Limiting overtourism; the desirable new behaviours of the smart tourist

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ABSTRACT

Overtourism is more than a summer headline in European newspapers. It is a significant development in the evolution of global tourism. Then UNWTO Secretary General, Taleb Rifai, speaking to the Guardian newspaper in August 2017, said the rise in anti-tourist sentiment is “a very serious situation that needs to be addressed in a serious way” (The Guardian, 2017). Many stakeholders have a role to play in improving the liveability of those communities already affected by tourism. Governments, promotion bodies and communities all need to be involved. Further, tourists themselves must be considered in the matrix of evolution and change to avoid overtourism.

It is the argument of this paper that simply providing authoritarian statements of how tourists should change may be unsuccessful. The various codes of conduct promulgated by organisations may be ignored if they are designed in a top down way. Edicts and codes suggesting “Tourists must…” and “Tourists should….” conduct themselves in specific ways may not be aligned with tourists’ needs. In this paper the needs of tourists are brought together with the requirements to limit overtourism. This marriage of interests is achieved by considering the ways tourists in crowded and pressured settings manage to have a successful visit. From these success stories, it is possible to build an inventory of tactics about effective and smart tourist behaviour. Some of these tactics have a role to play in creating more positive outcomes and limiting the effects of tourists on the destinations they visit.

This paper builds on the analysis of pivotal micro cases to offer useful applied directions for limiting overtourism. The strategically selected marker cases, all from Europe, range from congested attractions - the Tower of London, United Kingdom and Juliet’s balcony, Verona, Italy - to destinations where there is typical pressure on the city core; Venice and Florence Italy, Oxford, United Kingdom and to a lesser extent, Innsbruck, Austria. Academic work already completed by the research team members at these sites, supplemented by detailed analysis of tourists’ advice for a successful trip and multiple site visits by the researcher, provide useful intelligence to build a repertoire of recommendations.

In conclusion, specific insights from these micro case studies emphasise that a fresh focus on the tourists’ preparation, and the building of their on-site skills represents necessary evolutionary pathways for limiting overtourism. Five specific themes are developed from the data. The need for smart preparation, to be a smart guest, a smart traveller, a smart user of technology and for tourists to be smart in immersing themselves in their experiences were identified. These themes offer helpful directions to maintain the well-being of both tourists and those who live where so many others visit. In
the Tourism Intelligence Forum, it is fitting to advance the cause of making tourists smarter and more intelligent to reduce some of the effects of overtourism.

INTRODUCTION

The publicity given to and the reality of anti-tourism sentiment in recent European northern hemisphere summers is a topic of concern to many stakeholders (Leisure Tourism News, 2017; The Guardian, 2017). Local residents, especially those living very close to the intensely visited districts, are genuinely suffering from both summer congestion and the cumulative, year on year impacts of large numbers of tourists visiting them. The totality of the tourism and tourist induced pressures have been labelled overtourism; a media created term which now effectively supersedes the more formal, long standing academic labels of the social, cultural, economic and environmental impacts of tourism (cf. Jafari, 2005). Venice, for example, has 55,000 residents and hosts 30 million visitors. Relaxing outdoors, doing the local shopping, accessing transport, and simply walking around the city all become challenging activities for Venetian citizens in the presence of thousands of others. In Paris, waiting times for major attractions can exceed 3-4 hours, with attended traffic and community facility overload. In Barcelona, pedestrian foot traffic along Las Ramblas is more like joining a crowd leaving a football stadium than engaging in a leisurely stroll.

The local community is not the only stakeholder affected by overtourism and its challenges. Quite rightly, businesses may be fearful that they will become the targets of the residents’ anti-tourism sentiment and that their profitability may be disrupted if strong regulations are introduced which demand limits to numbers and capacity. Tourists, too, are potential losers as anti-tourism sentiment rises; not only will poor service be likely to prevail, but also covert hostility may evolve into direct aggression (cf. Waller, 2011).

These pressures are not entirely new, nor are they understudied (Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Murphy, 1985; Jafari, 1990, 2005; Lew, Hall & Williams, 2014; Smith, 1978). What is new is the pervasiveness and perceived significance of the problem, especially in Europe, as the demand for travel continues to rise (UNWTO, 2018). Importantly, the surge of new numbers of tourists from Asia to key European destinations swells the existing intra-European congestion with a new set of culturally different visitors who are less attuned to the local sensitivities (Pearce & Wu, 2017). The problems are not simply confined to Europe, and indeed much can be learned from other settings, notably the pressures on tourist places in China, but the focus of attention in this paper is the European setting.

Quick fix solutions such as cynically proclaiming that tourists should not visit popular destinations, and drastically increasing entrance fees or prices, have been offered, but may not be the only or best ways to tackle this kind of tourism issue. Faced with the complexity of the task, and its prevalence in many locations, the topic of overtourism can be classified as a wicked problem (cf. Head, 2008; Rittel & Webber, 1973). The terminology characterises those issues involving many stakeholders with interdependent roles producing systems with undesirable consequences. The singular advantage of using the wicked problem language is to borrow, from that field, the special ideal of pursuing one kind of solution to the topic, while recognising that it is only a part of the matrix of possibilities. In essence, the diligent pursuit of one theme or thread in a wicked problem can begin to untangle the many layers of action which can assist in ameliorating the difficulty. In this paper, the specific thread to be explored is the role of the tourist, and in particular, the need for tourists to become smarter to confront this contemporary challenge of overtourism. The agenda for this paper is to consider both the main themes in the literature on overtourism or its earlier variants, and then generate insights from carefully selected cases to explore how smart tourist behaviour might provide one set of solutions for improving the outcomes for multiple parties.
LITERATURE REVIEW

Three areas of interest build the background and context for this study. Initially, the foundation studies about community reactions to tourism are considered. Next, the best current conceptual or theoretical ideas about the understanding and management of intense tourism pressure are reviewed. In a linked part of this second section, the appeal and usefulness of ways to influence tourists in these kinds of problematic settings are analysed. This review material then leads to the value of an emic approach to tourism management, that is considering the solutions tourists themselves use and the need to conduct fresh investigations from this perspective. The aims of the study flow from these background and contextual considerations and are then stated precisely at the conclusion of the review.

Communities and Tourism: Foundation studies.

Since the earliest definition of the term tourist, and the origins of the sector, there have been some criticisms of tourists by local residents (Young, 1973). The leading economist Adam Smith in the eighteenth century referred to tourists as ignorant, unprincipled, ill-disciplined, and from the point of view of residents, overabundant (Hibbert, 1969). The academic studies of tourism began to highlight and address the problem of negative reactions to tourism in the 1960s and 1970s. Typically, it was the small island communities in developing parts of the world which first experienced what has now been labelled overtourism. In Fiji, Hawaii and in the Caribbean, insensitive tourism development and the growing numbers of tourists who intruded on the lives of the locals were identified as the causes of resentment (Finney & Watson 1973; Turner & Ash, 1975). Anthropologists such as Valene Smith and geographers such as Geoff Wall and Peter Murphy raised voices of concern about the damage that tourism could do in the more sensitive and remote but popular destinations (Jafari, 1990; Smith, 1978; Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Murphy, 1985).

Stage models about tourism impacts and the reactions to tourists were developed from this work. Firstly Doxey (1975), then Smith (1978), followed by Butler (1980), all proposed sequences or steps in the evolution of tourism with attendant rising concern about too much tourism. Doxey’s work is perhaps the most relevant to the tourist related components of interest in this paper. He suggested four stages in the local response to the arrival of tourists: delight, apathy, irritation, and finally antagonism. The gradations between these steps or stages were not always clear, but the work stimulated researchers to conduct local case studies of community responses to tourism. A suite of studies in the 1980s and the 1990s pursued the topic of the social impacts of tourist-local contact and the effects of industry development (Pearce, Moscardo, & Ross, 1996). Much of this work involved commentaries by field researchers, notably anthropologists sociologists and geographers, on specific examples of tourism’s impact. There was some frustration with these studies within the research community since the findings did not show many consistencies and lacked an effective integrative theory with which to build an understanding and implement positive remedial steps. Indeed, van Doorn (1989) criticised the work as offering not much more than “small talk at a social gathering” (1989: p.89).

Following these criticisms, the work moved to more systematic surveys of the perceived impacts of tourists and tourism. Pizam (1978) was one of the first influential researchers to direct attention to the need for sound empirical studies of the topic, rather than relying for our understanding on broadly based ethnographic research. Again, in time, researchers generated considerable activity in this topic area reporting on sample surveys of residents’ attitudes to tourists (Pearce, Moscardo, & Ross, 1996). Once more, the findings were not easy to integrate as the different measures used, the distinctive kinds of tourism histories of the destinations studied, and the techniques for sampling the community in a representative way inevitably produced a mix of tolerance and distaste for tourists and tourism growth. Arguably too, this kind of survey work began to feed on itself; it became a productive area for scholarly publications but was not generating many solutions for the core problem of managing the social impacts of tourism and tourists.
Communities and Tourism: Current ideas.

The studies which surveyed residents’ attitudes to tourism were often, and sometimes still are, conceived in a narrow way. The fundamental logic was, and is, that by obtaining an overview of how local residents viewed tourists, then tourism policy makers can better plan for less intrusive forms of development. The approach ignored three fundamental points. Communities are not homogenous entities and average views matter less than the consistent sub-sets of views held by special groups (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Secondly, the genesis of attitudes is not always simply from direct contact and personal experience. Importantly, the role of the media and representations of critical incidents may be formative influences overriding the individual’s experience of contact. And thirdly, as the commentators on sustainable tourism have emphasised, the decision makers in a community, those who hold real financial power, are only partly, and sometimes not at all, interested in the resident response when large scale economic decisions and investments are being contemplated (Bramwell & Lane, 2011). Nevertheless, a growing realisation of the power of negative voices towards development and untrammelled growth is arguably building a new civic sensitivity to too much tourism. As the Mayor of Venice has said “we need to reclaim our city for ourselves or at least share it better” (Large cruise ships banned from Venice, 2017).

These concerns, both at the applied and academic level, have prompted analysts to look at the residents’ responses to tourism in more insightful ways. Building on the theory of social representations, it is now desirable that community survey work towards tourists and tourism meets new criteria (Howarth, 2005). There needs to be an appreciation of the views of sub-sets of people in the community who share the perspectives; in the language of market segmentation an understanding of what segments of the community think what about tourism is required. This more differentiated view of the perspectives on tourism within a community needs to be accompanied by an appreciation of the representation and communications about tourism in the public arena (cf. Moscovici, 1988). Both in the traditional media, and increasingly in the social media of contemporary communication and influence, how incidents and events of pressure and conflict are reported, and the reactions to these pivotal incidents, are formative issues to consider in researching and beginning to manage the impacts.

A third criteria and pivotal idea for contemporary work of influence is to recognise the role of power (Bramwell, 2006; Bramwell & Lane, 2011). Those who have invested millions of euros, dollars, yen or RMB in tourism are not going to simply downgrade their operations. Indeed, they are most interested in seeking to manage contemporary problems in a way that keeps at least the same number of tourists flowing into their businesses while managing the attendant pressures. This view is reinforced by the voices of many tourism ministers who seek to avoid overtourism but not limit the benefits of the sector (Leisure Tourism News, 2017). At the heart of this power base is the need to feed off continuing tourist demand, a force which itself relies on positive tourist experiences. The pivotal implications from this refreshed view of how to think about community responses to tourism include continuing to understand how tourists manage to have enjoyable and positive experiences in these crowded situations. This topic represents one of the pathways to generate ideas about limiting overtourism while not diminishing the economic power of the sector. There are no claims here that this pathway is any kind of total solution to the wicked problem; instead it is a direction which may generate special insights and new approaches.

The existing work on creating good behaviour codes for tourism has seen mixed results (Fennell & Malloy, 2007; Font, 2005; Swarbrooke, 1999). Advice and instructions in such codes include: “Use locally owned infrastructure for accommodation and transport where possible, Spread the financial benefits amongst local people and operators, Provide employment and leadership opportunities for local people” and many similar items exhorting tourists to be good public citizens (Intrepid Travel, 2017). Some difficulties with these listings include the perspective that knowing about the good behaviours and being able to enact them in international settings are rather separate issues. Judgments about who benefits from the tourists’ spending in terms of the ownership of businesses and the fairness of prices...
in unfamiliar settings are just some of the difficulties. Secondly, the existing codes are mostly constructed by management and have an idealistic and utopian quality. In the dystopian world of extremely congested and stressful tourism sites suffering from massive tourist numbers, such idealistic sentiments are unlikely to be enacted, even if they are known.

A different perspective is adopted to developing tourist behaviour directives in this study. The approach considers the success stories tourists provide in managing a good time in these difficult overtourism cases. This approach therefore highlights actions which may benefit tourists and the businesses they support. It also improves the likelihood of the tactics being employed by tourists because they serve the tourists’ interests. There is though, an important and fundamental caveat to the approach. Some of the suggested actions and tactics for success may be harmful or indeed exacerbate the problem for local residents. For example, using a quiet corner of a less visited church for smoking or eating may suit some tourists but run counter to the direction of the study. These kinds of tactics will be eliminated from the suggested approaches.

STUDY AIMS

By considering the history and directions of studies about the community reactions to tourism, the aims of the present work can be contextualised and specified. It is the first intention of this study to identify contemporary tactics tourists use to have positive and enjoyable experiences in crowded tourist settings, notably the kinds of settings which are now being labelled as examples of overtourism. The second aim of the work is to select from this set of tactics and behaviours, those which hold the most promise for limiting overtourism. The work has a European focus, but the principles and ideas have a global applicability.

METHOD

Many studies in social science employ the approach of learning from multiple case studies (Yin, 2009). Key researchers advise using a structured and stratified approach when selecting a set of case studies to provide insights about a problem (Flyvbjerg, 2005). In this study, three case study selection criteria prevailed; sites varying in scale, sites in different European countries, and locations with established relevant data which had been studied by the research team. The cases selected were as follows: three destinations where there is typical pressure on the city core; Venice and Florence Italy, Oxford, United Kingdom, and one less overcrowded, historic city site as a contrast, that of Innsbruck, Austria. There were also two congested attractions chosen to explore overtourism issues at a different site specific scale: the large, very popular fee charging Tower of London, United Kingdom, and the free access, small courtyard featuring Juliet’s balcony, Verona, Italy. These six diverse and strategically selected cases offer variety, thus permitting both commonalities and idiosyncratic issues to be assessed (Yin, 2009). The model for the selection process closely follows that recommended in learning from case studies where it is proposed that leading examples be selected but a range of allied cases with different features are also incorporated into the design to provide contrasts and benchmarks (Eisenhardt, 1989).

For readers and researchers unfamiliar with these settings, a brief case by case description is provided as advocated in the work of Pearce (2008) and Van der Borg, Costa and Gotti (1996). Abundant publicity about these sites provides information to supplement the academic studies which inform the cases (Pearce, 2008; Pearce & Wu, 2017; Pearce & Mohammadi, in press; Zhang & Pearce, 2016). Select media reports or relevant commentaries accompany the descriptions.

Venice, Italy. Perhaps more than any other destination Venice is the prime exemplar of overtourism. Passengers from the controversial mega-size cruise ships account for 2.5 million of the 30 million
visitors who seek to photograph, eat in and experience the plazas and landmarks of the canal dominated medieval city. Recent site visits and ongoing studies by the researcher and team members examining attitudes to transport, congestion and the gondola rides identified many of the stresses on the city residents and challenges to the visitor experience. This detailed work is in preparation but the ideas generated in the studies contribute to the present analysis. https://skift.com/2017/07/27/venice-is-tackling-overtourism-by-telling-tourists-to-follow-the-golden-rule/

Florence, Italy. The art and architecture of Florence have been tourist drawcards for several centuries. Now, 17 million tourists visit this capital of the Tuscan region. The tight spaces and small streets surrounding the Duomo, the pivotal cathedral hub of the Renaissance buildings, have become the crowded queuing areas for those wishing to enter the key religious buildings, museums and art galleries. Survey studies by the researcher and colleagues have highlighted the focus and concentration of tourists along specific routes with attendant stresses to local citizens. www.theflorentine.net/art-culture/2017/09/italy-tourists/

Oxford, United Kingdom. The famous University consists of an architecturally appealing mix of old colleges, each embellished by manicured English lawns and gardens. The golden sandstone buildings, many of which were built in the seventeenth century, are dispersed around the curving streets of an essentially medieval town layout. The High Street is the focus for souvenir hunters. The distinctive Radcliffe camera and Bodleian library, acknowledged architectural masterpieces, have always been popular. They are arguably now surpassed as attractions by the interest in Christchurch College created by the Harry Potter series of books and films. In summer, footpaths and cycle ways are jammed by the influx of close to seven million tourists – most of whom arrive on coaches on day trips or visit the city for short language learning courses. http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/oxford-tourist-hell-summer-months-mary-clarkson-lord-mayor-labour-councillor-edinburgh-small-city-a7882776.html

Innsbruck, Austria. Innsbruck is one of the cross roads cities of Europe. The city is at the midpoint of the passageway through the Alps from northern to Southern Europe. The rococo and gothic style buildings represent the symbolic power of the once extensive Austro-Hungarian empire and, in summer, provide much of the tourist interest for the well-preserved city core known as the old town. As a moderately priced winter snow based destination, Innsbruck residents have to cope with different kinds of tourists in its markedly different seasons. In the selection of sites, arguably Innsbruck suffers the least from overtourism, thus offering some contrasts to other key study sites. https://www.tripadvisor.com.au/ShowUserReviews-g190445-d195374-r312809257-The_Golden_Roof_Goldenes_Dachl-Innsbruck_Tirol_Austrian_Alps.html

The Tower of London, United Kingdom. The historically important Tower of London is the most visited, entry charging attraction in the United Kingdom. With almost 3 million visitors every year, the Tower permits individual exploration of the site. Many tourists do, however, opt for the informative and richly humorous guided tours conducted by the colourful ex-military characters known as the Beefeaters. Key events associated with the history of the site sometimes produces queues that last for hours, even forcing the closure of nearby local underground stations as the capacity to manage the visitors is not available. Local residents are given warnings to manage the consequences of congestion and tourists advised about the best times and days for visiting. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/history/world-war-one/11202631/Dont-visit-the-poppies-at-the-Tower-of-London-public-told.html

Juliet’s balcony Verona Italy. The fame of the site is dependent on a rather spurious link to Shakespeare’s famous play Romeo and Juliet. The space of interest is actually a small rectangular courtyard which features a life size, bronze statue of Juliet located below a balcony. The buildings around the courtyard are three stories high and adjoin one another with no gaps or spaces. There is a sign advising tourists not to deface the walls; and a quotation about Romeo seeing Juliet and comparing her to the rising sun. Nevertheless, the walls of the courtyard, to approximately the height of two metres,
are nearly completely covered in the text of lovers’ messages. There are small padlocks attached by tourists to available railings and even plants. These locks are widely used to signify the strength of a couple’s relationship. The main space is an open access area. There is no entrance charge but it is possible, for a fee, to climb stairs to the first floor of Juliet’s house, visit a small museum there, and venture onto the balcony.  


The approach to building the recommendations was developed as follows. Throughout, the researcher and colleagues focussed on the tactics and skills tourists use to ensure a successful visit. Published academic studies about these crowded, and sometimes very stress inducing sites served as an academic base for the work. The research team’s own recent studies and personal visits to all of the sites also served as a foundation. The archival data and comments were then considered. The total number of the available Trip Advisor commentaries was extensive. As of January 2018, the numbers of comments were Venice 1.026 million, Florence, 1.429 million, Oxford, 174,000, Innsbruck 76,000, the Tower of London 51,000, and Juliet’s balcony 9,100. For the attractions, specific comments were readily available. For the cities, The TripAdvisor remarks are dispersed among restaurants, hotels, attractions, tours and other services. The research team chose three leading attractions in each city and then assembled the comments about those attractions to represent the cities. The attractions chosen were St Mark’s square, Doges Palace, and Venice gondola ride (Venice); the Duomo cathedral, Uffizi galleries, and Piazza della Signoria (Florence); Christchurch College, University museum, and the Bodleian library (Oxford); and Innsbrucker Nordkettenbahnen, Swarovski Crystal Worlds, and the Golden Roof (Innsbruck).

Next, only the most positive five star ratings reported in English, and thus accessible to the research team, were considered. This selection was consistent with the perspective offered in the literature review, and in the argument for this study, that solutions achieved by tourists who had a successful experience in these settings could offer a contribution to the analysis of overtourism issues. Evaluations were then limited to those recorded since May 2017. This selection was consistent with the rising recent concerns about overtourism and also established the contemporary technology-based nature of some of the solutions. This filtering further reduced the task of inspecting the amount of data.

Having delimited the data to more manageable proportions, amounting then to 872 in total, the researcher and assistants built an Excel listing of the relevant comments at each location. Advisory comments about behaving in smart ways included both planning actions and on-site behaviours; that is comments about pre-trip activities as well as on-site responses to the situation were examined, copied and recorded in an Excel spreadsheet. A checking process was implemented whereby two research team members looked at the data for each location. Many, but certainly not all, tourists simply reported the pleasure of the visit and offered little in the way of advice to other people. It was noteworthy, however, that solid numbers of tourists provided suggestions for managing a good time to others. The numbers of advisory responses were Venice (225), Florence (196), Oxford (67), Innsbruck (63), Tower of London (213) and Juliet’s balcony (108). Such instructive, altruistic behaviour by reviewers is a feature of social media and travel evaluations (Sigala, Christou, & Gretzel, 2012).

Manual content analysis was used to develop integrative themes from the Excel listings. The steps in this procedure included the recommended pathways for building more integrative themes and codes from raw data (Berge, 2007). That is, the listing of the items to be considered were reviewed. In this case the lines on the Excel spread sheet were examined. Common items in these lists were considered and trial themes were written down after previewing the first 30 items for each location. The adequacy of these codes was then revisited as more information was considered. The process follows the concept of saturation - choosing themes which capture all the information being considered (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Changes to the trial themes were usually required. By re-reading and checking the materials, a final list of meaningful themes was developed. The development of themes by gradually improving trial
summary headings through checking and re-checking material is a key way to develop satisfactory integrative themes (Gomm, 2004).

RESULTS

To ensure the trustworthiness of findings from qualitative research, it is valuable to present the results in ways which highlight the steps taken to realise the outcomes (de Crop, 2004). The first aim of this study was to assemble tourists’ suggestions to maximise their site visits from a variety of carefully selected overtourism cases. It was consistent with this aim, and the method employed of inspecting data from key cases, that each site produced some subtly different suggestions for other tourists. There were also many repetitive points of generic advice. Content issues are of less interest in this study, so the many detailed suggestions about which attractions or features within attractions to visit were not considered. These recommendations do, however, form a part of the construction of the tourists’ intellectual capital for a visit and build one aspect of being a smart tourist. Table 1 provides examples from the Excel spread sheets of the frequency and kinds of comments offered at each site.

Table 1. Examples of recommended actions for successful tourist visits (N= number of highly satisfied tourists’ advisory comments from the period and sites sampled)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Illustrative examples of suggested actions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Venice (N=225)</td>
<td>Avoid being effectively herded along a set path, design your own tour, buy the hop on and off tickets for the Vaperotto, respect the locals going to work, be prepared to queue, plan for the queuing, go to St Mark’s square before 9am or late in the evening, recognise that prices will be very high even extreme but it is a privilege to pay for the setting, be wary of sellers and pigeons, off season is best, spend time in the highlight areas after 4pm when the cruise ship passengers have left, get the early gondola rides, use apps to monitor what people say</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florence (N=196)</td>
<td>Take a guided walking tour, buy a skip the line ticket but know there still may be waiting lines, be prepared for effort and even claustrophobia in climbing the Duomo, book in advance for tours, be polite to the locals and share the city, visit the Duomo several times at night as well as in the day, be aware of the scams of gypsies and sellers, know you will have to wait at the Uffizi gallery, plan what you want to see in each big gallery or museum, if you are older then use the hop on and hop off bus, take water with you everywhere, dress comfortably in the heat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxford (N=67)</td>
<td>Use a guide—a student if possible, use the hop on and off bus, follow a favourite figure C.S. Lewis, Tolkein, Inspector Morse, it is not all about Harry Potter, plan for diversity-visit the parks, museums, colleges and shops, select 2-3 colleges and take time there, respect the rules-students, scholars and locals live and study here, study the museum history, check websites for busy visit times and avoid them, use apps for insightful self-organised tours, go to the visitor centre.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innsbruck (n=63)</td>
<td>Dress carefully and plan for the weather, buy the city pass as it saves time, money and adds flexibility, use the information centre, training needed for serious mountain walkers, take time to stroll the old city, go early to the old town, avoid the 10-4 coach tours, slow yourself down to enjoy the subtly beautiful buildings, soak up the atmosphere slowly, be brave and strong at the ski jump and mountain top-worth the view</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tower of London (N=213)</td>
<td>Take the tour with the Beefeaters, plan for lots of time e.g. 3 hours, go early, pre-purchase tickets, dress comfortably with walking shoes, use the audio-guided tour, plan your exit and transport—it can be a problem, before you go</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
design your own interest points and highlights by reading, prepare children for the (bloodthirsty) stories, use your imagination

| Juliet’s balcony (N=108) | Tolerate others, participate in the activities, boost your enjoyment by getting into the romantic spirit, time your visit-go early or late, disperse to other areas as well as this site, take the tour, be respectful to other tourists, read your Shakespeare, act out your love and romance fantasy, be aware of queues, plan a short visit to avoid the crowd stress, create your own good time, enjoy the festive feel of the crowd, be wary of pickpockets. |

The second aim of this study was to consider and integrate these points of advice and seek to draw from them some lessons for limiting overtourism. The common threads in the remarks from the highly satisfied tourists (N=872) across these locations were then grouped under 11 themes.

Although advice to researchers suggests that the best coding schemes should not have headings which accommodate multiple cases (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000), the themes used did overlap in some ways. This was not considered to be a substantial problem as they were seen as a first step in producing a manageable set of clear recommendations for community and industry use. The 872 remarks thus produced 1100 items for further coding. The themes identified from the commentaries, as well as through the academic on-site studies, are summarised and succinctly defined in Table 2. The data reported after each theme again reflects the point that a TripAdvisor comment could be coded to one or more themes.

Table 2. Key themes for successful tourist visits in heavily visited settings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme extracted from the tourists’ comments and (times mentioned) N=1100</th>
<th>Succinct definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Time management n=179</td>
<td>Selecting visit times which avoid trouble spots, delay time of visit, go early or late</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guided tour use n=156</td>
<td>Benefitting from the trip structure and insights of the well informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport planning n=112</td>
<td>Preparing arrival and departure strategies, use passes, on-off buses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced smart technology n=106</td>
<td>Using online apps and smartphone technology to manage visits, go to visitor centre apps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street smart awareness n=97</td>
<td>Protection against scams, minor crime and criminal exploitation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-trip awareness n=95</td>
<td>Building personal intellectual capital about the destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive waiting n=94</td>
<td>Building skills in enjoying the time waiting and anticipating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal control n=73</td>
<td>Designing individual itineraries, following interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slow tourism behaviours n=70</td>
<td>Thorough immersive investigation of fewer sites and destinations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local respect n=65</td>
<td>Cheerful, respectful recognition of local rights and rules</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clothing and exercising n=56</td>
<td>Dressing for the activities and building necessary fitness levels</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The themes summarised in Table 2 provide a base for a clearer, structured set of recommendations to help reduce overtourism. In articulating and specifying these themes the aims of the study to inductively derive overtourism recommendations can be fulfilled. As noted previously, there are links among the 11 themes identified and the subsequent discussion highlights these linkages for the specific purpose of limiting overtourism.

There are, arguably, at least five superordinate themes for providing Smart Tourist codes which might reduce overtourism. The rounded percentages in the following summary statements refer to the number
of items in combined categories over the total number of items as reported in Table 2. The first of the linked themes builds on pre-trip awareness and emotional regulation, clothing and exercising—these items are discussed under the theme “Smart preparation” (12% of the items). The next set of items which focus on organising transport and using guided tours are united under the heading “Smart traveller” (24% of the items). Another grouping of ideas includes linking local respect and street smart awareness with the identifier “Smart guest” (15% of the items). A further theme with special power connects advanced smart technology and time management. Here the easy identifier is “Smart technology user” (26% of the items). The final themed area, building on the comments and supported by the on-site researcher studies, integrates the slow tourism behaviours theme, personal control and positive waiting. Here the easy access label is “Smart immersion” (22% of the items).

DISCUSSION

The ways in which the five superordinate themes reported in the Results section can influence overtourism are addressed in turn. It is pivotal to the approach taken in this study to recognise that these themes were drawn from the successful experiences of tourists in the challenging, highly congested case studies. As consumer derived recommendations, they are therefore likely to be appealing solutions for a better tourist experience as well as potentially valuable in limiting overtourism.

Smart Preparation

Being a smart tourist and thereby limiting overtourism is facilitated by serious preparation for the trip. This set of anticipatory activities and behaviours is conceived at the level of the tourist reading about and familiarising themselves with the destination. As a consequence of this self-education, decisions about where to go as well as places to avoid, which may be seen as obligatory for many but of less interest to the individual, can be selected. The getting ready concept is congruent with the idea of being an intelligent tourist (Horne, 1990; Pearce, 2015a, b). It includes developing personal intellectual capital. That is tourists need to build an understanding of sites and locations to maximise personal enjoyment while anticipating that there will be a need for emotional regulation. This concept summarises firstly the need to deal with the frustrations and delays of travel. Emotional regulation also helps the individual greet people with cheerful gratitude for the opportunity to enjoy their world. Intelligent physical preparation for the experience matters too, both in terms of fitness and health issues. Quite simply, wearing the kinds of clothes to make the individual comfortable in the visited setting is a facet of smart preparation. Such attention and planning can reduce personal discomfort and arm the tourist with personal reserves to remain upbeat about the experience and avoid or defuse confrontation with local residents when situations go awry.

Smart Traveller

Getting there, getting around and leaving destinations are key phases of the tourists’ mobility efforts. The many recommendations from the successful tourists highlight the value of using the existing systems of hop on–hop off buses, guided tours, on line pre-departure ticket purchases, local city access cards, discounted advanced bookings, queue avoiding pre-purchase entrance options, and similar tools to facilitate easy movement. It is useful not to carry a heavy bag or backpack and to follow local norms about tipping transport workers and staff. The principles here follow the argument that by facilitating a positive tourist experience, the smart travellers reduces their own frustration. This positive state of mind readies them for more cordial interactions with others. Applying this emotional self-monitoring represents a pathway to be civil to others. The ideas here are consistent with the way emotional states of mind shape our daily interactions (Frederickson, 2009).

Smart Guest

Multiple academic studies, including the key work on social representations identified in the literature review, reveal that critical incidents, perhaps best described as flashpoints of conflict, feed the media
stereotypes which sour residents’ views of tourists. The advisory remarks feature this theme. The smart guest builds a knowledge of what behaviours are permissible, as well as when, where, and how to enact them. Examples which cause friction and which were noted in the reviews includes smoking without considering others, pushing into lines, drinking too much alcohol, walking in forbidden areas, not tipping, using public facilities inappropriately, being loud, and not respecting dress codes (cf. Loi & Pearce, 2015). Guests who conform to local rules of conduct are liked and respected. Such guests defuse the stereotypes and limit the overtourism problem. Cheerful, respectful recognition of local rights and rules makes for smart acceptable guests, even if they are numerous. For protection and safety, the smart guest is also street smart, carrying with them an awareness that a few local predators will seek to exploit the strangers in their midst (Pearce, 2011). Refusals and limiting contact with such individuals are tools to limit these negative features of contact and consequential generalised hostile reactions to residents.

**Smart Technology User**

The advisory comments reveal a new force in tourists’ abilities to manage their time and reduce their impacts. On line live streams of queues, indicative graphics of the peak visit times at sites, mobile guides and recommender systems, and access to the services of a wired, smart destination can shape the tourists’ day to day activity planning. The abundant use of technology to anticipate, embellish and report on tourists’ experiences, including the immediacy of such reporting and the capacity to share it both locally and with those at a distance, can be developed as a key instrument to create less tourist-derived impact (Sigala, Christou, & Gretzel, 2012). The creation of a culture of smart positive waiting (see next section) is an allied new development in academic thinking. It offers a set of practices and opportunities to avoid frustration (Ryan, Hernandez-Maskivker, Valverde, & Pamies-Pallise, 2018). In this context, the use of mobile phone technology as an entertainment resource is a contemporary tool to manage the ubiquitous queues associated with the most popular sites.

**Smart Immersion**

A key theme in the tourists’ comments highlighted the theme of avoiding a culture of complaint about the difficulties encountered and instead promoted the approach of savoring the experience (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). The savoring literature suggests that having a sense of gratitude for being able to visit a place is an important overriding value in diminishing the trials and tribulations of the pressures of visiting. Positive waiting, which can involve enjoying the crowds, inspecting the surroundings, and amusing one’s companions with stories and games, assists in turning a potentially onerous task into an immersive experience. The immediate savoring and the longer term enjoyment are facilitated by the tourists immersing themselves in the activities of the site and maximising their interactions with all those around them. This is co-creation in the broadest sense of that well cited term about contemporary tourism (Prebensen, Vittersø, & Dahl, 2013). The savoring and co-creation concepts can be linked to the benefits of slow tourism, an approach and way of thinking about contemporary travel which stresses living more like a local, appreciating the local life and minor attractions, and providing local economic benefits by behaving in sustainable ways (Fullagar, Markwell, & Wilson, 2012).

In highlighting these five generic areas of advice, the limitations of the study need to be considered. Arguably, some additional points could be introduced into the discussion with another sample of places and tourists’ comments. That possibility can be the task of future research, though it is worth noting that the credibility some of the themes introduced here are reinforced by their appearance in other sources such as the deliberations of tourism ministers (Leisure Tourism news, 2017) and the attempts by governments to manage their citizens’ behaviour abroad (Pearce & Wu, 2017). Local and specific site recommendations can be studied in individual settings to draw out the particular ways to express these themes in online and printed advice statements. Another limitation is that the study focused on recent and contemporary attempts by tourists themselves to have a successful time in heavily congested spaces. There may be future innovations in technology which will further advance the on-site information for tourists to better manage their visit times and experiences.
There is a full awareness by the researcher and colleagues that this study employs only one approach in the attempt to forge pathways to limit overtourism. Key political and site management decisions can limit numbers, re-route cruise ships, partition areas, raise charges, change walking routes and patterns, improve technology and design more accommodating and pleasant spaces. These are some of the many directions which need to be pursued. There remains, however, the power of the present approach. Few of these other measures will work well if the tourists are dumb and insensitive to the local residents, rather than being smart and intelligent guests.

CONCLUSION

This study analysed pivotal micro cases to offer useful applied directions for limiting overtourism. The strategically selected marker cases, all from Europe, range from congested attractions (the Tower of London, United Kingdom, and Juliet’s balcony, Verona, Italy), to destinations where there is typical pressure on the city core (Venice and Florence, Italy; Oxford, United Kingdom; and to a lesser extent, Innsbruck, Austria). Specific insights from these micro cases emphasise that a fresh focus on the tourists’ preparation, and the building of their on-site skills represents one evolutionary pathway for limiting overtourism. While all of the superordinate themes discussed have positive implications for the visited communities, being a smart technology user, a smart guest and a smart traveller, stand out as three of the identified themes with the power to limit substantially the tourists’ social impacts.

As destinations and businesses seek to manage the problems of overtourism, the ideas developed in this paper have a special force. They are devised from the recommendations of successful smart tourists. The preface to any localised versions of advice built on these recommendations can feature this perspective; that is, these points of advice come from smart tourists who have enjoyed the specific city (or attraction). Across the globe, very few people want to be called dumb. By way of contrast, being labelled a smart tourist is a widely acceptable phrase of praise. It is in the interests of many stakeholders and in the spirit of the Tourism Intelligence Forum to encourage the smart and intelligent tourist.

REFERENCES


