrian centers) are in the majority compared to private spaces (restaurants, thematic spaces, entertainment). Although they spend a lot of time in spaces intended exclusively for mass tourism (resorts, comfortable hotels), consumers of private spaces cannot do without consuming public spaces. Thus, precisely this opening to the general public in the case of public spaces, allows the acceleration of the constraint of the premises (Sæþórsdóttir et al., 2020). Overall, a destination has the right to have tourists, but they should not own the destination.

Although technology is the basis of negative or positive development at the universal level, regardless of the industry, strategic policies can by no means be avoided. As already underlined, the tourism promotion policy aimed at attracting more and more tourists was not thought of in the long term nor through a possible imagination of an overexploitation of the space in question. Steps in this direction are starting to be taken, but many are limited to a tourist site, a branded attraction and less to a destination as a whole. The real problem, however, is not that the tourism promotion policy tends to attract as many tourists as possible, but that all these tourists want to visit the same place at the same time.

Therefore, trying to understand the reasons why tourists cannot imagine their trip to another nearby or similar destination, several reasons leading to overtourism could be identified:

- Excessive promotion of same branded destinations: With a multitude of sources that encourage travel and unique experiences, promotion should start with lesser-known destinations that have potential generally overlooked by mass tourism. However, tourism promotion gives pride of place to the same branded destinations, but in different forms, hence the overuse of a space visited at the same time, in the same way.

- Cost of transport: Travel between the place of origin and the tourist destination is no longer an obstacle for the lower social classes or people with low-middle incomes. Airlines have developed sales strategies whereby almost anyone can afford to visit another country, at minimal cost or even free in some cases, hence the increasing number of tourists from a season to another.

- Cruises with pre-arranged and fixed stops: In the same situation are the cruise-type vacations, which, in addition to the current extremely admissible prices, also offer a predetermined itinerary. Having already a very large number of tourists, stopping to visit a very well-known tourist destination will only overuse that place at that time, considering the presence of other tourists in that destination.

- Tourist accommodation system vs short-term rental: If previously accommodation units were measured exclusively by the number of rooms in hotels, holiday homes, guesthouses, now the number of accommodation units has increased without be registered. The apartments are offered for rent at much more affordable prices and with new conditions allowing tourists to feel at home.

3.1.1. Branded tourist destinations and excessive promotion

Tourism promotion must behave as a mechanism that takes into account both the regional development of the destination, but also the supply and regeneration of the resources of the destination, after their use by visitors (Manhas et al., 2012). Once exhausted or excessively used, the tourism resources that give a destination's brand image cannot be regenerated and risk a loss on several scales: uniqueness, quality of services and even degree of attractiveness. Therefore, tourism promotion is not just a

sales tool designed to attract as much income as possible, but an amalgamation of strategies designed to strike a balance between stakeholders and the capacity of local resources (Sharma & Dogra, 2011).

Thus, the opening up of travel in terms of online promotion, social networks intended to promote the compulsory visit of the revised objectives, as well as the desire to attract as much income from the tourism industry, have led to uncontrolled congestion which does not seem to be easily diminished. Likewise, blogs and travel sites not only make well-known lists of places to visit "before death" ("The Top 50 Bucket List Destinations in the World") but also emphasize the most popular destinations already overcrowded in terms of tourism and already known around the world.

The global travel site Big 7 Travel did not hesitate to present in this list destinations such as: New York, Las Vegas, Beijing, Dubai, London, Rome, Paris, Amsterdam, and Dubrovnik. Of course, this cannot attest to the uniqueness and merit of branded destinations, but the promotion of an already world famous destination cannot fail to result in the overtourism, felt most strongly in such cases.

Regarding the reasons for tourists' travel, both the evolution and the differences in design are felt. The trip has become the perfect photo opportunity for the tourist to stand out on social media, and vacation recommendation sites are not far behind in compiling listings to promote the most popular destinations due to the setting unique photograph they have ("50 Most Instagrammable Places in The World 2021"). Nice, Paris, Milan, Madrid, Vienna, Berlin, Stockholm, Prague, are just some of the destinations besieged by tourists not out of curiosity to know the place, history or architecture, but to take pictures supposed from a psychological point of view (through the appreciation of others) to increase self-esteem. Thus, an awareness of the significance of the place visited becomes increasingly unnecessary. The tendency of tourists is no longer to visit new places and enrich themselves from a cultural point of view, but it is increasingly showing the financial conditions through frequent photos taken in famous places. And so, where does the claim to have tourist destinations in which the behavioral limits and those of the space itself are respected?

3.1.2. Accessibility of tourist destinations. Current costs of mass travel

The motivation to reach a certain point has always been hampered by obstacles, in the case of tourism: high prices, visas and other formalities related mainly to the country of origin of each traveler. Thus, accessibility becomes the basic functionality in the case of transport tourism, both for the ease with which potential travelers can access the destination in question and according to the diversity offered by the means of transport.

Transport is one of the main causes of the growth of mass tourism, but the dilemma arises when analyzing whether tourism has exploded due to the diversity of transport or vice versa. The intention to travel more and more people has led to the development of transport, and a non-stop frequency, especially in the case of air transport. From then on, competition in air transport began to increase, but airlines took advantage of this opportunity by offering equally competitive and increasingly lower prices, which resulted in increased demand (Rey et al. al., 2011).

This explosion of cheaper flights has only attracted more passengers but not necessarily higher incomes, giving rise to a new trend of unscheduled and non-essential travel. A shining example is the airline Ryanair, which not only offers extremely affordable flights for all income classes, but which, of course, brings the already overcrowded most popular destinations onto the upline line - such the flight Dublin-Barcelona at the price of 26 € (Ryanair, 2021).

If we compare a one-way flight of around 10 euros that can reach different destinations and countries with any other product purchased daily, the trip becomes something that is no longer planned in advance based on income. and time, but depending on the offer found. These "must see" offers greatly influence the choice of

potential travelers, in some cases forcing them to go to a certain iconic destination that they had not planned but don't want to lose because of the low price.

3.1.3. Cruises: a threat to tourist destinations and locals

As a method of transporting tourists, great importance is given to cruise ships capable of reaching faraway destinations for a significant number of passengers. However, compared to the airline segment, cruise ships cover the whole area of the tourism industry, which in addition to transport also provides accommodation and hospitality, but of course tourist attractions.

It is well known that cruises, as a form of tourism, do not offer destinations but pre-established itineraries, and to a small extent flexible. Practically, this form of transport and vacation at the same time has an itinerary to follow respecting the stop towards the opening of the tourist objectives. Diversity is not to be condemned; the fact that this type of tourism offers passengers the possibility of visiting several destinations in a short time contributes to enriching knowledge and the tourist experience. But what would be the scenario of a very large capacity vessel anchoring in the port of a well-known destination, already populated by other international tourists?

By excluding in this sub-chapter the negative impact that this form of tourism and transport generates on the marine ecosystem through the considerable emission of CO₂, there are also threatening signals that the passengers of such a cruise raise on the destination visited and even on the local population. Given a capacity that often exceeds 5,000 passengers per cruise ship (CruiseCritic, 2021), a potential stopover to visit a tourist town can only create congestion and confusion, as it invades this space at the same time, without dispersing in a few days. In addition to the disturbing aesthetic that it brings to the city visited, it is necessary to take into account the gain ratio brought to the destination vs. losses resulting from the acceptance of such vessels.

While such a stopover should disrupt the operation of available tourism services, cruise lines are not the ones who bring significant income to the economy of the tourist destination. The limitation to only a few hours of visit, leads to income from the purchase of souvenirs which cannot contribute to the economic development of the destination. Similarly, given the main claim that cruise ships offer a complete vacation package and not just transportation, the investments of these tourists to the stopped destination are automatically reduced, taking into account the fact that when returning to the ship, they have all the facilities (food, drink, leisure areas).

It is certain that port stops are established and promoted on the same principle which attracts and encourages the general public to visit historic, famous and well-known cities in the world. As stated by Harold Goodwin, the world's population is largely concentrated in coastal regions. Given this concentration on which tourists prefer to travel in a city but which is also open to the sea and where of course it is the right place to stop cruise ships, overexploitation becomes inevitable.

The even more obvious problem arises when, as has been observed in the case of international flights, these ship calls are concentrated in the same branded destinations, resulting in tourist congestion and lack of novelty. The highest concentrations of cruise passengers in 2011 were supported by destinations in Mediterranean Europe (notably Venice, Barcelona, Naples, Dubrovnik, Athens) but also by those on the American coast (San Francisco, Seattle, Boston, New York, Miami) as well as in the island zone of the continent (Bahamas, Havana, Haiti, Dominican Republic, and many others) (Rodrigue & Notteboom, 2013).

The sale of these tourist routes by promoting visits to large port cities, only concentrates tourists in the same places which gradually can no longer cope with this overexploitation while maintaining a natural and social balance. For some destinations (for example, Barcelona and Venice), this accumulation has exceeded the level of permissiveness, and thus, the inhabitants, constrained by the continuous agglomeration

and the way in which the rhythm of their life has radically changed, felt the need to revolt to find their “home” (Hughes, 2018; Guardian, 2017).

Control measures began to be taken gradually after these protests took off. For example, the Italian Minister of Transport Danilo Toninelli approved a ban on large cruise ships from docking in the historic center of Venice from September 2019. This is not a singular case, many destinations (Amsterdam, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, Santorini), which have their historic center or their tourist attractions very close to the port area, have taken measures to reduce the number of cruise ships invading the district. However, this appears to be the only remedy currently in place, with most measures being taken to reduce the surging tourist traffic. But should it be the revolt of the locals only because of the massive congestion, or also because of the poor reception infrastructure which is not a priority among the investments?

3.1.4. Tourist accommodation system vs short-term rental

More than obvious, the increase in the number of tourists from one season to another requires adjustments and even new establishments in terms of accommodation in rooms, apartments, holiday homes. Since tourists most often choose their accommodation when establishing a vacation based on its proximity to tourist attractions, it is no wonder that hotel institutions predominate in the city center.

However, the problem arises when the infrastructure dedicated exclusively to tourists reaches a level of saturation both for the landscape of the destination and for the inhabitants of this area. Basically, the tourist reputation turns the city from the home of locals to that of tourists. The immediate need to respond to an uncontrolled demand often leads to chaotic constructions, which do not take into account the specificities of the place and the negative effect that the environment can feel, but which only cares about ensuring an extreme availability and flexible reception and reservation.

In addition to traditional accommodation infrastructure, another trend is observed, which uses information technology to distribute and share other new tourist accommodation spaces, namely Airbnb, booking.com, and not only. The tourist explosion is not due to the diversity of existing forms of accommodation or the ease of the reservation process. The Airbnb phenomenon has grown alongside the growing urge to travel and has also brought new meaning and approach to the rental market (Bugalski, 2020). But, to what extent would the short-term rental of apartments through the Airbnb system lead to the revolt of the locals and at the same time the overexploitation of tourism?

Unlike the dispersion of hotels along a destination city, the Airbnb system does not seek to concentrate accommodation only in the central space, with apartments for rent being very common in residential areas, among locals. Since in large tourist destinations seasonality is no longer a threat and income does not depend on the hot season, interested parties and investors prefer to rent the apartment / room for a short period, of course aware, value differences in the purchase of the service and the guaranteed profit. By transforming the long-term rental into a short-term rental intended for the tourist sphere, the area can gradually become uninhabitable and dedicated exclusively to tourists.

At the same time, the main threat is brought by the change in the value of the property, but also the costs related to the quality of life (Bugalski, 2020). For example, the rent that a local would pay monthly would be much more expensive if it was calculated in the short term. Small businesses that were supposed to provide goods and services to the local population would change their prices according to the tourist degree of the region, and thus essential purchases would no longer be adapted to the purchasing power of the employees of the destination.

The new way of booking does not seem to be totally rejected by locals, with some taking advantage of renting their own apartments for additional income. But what happens to their neighbors or to those who feel overwhelmed by the tourist flow in the

neighborhood where they live? As in the case of large capacity vessels, local grievances have not hesitated to be expressed openly and directly (Street, 2018).

Many cities (Prague, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Krakow, Munich, Paris, Valencia, and Vienna) where the maximum threshold for tourist accommodation has been exceeded have started adopting various strategies to prohibit or control bookings made through Airbnb. Either it allows local authorities to restrict short-term rentals or improve taxes, up to forcing the Airbnb platform to provide more information about potential tourists, including the number of customers for a particular reservation.

However, calls from locals cannot be controlled by reducing the number of tourists staying at their homes, or at least not in the long term. Instead of reducing the rights of the Airbnb platform or improving taxes, tourism players should listen more carefully to residents' dissatisfaction. It is not the number of tourists that seems to be the problem, but the degree of separation of the city. Thus, the strategies of the destination cities should focus more on the separation between the tourist space itself and the place where the inhabitants actually live.

3.2. Unbalanced tourism: analysis of the affected parties

After an analysis of the obvious causes that determine overtourism through the prism of the influence of the media, increasingly affordable costs, the variety of means of transport and accommodation, special emphasis is placed on the consequences that can also be treated by referring to three spheres from different environments.

The concept of "overtourism" has become a reality, particularly through the prism of customers who are responsible for the imprint they leave on the visited space. Concretely, the degree of education and respect of potential visitors are vital to maintain and rationally develop a tourist destination.

Thus, depending on the basic tourist resource of the space, tourists have the obligation to respect:

- The inhabitants of the city, when it comes to urban tourism or city break getaways.
- Local culture and archaeological sites, in order to support the built or intangible heritage that defines the destination.
- The microclimate, flora and fauna, in the case of tourist destinations which depend on the natural environment.

This categorization is in fact a sum of the responsibilities that tourists have to assume in addition to the average knowledge of "leaving as one has found" or not disturbing the peace of others. Otherwise, the phenomenon of overexploitation or unsustainable tourism for the place, the natural setting and the people who live there is unleashed.

3.2.1. Disruption of quality of life: affected local communities

Most of the ways in which different specialists have attempted to define tourism overexploitation were related to the degree of acceptance and / or involvement, followed by revolt and / or rejection of the local population. Naturally, when the tourism demand of a destination increases, the impact on the local community becomes crucial.

Due to the lack of management of the city from a tourist point of view, as well as the capacity of reception in the given space, the tourist activity becomes generator of exclusively negative impacts. Thus, by deviating from the economic and ecological impact, which can be debated in a tangible way, the social impact is sought. The negative socio-cultural impact can in turn be measured by the feeling of discomfort and the way in which the daily life of the inhabitants suffers, not just during the high season.

Logically, many authors consider that the social impact can be considered the supreme impact, compared to others, precisely because it influences the quality of life of the local population by:

- The touristification of the residential area, and not just the destination itself. The classification of the hometown as a tourist destination does not fully bring the dissatisfaction of the inhabitants. The negative impact is underlined when the residential area or the public spaces with which residents are in daily contact are disturbed by the tourist invasion. Among the negative effects linked to the impossibility of separating the tourist area from the areas essential to local inhabitants' life is also the disappearance of local shops by replacing them with others oriented towards tourism (souvenirs, expensive food), congestion infrastructure and automatically an increase in wasted time, rising housing prices.

- Disruption of the traditional way of life. The way in which the local populations carry out their activity, in fact represents the specificities of the place. As these specificities become known to the general public, the authenticity of the place is lost and traditions are transformed into tourism marketing for even greater promotion. A relevant example can be taken in the city of Kyoto, Japan, known as the perfect place for a geisha to be photographed (Diamond & Olito, 2019). Thus, countless tourists invade the private spaces of the small town to photograph the tradition in all its magnitude, but without the consent of the geishas.

- Noise and insecurity, drug and alcohol consumption. Pleasure and suppressing inhibitions are the main forms of manifestation in tourists who want to get rid of stress, rules of conduct or the opinions of others. However, the problem arises when lack of education is a general characteristic of the visiting public. The association of disproportionate hallucinogenic substances, alcohol, with a serious lack of education lead to violence, hysteria, unjustified conflicts and finally to noise and security nuisance in the case of premises. At the same time, this is one of the negative impacts that may develop later in the case of the other two dimensions, cultural heritage and the natural environment, with long-term consequences this time.

Local protests to abolish uncontrolled tourism are worsening every day in major European cities in all its forms of dissatisfaction (high cost of living, short-term rentals, congestion in public spaces, cruise ships). Thus, without serious measures to increase the quality of life of the inhabitants or at least to bring it back to normal, we cannot speak of a decrease in tourismophobia, the feeling of opposition to tourists and the attempt to refuse to their entry into the destination (Singh, 2018).

3.2.2. Alteration of the cultural heritage and loss of the identity of the destination

The negative impacts linked to an uncontrollable number of tourists in the same space do not hesitate to be noticed in the case of sites of incontestable universal value (World heritage sites, designated by the United Nations for Science, education and culture). The state of the World Heritage site comes with protection, conservation, but with the risk of also generating popularity and the desire of an increasing number of tourists to visit the remarkable space for related reasons to antiquity, religion, architecture, history, or even the challenges it encountered in its construction.

However, cities of art and world cultural heritage do not have this capacity to support and adapt, compared to coastal tourist destinations, if we refer to the situation of tourist overexploitation (Koens et al., 2018). Many cities with a rich cultural heritage are currently suffering the consequences of tourist overexploitation, which has led UNESCO to create a new list designating the sites presenting a risk factor of degradation of the monument, or of the natural space and of cultural identity loss (UNESCO, 2021).

Given the large number of these sites and their global location, the diversity of categories and the fact that most have become famous tourist destinations, the challenges are increasingly difficult to overcome. The tourist overexploitation of a monument or a city of art creates problems of degradation, theft, vandalism, even destruction in the last phase, which not only lead to a negative experience for future tourists, but also to the loss of identity and the dissatisfaction of the locals.

Another negative impact is represented by the marketing of the site. The more the city of art registers an increasing number of tourists, the more the tendency of an offer inclined towards the market of goods and services will grow. Most of the products with immediate gain effect are represented by the famous souvenirs. Unfortunately, a large part of them are not original or locally made items, but are part of the globalization circuit, or part of the fast food sphere located right in the center of the most popular attractions.

The term touristification of space can be used again because all small businesses located in peak areas are aimed exclusively at tourists. Unlike the increase in the number of tourists to destinations that are emblematic for its cultural heritage, the local economy does not register higher incomes, as most tourists use monuments and museums exclusively for taking photos (without paying taxes or entry tickets) and buy counterfeit products. Consequently, the ever increasing number of tourists is not due to the massive culturalization of the population interested in architecture, art, history or the importance of the place. Such a practice can only lead to the progressive loss of the traditional culture, and of the values of the destination.

3.2.3. The challenges of the natural environment and long-term issues

The natural environment is the last sphere of analysis of the affected parts and at the same time the most sensitive tourist resource, sometimes impossible to restore. In terms of environmental impacts, tourist overexploitation contributes to an increase in water consumption, air pollution, and waste in tourist destinations and in wild areas, erosion and modification of the landscape, flora and fauna.

Probably the most observable pollution is that caused directly by tourists, by the addition of waste, most often thrown at random. A relevant example is recorded on the island of Bali, with an economy dependent on tourism. Due to its popularity, the growing number of tourists could no longer be controlled, especially their activity and the way in which the production and dispersion of waste manifests itself on these exotic beaches.

Thus, at present, Bali no longer represents the image of a dream destination, the majority of research as well as promotional materials no longer lead to the unique natural landscape, with its coral reefs or its rock formations. However, the degradation of the tourist destination does not seem to be the main problem even if the income was the basis of the economy, but problematic becomes the destruction of the whole ecosystem, the quality of the water, the air and human life, which once altered, becomes difficult to improve.

Similarly, apart from their causal attribution of tourist overexploitation, flights and cruise ships also pose a threat to the environment. Whether it concerns CO₂ emissions linked to the use of energy for air transport, or the enormous amount of waste produced by cruises, or even noise and aesthetic pollution in both situations, the tourism industry contributes significantly to massive air and water pollution, as well as accelerating climate change.

In addition to the consequences of uncontrolled pollution, there is the problem of resource consumption on which the tourist industry depends both for infrastructure and for associated services. Due to increasing demand and expectations of tourists, the pressure on basic resources (energy, potable and hot water, adequate heating, food) becomes a challenge, especially when these resources are limited. The situation worsens further when tourism demand pushes for the construction and development of several accommodation units, which in turn will put even more pressure on exhaustible resources. The development of tourist facilities can also lead to the exploitation of sand, the erosion of beaches, sand dunes, natural spaces and the loss of wild habitats.

As a result, the negative impacts on the natural environment can be considered the most devastating, even leading to the loss of the entire destination in some cases (high risk in Maldives due to sea level rise caused by global warming climate). Although attempts to promote sustainable tourism are increasingly discussed and even applied,

pollution in all its forms and overtourism have reached a level too advanced to be able to dream of a future at least as it is today.

3.2.4. Attraction or repulsion: famous destinations that can trigger the decline

However, the brand image defined and promoted in an exaggerated way only raises expectations in potential visitors. Once such an image is created, all aspects related to the infrastructure, the quality of services, as well as the appearance of the destination at first impact must meet the expectations of the tourist. Excessive promotion that does not reflect reality can only lead to a decline in the image of the destination in question. The image of a tourist destination is perhaps one of the most flexible and subjective aspects. If the formation of an opinion is linked to the filter of understanding and knowledge of each human entity, we can consider that the maintenance of the image of a destination has its destiny in its visitors.

When tourism promotion exclusively involves images of tourism objectives by capturing unique landscapes, the potential tourist will have the claim of a similar image when consuming the tourism product. The new "overtourism" trend thus ends up changing the images, perceptions and even the whole process of developing a tourist destination.

The image of Niagara Falls on the Canadian side is promoted by the Official 2021 Visitor Guide through its unique natural setting with of course the focus on the waterfall. The part of the cliff, that is, where this natural attraction can be seen, is completely omitted in the promotional image (Niagara, 2021). The large number of tourists actually present in the area of the tourist attraction leads to even greater popularity, but such an image might make potential tourists think twice before choosing such a destination, considering that the connection with nature, has nothing to do with tourist overexploitation.

Can it happen in this case that a prestigious destination loses its uniqueness because it has become too well known and too accessible? The scenario of a branded tourist destination continually overexploited by tourists wishing to expose themselves in the social environment, can only lead to the image of the decline of the destination. Thus, due to mass destructive tourist behavior that does not respect the visited place or the locals, the image of a top destination can turn into a harmful image of a destination that should only be avoided (Lennon, 2019; Fitzgerald, 2018; CNTravel, 2018; Itzkowitz, 2017).

Likewise, advice on crowded destinations and other lesser-known destinations that could replace them has become increasingly common. The latter is one of the smart initiatives in order to disperse the large number of tourists to different places, but gradually popular destinations will become known due to the shocking tourist overexploitation and less due to the specificity of the place or the basic tourist attraction.

5. Conclusions

Thanks to the process of conceptualizing the overtourism phenomenon, it has been possible to analyze from several angles the factors which play an important role in its own manifestation. Thus, it can be concluded that the degree of causality can be attributed in a greater proportion to a single factor depending on the case, but the magnitude of the phenomenon has fixed roots and cannot manifest itself without a multifactorial interconnection that validates and aggravate each other. In essence, the present work has been carried out on the basis of the existing literature of tourism researchers, as well as sources in the media sphere, through which several directions of analysis at a general level have been highlighted.

First of all, previous attempts to capture and define the overtourism have not focused on the multidisciplinary side of the tourism sector. Thus, researchers in the field generally define overtourism from a single angle (perceived as a threat to the natural or cultural environment, and more often to the social and economic environment) which actually

targets the motivation for research, and less according to its multiple perspectives that underlie the expansion of the phenomenon.

Second, the causes of the expansion of the overtourism phenomenon are generally listed, and too little detailed. The focus this time is on the affordability of travel prices and the current reinterpretation of transportation and accommodation, as well as increasing overall well-being. On the contrary, the most ignored are travel and promotional trends, which are a determining factor in the approach to travel for potential tourists (the reason for getting the perfect photo, the reason for standing out on the networks social promotion, the promotion of famous destinations according to the film industry).

Not least, the most affected parties are represented by the inhabitants, through the power they have in the media thanks to the scandals and protests they demonstrate. The opinions of tourists, which in fact represent the image of the tourist experience, are not taken into account at all, even if their degree of satisfaction does influence the fate of the destination.

Vital for future studies that attempt to define overtourism, as well as ways to improve the tourist experience would be to focus more on smart and genuine ways to boost tourism. Also, the way in which the inhabitants of the destination are affected by overtourism must be analyzed in relation to the tourist experience, because both actors are also responsible for the image of the destination. The question is whether the interaction between locals and tourists can be the key to success in designing the tourism experience,

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