Committee: Environmental Commission

Issue: Assessing the consequences of over-tourism

Student Officer: Melina Drosou

Position: Deputy President

INTRODUCTION

Every year, more than 1.4 billion individuals move around the world, and this number is increasing at an exponential rate. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the number of international tourists will reach 1.8 billion by 2030. Hence, there are a few tourist locations around the world that are overcrowded with visitors as they are considered 'must-see destinations'.

Additionally, tourism has an important part in the 2030 Agenda as it impacts all 17 goals, both directly and indirectly. It is especially important in Goals 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), 12 (Responsible Consumption and Production), and 14 (Life Below Water),[1] which all aim for sustainability. Over-tourism puts a strain on a region's natural resources and may contribute to the depletion of natural resources by increasing consumption where resources are scarce. In Asia, for example, a guest's average daily water consumption is 677 liters[2], which is more than six times that of Asian residents.

Over-tourism negatively impacts residents, this is evident from the growth of anti-tourist protests in cities suffering from over-tourism in 2019. In countries such as Spain, Croatia and Italy, residents have recently expressed their frustration with the consequences of increased tourism on the environment and quality of life. Many countries witnessed a reduction in tourism due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, but it is believed that once it is safe to travel tourism will once again become a major industry. This has sparked a surge in interest in techniques and ideas for dealing with the increased tourism that the end of the global lockdown has brought. Policymakers and local authorities are currently concentrating on ways to reintroduce tourism while avoiding the negative impacts of over-tourism that have previously plagued the regions.

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[1] *#Envision 2030: 17 Goals to Transform the World for Persons with Disabilities | United Nations Enable*. 9 Feb. 2016, https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/envision2030.html .

[2] Pensiri, A. "The Study of Tourists Behavior in Using Water Usage in Hotel Business." World Academy of Science, Engineering and Technology International Journal of Industrial and Systems Engineering file:///C:/Users/nicho/Downloads/10005514%20(1).pdf

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Over-Tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) defines it as "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors' experiences in a negative way"[3]

Over-Consumption

The act of consuming something in excess. An extended habit of overconsumption will eventually result in the depletion of natural resources.

Cultural tourism

Cultural tourism is defined by the Cultural Division of the Florida State Department as "movements of persons for essentially cultural motivations such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel to festivals and other cultural events, visits to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore, or art"[4]

Air Pollution

Air pollution refers to any physical, chemical or biological change in the air. It is the contamination of air by harmful gases, dust and smoke which affects plants, animals and humans drastically.[5]

Sustainable Tourism

Sustainable tourism is defined as a level of tourist activity that can be sustained over time because it benefits the social, economic, ecological, and cultural ecosystems of the region in which it occurs.[6]

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[3] "Over tourism? — Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions." Executive Summary Madrid, Spain 22 Aug. 2019, https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420070

[4] *What Is Cultural Tourism? - Basic Information - Division of Arts and Culture - Florida Department of State*.https://dos.myflorida.com/cultural/info-and-opportunities/resources-by-topic/cultural-tourism-toolkit/what-is-cultural-tourism-basic-information/ . Accessed 11 July 2021.

[5] "Air Pollution - Definition, Causes, Effects And Control." *BYJUS*, https://byjus.com/biology/air-pollution-control/. Accessed 15 July 2021.

[6] *Defining Sustainable Tourism*. https://www.gdrc.org/uem/eco-tour/sustour-define.html. Accessed 15 July 2021.

Noise pollution

Noise pollution refers to an undesirable and/or excessive sound that can harm human health, wildlife, and the environment. [7]

Eco-tourism

The term "ecotourism" can be defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserve the environment, sustains the well-being of the local people, and involves interpretation and education" [8]

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

General Information

Tourism is one of the largest and fastest-growing industries in the world. The UNWTO predicts that by 2030, the number of international tourists will reach 1.8 billion. With the continued increase in the number of tourists, the side effects of this industry become more apparent. The environment and host communities operate under pressure to manage the increasing flow of tourists. Travel has always been a popular activity and a thriving industry; however, for it to remain this way, it must be done without negatively affecting factors involved such as the surroundings. Decisions made now must represent a long-term solution to provide future generations with the same opportunity to travel and run the tourism industry.

Consequences of Over-Tourism

Nature's different ecosystems are being diminished. In most major natural tourist areas, the flora and fauna are frequently the first to suffer from over-tourism. For example, coral reefs are part of a natural system that is becoming extinct as a result of global warming and over-tourism. In certain circumstances, such as the damage to the coral reefs around the world, we still have not found ways to reverse the situation.

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[7] "Noise Pollution | Definition, Examples, Effects, Control, & Facts." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, https://www.britannica.com/science/noise-pollution. Accessed 11 July 2021.

Another example is the amount of waste caused by over-tourism: the need to fill swimming pools with water in hotels in warm regions can cause severe environmental issues. Additionally, to keep visitors cool in regions with limited resources, a significant amount of fossil fuels is being emitted into the air, negatively impacting both the environment and the local population.
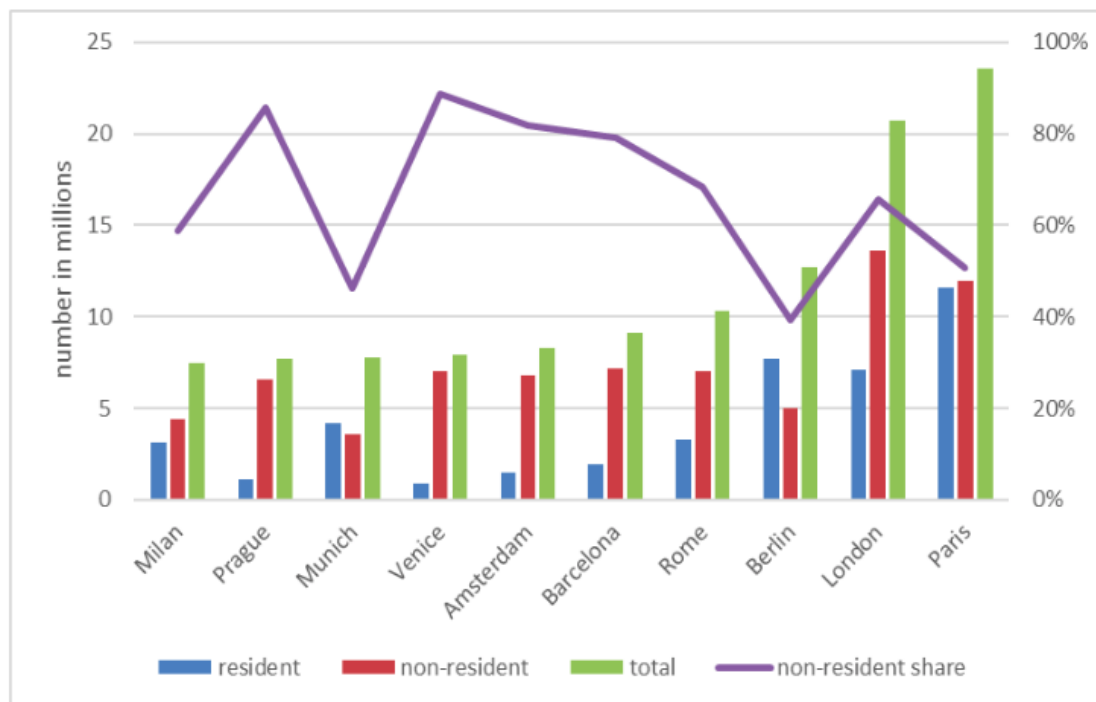
Figure 1: Populations of Residents and Non-Residents (Vanicek)[9]

Figure 1 shows that the number of non-residents is almost always higher than the number of residents in major cities.

According to experts, tourism will quadruple energy usage and greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The carbon footprint of tourism is largely caused by the transportation of tourists. It has been noted that car and airplane emissions are one of the main causes of air pollution and thus, the transportation of tourists inevitably pollutes. With the rapid growth

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[9] Vanicek, Jiri. "Position of Prague on the International Tourism Market." *International Journal of Innovation and Economic Development*, vol. 5, no. 6, Feb. 2019 https://www.google.com/url?q=https://researchleap.com/position-of-prague-on-the-international-tourism-market/&sa=D&source=editors&ust=1626863847932000&usg=AOvVaw14-2nmrOz2SKt6wi_a34s2

of international tourism, tourists presently make up nearly 60% of air travel[10]. On many occasions, buses or other vehicles keep their engines running to ensure that visitors return to comfortable, air-conditioned vehicles, a practice that further pollutes the air.

Furthermore, noise pollution is a common occurrence in tourist destinations. Vehicles used by tourists to make their way into and out of nature reserves make a lot of noise, as does the general loud presence of tourists. For wildlife, such loudness is a source of discomfort. Additionally, long-term noise pollution from tourist activities frequently affects animal behaviour patterns.

Measurements of Over-Tourism

Since World War II, the research field of tourism-impact analysis has developed. Initial research from 1960 to 1970 focused on the positive economic impact of tourism, while research in the 1970s and 1980s shifted focus to the negative impact of tourism on the destination's society, culture, and natural environment. In the 1980s and 1990s, interest in research evolved in the direction of combining economic perspectives with social and environmental perspectives.

In tourist planning and management procedures, indicators are thought to play a crucial role. In 2015, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and the United Nations Statistics Division launched the project Statistical Framework for Measuring the Sustainability of Tourism, with the goal of improving tourist industry statistics in the field of sustainability. The program, which is currently in development, will allow for the systematic collection of data on economic, environmental and social factors on various scales. The ultimate goal is to develop metrics that may be used to assess tourism's long-term viability and contribution to the achievement of the SDGs.

Demand is created by all the people who go to a certain place (tourists and destinations) and it can be measured by four parameters: people (tourists), money (expenses, income), time (length of stay and trip) and space (distance, length of trip). The first two types of measurements are by far the most common and there are large differences between countries. The data usually come from border statistics (police, immigration), complemented with surveys at points of entry (airports, ports); in other cases,

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[10] "What Are The Negative Effects Of Tourism On The Environment?" *WorldAtlas*, 11 Oct. 2018, https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-are-the-negative-effects-of-tourism-on-the-environment.htm.

Bhutan

With its unique culture and landscape, Bhutan undoubtedly fulfils the criteria to become a world-renowned tourist attraction. Originally Bhutan only maintained close and friendly relations with its southern neighbour, India, up until four decades ago when it chose to open its doors to tourists from all around the globe. While major European hotspots, such as Barcelona and Venice, are exploring visitor limits, Bhutan chose a "High-Value Low-Impact" approach to sustainable tourism back in the 1980s, when the country's fourth reigning monarch, Jigme Singye Wangchuck, became apprehensive about the impact of unrestrained tourism on the nation.

This approach is achieved through the imposition of a "visa" at a cost of $250 during the peak seasons (March to May and September to November) and $200 throughout the low season (the remaining months). This number may appear excessive; however, it is a minimal spending strategy for each domestic spending day which covers eating, three-star accommodation (minimum) in city hotels or resorts, ground transportation, and tour services.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Since its foundation over 70 years ago, UNESCO has become more active in encouraging sites to adopt tourism management plans, but unfortunately, this has not always been followed. Only 65 natural sites, about 28%, have created up-to-date tourism planning.

On another note, UNESCO has a scheme where sites are also required to report their tourism growth and targets to UNESCO every six years. Recent research suggests that reporting should be done more frequently.

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO).

The UNWTO was founded on 1 November 1975 with the primary goal of promoting tourism as a source of economic growth, inclusive development and environmental sustainability. The UNWTO ensures that this is done while providing assistance to the industry through the implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism and the advancement of tourism policies across the globe.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
18th-19th century	Industrial Revolution encourages technological advances, establishes and reinvents travel and trade. Additionally, it enforces markets – thus increasing personal incomes and designating travel as both a business necessity and a leisure activity.
1903	Wright brothers initiate the "flight era" with the first successful aircraft flight.
The 1950s	Franchise agreements result in the rapid growth of hotel chains within the United States.
1975	The UNWTO is founded.
The 2000s	TripAdvisor and similar online agencies are founded.
2012	Movement on Twitter in 2012 when the hashtag #overtourism becomes popular.
2016	Skift (a travel company) invents the concept "over-tourism," and later on trademarks the term.
2018	The term becomes officially recognized by the Oxford Dictionary.
2019	Many member states identify measures to contain over-tourism (e.g., a day-tripper tax in Venice, new levies on cruise passengers in Amsterdam, strict new entry policies at Machu Picchu).
2020-2021	The COVID-19 virus is declared a pandemic and due to that (over) tourism is decreased to a great extent.

UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

A/RES/74/214 Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Development in Central Asia.

This resolution was adopted by the General Assembly on 19 December 2019, and is guided by The United Nations Charter, which fosters regional collaboration to achieve the UN's goals and ideals. [12]

Within the resolution, there were many initiatives with regard to counteracting over-tourism. Member States and the World Tourism Organization are encouraged to continue to help Central Asian nations in their initiatives to boost responsible and sustainable tourism in the area, within the scope of their mandates and resources, and to do so in the following ways:

1. Participating in capacity-building initiatives to help accomplish globally accepted development objectives, such as the Sustainable Development Goals;

2. Making tourism-related benefits more accessible to all segments of society, particularly the less privileged;

3. Advertising environmental awareness, preserving and protecting the natural environment, respecting wildlife, biodiversity, natural habitats, and diverse cultures, as well as natural, historical, and cultural heritage;

4. Increasing tourist flow through sustainable tourist attractions and relevant capacity-building initiatives;

5. Promoting the growth of sustainable tourism and methods that attract international visitors to Central Asia while also improving the welfare and lives of local populations by supporting their local economies as well as the human and natural environment.

The resolution recognizes the Central Asian nations' efforts in implementing current programs aimed at establishing and promoting sustainable tourism throughout the area and applauds their contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its goals in this aspect.

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[12] Bangladesh, et al. *Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Development in Central Asia :* Nov. 2019. *digitallibrary.un.org*, https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3835167 .

Implementation of the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism

The Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, adopted by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) in a resolution (56/212) in 1999 and recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001, provides a framework of guidance for sustainable tourism development. It is a collection of fundamental principles intended to direct various stakeholders, such as governments, the corporate sector, and civil society towards responsible and sustainable tourism growth.

Its goal is to reduce tourism's negative effects on the environment, cultural heritage, and communities while increasing the advantages. Although the Code of Ethics is intended to be a voluntary, non-binding document, its content and requirements may be integrated into laws, rules, and ethical guidelines. Furthermore, in 2015, the Committee submitted to the UNWTO General Assembly a report to strengthen the efficiency of its rules and a proposal to turn the Code into an international treaty.

The UNWTO promotes the adoption of the Code of Ethics through its work program and the Committee. It is the United Nations system's specialized agency in charge of promoting responsible, sustainable, and widely available tourism across the globe in accordance with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.

In 2003, the World Committee on Tourism Ethics (WCTE) was formed. The Committee, as a subsidiary body of the UNWTO General Assembly, directly reports to the Assembly through its Chair. In 2017, the Committee revised the paper "Tips for a Responsible Traveler" in honor of the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development. In line with the UNWTO campaign "Travel. Enjoy. Respect," the paper addresses the principles of the Code of Ethics related directly to tourists providing essential guidance on respecting common heritage, protecting the environment, supporting the local economy, and, overall, being an informed and respectful tourist.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the paper was amended in the first half of 2020 to provide revised recommendations for safe and secure travel to be provided.

UNWTO Reports on Over-Tourism

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has issued two volumes of a report titled "'Over tourism'? - Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth

Beyond Perceptions." The UNWTO offered 11 strategies and 68 initiatives in the first volume of this study, which was issued on September 24, 2018, to improve, control and monitor the increase in tourism around the world.

The report's second volume, which was released in January 2019, has 18 case studies from cities across the Americas, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe. The focus of these case studies is on how each city has used the 11 measures outlined in the first volume of this study to better manage and govern tourism. Overseeing and managing tourist flows in cities for the benefit of visitors and residents alike is a major issue that the tourism industry is trying to overcome.

The report includes and analyzes residents' perceptions of tourism in eight European cities - Amsterdam, Barcelona, Berlin, Copenhagen, Lisbon, Munich, Salzburg and Tallinn.[13]

It recommends 11 strategies and 68 actions to help recognize and contain visitor growth in tourism hotspots. By implementing the policy recommendations that are proposed in the report, inclusive and sustainable tourism can be achieved. These recommendations will act as a catalyst and contribute to the UN 2030 agenda and moreover to sustainable tourism in its entirety.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

The Netherlands Tourist Board

The Netherlands Tourist Board released statements in May of 2019 announcing that it will stop extensively marketing the country's capital as a travel destination and instead focus on distributing the country's tourists to lesser-known areas. Amsterdam announced additional efforts to administer visitor numbers, some including a ban on group tours in the Red Light District beginning in 2020, as well as a prohibition on beer bikes. It also took down the 'I Love Amsterdam' sign outside of the Rijksmuseum, which was believed to be used for over 6000 selfies every day.

Police officers were given mobile card readers, allowing them to impose fines on anyone engaging in disruptive behaviour – behaviour that is deemed as socially inappropriate and causes environmental implications. The city implemented a number of

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[13] *'Overtourism'? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions Report – Tourism for SDGs*. https://tourism4sdgs.org/research/overtourism-understanding-and-managing-urban-tourism-growth-beyond-perceptions-report/.

other changes, including raising the visitor fee for anyone residing in an Amsterdam hotel, or Airbnb rental.

The Establishment of Innovative Sustainable Routes

A great example of innovative and sustainable routes is the EuroVelo routes, which are essentially a collection of 17 long-distance bicycle courses that cross each other and give tourists the chance to utilize the EuroVelo routes to travel across the European continent by bike. Michal Cramer, a former member of the European Parliament (MEP) and chairman of the European Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee, proposed the Iron Curtain Trail in 2005 to commemorate the previous separation in Europe and at the same time promote development. Over the years, European agencies have provided a lot of assistance to the Iron Curtain Trail (also known as EuroVelo 13) since it overlaps with major European tourist attractions and is suitable for all types of cyclists. The European Parliament recognized the "Road to the Iron Curtain" as a model initiative for ecotourism in 2005 and urged Member States to follow the example of contributing measures and implement and promote its multiple benefits.

Creating the Infrastructure for Sustainable Tourism

Nature's ecosystem services are the primary infrastructure that allows sustainable tourism, as well as any other economic activity, to thrive. As a result, it is critical that they are preserved. Furthermore, when supported by the construction of digital infrastructures, sustainable tourism develops. The Riverways initiative, a Joint Initiative of New York State and the City of Rochester,[14] intended to improve the conditions for long-term water tourism growth and development in comparison to other areas of the travel industry, as well as to address seasonality and congestion in major tourist locations. Governments, entrepreneurs, and tourism specialists worked together on three fronts: a) finding new goods and business possibilities; b) upgrading infrastructure, and c) establishing a targeted marketing plan.

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[14]*Story Map Journal*.
https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapJournal/index.html?appid=44c6876c669346dd8755e93ecbbd5159
#:~:text=A%20Joint%20Initiative%20of%20New%20York%20State%20and%20the%20City%20of%20R
ochester,-
Send%20keyboard%20focus&text=The%20ROC%20the%20Riverway%20initiative,core%20of%20Roch
ester%2C%20New%20York.

The product of their collaboration is that the rivers in question have been revitalized, benefiting both nature and local and foreign tourism. Fifteen new water tourist factors were developed or enhanced as a result of the initiative.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Taxation of Visitors

Taxes on tourists are quite controversial; they are usually too cheap to deter visitors, yet they enable local governments to finance tourism management, flora restoration, and litter removal. Since a major factor of "Responsible Tourism'' is to regard tourists as temporary inhabitants, it is logical to expect visitors to contribute to the upkeep of the public realm they are visiting. Tourism taxes are commonly collected from lodgings providers and, on rare occasions, from tour operators.

Seasonal Dispersion of Visitors

Promoting visitor dispersal inside and outside a city is one of the major techniques adopted by cities to reduce the impacts of over-tourism. This is a great approach, as studies have shown that tourists are interested in assisting when it comes to over-tourism. Tourists do not encounter "true locals" or get a sense of what it is like to live in a city when they visit the major tourist attractions. If travelers assist the city in dispersing themselves across the city, the impact on the area's top tourist attractions will be reduced, and tourists will have a more holistic view of the destination country.

"De-marketing Method"

There is not a shortage of approaches to reducing tourism flows when using the method of "de-marketing". The first option is to simply limit the number of available accommodation offers: refusing new hotel permits; limiting Airbnb capacity, and restricting cruise ship access could reinforce this proposal.

Alternative options could include decreasing or eliminating the promotion of these overcrowded hotspots, in addition to promoting lesser-known areas that can accommodate tourists with greater ease. Another method is regulated pricing used to target certain segments of the market as part of a marketing strategy.

Reducing Demand in Peak Season

Tourists frequently wish to travel to the same locations at the same time (i.e. school holidays), but this leads to overcrowded high seasons. Spreading visitor arrivals out over

longer periods is one method for combating over-tourism. Methods like seasonal pricing and greater advertising of the shoulder seasons can significantly reduce demand during peak periods.

Setting Limits of Acceptable Change

This is a collaborative strategy in which residents, governments, the tourism sector, environmentalists, and others collaborate to identify when and how tourism becomes problematic. These local stakeholders identify several signs or experiences that suggest that tourism is becoming an issue. Water shortages, increased food prices, restricted access to marketplaces, pollution, a lack of parking spots, an increase in drunken misbehaviour, and so on are examples of these constraints caused by over-tourism. These are the 'limits for acceptable change'[15] and essentially changes will be required as they occur.

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