

## **(De)growth imperative: The importance of destination resilience in the context of overtourism**

**Martin Fontanari**

ISM International School of Management GmbH, Cologne, Germany

[martin.fontanari@ism.de](mailto:martin.fontanari@ism.de)

**Anastasia Traskevich**

Hochschule Fresenius University of Applied Science, Cologne, Germany

[anastasia.traskevich@hs-fresenius.de](mailto:anastasia.traskevich@hs-fresenius.de)

**Hugues Seraphin**

University of Winchester, Winchester, United Kingdom

[Hugues.seraphin@winchester.ac.uk](mailto:Hugues.seraphin@winchester.ac.uk)

### **Abstract**

The current research addresses the research gap in understanding overtourism in terms of strategic planning for destinations with regard to regional uniqueness and socio-cultural identity of local communities. This approach to investigate overtourism remains a pressing issue even in the times of crisis, caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, because it is focused not to the quantitative parameters of tourism itself but to the aspects of sustainable and resilient tourism development targeted to long-term prosperity and wellbeing of destinations and their community.

This paper examines the topic of overtourism in order to develop solutions for management on the basis of the recent concepts of destination degrowth and destination resilience. In these terms, (de)growth as a strategic consideration is valued as a tool for development of qualitative aspects of tourism dedicated to discovery and preservation of uniqueness, authenticity and identity of destinations. For this purpose, the theory of resilience is applied in the current study to emphasise the safeguarding and balancing functions of the tourism industry, which becomes especially topical within the present devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The methodology of the research is based on the Delphi survey, in which 28 hypothetical statements were offered to international tourism experts. Selected statements are analysed in this chapter in the context of degrowth strategies for destinations and building on destination resilience.

The results of the Delphi survey showed that overtourism requires a broader conceptual perspective which was immediately confirmed by the first effects of the COVID-19 crisis. It was discovered and in the extraordinary situation of the pandemic is being confirmed that it is relevant to consider the idea of degrowth for mass-tourism because the latter expands (and multiplies) itself through globally vulnerable supply-chains and interdependence. Therefore,

building a framework for destination resilience represents a central strategic solution for the balanced and sustainable development of tourism regions in the new future created by COVID-19.

**Key words:** Overtourism, Delphi survey, Destination Resilience, Socio-cultural Tourism Satellite Account, COVID-19.

## 1. Introduction

Since the early 1970s, criticism of the tourism industry for its excessive volume and negative impact on the local environment has become regular and traditional. Overtourism, however, was addressed as a more recent phenomenon, which denotes the "touristification" of a habitat, including all negative economic, ecological and social outgrowths that such an excess of tourism entails (Oklevik *et al.*, 2019; Panayiotopoulos and Pisano, 2019; Wall, 2019). However, the current research is focused not on the quantitative effects of overtourism, which is narrowed down by the COVID-19 pandemic. Rather, the investigation concerns the fact of "touristification of a habitat" and all the related negative economic, ecological and social impacts of tourism in regions and for communities – the effects which comprise a pressing issue even, or especially, in the times of the systemic crisis caused by the pandemic.

The devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic bring a new understanding to the topic of overtourism. The issue cannot be considered "dead" through the current disappearance of crowds in the touristic hotspots. In the current situation, the negative effects of overtourism to the overall economic, social and cultural orientation of the region can be perceived even acuter than ever: destinations find themselves unable to react adequately to challenges, no matter whether this is the excessive numbers of tourists or no tourists at all. The initial and native economic and social orientation of the region and its community was quitted and replaced by global economic structures which were aimed at development of mass-tourism in the destination. This means that in the critical situations, like a pandemic outbreak, these destinations appeared totally locked down and unable to come back to their initial authentic way of life and economic activities. The first attempts to reflect on the current situation bring to the conclusion that more holistic strategic solutions are required to balance tourism development in the destinations which were once affected by overtourism.

In the context of the present critical situation of the regions previously affected by overtourism, current research aims to reflect on the phenomenon of overtourism conceptually – to develop adequate strategies to balance tourism development in regions in "the new future" (Zukunftsinstitut, 2020) created by COVID-19.

At the current stage of research, some attempts have been made to develop initial solutions to the problem of overtourism (e.g. Haifeng *et al.*, 2012; Gonzalez *et al.*, 2018; Dodds and Butler, 2019; Gretzel, 2019). However, these efforts did not lead to any holistic breakthroughs, even though a certain shift away from purely quantitative tourism concepts is apparent worldwide. For urban and rural destinations which once suffered from overtourism, new design approaches and measuring instruments should be taken into consideration, in order to better understand the phenomenon of tourism growth as such, and to draw strategic conclusions for further destination development. This can lead to overcoming the still pressing negative effects of overtourism in a holistic way.

The study which was launched at the beginning of 2019, took as its objective that of finding a consensus between the different suggested strategies to balance tourism growth and tackle related perverse impacts of overtourism. This led to two core research questions:

- What are the different views (from the perspective of a stakeholder) regarding the strategies which need to be put in place to tackle the effects of overtourism and related perverse impacts?
- What could be a potential strategic consensus to tackle the effects of overtourism and ensure successful (de)growth?

In these terms, (de)growth as a strategic consideration is valued as a tool for development of qualitative aspects of tourism dedicated to discovery and preservation of uniqueness, authenticity and identity of destinations. For this purpose, the theory of resilience is applied in the current study to emphasise the safeguarding and balancing functions of the tourism industry, which becomes especially topical within the present devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The first attempts to analyse the implications of the current pandemic showed that the present situation of a systemic crisis requires thorough investigation within the theory of resilience (Cheema-Fox *et al.*, 2020; Fontanari and Traskevich, 2020; Gössling *et al.*, 2020; Hall *et al.*, 2020; Lapointe, 2020; Nepal, 2020; Niewiadomski, 2020).

From a methodological point of view, this study began by collecting data from experts in the field of tourism development and, more specifically, people who have investigated the impacts of overtourism either conceptually or empirically (Fontanari and Berger-Risthaus, 2020). As a basis for the later Delphi survey and its underlying theses and statements, an extensive literature-based research into the causes and justifications of overtourism was first conducted (Jacobsen *et al.*, 2019; Koens *et al.*, 2018; Milano, 2017; Moscardo *et al.*, 2017). More than 100 authors who have devoted themselves to the problem of overtourism in public and in scientific articles have been identified, although this list does not claim to be exhaustive and centres on German and English academic literature. From this literature analysis, 28 theses and statements have been proposed to conduct a Delphi survey (Innerhofer *et al.*, 2020).

The expected outcome of this contribution is to offer a practical strategic approach to destination management in order to tackle the effects of overtourism for any case of physical quantities of tourists in destinations (up to none in the situation of a pandemic) through the following theoretical approaches:

- the idea of (de)growth strategies which allow to balance tourism development and aim it to unique and authentic tourist experiences; and
- the resilient orientation of destinations to ensure their safeguarding functions in any scenario of economic, social, cultural, ecological and political development in the regions.

## 2. Methodology of Empirical Study

The Delphi method assesses certain development processes in order to allow for a look into the future, and thereby accelerate the implementation of innovations. In the literature there is no uniform procedure for the use of the Delphi method, which permits a broad spectrum of survey types and variation of it. Results also serve as the information basis for decision-making (Blind and Cuhls, 2001, p. 59). In a Delphi survey, it is not the statistical representativeness which is relevant, but rather the expert knowledge which must be recorded and derived with the intention of evaluating the current state of art and future forecasts (Niederberger and Renn, 2018). The Delphi method is used to produce oracular statements regarding the future. This method requires the construction of a panel of experts with a wide range of experiences (Hammond and Wellington, 2013).

### 2.1. Adaptation of the Delphi method within the Welphi platform.

Within the 28 hypothetical statements, a three-stage Delphi survey was conducted in the form of an online questionnaire, with a mix of qualitative and quantitative statements. For this purpose, the specialised online survey platform Welphi ([www.welphi.com](http://www.welphi.com)) was used, which allowed an easy and affordable way for the questionnaires to canvass the opinions of 104 participants, across a geographically dispersed area and with a busy agenda. The range of experts involved is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Expert Panel of Survey

Expert Group	1st round			2nd round			3rd round		
	N	n	Rate	N	n	Rate	N	n	Rate
Academics	34	13	38%	34	13	38%	13	12	92%
Managers (Tourism Associations)	23	1	4%	23	4	17%	4	4	100%
Journalists	25	6	24%	25	1	4%	6	2	33%

Ministries (Germany)	22	2	9%	22	2	9%	2	2	100%
Others	-	3	-	-	2	-	3	1	33%
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>75%</b>

Note: N – the number of experts invited for the round of Delphi survey; n -the number of the experts who participated in the round of the survey.

Source: The authors

Through a system of three rounds, it is possible to confront each participant anonymously with the opinions of his peers, engaging participants in a non-face-to-face format and promoting consensus across the group on issues that lack the support of quantitative data.

Thus, in terms of methodology, the Welphi approach ranges between a face-to-face Delphi-meeting, where the confrontation of ideas is possible, but the physical presence of all participants is required, and a simple online questionnaire, where the opinion of participants is requested but not shared with others and no opportunity is given to each participant to revise his or her opinion under the influence of the opinions of his peers. Therefore, the Welphi approach allows for the confrontation of ideas in an asynchronous, online, participatory and interactive way. Moreover, by allowing the sharing of participants' comments anonymously, each participant can change his initial position, thus promoting group consensus.

## ***2.2. Research approach to quantitative evaluation of the statements.***

The present research approach presented a quantitative evaluation of the diverse data, which was received within the statements. The statements are initially arranged on an ordinal scale of one – five in the first round; this scale is standardised for all the questions and ranges from "1 = disagree at all" to "5 = fully agree". At the same time, the experts were given the opportunity to reveal qualitative positions on the individual statements and to incorporate different arguments.

In the first round, the experts were able to give their opinion on a total of 28 statements and comment on them with the help of the commentary function. Following the first round of the survey, it was possible to select the statements which could be evaluated as already sufficiently answered. The other statements, which had the same formulation of the question, were taken over in the second round and, in the same way, in the third round, in order to achieve a clearer expert opinion. With the further rounds, the approval scale was reduced according to the Delphi methodology: from 1–5 to three most frequent responses (for the second round) and two most frequent responses (for the third round). The scale values have been reassessed accordingly.

To explain this more precisely, the methodological decision to remove or adopt statements from the Delphi survey and reassess the scale values were the following:

- For the first round: if a particular scale value results in an expert approval-rate of 50% or more; and, in the adjoining consent value (e.g. “agree” + “rather agree”), if the rate is more than 25%, such a question is regarded as meaningful; further expert discussion is then not necessary.
- For the second round: expert result is considered meaningful if the scale value results in the approval-rate of 51% or more; further expert discussion is then not necessary.
- If the approval-rate is 50% or less, the statement is included in the second (third) round for further expert discussion.
- If a statement received too much scope in experts’ interpretation and, thus, too many varied approval-rates, it is not adopted for the second round.

The evaluation and display of the results are as follows:

1. Presentation of the average agreement, on the basis of a semantic profile;
2. Naming of the statement and representation of the individual scale values, agreement rate in percent;
3. Analysis of the comments made by the experts;
4. The researchers’ decision regarding the continuation or removal of a statement;
5. If a statement is included in the second (third) Delphi round, the underlying three- (two) part evaluation scale is also explained for each statement.

For this chapter, the results of the Delphi study were selected to emphasise the idea of degrowth strategies for tourism destinations. At the same time, within the selected statements, the benefits of resilient orientation of destinations (Fontanari and Traskevich, 2020) are shown in the context of managing overtourism and implementing degrowth strategies.

### **3. Main findings**

In this section of the chapter, selected statements are presented from 28 questions which were offered to the experts (Table 2). Each of the selected questions is illustrated with the statistical results on the rates of experts’ approval in each round. Also, the number of experts’ additional comments is indicated, and the mean scale value is calculated for each response (see section 2.2 of this chapter).

The analysis shows the importance of addressing the issue of quality of life in tourism destinations, as well as the importance of adopting a new comprehensive system of destination management which would incorporate the

concepts of degrowth and resilience. Selected expert comments are analysed and interpreted for further conceptual considerations and managerial suggestions of the study.

Statement 1 (Table 2) was about the temporary nature of the very issue of overtourism. Already within the first round, a clear picture was received: 82 % of the experts (rather) denied this statement, with the mean value of the rejection 1.84.

Table 2: Selected results of the Delphi survey on overtourism

<b>Statement 1:</b>	The issue of overtourism should not be viewed critically as a problem in the medium term and will be resolved automatically in the future.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	4%	11%	4%	26%	<b>56%</b>	1.84	2
<b>Round 2</b>	No further round necessary						
<b>Statement 2:</b>	Overtourism is a phenomenon that is perceived and felt more sensitively by the locals with increasing prosperity in a region/destination.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	23%	54%	19%	4%	0%	3.96	0
<b>Round 2</b>	<b>36%</b>	<b>55%</b>	9%			4.27	3
<b>Round 3</b>	No further round necessary						
<b>Statement 3:</b>	Overtourism is a question of individual perceptions, both for locals and for tourists.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	15%	27%	27%	15%	15%	3.12	2
<b>Round 2</b>	No further round necessary						
<b>Statement 4:</b>	The declining quality of life of the locals due to overtourism is clearly noticeable and measurable.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	46%	19%	15%	15%	4%	3.88	1
<b>Round 2</b>	27%	<b>59%</b>	14%			4.13	3
<b>Round 3</b>	No further round necessary						
<b>Statement 5:</b>	Overtourism results from the accumulation of non-existent strategic planning and the absence of spatial and destination design.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	26%	33%	30%	4%	7%	3.67	2
<b>Round 2</b>	35%	43%	22%			4.13	1
<b>Round 3</b>	33%	<b>67%</b>				4.33	4
<b>Statement 6:</b>	In order to achieve the highest possible benefit for residents and tourists, urban and local development concepts are						

	approached jointly by tourism managers and urban planners. The focus is on participatory processes from idea development to decision-making in the areas of infrastructure, environment and quality of life.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	15%	27%	27%	15%	15%	3.12	2
<b>Round 2</b>	<b>59%</b>	27%	14%			4.45	3
<b>Round 3</b>	No further round necessary						
<b>Statement 7:</b>	In developing a future strategy for a destination, the various stakeholder groups must be involved, whether or not they are directly linked to tourism. Tourism development cannot be left to tourism professionals.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	<b>65%</b>	31%	4%			4.61	2
<b>Round 2</b>	No further round necessary						
<b>Statement 8:</b>	The affected destination focuses on the development of tourism in the surrounding area and on more effective domestic marketing, and creates a relief of its hot-spots through attractive products in the low season.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	12%	31%	38%	12%	8%	3.27	3
<b>Round 2</b>		41%	27%	32%		3.09	4
<b>Round 3</b>		<b>57%</b>	43%			3.57	4
<b>Statement 9:</b>	Communicating the positive aspects of tourism in general to the inhabitants is sufficient to counteract overtourism. Justify your response in the comment function on the right.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	12%	4%	4%	38%	42%	2.06	17
<b>Round 2</b>			5%	23%	<b>73%</b>	1.30	11
<b>Round 3</b>	No further round necessary						
<b>Statement 10:</b>	In order to sensitize each individual stakeholder to the topic, there will be organized training courses and e-learning platforms organized by the respective DMO, which will increase and certify the quality of consulting and services offered by the service providers, in terms of visitor flow management.						
<b>Approval</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Round 1</b>	16%	20%	<b>48%</b>	16%		3.36	
<b>Round 2</b>	No further round necessary						

Note: the approval scale values stand for the following: 5 - completely agree; 4 - rather agree; 3 - partial / partial; 2 - rather disagree; 1 - disagree at all.

Source: The authors



According to the responses given to the statements, it was clear that, even if one assumes that overtourism is just a short-term problem, it is still one "...that needs to be managed". Regarding the power of destruction towards the cultural and natural basics of its development, tourism "requires a sustainable concept", since "...the natural heritage does not need tourism, but tourism is dependent on the natural heritage". It can, therefore, be concluded that the problem of overtourism will not be solved by itself in the future. Rather, overtourism requires new concepts of dealing with this phenomenon, in order to protect the entire tourism system.

Furthermore, more than 90% of the experts (rather) agreed that overtourism is a phenomenon that is perceived and felt more sensitively by the locals, even in cases in which their wealth increased over time with the impact of tourism affairs 2 (Table 2).

Experts mention that the intensity of perceived overtourism depends on the target group as well as the very nature of the destination. Obviously, there are differences between rural and urban areas. In many areas, tourism is one important economic branch, through which service providers and locals can support their families. In this situation, all other relevant objectives (e.g. environmental or cultural protection) are rejected in favour of earning an income. An expert statement illustrates the main problem: "Especially in worse managed regions, tourism passes by the local population, which has to bear negative effects". There might be two conclusions from this:

- classic, established destinations are more sensitive for overtourism on account of their social and cultural nature;
- on the other hand, the sensitivity for overtourism depends on the quality of the destination management.

In "just growth-oriented" destinations, the positive impacts of tourism don't actually benefit the local population due to high leakage. At the same time, the natives have to perceive the negative effects.

The most challenging topic of overtourism is how to measure or methodically capture this phenomenon. Neither natives nor tourists naturally rely on any actual model of measurement. Furthermore, the impression of being affected by overtourism is also heavily influenced by peer groups and media. Statement 3 (Table 2) of the Delphi study aims at this individually distinctive perception of the phenomenon by approaching both these aspects. The challenging nature of this question is revealed in the very first round when a whole range of experts' opinion was revealed. Even the distribution of the experts' opinions – mean value achieved at 3,12 - does not methodologically allow for the sorting-out of further scale values.

However, this "unsolved" statement remains one of the most crucial aspects to approach overtourism with articulate solutions. While many of the experts confirm the importance of the phenomenon of "individual perception" (Gonzalez *et al.*, 2018), others believe that existing territory-oriented instruments

for assessment-carrying capacities of the recreational landscapes are still sufficient to indicate the impact of overtourism, even with all its current social and cultural facets. Even if overtourism is a matter of perception, this does not exclude the possibility that it might be statistically or methodically measured as a real-life problem. Therefore, this statement still appears relevant for the derivation of management approaches, even though subjective perceptions of the problem of overtourism by travellers or locals would require extensive quantitative and qualitative surveys and further measuring models.

Statement 4 (Table 2) was about the measurable quality of life of the locals due to overtourism. The sharp deviation of the responses and comments can be connected with the difficulty to measure both the quality of life and the impact of overtourism.

Some experts pointed out that the perception to overtourism is subjective and depends on how much one is exposed to overcrowding. The problem is based on the questions of how to define, measure and compare the quality of life in the situation when every city or region has very different conditions. What all expert statements have in common, however, is that the assessment and evaluation of the limited quality of life is based on subjective, and thus different, impressions and requires a more objective – and so more systematic – approach and measurement. The experts, therefore, express the need to define and quantify related impacts – but are aware that there is no current instrumental set to correlate local quality of life with the impact of overtourism.

The following statements have been designed around the hypothesis that the perception of overtourism by locals and guests also results in a lack of involvement or consideration of their interests and expectations for the strategic development of a destination (Statement 5, Table 2). Above all, this statement assumes that the requirement of strategic and integrative planning in the context of holistic destination development at the current moment often fails to meet the high theoretical and methodological standards when implemented in real practice. The growth of the mean value over the rounds shows clearly that the experts tend to crystallize their opinion regarding the special meaning of relevant strategic planning, in order to cope with both hard and soft factors of overtourism.

Analyses of the comments of the experts provides an explanation of the still cautious agreement to this statement (67% rather agree). The experts mention the importance of strategic planning, but see a number of circumstances and influencing factors which prevent the desired success in real practice.

Some experts first point out the particular significance of strategic planning and a long-term vision: “If a city does not strategically know what it wants to be and how many visitors it can accommodate, it will overflow and lose control. What is needed is long-term strategies and visions which are currently not popular with city administrations”.

At the same time, the statements of many experts also explain why strategic planning, nevertheless, often fails. In particular, numerous unpredictable

sociocultural factors still expose the destination to overtourism, even when the planning was successfully implemented. Some successful tourism planning is often not devoted to a holistic sustainable regional development in the sense of receiving welfare and economic growth for all the residents and market participants. Hence, experts claim: "... the question arises how the positive aspects of tourism can affect urban development and how it can be exploited holistically". Moreover, if strategic tourism planning was successfully implemented, but only to the benefit to the tourism industry and its stakeholders, not to the holistic welfare of the local community, this can still lead to overtourism. As the experts wrote: "Also the planning is often incoherent and does not apply to cross-sector integration processes". In all those complex cases, overtourism is not really the result of a lack of strategic urban planning itself, but rather a result of the lack of holistic understanding of the strategic significance of tourism to the region and its community.

Among such problematic social and cultural factors, experts also mention "... a dramatic increase in the volume of the number of international tourists - which cannot only be solved by better cooperation and planning." A lack of ongoing professionalization of tourism and destination management is also mentioned as a home-made reason for overtourism: "they have lived from hand to mouth for too long, with one-sided, short-term objectives; strategic management skills have been too modestly represented in too many decision-making bodies for too long". On the basis of these statements, the following conclusions can be made:

- strategic planning for destination development should become integrated and oriented to the long term (for a planning and design period of 15-20 years);
- it should take place in a cross-sectoral mode;
- the quality of management competencies in decision-making bodies should be increased; and
- a new methodological approach and conceptual understanding of tourism development is required, which will address the risk of overtourism in detail.

The next statement under critical evaluation within the Delphi study was about the co-operative approach of urban planners and tourism managers (Statement 6, Table 2). After the second round of questioning, there was clear agreement with this statement, with a mean of 4.45 and almost 60% agreement.

Almost all experts relied on a co-operative approach in tourism planning and development, but the slowness or restrictions by the administration is often a challenge here. When the framework of planning is extended because of inviting other specialists from other planning departments, the execution of the planning process becomes highly complicated. As the experts say, "having the same database, looking together at a city and its development can improve the situation in the destination. The big steering approaches cannot be implemented without

the urban planning and the legal authorities of the city or even the national government...”. Experts are aware here that an integrative planning process is ideal to achieve the goal of holistic planning. However, at the same time this is very difficult to implement effectively, when so many stakeholders and special forces are actually involved. “Administration and local council have, additionally, a very strong perseverance which too often causes no future-oriented development to take place”.

These statements can be interpreted as follows:

- integrative and participatory development planning is the key strategic tool to handle the problem of overtourism;
- tourism management and urban management both need new approaches to implement participative integrative decision-making procedures.

Furthermore, experts are agreed on the fact that “tourism development cannot be solely left to tourism experts”. Statement 7 (Table 2) points out that every destination requires synergy-oriented planning. Two thirds of the experts agreed on that idea already within the first round.

Experts also commented that various stakeholder groups which are not directly involved in tourism will use their external insights to fertilize professional decisions in tourism development. Aspects for increasing the quality of leisure time, and thus the overall quality of life of locals, also influences the attractiveness of business locations. One can assume that external stakeholders or entrepreneurs who do not come directly from tourism industry can enrich tourism planning with new ideas.

It is especially important to ensure that within tourism planning synergies are fulfilled and complementary gaps are covered to contribute tangibly to the quality of life of both guests and locals. This may be achieved through meticulous cooperation-based project moderation. Synergetic and complementary considerations can each be taken into account in the form of benefit calculations.

At the same time, effective approaches for holistic planning would also include geographical and spatial components towards the product design (Statement 8, Table 2).

57% of the respondents rather agree with the statement that the overcrowded destination should concentrate on a triad of focussing activities:

- to extend tourism into the surrounding geographical areas;
- to elaborate on effective domestic marketing; and
- to design attractive products for the off-season.

However, experts comment about their own experience on dealing with seasonality in tourism in the real-life-conditions (e.g. weather in the off-season, school or holiday periods, etc.). “Off-season trips are off-season because the weather is usually less attractive and does not coincide with school holidays.”

It is even more difficult to implement a divergent geographical approach towards spatial tourism design and planning: “(...) that's not how we travel. The masses attract the masses. We mainly travel to the well-known areas and

attractions. The reason for this is that "... the tourists want to see the hotspots or "need" the top-rated spots for a selfie or Instagram photo. Only a limited number of travellers leave the beaten track."

Moreover, strengthening the low season does not often lead to a smoothening of the high season. In fact, such efforts of product design can also attract new guests (e.g. Jin and Sparks, 2017), so that "the low seasons also become high seasons". The increased efforts to attract guests in the low season, therefore, lead to selecting and addressing to new target groups, "who show the desired behaviour". "Cities in particular attract a global audience, and every city must define its ideal target groups in comparison with all players of the visitor economy". Experts state, however, that the classic destinations affected by overtourism have in the meanwhile become hotspots throughout the year (e.g. Barcelona, Venice, Amsterdam).

With the same kind of reasoning, some experts also deny that activating potentials in the surrounding area of an overcrowded site will lead to relief. In contrast, "by realizing tourist attractions in the surroundings, you simply make the destination more attractive, not less attractive". Besides this, experts mention the existing "ivory tower thinking, municipal district boundaries and public tourism promotion oriented to political-administrative borders". These factors do not allow for the spatial expansion of the portfolio of a destination. Experts agree on creating new points of attraction to expand carrying capacities and seasonal distribution. But a stronger domestic marketing is also required and can be seen as a much more differentiated solution.

The context of internal marketing, and the possibilities of a more focussed "internal communication" with service providers and locals for the communicative control of (regular) guests, has, however, not been sufficiently brought up for discussion in the statements.

The most intensively and most controversially discussed thesis was Statement 9, to which additional qualitative statements had also been expressly invited (Table 2).

In the second round, 73% of the experts completely disagree with this statement (with a mean of 1.3). However, the comments submitted by the experts for it are diverse and ground-breaking at the same time. First of all, experts mention the negative aspects of high-density-tourism, such as "emissions, housing shortage, increased cost of living and rents, low remuneration in service-dominant tourism (...) which cannot be corrected simply by explaining the positive aspects (tourism value added, jobs, etc.)". Moreover, "in some overcrowded areas, such as cities where locals and tourists share space, locals tend to perceive more negative than positive aspects of tourism (...), so the positive effects of tourism hardly represent a counterbalance." Further: "Simply communicating the positive effects of tourism as an economic factor is not enough to appease critics and does not automatically lead to a solution to the problem."

Experts also stated that “...the feeling for overtourism often comes from the gut, while the argumentation aims at the head – which causes different levels of sensation and communication”. Besides, in their comments, they reduce to a certain level the importance of open communication. Yet while this activity helps to understand the effects of tourism, it is by no means the only and sufficient activity.

The essence of these contradictory points of view lies in the fact that “what is economically attractive for a city or region is not necessarily the same as what makes a city/neighbourhood liveable and lovable for its inhabitants. These qualities often compete with each other because the needs are different.” However, it can be assumed that this disagreement brings one back to the statements on participative integrative planning (no. 6 and 7, Table 2). This requires strategic planning to be in line with both residents’ and guests’ needs: “Building strong partnerships and cooperation is the most important basic element of management of overtourism. In addition, the general positive attitude of the locals towards the guests is necessary. Both imply the conviction of the positive importance of tourism development in the region”.

This aspect requires that the responsible sides both in tourism and city management have to elaborate a more intensive and differentiated way of communication between all the involved people and stakeholders. The determinants to be shaped within such strategic communication are regional identity, homeland, solidarity, value reference, cultural reference, tradition and historic memory, among others. Certainly, such determinants are only created with the tools which go far beyond classical marketing communication in tourism (e.g. Park and Petrick, 2006). This requires new perspectives and a new quality of communication within “interior marketing” towards “resilient identity” (Traskevich and Fontanari, 2018).

Related to this, the experts have also been invited to discuss the statement which presented some future instruments for both a better interior marketing and competence for improved visitor-flow management, such as eLearning-platforms or organized training courses (Statement 10, Table 2).

The cautious approval which the experts show can be explained by the fact that the examples mentioned in the statement are only a few of the many possible ones. At any rate, though, it can be seen in the trend that new instruments and measures are needed to raise the awareness of service providers and destination management, and to set stronger emphasis in the internal marketing of a destination for at least a balanced consideration of the phenomenon of overtourism.

#### **4. Supplementary tourism satellite accounts address the problem of overtourism**

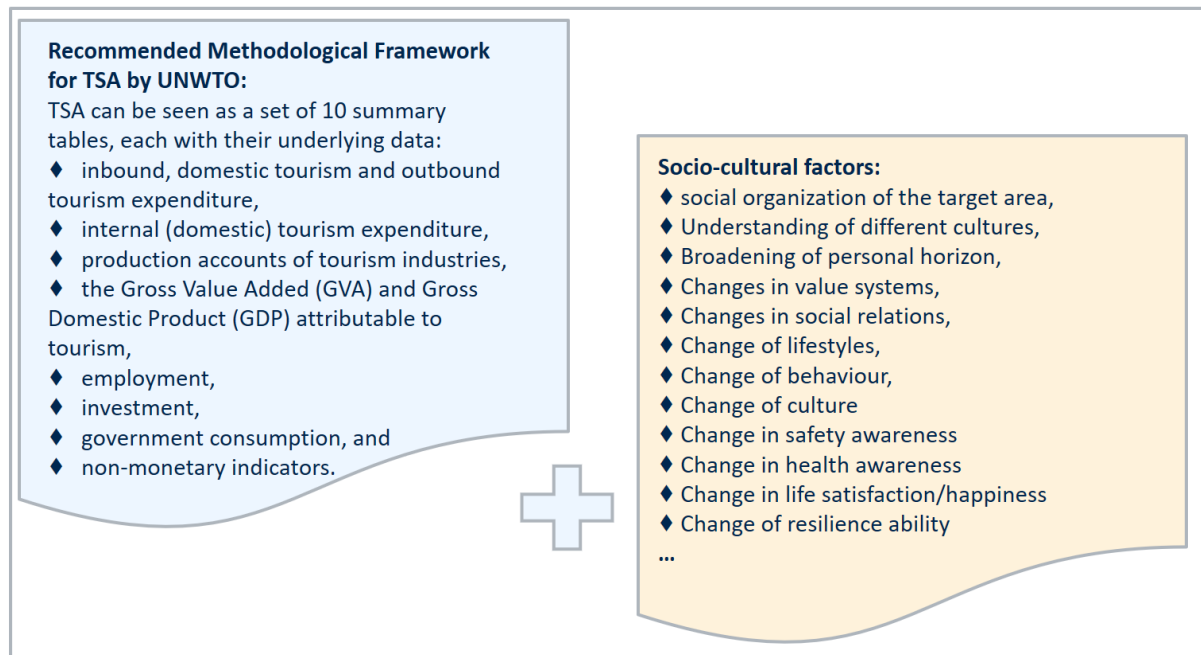
It should first be noted that the phenomenon of overtourism as such is not new, but has clear parallels with the problems of mass tourism and the subsequent "revolt of the travelled" (such as in India in the 1970s). Accordingly, approaches and methods of destination (regional) planning, which can be integrated to facilitate the better avoidance or overcoming of critical tourism developments or negative effects, already exist.

The Delphi study came up with quite a clear understanding of the view of the experts, stating that the overtourism phenomenon not only presents itself as a problem in large cities, but also leads to an increasing impairment of the quality of life of some rural regions, such as the Alps, coastal regions or UNESCO World Heritage sites.

Since there are no models or measuring methods which express the objective and subjective perceptions of the locals through overtourism and its associated effects on the quality of life, this must be the starting point for further research in tourism science. It should also be noted that the subjective perception of stress and impairment can only be ascertained with difficulty. Thus, it is relevant also for the question of a representative, measurable quality of life, which points the way for a sustainable balance of work, tourism and living in the tourism region.

Against this background, it could be a challenge methodically to collect determinants of quality of life and to correlate them with tourism and economic value creation. Today, tourism satellite accounts (TSA) represent a framework which was developed for quantifying the importance of tourism. Above all, on the basis of quantitative measures, they record the range of products and services produced in tourism-relevant branches of the economy, whose goods and services are predominantly consumed by tourists – i.e. consumption and the associated economic effects. As a socioeconomic consideration of this research, it is proposed to expand TSA or to supplement it with socio-cultural effects (Figure 1). The intention behind this is to evaluate and compare tourists' and natives' expectations, experiences, and burdens, with the practical aim to derive approaches for harmonising both the socio-economic living space and the cultural experience space of guests and locals.

Figure 1: Complementary elements for socio-cultural TSA



Source: The authors

On the left side of figure 1, the methodological framework of the UNWTO is presented for the purposes of recording added value in tourism. On the right side, supplementary tables are suggested to analyse and assess the perception, acceptance and resilience for sociocultural tourism impacts, which have a direct impact on quality of life. Each of these complex and subjective phenomena are addressed as complimentary elements of TSA, such as understanding of different cultures; broadening of personal horizon of both locals and guests; changes in value systems; changes of lifestyle and behaviour; and finally the change of inherited ability for resilience. These are undoubtedly very challenging fields of survey, research and measures. In the further consideration of a methodical recording and assessment of these qualities, corresponding measurable criteria and indices would have to be developed, which would then be correlated with the initial methodological framework for TSA developed by UNWTO.

A socio-cultural TSA could also be conducted on its own without an economic survey of the added value of tourism, especially because the methodological effort should be taken into consideration. In the well-known and large destinations affected by overtourism, a complementary approach would be appropriate. And, in smaller affected regions, solely socio-cultural TSA approach will be more feasible.

A socio-cultural TSA would additionally support the strategic and situational analysis as a crucial part of strategic planning for the development of tourist regions and habitats. Furthermore, this new approach is able to enhance the stronger focus on the integration of the local or regional population, which is required for effective destination development. This is due to the fact that



objectifiable data that is necessary for the implementation of the socio-cultural TSA is actually socio-cultural primary data. With its efficient flow into the planning processes, the whole population can be integrated organisationally.

## 5. The concept of destination resilience to prevent overtourism

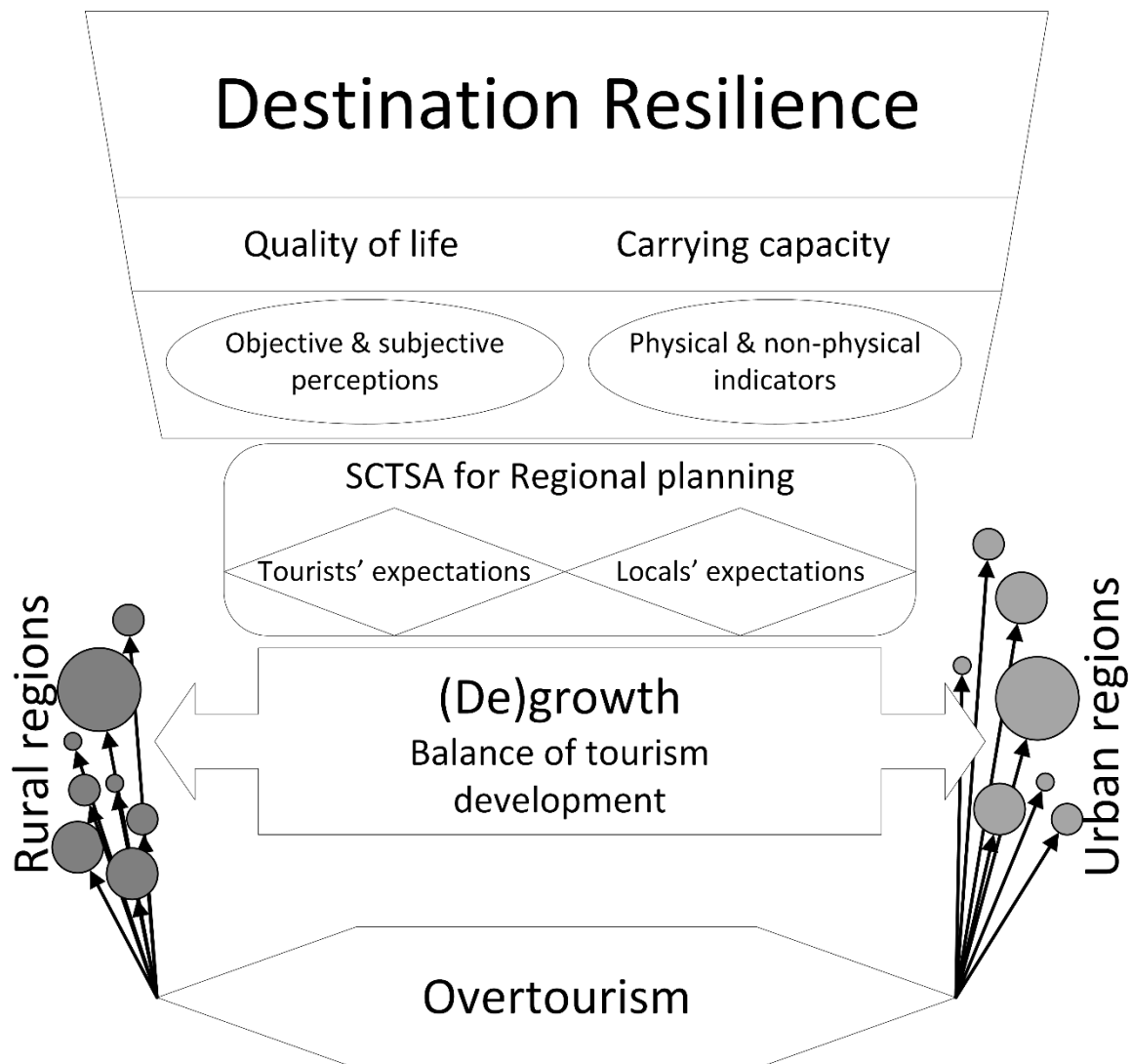
The experts' considerations presented in the main part of this chapter lead us to an overall conclusion from the novelty of the results achieved in this study: to prevent and manage the present effects of overtourism which are perceived even acuter than ever in the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, regional planning and development strategies should be based on the concept of destination resilience. In particular, as far as the negative impacts of overtourism on perceived quality of life are concerned, the dimensions of social-cultural and socio-psychological resilience of both locals and guests have to be strengthened (Hassan *et al.*, 2017). This approach would allow for one to deal with existing impairments in such a way that powerful changes in lifestyle and personal attitudes can be introduced (Traskevich and Fontanari, 2018).

The core idea of the concept of resilience for tourism destinations implies their functional autonomy and independence in the value chain of tourism products. This requires the establishment of dialectical relationships in production and consumption of tourism products, and at the same time a process of responsible, open and attentive co-living of the local community and tourists (Fontanari and Traskevich, 2019). These dialectical interrelations include the following functional elements, which are consciously aimed at ensuring the reliability of the supply system and integrative social co-operation within the local or regional population:

- independence in the disposal of production and consumption waste, both for the tourism industry and the everyday life of the local population;
- autonomy of water and electricity supply;
- security of supply of food;
- awareness of possible risks among the local population and tourists;
- overall personal (psychological) resilience towards any external challenges and critical situations, which are generated by systemic crises, like the present COVID-19 pandemic (Fontanari and Traskevich, 2020).

Figure 2 shows the framework of application of the concept of destination resilience to tackle the present effects of overtourism within strategic planning approaches that are elaborated for the development of resilient destinations (Innerhofer *et al.*, 2018; Fontanari *et al.*, 2020). In this framework, the instrumental approach of a socio-cultural TSA forms the basis for the quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the prerequisites and the perspectives for building a resilient destination, with a focus on the psychological resilience of the residents and their guests.

Figure 2: (De)growth framework to handle overtourism: life-quality and resilience approach



Source: The authors

The framework incorporates the dynamic impacts of overtourism to pointed (hotspot) urban or rural destinations, as well as shrinking or degrowth strategies which were previously discussed and used in science as a most frequent solution to reduce the phenomenon of overtourism. This is contrasted and merged with a development approach, which deals for the first time with the question of resilient structures (Fontanari *et al.*, 2020) and resilient orientation of a destination (Fontanari and Traskevich, 2020). The fundamental consideration of this framework – based on the empirical results of the Delphi survey – is how to make the perception of overtourism measurable, and how to correlate it with the economic value added and the positive economic effects of tourism (which above all means the increase in prosperity of the population). The introduction of the new instrument of a socio-cultural TSA goes beyond the purely economic creation of value and deals intensively with the question of quality of life (which

is a particularly topical aspect in times of pandemic) and its correlation with the tourism volume and intensity. The results of such a measurement over time determine the degree of further resilient development of the destination, in order to achieve a balance between economic value creation with low leakage rates and subjective value enhancement of quality of life for both residents and tourists. In the times of COVID-19 pandemic crisis, this can mean more but also less tourism, implying either growth or degrowth strategies.

## 6. Conclusion

The analysis of the outcomes of the Delphi survey presents the conclusion that tourism managers and planners need to change their way of thinking and governance approaches, in order to overcome the effects of overtourism which are still perceived within the present devastating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous findings of a holistic and integrative tourism planning, its methods and instruments can still be applied in the current situation of systemic crisis and indefinite future of the global tourism industry – under the umbrella concept of (de)growth. In addition to the economic value added, which is normally associated with trivial business-growth, socio-cultural value and the overall appreciation of tourism and its effects should also be taken into account.

In particular, the involvement of the local population must be based on empirical and thus meaningful data with a long-term orientation. A long-term panel on selected socio-cultural added value and the attitudes of the local population will contribute to a more objective assessment of the tourism situation and development, thus having a stronger influence on strategic planning and public communication. Within this objective and comprehensive data, either growth or degrowth strategies can be implemented for both competitive and sustainable tourism development, which would above all contribute to the quality of life of the local community. This also increases the dimension of (psychological) community resilience for the destination which is especially urgent in the present times of COVID-19 pandemic.

It is concluded that the coherent application of the concepts of degrowth and destination resilience contributes to solving the problem of negative impacts of tourism. Furthermore, it is proposed to design a socio-cultural tourism satellite account to measure the impact of tourism and to bring the native community into permanent self-evaluation of perceived socio-cultural benefits or losses.

Furthermore, a higher destination resilience also offers new perspectives for the entire concept of destination (de)growth. The joint practical application of the concepts of degrowth and resilience bring to tourism regions the following substantial benefits:

- innovative offers in the portfolio of the tourism products,
- stronger interactive communication between locals and guests, as well as

- an increase in the identification factor for the region itself, and thus, for external marketing.

Confrontation of the ideas of (de)growth and building on resilience restores the initial identity of the destination and emphasises its uniqueness. This is especially revealed in the development of USP tourism products on the basis of local recreational resources: these products are oriented on the local identity – but not on the trendy fashionable “touristic solutions”, which are offered by globalised mass tourism. Shaping the touristic uniqueness of destinations is based on the impacts of new partnership behaviour between all participants of tourism in the region.

The conclusion obtained by the present study is that the balance between competitive entrepreneurial activity and overall happiness and health in the community is achieved for tourism destinations by means of the coherent application of both the recently discussed concepts of (de)growth and resilience.

However, it should be stressed that this ideal balanced situation can only be achieved in real life if developments in infrastructure, product design and associated marketing are always seen from the perspective of different target groups and local stakeholders. Therefore, new competences are required for tourism management, so that the decision-making processes in the destination can produce positive synergies for all those who are directly or indirectly involved and affected by tourism activities. In this regard, the presented framework to handle the critical effects of tourism (or the systemic crisis of the tourism industry) clarifies the new thinking and acting which is required for destination managers. This framework is based on the instruments of well-approved participative planning and expands the perspective to tackle the negative effects of tourism by means of the concept of (de)growth. At the same time, competitiveness and safety in the implementation of this framework is assured through the orientation of regional development to produce a complementary concept of destination resilience. The instrumental key for such a harmonised resilient development is presented within a socio-cultural TSA, which is introduced for an objectifiable assessment of the phenomenon of overtourism itself and the perspectives needed to overcome it.

This framework should be transferred to all the participative stakeholders: first of all, to overcome the stereotype that tourists might be seen as offenders and locals as victims. Furthermore, it can be seen as the way forward to meet the needs of opposite sides (locals & tourists) and adopt them within an “ambidextrous management approach” (Papachroni *et al.*, 2015; Smith, 2017). Based on this framework, the strategy of regional development has to be elaborated in detail, in order to achieve a more harmonious and resilient destination, that is capable of tackling and even preventing all the perverse impacts of tourism, including systemic crisis of the tourism industry.

## References

1. Blind, K. and Cuhls, K. (2001) Der Einfluss der Expertise auf das Antwortverhalten in Delphi-Studien: ein Hypothesentest [The influence of expertise on response behaviour in Delphi studies: a hypothesis test]. *ZUMA Nachrichten*, 25(49), 57-80.
2. Cheema-Fox, A., La Perla, B. R., Serafeim, G., and Wang, H. (2020) *Corporate Resilience and Response During COVID-19* [Manuscript in preparation]. State Street Associates; Harvard Business School.
3. Dodds, R., & Butler, R. (Eds.). (2019) *Overtourism: Issues, realities and solutions*. De Gruyter.
4. Fontanari, M. and Berger-Risthaus, B. (2020) Problem and solution awareness in overtourism: A Delphi study. In Pechlaner, H., Innerhofer, E., and Erschbamer, G. (eds.) *Overtourism: Tourism management and solutions*. Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), Oxford, UK, pp. 43-67.
5. Fontanari, M. and Traskevich, A. (2020) *The Concept of Destination Resilience: Application for advanced sustainable Management in Tourism* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. International School of Management, Cologne, Germany; Hochschule Fresenius University of Applied Science, Cologne, Germany.
6. Fontanari, M., Traskevich, A., and Kutsch, H. (2020) *Corporate resilience within tourism enterprises* [Manuscript submitted for publication]. International School of Management, Cologne, Germany; Hochschule Fresenius University of Applied Science, Cologne, Germany.
7. Gössling, S., Scott D. and Hall, C. M. (2020) Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2020.1758708
8. Gonzalez, V.M., Coromina, L., Gali, N. (2018) Overtourism residents' perceptions of tourism impact as an indicator of resident social carrying capacity – case study of a Spanish heritage town. *Tourism Review*, 73(3), 227-296.
9. Gretzel, U. (2019) The role of social media in creating and addressing overtourism, In Dodds, R., and Butler, R.W. (eds). *Overtourism, issues, realities and solutions*. De Gruyter, Berlin, Germany, pp. 62-75.
10. Haifeng, Y., Jing, L., and Mu, Z. (2012) Rural community participation in scenic spot. A case study of Danxia Mountain of Guangdong, China. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism*, 10 (1), 76-112.
11. Hall, C.M., Scott, D. and Gössling, S. (2020) Pandemics, transformations and tourism: Be careful what you wish for. *Tourism Geographies*. DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1759131
12. Hammond, M. and Wellington, J. (2013) *Research methods. The key concepts*. Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), Oxford, UK.

- 13.Hassan, A., Ramkissoon, H., and Shabnam, S. (2017) Community resilience of the Sundarbans: Restoring tourism after oil spillage. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 15 (1), 1-18.
- 14.Innerhofer, E., Fontanari, M., and Pechlaner, H. (Eds.) (2018) *Destination Resilience: Challenges and Opportunities for Destination Management and Governance*. Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), Oxford, UK.
- 15.Innerhofer, E., Erschbamer, G., and Pechlaner, H. (2020) Overtourism: The challenge of managing the limits. In Pechlaner, H. Innerhofer, E., and Erschbamer, G. (eds.) *Overtourism: Tourism management and solutions*. Routledge (Taylor & Francis Group), Oxford, UK, pp. 3-14.
- 16.Jacobsen, J.Kr.S., Iversen, N.M., and Hem, L.E. (2019) Hotspot crowding and over-tourism: Antecedents of destination attractiveness. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 76, 53-66.
- 17.Jin, X.C. and Sparks, B. (2017) Barriers to offering special interest tour products to the Chinese outbound group market, *Tourism Management*, 59, 205–215.
- 18.Koens, K., Postma, A., and Papp, B. (2018) Is overtourism overused? Understanding the impact of tourism in a city context. *Sustainability*, 10 (12), 4384; <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10124384>.
- 19.Lapointe, D. (2020) Reconnecting tourism after COVID-19: The paradox of alterity in tourism areas. *Tourism Geographies*. DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1762115
- 20.Milano, C. (2017) *Overtourism and Tourismphobia; Global trends and local context*. Ostelea School of Tourism & Hospitality, Barcelona, Spain.
- 21.Moscardo, G., Konovalov, E., Murphy, L., McGehee, N.G, and Schurmann, A. (2017) Linking tourism to social capital in destination communities. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 6 (4), 286-295; DOI: 10.1016/j.dmm.2017.10.001.
- 22.Nepal, S.K. (2020) Travel and tourism after COVID-19 – business as usual or opportunity to reset? *Tourism Geographies*. DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1760926
- 23.Niederberger, M. and Renn, O. (2018) *Das Gruppendelphi-Verfahren* [The group Delphi method]. Springer Verlag, Wiesbaden, Germany.
- 24.Niewiadomski, P. (2020) COVID-19: from temporary de-globalisation to a re-discovery of tourism? *Tourism Geographies*. DOI: 10.1080/14616688.2020.1757749
- 25.Oklevik, O., Gossling, S., Hall, C.M., Kristian, S.J.J., Petter, G.I *et al.* (2019) Overtourism, optimisation, and destination performance indicators: a case study of activities in Fjord Norway, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(12), 1804-1824; DOI: 10.1080/09669582.2018.1533020.
- 26.Panayiotopoulos, A. and Pisano, C. (2019) Overtourism dystopias and socialist utopias: Towards an urban armature for Dubrovnik. *Tourism*

- Planning & Development*, 16(4), 393-410; DOI: 10.1080/21568316.2019.1569123.
27. Papachroni, A., Heracleous, L., and Paroutis, S. (2015) Organizational ambidexterity through the lens of paradox theory: Building a novel research agenda. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 51(1), 71-93.
  28. Park, S.Y. and Petrick, J.F. (2006) Destinations' perspectives of branding. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 33(1), 262-265; <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2005.10.007>.
  29. Smith, S.M. (2017) Organisational ambidexterity: Welcome to paradox city. *Human Resource Management International Digest*, 25(1), 1-3; DOI: 10.1108/HRMID-06-2016-0087.
  30. Traskevich, A. and Fontanari, M. (2018). Mental Wellness in Resilient Destinations. *International Journal of Spa and Wellness Industry*, 1(3), 193-217; DOI: 10.1080/24721735.2019.1596656.
  31. Wall, G. (2019) Perspectives on the environment and overtourism, In Dodds, R. and Butler, R.W (eds). *Overtourism, issues, realities and solutions*. De Gruyter, Berlin, Germany, pp. 27-45.
  32. Zukunftsinstitut (2020) *Die Welt nach Corona. Business, Märkte, Lebenswelten – was sich ändern wird* [The world after Corona. Business, markets, lifestyles - what will change]. <https://onlineshop.zukunftsinstitut.de/shop/die-welt-nach-corona/>
  33. Фонтанари, М., Траскевич, А.Г. (2019) Концепция резильентности дестинаций и перспективы ее применения в отношении сельских дестинаций Беларуси. *Белорусский экономический журнал*, 1, 136–151. [Fontanari, M. and Traskevich, A. (2019) The concept of destination resilience and prospects of its application with regard to rural destinations in Belarus. *Belorusskij Ekonomicheskij Zhurnal = Belarusian Economic Journal*, 1, 136-151. (in Russ.)].