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TOPIC TITLE

How 'over-tourism' has impacted the host destinations environment, culture and economy and developing a model, with global applications, to manage these challenges

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. Identify the impacts of over-tourism on the host destinations environment, culture and economy

2. Identify and analyse how specific tourist attractions and destinations have created strategies to successfully manage an increase in visitor numbers

3. Create a Capacity Management Model to enable resorts, venues, regions and attractions to identify, cope with and manage increased visitor numbers.

1. INTRODUCTION TO OVER-TOURISM

International tourism has grown from 200 million tourists in the 1960's to 1.4 billion in 2018 (UNWTO 2019). As Sezgin and Yolal (2012) highlight, this growth has been stimulated by package beach, cruise, ski and cultural tour holidays. Also, new source tourist markets, such as China, which now accounts for 12% of tourist arrivals to Europe, has additionally driven this growth. This development can affect the host destination and its natural environment, culture and economy, subsequently influencing resident attitudes towards tourists. For example, the Thailand government stopped holidaymakers visiting the beach at Maya Bay, the location for the film 'The Beach', due to 2.5 million annual visitors affecting its natural habitat (Associated Press 2018). Infrastructures are also placed under strain resulting in locals being excluded from using facilities, as is the case in Mexico's Cancun resort where locals are prohibited from using the hotels beaches (Martínez et al 2013). This paper sets out the case for further research on the environmental, cultural and economic impacts of over-tourism, which is defined as 'The impact of tourism on a destination that influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way' by UNWTO (2019) and identifies further research to establish a Capacity Management Model to manage this.

The coronavirus outbreak is estimated to cost global tourism $1 trillion and 50 million jobs Daily Sabah (2020) and this research considers the implications to over-tourism and resident anti-tourist sentiments. The lockdown allows governments to maintain infrastructure and nature to rehabilitate. For example, the Abbey Road crossing in London, made famous by the Beatles, has been repainted, dolphins have returned to Venice's canals and the coral reefs of Australia's Great Barrier Reef are recovering. Tourists will return in small numbers initially which provides an opportunity to incorporate smarter and sustainable tourism strategies into future planning. Also, travel companies will need to consider social distancing and how to manage crowds better with tourists possibly happy to pay for experiences that consider these approaches (Rotondo 2020).

2. THE IMPACTS OF OVER-TOURISM ON THE HOST DESTINATION

The World Travel and Tourism Council (2017) report identified five impacts of over-tourism which are discussed below;

Firstly, residents can feel a sense of being alienated if their local community does not benefit from tourism or if they feel an imbalance between tourisms rewards and over-tourisms impacts. This can influence local's toleration of tourists with residents even protesting against over-tourism in cities such as Venice, Dubrovnik and Barcelona (Gonalez 2018). Furthermore, research by Kuscer and Mihalic (2019) identified Ljubljana residents had negative feelings towards visitors due to pollution, overcrowding and traffic resulting in residents wanting to leave Slovenia's capital city.

Coldwell (2017) identifies 'ice cream tourists' being part of residents daily lives with day trippers or cruise passengers, for example, providing limited economic contribution but adding towards increasing urban congestion. Also, some city centres have experienced a change in the retail landscape with businesses emerging to serve tourists, such as restaurants, souvenir shopping and boutique clothing stores, rather than for the needs of the local population (Koens 2018).

Secondly, over-tourism can degrade the overall visitor experience as tourist volumes congregate in specific 'hot spot' areas. For example, the waiting times to climb the Eiffel Tower can be 3 hours and many holidaymakers are crowded together to see famous sites such as the Louvre's Mona Lisa. Shelby and Haberleins' (1986 cited by Gonzalez 2018) research identified that if 66% of tourists stated they felt they were in a crowded area, it is likely that the capacity has been exceeded. Furthermore, the increased desire to experience the 'authentic' daily life of locals such as the 'Slumdog' tours of Mumbai's slums results in tourists visiting historically non-touristic areas that are unused to dealing with tourism (Koens et al 2018).

Thirdly, the destinations infrastructure can struggle to cope with over-tourism as the 850,000 Amsterdam residents can testify with 20 million tourists annually descending upon the capital. The locals are tired of 'partying' visitors and subsequent strains on infrastructure which has resulted in authorities stopping the marketing of the city and the council not authorising the construction of additional hotels (Fes 2020). The Philippines has also experienced challenges with power failures, water shortages and overcrowded roads resulting in the government now limiting holidaymaker arrivals (WTTC 2017).

Fourthly, over-tourism can damage the natural environment, increase pollution and consume scarce resources such as water and food; especially when taking into account that 10% of destinations that attract holidaymakers account for 80% of total tourism arrivals. This strain and the fact that global tourism is responsible for 5% of all greenhouse gas emissions highlight the need to manage visitor impact. Few locations are immune, for example, 3,000kg of rubbish has been collected from Mount Everest and 80% of the Koh Khai islands coral reefs in Thailand are damaged as a consequence of over-tourism (WTTC 2017).

Fifthly, over-tourism can bring threats to the local culture and heritage. For example, holidaymakers have vandalised sites such as China's Great Wall and large volumes of visitors diminish the destination's spiritual integrity as is the case with Cambodia's Buddhist temple complex at Angkor Wat. Also, the heritage of a city can be affected, as is the case with the Boqueria food market in Barcelona, which, for 180 years has been selling traditional Spanish food but has now banned tourist groups due to overcrowding.

3. STRATEGIES TO COMBAT OVER-TOURISM

Tourism organisations can work together to govern the economic, cultural and environmental impacts of over-tourism as discussed below;

Firstly, as Darrell Wade of Intrepid Travel highlights, travel companies and tourist boards can spread tourism incomes more evenly throughout the economy with the marketing of a wider range of experiences and tourist attractions (Travel Weekly 2018). For example, dining in independent restaurants instead of chains and offering alternative attractions such as Iceland's Seljavallalaug hot spring rather than the Blue Lagoon can ease the strain on iconic visitor 'hotspots' plus provide opportunities to connect with a wider range of local people, their customs and cuisine.

Furthermore, governments such as in Bhutan and Botswana have chosen a low-impact and high-yield tourism policy through their pricing and quality holiday offering. Holidaymakers are still contributing to their economies but, with fewer travellers, there is less impact on the environment and culture. Also, tourists are willing to pay for higher value experiences, such as smaller groups paying $125 to watch the sunrise at Chichen Itza in Mexico compared to the 5,000 daily visitors who watch a similar scene at Angkor Wat in Cambodia for $37 (Lonely Planet 2020).

Secondly, socio-cultural impacts can be managed by incorporating local expertise into tourism plans, understanding cultural values and gaining residents cooperation and support. Gonzalez (2018) identified citizens' willingness to accept further tourism development is influenced by how tourists currently impede residents' daily life, especially in shared spaces and how tourism impacts local prices. For example, the housing rents in Lisbon have increased as landlords prefer to advertise their properties to tourists through Airbnb rather than offer them to locals thus creating an increase in the demand for housing. This subsequently reduces the number of residents dwelling in the centre which is impacting on the city's social makeup and living standards. The outcome of this lack of consideration can result in negative publicity as was the case with Cornwall's 'Wish you weren't here' media coverage which represented a manifestation of local's frustrations (O'Connor 2002).

Thirdly, appropriate strategies can reduce the impact on the environment by limiting permits or daily numbers of tourists. For example, since 2002, Inca Trail permits have been limited to 200 per day compared to 1,600 previously which resulted in excess rubbish, unauthorised camping areas, erosion and pollution (Coldwell 2002). As Gonzalez et al (2018) highlights, residents themselves can participate and influence how sustainable tourism can develop by acting as a cultural agent and social group. For example, Bermuda and Ibiza have applied a cap on the building of hotels and the Galapagos Islands have limited cruise ship

numbers to reduce pollution and impact on its natural environment with the blessing of locals.

Staggering tourism flows can assist in reducing environmental impacts. As Adam Goldstein of RCC highlights, cruise ships dock into Dubrovnik only in the morning and only on three days a week which causes pollution and overcrowding on these days. The ships could arrive throughout the week and in the afternoon which would increase the destinations capacity without exacerbating environmental impacts (Travel Weekly 2018). Also, destinations such as Venice are now using technological solutions to manage tourism volumes such as installing turnstiles that restrict entry at specific times to reduce rubbish and erosion (Fes 2020).

4. PROPOSED RESEARCH

As Salli Felton, the Chief Executive of the Travel Foundation stated, 'we've created over-tourism together and the only way to solve it is together' (Travel Weekly 2018). It is therefore important to establish the varying aims of both government organisations, such as tourist boards, and privately owned profit orientated travel companies, such as tour operators. This will establish if there are competing interests and identify a common framework to manage the governance of the environmental, cultural and economic impacts as well as create tourism growth.

Although there is current evidence of localised strategies, such as the WTTC (2017) over-tourism research within cities (see below) and Gonzalez et al (2018) work on heritage towns, the proposed study will develop a Capacity Management Model that is appropriate to a wider range of tourism circumstances including; resorts, venues, regions, urban areas, natural attractions and historical sites.

Various tourism organisations would be consulted using contacts from the author's 25 years of travel industry knowledge as well as in academia to establish this framework. The planned outcome will identify the maximum tourism capacity that each can handle, still maintain enjoyable visitor experiences and reduce the environmental and cultural impact. The model uses the spider diagram approach to modelling with each aspect of over-tourism being graded between one and five (five being negative) and the cumulative score identifying the potential level and risk of over-tourism.

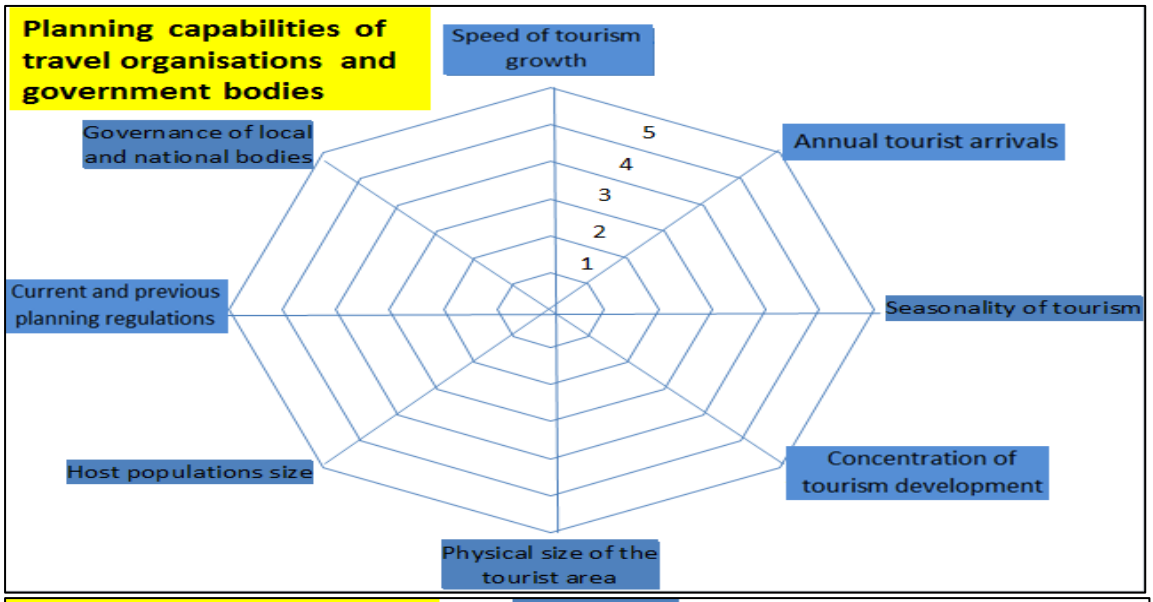
As Gonzalez et al (2018) identifies, residents goodwill is crucial to successful and sustainable tourism expansion and consequently, the model can guide tourism planners to manage future growth strategies for both developing and already developed tourism destinations. The initial draft of this model is enclosed although the three diagrams would be merged together.

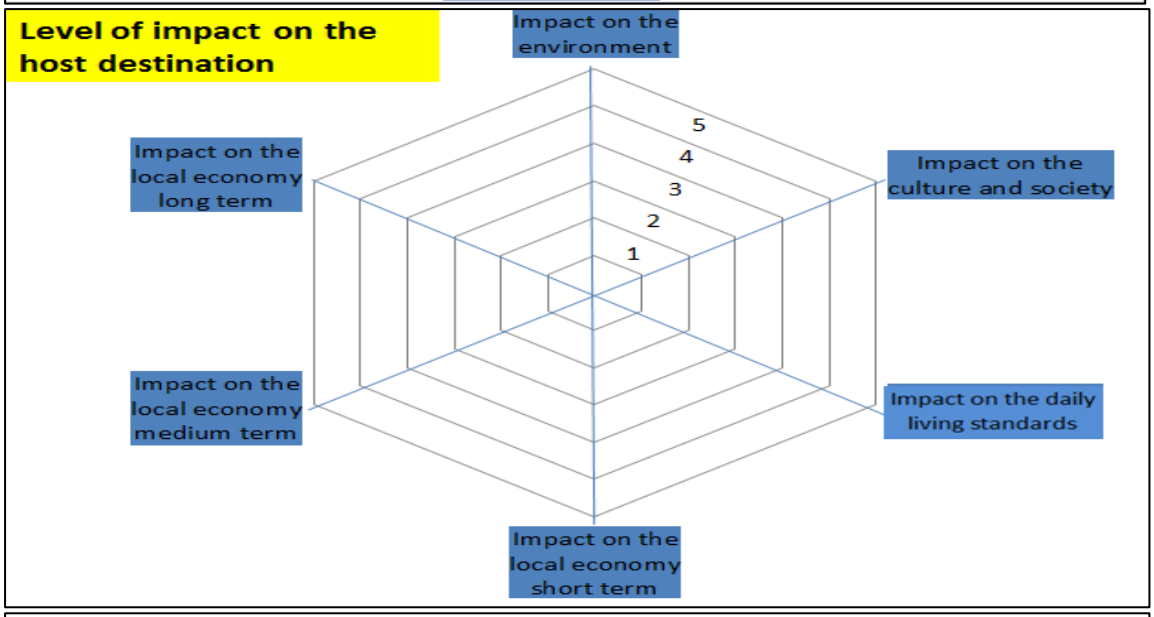
The research conclusions will be finalised by 2021/2 and tourist organisations including the author's previous employers are interested in offering their services which would involve using their international travel partners. Few academics have as extensive contacts within the tourism industry as the author and these will be used to gather international viewpoints via qualitative research.

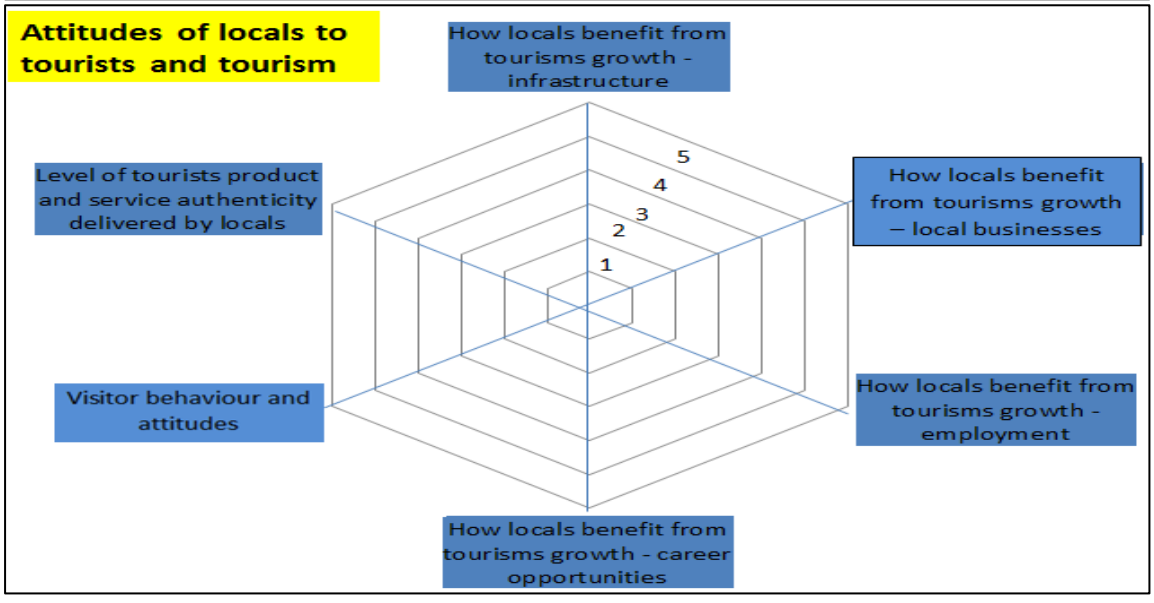
WTTC 'Metrics to understand the potential risks of over-tourism within cities' (2017)

	Metric	Definition
Overall concept	**Importance of tourism**	Tourisms share and contribution of GDP and employment
	Arrivals growth	Average annual growth rate and domestic arrivals including overnight arrivals in paid accommodation
Alienated local residents	**Density of tourism**	Arrivals divided by the number of square kilometers in the area encompassing TripAdvisor's top 20 attractions for the destination
	Tourism intensity	Number of visitors divided by the population of the city
Degraded tourist exerience	**Negative Trip Advisor reviews**	Share of poor and terrible TripAdvisor reviews among top attractions in the city measuring negative sentiment in visitor experiences
Over-loaded infrastructure	**Arrival seasonality**	Difference in arriving flight seats between high and low arrival months representing the degree of seasonality
	Attraction concentration	Share of TripAdvisor reviews limited to the top 5 city attractions divided by reviews of all attractons indicating its concentration
Damage to nature	**Air pollution**	Annual mean PM10 particulate concentration in cities (micrograms per cubic meter)
Threats to culture and heritage	**Historic site prevalence**	Share of top 20 TripAdvisor attractions that are historic sites to identify the volume of these indicating potential risk to spiritual and physical integrity

Capacity Management Model; score of 5 being negative (proposed)







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