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OVERTOURISM

Research and Development Methods - 1

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ABSTRACT

Over-tourism represents the unsustainable influx of tourists to popular destinations, straining local infrastructure and negatively impacting residents' quality of life. This phenomenon challenges the balance between tourism promotion and preservation of cultural and environmental assets.

Previous research on over-tourism has primarily focused on identifying its impacts on popular tourist destinations. While these studies have shed light on the negative consequences such as environmental degradation and cultural erosion, there is a notable limitation in the methodologies employed, often relying on qualitative assessments or limited scope surveys. This paper argues for a more comprehensive and quantitative approach to better understand the complexities of overtourism and its multifaceted impacts, providing a rationale for new studies to develop sustainable tourism strategies.

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining primary research through surveys and interviews with secondary research utilizing academic journals, reports, and case studies to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue.

Our research highlights the detrimental effects of overtourism, revealing that overcrowded destinations diminish the quality of tourist experiences, leading to hurried and unsatisfying visits. This study underscores the urgent need for sustainable tourism practices to preserve destinations and enhance visitor satisfaction.

2. INTRODUCTION

The global tourism landscape has undergone profound transformations in recent decades, because of technological advancements, shifts in consumer behaviour, and the interconnectedness fostered by globalization. Amidst this evolution, the phenomenon of over-tourism has emerged as a challenge faced by destinations worldwide. Overtourism means too many tourists visiting famous places, putting a lot of strain on local facilities, nature, and the people who live there. This surge not only strains the delicate balance between tourism promotion and preservation but also poses significant threats to the integrity of cultural and environmental assets.

The roots of over-tourism can be traced to several interconnected factors that have reshaped the tourism industry in fundamental ways. The rise of social media has played a large role in causing over-tourism by changing how people find, talk about, and visit places. Social media and influencers have made beautiful places and famous landmarks even more popular by sharing stunning photos and recommendations. This has led to a flood of tourists wanting to experience these places for themselves. But the focus on getting the perfect Instagram picture has led to problems. These destinations become overcrowded, losing their original charm and harming the environment. Essentially, they're turning into tourist traps rather than genuine experiences. The COVID-19 pandemic also changed how we view tourism. Travel restrictions and safety concerns meant fewer people visited popular tourist spots. However, it also highlighted just how dependent they are on tourists for income. Additionally, as restrictions were lifted, there was a phenomenon known as "revenge travel," where people who had been cooped up for so long rushed to travel again, leading to sudden surges in tourist numbers. This added another layer of complexity to the recovery process for destinations, as they had to manage both the absence and then the sudden influx of visitors.

Previous studies on over-tourism mostly looked at its impacts on popular tourist spots, but they often used limited methods. This paper says we need a better way to understand over-tourism, using a mix of methods like surveys, interviews, and looking at existing research.

This will help us see how overtourism hinders visitor experiences, damages the environment, and erodes local culture. In conclusion, the tourism industry faces big challenges from over-tourism and recovering from the pandemic. We need to take a smart and complete approach to manage tourism sustainably. By using what we learn from this research, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and destination managers can grow towards a more resilient, equitable, and environmentally responsible tourism future.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 *The rise of the word 'over-tourism' and its reasons*

In recent decades, tourism has seen significant growth driven by two main factors. Firstly, advancements in technology and the rise of low-cost airlines have boosted tourism, expanding its reach even in developing countries. However, this growth has also led to challenges. Unregulated demand and the focus on specific popular destinations have negatively affected both the areas and the local communities. The continuous rise in tourism has given rise to the problem of "overtourism," which is becoming an increasingly important issue discussed in the literature (*Overtourism: A Literature Review to Assess Implications and Future Perspectives*. (2019, June 15). *Overtourism: A Literature Review to Assess Implications and Future Perspectives*. UNWTO indicates that rapid urbanization coupled with the growth of tourism in cities has led to a notable increase in the demand for urban tourism. Global trends like increased mobility, a growing middle class, and more affordable transportation and accommodation options are expected to further boost this demand for urban tourism. There's a growing emphasis on making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable in light of these trends. The term "over-tourism" has emerged as a new buzzword, highlighting existing concepts related to managing tourism congestion and understanding tourism carrying capacity. When establishing mechanisms to monitor and manage tourism congestion, carrying capacity, and the 'limits of acceptable change,' it's crucial to consider both quantitative and qualitative indicators to gain a comprehensive understanding of tourism's impact on destinations and their residents. Furthermore, tourism development and management in cities should be integrated into broader urban planning agendas. ('Overtourism'? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions, Executive Summary, 2018)

3.2 *The Impact of Mass Culture, Film Tourism, and Overtourism on Popular Destinations"*

More than 1.4 billion people travel globally each year, and this number is growing rapidly. The World Tourism Organization forecasts that by 2030, the international tourist arrivals will surpass 2 billion. A significant portion of these travellers tends to concentrate on a handful of popular tourist destinations, leading to an overwhelming presence of tourists in these areas. The reasons for this surge in tourism are varied, ranging from popular films promoting tourist spots to the accessibility of travel to virtually any part of the world. A contemporary trend in tourism revolves around the influence of mass culture. Under this paradigm, individuals select their destinations based on what they encounter on social media, through influencers,

or in movies and television shows. This phenomenon, commonly referred to as film tourism, has occasionally resulted in significant challenges. The proliferation of budget-friendly air travel and cruise options contributes significantly to the phenomenon of overtourism. Many authors have maintained their focus on the traditional debate surrounding the impacts of tourism over the years. Some have introduced new perspectives, while others have aligned with social movements questioning the foundations of tourism development. The terms "overtourism" and "tourism phobia" have gained popularity among scholars due to these shifts (Milano 2019b). Saarinen & Nikula (2013) emphasized the need for more environmentally and host-friendly practices in tourism development. They called for stronger governmental regulations to control tourism growth effectively.

While there were limited publications on overtourism before 2015, there has been a significant increase in journal articles and edited books on the topic in recent years (Cappochi et al. 2019; Wendorf 2019; Pechlaner et al. 2019; Dodds & Butler, 2019a; Milano et al. 2021). However, some publications, like the one by Gonzalez et al. (2018), have used the term "over-tourism" in their titles without discussing it in detail within the content. (framba, 2020)

Adie et al. (2019) conducted a survey involving 26,000 residents to examine the impact of overtourism on communities living near historical sites, monuments, or festivals. The results revealed that residents perceive overtourism as a threat to cultural heritage. Meanwhile, Seraphin et al. (2019) approached the issue of overtourism by focusing on the perspectives of local residents. Their research identified four distinct local attitudes towards foreign visitors: victims, peaceful activists, vandals, and resilient locals. The primary aim of this study was to determine if there was a shared understanding of the term "overtourism" among different social groups and to explore both the potential negative and positive impacts of this phenomenon from the participants' viewpoints. This research aims to provide insights that could lead to short-term and long-term solutions for more balanced and sustainable tourism development in these destinations.

Various factors often work together to contribute to the phenomenon of overtourism. Research indicates a significant decline in the average length of tourist stays globally, decreasing by approximately 15% between 1995 and 2015 (Gössling et al., 2018). Shorter stays often lead tourists to focus on major attractions, resulting in a concentration of tourist traffic both temporally and spatially (García-Palomares et al., 2015; Ram & Hall, 2017), especially when guided by social media rankings of 'best' attractions. According to a report by McKinsey & Company and the World Travel & Tourism Council (2017, p. 14), social media platforms may contribute to directing tourists towards a limited number of popular destinations, exacerbating issues of overcrowding. The same report notes that millennials, more than previous generations, rely on social media and technology for travel decisions. This could lead them to seek non-traditional travel experiences, potentially diverting them from popular destinations. However, it may also guide them towards already crowded locations due to the ease of checking reviews and navigating recommendations (McKinsey & Company & World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017, p. 14). Overall, there remains a gap in understanding the influence of social media on the popularity or 'hype' surrounding specific destinations (Zeng & Gerritsen, 2014). Peeters et al. (2018)

3.3 Cultural preservation and positive impacts of over-tourism

Tourism plays a crucial role in funding the preservation and conservation of cultural heritage, fostering cultural pride, revitalizing customs and traditions, and promoting cultural sharing and learning (Smith, 2009). Some of the common positive impacts of tourism on culture include enhancing cross-cultural interactions, preserving and promoting local arts, crafts, and traditions, empowering host communities, and reinforcing cultural values. In Indonesia,

research by Cole (2007) revealed that villagers view tourism as a source of pride as it reinforces their cultural values. To attract tourists from afar, local children are encouraged to uphold traditional customs, ensuring a robust and authentic cultural foundation without compromising ancestral values. Tourism has facilitated the establishment of cultural identities, such as distinctive housing styles, clothing, and megalithic structures, which serve as group identifiers. These cultural elements are further promoted through photography and marketing in promotional materials at the provincial level. Furthermore, people believe that tourism has enabled them to leverage economic and political capital, enhancing their influence in church affairs and securing positions in state administration (Shahzalal, Vol.20, 2016)

3.4 Complex Landscape of Overtourism: Sustainability, Impact, and Future Challenges - simple language

The multifaceted nature of overtourism is expected to gain increasing significance in the near future, as it intertwines with issues of sustainability, the assessment of tourism's impact on both economic and social aspects of territories and communities, and the adoption of new technologies. This complex concept encapsulates a situation that has evolved over time due to the convergence of various interconnected factors, as extensively discussed in the literature reviewed in this study.

The projected growth in global tourism to 1.8 billion people by 2030 is anticipated to exacerbate the concentration of tourist flows in already popular destinations, posing significant sustainability challenges (Sustainability 2019, 11, 3303). Complicating this scenario is the diminishing bargaining power of local administrations, particularly in negotiations with major airlines, including low-cost carriers. This trend makes it increasingly challenging to manage tourist inflows effectively. Based on our review, and consistent with insights from Butler [52] regarding future approaches, two primary considerations emerge. Firstly, the challenges and issues anticipated for 2030 are likely to mirror those confronting the tourism industry today. Secondly, an emerging priority in addressing overtourism is the imperative to educate tourists or visitors. Specifically, educational initiatives should focus on enhancing understanding of the destination, its customs, traditions, and fostering respect for the territories and communities that uphold them.
(2, 15 June 2019)

3.5 Strategies & measures to reduce overtourism

Strategy	Measures
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<p>Promote the dispersal of visitors within the city and beyond</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Host events in less-visited areas and surroundings of the city.• Develop and promote attractions and facilities in less-visited parts of the city and its surroundings.• Improve capacity and time spent at attractions.• Establish a joint identity for the city and its surroundings.• Implement a travel card for unlimited local travel.
<p>Promote time-based dispersal of visitors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage experiences during off-peak months.• Implement dynamic pricing.• Promote events during off-peak months.• Allocate timeslots for popular attractions and events with real-time monitoring
<p>Stimulate new visitor itineraries and attractions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promote new itineraries at city entry points and through the visitor's journey, including at tourist information centres.• Offer combined discounts for new itineraries and attractions.• Produce city guides and books highlighting hidden treasures.• Create dynamic experiences and routes for niche visitors.• Develop guided tours through less-visited parts of the city.

<p>Review and adapt regulation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review opening times of visitor attractions. • Assess regulation on access for large groups to popular attractions. • Review traffic regulation in busy areas. • Encourage visitors to use parking facilities at the city's edge. • Establish specific drop-off zones for coaches. • Implement pedestrian-only zones. • Review regulation and taxation on platform tourism services and accommodation.
<p>Enhance visitors' segmentation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and target visitor segments with lower impact. • Target repeat visitors.
<p>Ensure local communities benefit from tourism</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase employment opportunities in tourism and create decent jobs. • Promote the positive impacts of tourism and create awareness among local communities. • Involve local communities in developing new tourism products. • Analyse supply-demand potential of local communities and integrate them into the tourism value chain. • Improve infrastructure and services for residents and visitors. • Stimulate development of impoverished neighbourhoods through tourism.

(‘Overtourism’? – Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions, Executive Summary, 2018)

Tourism can achieve sustainability only when it's developed and managed with consideration for both tourists and local communities. This involves engaging with the community, managing congestion, reducing seasonality, planning carefully to respect capacity limits and the unique characteristics of each destination, and diversifying tourism products.

It's important to distinguish between overcrowding, which refers to negative experiences due to an excessive number of tourists at specific locations and times, and overtourism, which is

a broader and more intricate issue. While the tourism industry often views overtourism as an obstacle to continuous growth, its effects can pose existential risks to destinations worldwide. Numerous instances highlight the risks overtourism presents, such as threats to a place's cultural and natural heritage, significant increases in living costs and real estate, leading to a decline in quality of life.

The proliferation of overtourism can compromise the authenticity of a destination and pose significant risks to its future appeal. Uncontrolled tourism development can harm landscapes, seascapes, air and water quality, and residents' living conditions, contributing to economic disparities and social exclusion, among other issues (European Parliament, 2018, ...).

(JOUR, 2021/06/18)

4. RESEARCH GAP

The main gap in the tourism industry that is leading to overtourism is the lack of meaningful and sustainable experiences for travellers and tourists. Traditional tourism tends to concentrate visitors in overcrowded, popular destinations, resulting in several negative impacts:

- **Overcrowding:** Popular tourist spots become overwhelmed with visitors, leading to congestion, long lines, and limited access to attractions. This overcrowding diminishes the quality of the experience for both tourists and locals.
- **Strain on Infrastructure:** The influx of tourists strains local infrastructure, including transportation systems, accommodations, and public facilities. This can lead to wear and tear on infrastructure, overcrowded public transportation, and increased pollution.
- **Environmental Degradation:** Overtourism often leads to environmental degradation, including damage to fragile ecosystems, pollution of natural habitats, and depletion of natural resources. Popular destinations may suffer from littering, habitat destruction, and loss of biodiversity.
- **Cultural Erosion:** Overcrowded destinations may experience a loss of cultural authenticity as they cater more to mass tourism. Local traditions and heritage may become commodified or diluted to appeal to tourist preferences, leading to cultural homogenization and loss of identity.
- **Negative Socio-economic Impacts:** Overtourism can exacerbate socio-economic inequalities by concentrating wealth and economic benefits in certain areas while neglecting others. Local communities may face rising living costs, displacement, and loss of traditional livelihoods due to the tourism industry's focus on popular destinations.

5. OBJECTIVE

- The research aims to evaluate a redefined approach to tourism that focuses on creating meaningful and sustainable experiences for travellers.
- The objective is to assess the impact of spreading tourists across various destinations to reduce overcrowding in popular spots.
- The study highlights the importance of discovering hidden gems to diversify tourist attractions.
- It investigates how this new approach preserves the authenticity of each destination.
- The research explores the facilitation of travellers' immersion in local communities.

- It aims to understand the acquisition of skills by travellers and their contribution to cultural preservation.
- Additionally, the study analyses the role of this approach in promoting exploration and sustainability.
- The research aims to foster deeper connections with diverse cultures and heritage.
- The goal is to mitigate over-tourism by implementing these strategies.

6. METHODOLOGY

In conducting secondary research on the topic of overtourism, a structured approach was employed to explore and understand its multifaceted nature. Initially, a brainstorming session was conducted to generate a comprehensive list of approximately 200 questions related to overtourism. These questions covered various aspects such as its causes, impacts, management strategies, and implications for destinations and communities.

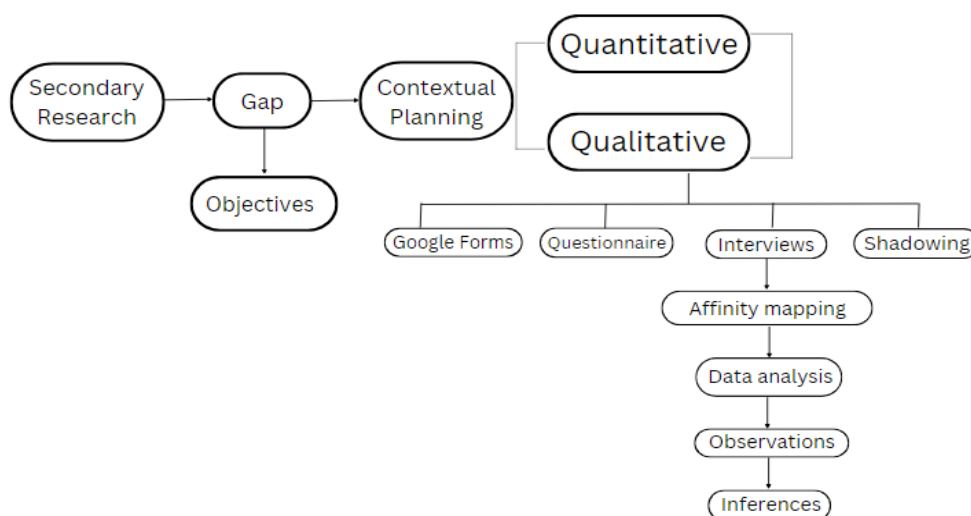
The questions were then categorized into distinct groups or buckets based on their thematic relevance. Categories included environmental impacts, socio-cultural effects, economic implications, management and policy responses, and tourist behaviour, among others. Understanding the significance of each question helped prioritize them based on their relevance and importance to the research objectives.

During this categorization process, repetitive or overlapping questions were identified and either merged to form broader queries or eliminated to streamline the list. This ensured that the research remained focused.

With the refined list of questions in hand, efforts were made to seek evidence from credible sources such as academic journals, reports from international organizations, and case studies to address and answer these questions. Finally, all the gathered information, evidence, and insights were organized using a mind map.

For the primary research component of this study, a multi-faceted approach was adopted to gather insights from a diverse range of stakeholders involved in the tourism industry. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with various stakeholders, including tourists, social media influencers who actively promote tourism destinations, content creators specializing in travel-related content, representatives from travel agencies and historians with expertise in tourism history. These interviews were designed to delve deep into their perspectives, experiences, and opinions regarding overtourism, its causes, impacts, and potential solutions.

In addition to interviews, Google forms were distributed to a broader audience of frequent travelers who have a history of traveling often. This method allowed for the collection of quantitative data on their travel habits, perceptions of overtourism, and experiences with crowded tourist destinations. The combination of qualitative insights from interviews and quantitative data from the Google forms provided a comprehensive understanding of the complex issues surrounding over-tourism from both individual and broader perspectives.



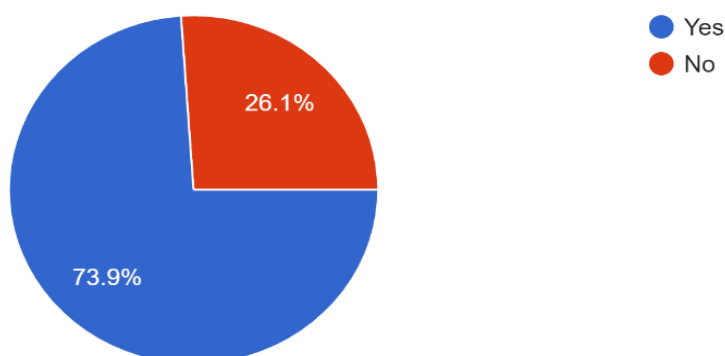
7. PRIMARY RESEARCH

7.1 Survey questions through Google forms for tourists

A Google form was created for tourists to provide feedback on their personal encounters, insights, and thoughts about overtourism. We also inquired about its importance and collected suggestions on how to address overtourism and achieve memorable travel experiences.

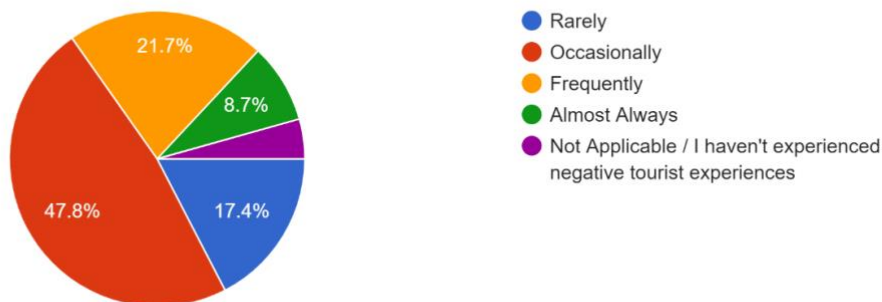
are you aware about the term "OVERTOURISM?"

23 responses



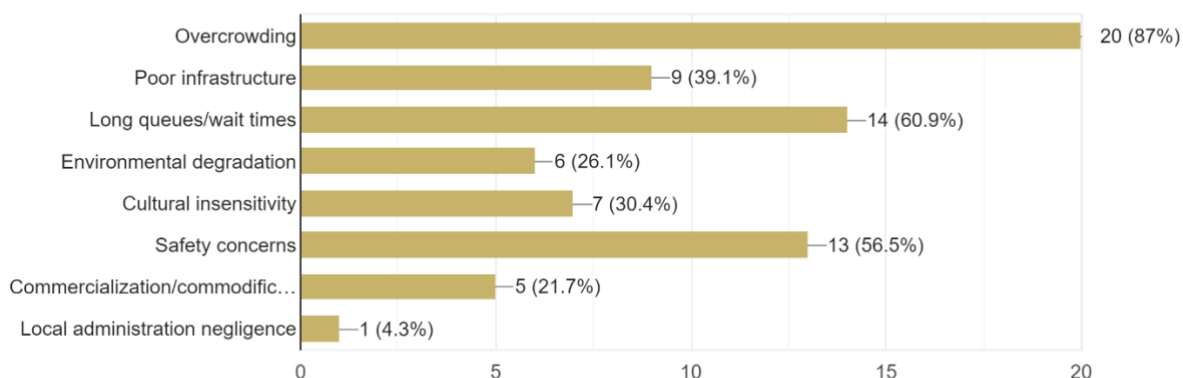
How often are you affected by negative tourist experiences in overcrowded places?

23 responses



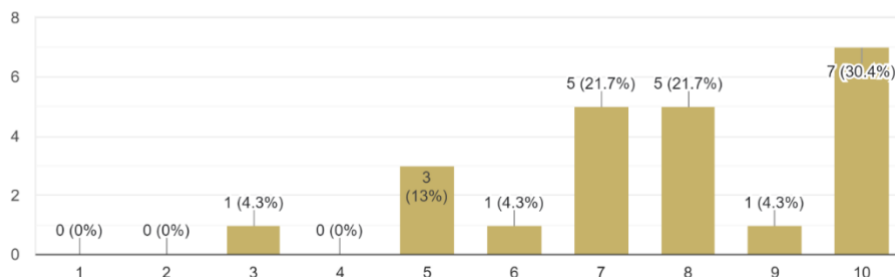
What were the main factors contributing to this negative experience? (Please select all that apply):

23 responses



On a scale of 1 to 10, please rate how important it is for you that the topic of overtourism be addressed in the travel industry and destination management (1 being not important at all, 10 being extremely important)

23 responses



A response Google forms on tourist experiences revealed significant concerns. 65% of respondents were dissatisfied with overcrowded markets, like those in Thailand, while 70%

faced challenges like congestion and pickpocketing at places like Egypt's Khan El Khalili market. 55% found urban photography difficult in tourist-heavy areas such as New York City. Additionally, 60% felt their experiences were negatively affected by overcrowding, with 40% comparing it to a fish market. Cultural insensitivity affected 45%, with 50% citing traffic congestion and long queues as issues. High hotel prices bothered 35% of respondents, and negative encounters at historical sites were reported by 25%. Poor amenities at crowded pilgrimage sites were noted by 30%, and 40% had to change plans due to overcrowding, as seen in Nainital. These insights lay emphasis on the challenges tourists face due to overtourism, emphasizing the need for sustainable tourism practices and better management strategies.

7.2 Findings collected from historians, influencers, travel agents and content creators through In Person Interviews

Overtourism, defined by Tentagram as excessive tourist influx causing environmental and cultural harm, is a pressing issue, particularly in well-known destinations like Agra and Rome. Crowds, lack of maintenance, and safety concerns deter from authentic experiences. Influencers play a significant role in promoting destinations, but their focus often neglects cultural depth. Lack of awareness about lesser-known places exacerbates the issue. Solutions include promoting smaller destinations, raising awareness, enforcing regulations, and supporting sustainable tourism.

Influencers, such as social media personalities, influence travel decisions through their content, often focusing on popular destinations and neglecting lesser-known places. However, promoting hidden gems and educating about cultural significance can mitigate overtourism. Additionally, infrastructure improvement, promoting offbeat experiences, and implementing responsible travel practices are vital. The role of government and local authorities is crucial in managing overtourism, including regulation enforcement and infrastructure development.

In summary, overtourism negatively impacts both well-known and lesser-known destinations. The tourism industry, influencers, and local authorities all have roles to play in promoting sustainable tourism and preserving cultural heritage.

7.3 Inferences

Factors Contributing to Overcrowding:

- Overcrowding results from population growth, increased accessibility, and viral trends on social media.
- Addressing this issue requires a balanced approach involving infrastructure development, promotion of lesser-known destinations, and regulation of tourism activities.

Quality Experiences and Infrastructure Development:

- Maintaining quality travel experiences involves clearing crowded destinations and offering diverse travel options.
- Sustainable tourism relies on well-planned infrastructure that supports visitor needs while preserving destination integrity.

Promotion and Accessibility of Destinations:

- Promoting destinations through diverse marketing approaches enriches travelers' experiences and reduces overcrowding.
- Lack of coordination and insufficient accessibility can disrupt travel plans and diminish visitor experiences.

Challenges of Undertourism:

- Places suffering from undertourism struggle to invest in and maintain adequate tourism infrastructure.
- Bridging this gap requires collaborative efforts to promote lesser-known destinations and enhance their visibility.

Personalized Travel Planning:

- Travelers seek flexibility and freedom in creating their itineraries but face challenges such as finding affordable tickets and comprehensive destination information.
- Improved accessibility and streamlined travel planning resources are needed to address these challenges.

Weekend Travel Trends:

- The preference for weekend trips has surged, particularly among couples, families, and small groups.
- This trend leads to overcrowding during weekends, impacting travel experiences.

Collaboration for Impactful Tourism:

- Effective collaboration among stakeholders is crucial for achieving significant and impactful travel experiences.
- Collaborative efforts can address issues like overtourism and enact meaningful changes in tourists' behaviors.

Impact of Enhanced Connectivity:

- Improved infrastructure and connectivity have reduced travel time, making destinations more accessible.
- However, increased accessibility has led to higher visitor traffic, contributing to issues of overcrowding and overtourism.

Role of Social Media in Overcrowding:

- Excessive publicity and promotion on social media platforms contribute to overcrowding in popular tourist destinations.
- Locations heavily hyped on social media experience a domino effect, exacerbating issues of overcrowding.

Promotion of Lesser-Known Destinations:

- Despite the popularity of well-known destinations, there are numerous hidden gems waiting to be discovered.
- Diversifying travel narratives reduces the strain on heavily visited sites and promotes sustainable tourism practices.

Cultural Exploration and Appreciation:

- Showcasing India's diverse cultures to the world attracts tourists and fosters cultural exchange.
- Cultural immersion helps build a deeper understanding and appreciation for cultural diversity among travellers.

Regulation and Enforcement for Sustainable Tourism:

- Stricter enforcement of rules and implementation of new regulations are essential to address challenges posed by overtourism.
- Government initiatives should prioritize preserving natural habitats and cultural heritage sites while maximizing the benefits of tourism.

Regulation and Enforcement for Sustainable Tourism:

- Stricter enforcement of rules and implementation of new regulations are essential to address challenges posed by overtourism.
- Government initiatives should prioritize preserving natural habitats and cultural heritage sites while maximizing the benefits of tourism.
- Despite budget constraints, travellers prioritize experiences over financial limitations.
- Cost-effectiveness remains a common mindset, influencing travellers' choices and preferences for affordable travel options.



CONCLUSION

The research paper provides a thorough examination of the sensitive issue of overtourism and its significant impacts on popular tourist destinations globally. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study combines primary research through surveys and interviews with secondary research from academic journals, articles, reports, and case studies, offering a comprehensive perspective.

One of the key findings of the study is the urgent need for the implementation of sustainable tourism practices to effectively tackle the challenges posed by overtourism. It is highlighted that overcrowded destinations result in negative tourist experiences characterized by rushed and unsatisfactory visits. Moreover, the strain on local infrastructure and the negative implications for residents' quality of life underscore the severity of the issue.

The paper stresses the importance of adopting a more detailed and quantitative approach to gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted impacts of overtourism. While previous research has predominantly focused on identifying negative consequences, often relying on

qualitative assessments or limited surveys, this study advocates for a broader perspective to inform the development of sustainable tourism strategies.

However, it is acknowledged that there are limitations to the study. The scope may not encompass every facet of overtourism, and the applicability of the findings may vary across different destinations. Additionally, the effectiveness of proposed solutions could be contingent upon local contexts and the level of cooperation among stakeholders.

Looking ahead, the paper calls for further research to explore innovative approaches to address overtourism while simultaneously safeguarding cultural and environmental assets. This includes evaluating the effectiveness of regulatory measures, promoting lesser-known destinations, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. By continuing to investigate and implement sustainable tourism practices, policymakers, industry stakeholders, and destination managers can collectively strive towards a tourism future that is more resilient, equitable, and environmentally responsible.



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