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Approaches To Overtourism In The Area Of Destination Management Marketing

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Abstract

This research addresses the critical need to understand the role of Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) in facing overtourism through an investigation into the practices employed by diverse DMOs. The aim of this paper is to identify the marketing strategies and tools used by DMOs in response to tourist destination congestion in the context of the available literature and the current state of knowledge and to suggest needs and directions for further research based on case studies focused on selected tourist destinations. Exploring the roles of DMOs in Vannes, Colmar, Melaka, and Český Krumlov has revealed a diverse spectrum of responsibilities undertaken by these entities. Insights drawn from semi-controlled interviews with marketing representatives shed light on the nuanced challenges of overtourism and the array of tools available to DMOs for mitigation. The discourse transcends geographical boundaries, recognizing overtourism as a complex interplay of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental factors across varied destinations. In response to the evolving tourism landscape, the study emphasises the urgency for DMOs to adopt forward-thinking approaches, innovate strategies, harness technology, foster collaborations, and continually evaluate the effectiveness of deployed tools. While acknowledging the contextual nature of identified tools and strategies, and not yet providing a universal solution, the insights gleaned from diverse experiences may serve as a starting point for further research endeavours and a catalyst for adaptive measures to improve destination resilience in mitigating overtourism's impacts globally.

Keywords

marketing, management, destination, sustainability, resilience, overtourism, strategy, practices

JEL Classification: M39; Q01; Q55; Q56; Z32; Z33

1. Introduction

The issue of overtourism has been a concern for certain tourism destinations for several decades, although it has become more pronounced in recent years due to many factors. In the 21st century, the world has seen outstanding growth in global tourism, which was perturbed in 2020 but recovered fully in 2024. A disposable travel budget has significantly increased among people and brought to travelling even the lower-income groups. Advances in transportation technology and infrastructure have made travel more accessible and affordable, allowing people to travel longer distances and visit more destinations. The proliferation of low-cost airlines, cruise ships, and ride-sharing services has facilitated mass tourism and contributed to the overcrowding of popular destinations. The advent of social media and digital platforms has revolutionised the way people travel and share their experiences. Popular destinations are now more accessible and visible than ever, leading to a phenomenon known as "Instagram tourism," where travellers seek out photogenic locations to capture and share on social media. This has contributed to the concentration of tourists in certain hotspots and exacerbated overcrowding and overtourism. Many destinations experience seasonal tourist fluctuations, with peak seasons characterised by overcrowding and overtourism, followed by periods of low visitor numbers. This cyclicality can reinforce the negative impacts of tourism on destinations, leading to problems such as congestion, environmental degradation and social disruption.

Of course, increased media coverage and awareness of environmental and social issues have led to increased advocacy and activism for sustainable tourism and responsible travel practices. This has led to greater scrutiny of the negative impacts of tourism on destinations and increased pressure on governments, businesses and travellers to address the problem of overtourism.

Addressing the issue of overtourism is a critical endeavour for Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) striving to preserve the allure and sustainability of their destinations. In the contemporary tourism landscape, the surge in visitor numbers, while economically beneficial, often brings about ecological, social, and infrastructural strains. This article explores the marketing tools available to DMOs in their quest to prevent or mitigate the adverse impacts of overtourism.

Despite the pandemic-induced disruptions in travel patterns, a one-off reduction in the volume of tourists and the temporary alleviation of overcrowding, the underlying issue of overtourism remains significant. DMOs' marketing strategies remain relevant due to the imperative of sustaining tourism while preserving destinations and local communities. As travel gradually rebounds, the risk of overtourism re-emerging in particular tourist destination intensifies, necessitating ongoing attention to practical marketing tools to steer and regulate tourist influx. Consequently, the post-pandemic period underscores the continued importance of DMOs employing these tools to manage the tourism flow and mitigate the adverse impacts of excessive tourism.

2. Theoretical background

a. Destination management organisations

The traditional definition posits a destination simply as a particular country, island, or town (Hall, 2000). Today, however, it becomes more and more evident that a turn towards a new paradigm is necessary, where the borders of a destination are decided by the tourist him/herself according to their needs, interests, financial capabilities, and chosen means of transport. This is happening primarily due to globalisation and the changes it has caused in the tourists' consumer behaviour: the whole of middle Europe or a specific hotel at Old Times Square can be seen as a destination. Buhalis (2000) defines a destination as a particular entity that creates a political and legislative framework for planning and management by the destination management organisation (DMO). Thus, destination marketing should be the area leader in acquiring resources and implementing the chosen area's marketing goals while bearing full responsibility for it.

i. General tasks

While most tourist destinations have entities responsible for attracting and managing tourism activity, their names, structures, functions, and funding mechanisms vary considerably across regions (Borzyszkowski, 2013).

According to the World Tourism Organisation (2019), the primary roles of a DMO are strategic planning, formulation and implementation of the tourism strategy in a destination, market analyses, product and service development, digitalisation and innovation, monitoring, crisis management, employee training and workshops for other stakeholders' employees, promotion, marketing, branding, funding and investing. Attractions, accessibility and infrastructure, equipment, complementary services, product packages, and offered activities form the core of a destination. Cooper (2008) adds that those facilities that serve to fulfil the tourists' needs (such as public toilets or grocery stores) may also be seen as destination components. Some authors consider DMOs to be more management-focused, with tasks revolving around planning, organisation, stakeholder engagement, and leadership. Others emphasise DMOs' marketing role, prioritising attracting tourist flows and communicating with potential, existing, and past visitors (Morgan et al., 2012). DMO activities are constantly evolving, as shown e. g. by Wagenseil (2010), who identified three key areas of operation: marketing, managing tourism products, and creating a suitable environment. This divergence reflects the adaptable nature of DMO tasks globally, influenced by varying preferences within distinct tourist destinations (Borzyszkowski, 2013).

Supporting the notion of a management-focussed DMO, Bartl and Schmidt (1998) understand DMOs as mutually competitive entities aiming for complex organisation of all the product and service offers in the destination and offering them to intermediaries or end customers. The role of the destination is rooted in the offer of products and services to the customer, satisfying their needs. The managerial phases are influenced by external factors that must be considered as they impact the tourism industry in all their stages (Laesser & Beritelli, 2013). According to Kaspar (in Bieger, 1996), the DMO's managerial functions are the general tasks of the local and regional politics relevant to tourism, representing the overall interests in tourism, and support of the positive approach to tourism in the destination; the support for local sports, culture, and social life; administrative tasks such as running a municipality-controlled travel agency and dealing with complaints and claims; and co-creating, influencing, and operating the tourism offer. DMOs act as economic drivers, generating new income streams, employment opportunities, and tax revenue contributions. Their activities foster a more diversified local economy, promoting financial stability and growth. DMOs also function as industry coordinators, providing a cohesive focal point to reduce fragmentation within the tourism sector. By fostering collaboration and coordination among stakeholders, they ensure a shared approach that maximises the benefits of tourism for all involved parties. (Presenza, 2005). Boley and Perdue (2011) stress the crucial need for all critical frameworks for destination planning and management to have the locals' quality of life as a critical measure of success. Although the DMO must regularly perform normative planning for the whole destination, the responsibility for the plan's contents usually lies on local politicians as they answer for the region's development.

On the strategic level, the DMO must establish the direction of its development (the corporate strategy), which target groups it wants to cater to (the business strategy), and how to distinguish itself from the competition. As with any other business, the strategic plan is based on the continuous analysis of the inner and outer environment (demand, offer, competition, trends analysis). The goals are set concerning the overall corporate strategy and the results of such analysis. Destination management is also responsible for directing its employees and financing its tasks. Again, it must be clearly stated (and often is not), which tasks the destination management organisation is responsible for and which are in the hands of the municipality. Morgan et al. (2012) highlight that DMOs are multifaceted entities engaging in social responsibility, sustainability, and stewardship beyond destination management. They also contribute to destination crisis management by coordinating strategy implementation, with accountability resting on professional associations of tourism stakeholders (Paraskevas & Arendell, 2007). The focus here is on fostering preparedness and mitigation rather than cultivating a culture of fear. Furthermore, Neuhofer, Buhalis, and Ladkin (2012) stress the importance of DMOs utilising information and communication technologies (ICTs) to augment the co-created tourist experience. Integrating ICTs enhances the virtual pre-travel experience, inspiring and encouraging tourism. Castelltort and Mäder (2010) highlight the importance of DMOs in tracking their efficacy systematically. This monitoring could offer researchers and practitioners a valuable tool for assessing the impact of different strategies on tourism destinations.

DMOs should certainly fulfil the marketing, offering, representation, and planning functions (Bartl & Schmidt, 1998). Žužić (2012) contends that a crucial task of destination management involves recognising distinctive features of destinations and tailoring these offerings to specific target groups of tourists. According to Freyer (in Bieger, 1996), the DMOs should perform primarily the marketing and supply functions, e.g. securing customers through strategic and creative marketing efforts ranging from market analysis through sales support, advertisement, PR activities, events, and collaboration with tour operators and travel agencies. DMOs serve as community marketers, strategically communicating the destination's image, attractions, and facilities to targeted visitor markets. They craft and disseminate messages to attract and engage these visitors, effectively marketing the destination (Presenza, 2005). A

DMO should also support local attractiveness, for example, by providing information, supporting the development of local infrastructure, and widening the tourist offer (Bieger, 1996). The significance of the Destination Management Organization (DMO) in shaping destination branding and image construction is also underscored by Pike (2006). García, Gómez and Molina (2012) suggest that the conventional approach of certain DMOs, prioritising rapid brand projection towards visitors, might potentially yield counterproductive outcomes.

In recent years, the DMO's function as an environmental controller becomes ever more crucial. The tourist destination is a space defined by the spatial area, and all the tourism businesses and personas whose service offers act as the tourism product. The destination organisation may, therefore, be considered the collective producer, and as such, it must be effectively managed just like any other organisation. However, numerous markets meet in the area of one destination that often carry different interests: (1) residents and workers; (2) visitors, tourists, travelling business people; (3) tourism business subjects (Komppula, 2016). Destination management must be seen as a multi-layered process where different subjects are interconnected in different layers in space and time. Freyer (in Bieger, 1996) stresses that a DMO must act as an advisor when developing local spatial planning and protecting the natural and cultural environment. A crucial function of destination management should be counselling and leading training exercises for local inhabitants and businesses to keep developing and improving local tourism environment (Bieger, 1966). The research by Forgas-Coll et al. (2012) emphasises several vital responsibilities of DMOs when ensuring a healthy cultural environment: They should strive to minimise cultural differences in tourists' perceptions by ensuring cross-cultural training for their employees to interact with diverse visitor demographics effectively. DMOs ought to provide stakeholders with information enabling the differentiation of tourists from individualistic, low uncertainty avoidance cultures and collectivistic cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, and adapt tourism services to varied cultural and social contexts. DMOs act as quasi-public representatives, lending legitimacy to the tourism industry and offering protection and assurance to individual and group visitors. This reinforces the credibility and reliability of the destination's offerings. DMOs also function as builders of community pride. By promoting tourism and associated amenities, they enhance the quality of life within the community. They act as chief advocates, instiling a sense of pride among residents by showcasing the destination's attributes, benefiting both residents and visitors alike (Presenza, 2005).

My understanding of a DMO resonates with the thought that destination management should take on any or all of the roles should that quickly changing destination paradigm needs the most at the given moment (Hartman et al, 2020). As a destination progresses through stages of its life-cycle (typically involving exploration, development, consolidation, stagnation, and potential rejuvenation or decline), different approaches to managing a destination will be needed in reaction to distinct tourist flows, investment patterns, and development (Andrianto & Kusumah, 2021). However (as is often the case), by focusing solely on marketing, DMOs risk losing sight of the big picture. A successful tourism destination requires a holistic approach that balances marketing with infrastructure development, community engagement, stakeholder collaboration, and attention to sustainability (Boley and Perdue, 2011). A marketing-centric DMO strategy risks a negative cycle. Unrealistic visitor expectations, fuelled by overly positive portrayals, can lead to dissatisfaction and harm the destination's reputation (Lai & Li, 2016). Overlooking sustainability concerns can attract unsustainable tourism practices, further jeopardizing the destination's long-term appeal. A DMO solely focused on marketing also risks neglecting community engagement. This may look like overlooking resident concerns, tourism's impact on housing affordability, overcrowding, or environmental degradation, which may lead to tension between residents and tourists and failing to collaborate with local stakeholders, ultimately hindering the development of a sustainable and well-rounded visitor experience (Escudero Gómez, 2018).

It is crucial to mention that each country or region will understand DMO’s (or its local counterpart’s) responsibilities differently. In the Czech paradigm, Holešinská (2007) outlines the four core DMO functions, as planning (strategy, analysis), product development (offerings, quality control), stakeholder representation (coordination, communication), and comprehensive marketing (branding, promotion, sales). The functions will differ according to the relative size of the destination organisation and whether it operates as a local, regional, or national organisation. They do not, however, follow the top-down order. In a globalised world and information age when visitors' behaviour differs and changes rapidly, the destination is seldom traditionally considered through a country-region-town approach. This creates new demands on marketing, brand management, and presence on social networks, as well as creating the product and service offer catering to multiple target groups with a diversified accompanying program. The cooperation between different actors in the destination and between destinations becomes vital, especially in terms of offer creation, information exchange, and education (Holešinská, 2007).

ii. Structure and dependence

Although public institutions usually establish DMOs, the task of destination management – just as with any private organisation – is to ensure long-term market competitiveness. It is, however, often not that clear who lies responsible for managing the destination within its external and internal environment. Should it be the town, the regional government, or the most significant stakeholders? Ideally, the responsibility of higher management with its operative and cooperative function should be placed on the destination management organisation (and its director/manager). In all different scenarios, the managerial organisation of the tourist destination should be given, and a destination necessarily needs to state which organisation is responsible for which tasks.

The destination management organisation, a complex of services defined by the area, faces specific requirements and demands. These factors thoroughly influence the process of managing the destination. Among these, Holešinská (2007) mentions:

- The dual function of the destination management organisation. The management is often responsible not only for the organisation's operation but also for the operation and success of the destination. For instance, one of the tasks of a DMO is "destination network management" (Meriläinen & Lemmetyinen, 2011).
- Uncertain, unclear or only partly measurable goals. The goals stem from the duality of functions – the DMO aspires to reach its own organisational goals and the goals of the tourist destination. DMOs, in most cases, are non-profit or not-for-profit organisations oriented not on revenue but rather on the contentedness and loyalty of the customer. The goals are to offer the services of the destination not only to customers but also to other members of the destination, and measuring and evaluating the productivity and success thereof depends on so-called 'success indicators', which need to be defined beforehand (Vystoupil et al., 2007). The most common indicators include the number of visitors or bed-nights. Bed-nights, however, do not include day trips, and the number of visitors does not consider the utilisation and wear of resources, facilities, and infrastructure.
- Limited influence and control options. Destination management can hardly influence the product and service as its offering subjects are usually independent private organisations with agendas. A DMO can only indirectly influence the

activities of such organisations through good relationships based on trust and strategic communication among all stakeholders.

- Big influence of all interest groups. The interest groups of a destination (its inhabitants, local government, tourism, other businesses, ecological organisations) often have conflicting interests with which the destination management organisation is regularly confronted and must resolve to everyone's happiness.
- Necessity of legitimacy in a socio-political environment. The public must understand and accept the sovereignty and legitimacy of the destination management organisation.

iii. Ideal operation of destination management organisation

By strategically utilising the base principles of destination management, achieving a systematic, harmonious, and complex development of the destination is possible. When the natural, cultural and human resources are used optimally, the quality of the tourism product rises, the local inhabitants start to support the tourism ventures and activities, and the negative impacts of tourism are minimised. By improving the communication between interested parties in tourism, more subjects may join local tourism activities thanks to a better understanding of local tourism problems and more effective marketing. Applying strategic destination marketing management may lead towards the sustainable development of tourism in a destination and its stable positioning among the market competitors, as well as towards achieving steady growth in employment, income, and other business, cultural and educational opportunities (Holešinská, 2007). Destination management differs from general management in a couple of specifics. Firstly, although accommodation and other services are essential for a destination, DMO is, in most cases, not their owner and, therefore, cannot affect their pricing or quality. DMOs are only sporadically included in the pricing process and, even then, often only in an advisory role. DMOs must also consider the interests of their stakeholders, who tend to be numerous (from small businesses to municipalities) and often have conflicting demands. DMO should be flexible and, as part of cooperation and collaboration with its stakeholders, receive information and help them fulfil their goals. A DMO may only develop tourism in a destination so as not to put the local natural or cultural environment in harm's way.

Moreover, although the DMO must care about and report its use of donations and funding, measuring its effectiveness is often nearly impossible (Herget, 2018). Boley and Perdue (2011) predict a future trend in destination development and management that centres on sustainability and its impact on the residents' quality of life. They anticipate a greater integration of tourism and community planning to achieve this goal. The "triple bottom line" concept, focusing on economic, natural, and social benefits, is identified as a core metric for sustainability. Over the past two decades, resident quality-of-life has become the primary measure for evaluating the value added to a community through tourism development, especially for community development authorities.

iv. Operation of destination management organisation in practice

The first local or regional tourism organisations in the Czech Republic have been established on the brink of the 21st century, following advertisement groups and collectives. From circa 2010, the first destination organisations started to appear, forming strategic partnerships with tourism organisations and among themselves. Today, the DMOs of third-generation should collaborate on developing new strategies and pooling resources, creating the link between all stakeholders in a destination, and controlling the marketing image of the destination. The DMOs in the Czech Republic are currently organised on the national, regional, district, and local levels. The financial budget of DMOs differs widely. For example, in 2009, the highest budget for a DMO was as high as 22 million CZK, while the lowest rose only to 460,000 CZK. The DMOs primarily receive funding through grants, membership fees and income from commercial activities (Holešinská & Šauer, 2015). In 2010, the most common activities (in order of time spent on them) of Czech DMOs were:

- Communication with the tourism sphere stakeholders;
- Planning and realising marketing activities;
- Processing and submission of grant applications;
- Creating the destination identity and image;
- Representing the interests of destination and other institutions;
- Searching for and motivating new partners for collaboration;
- Operation of the tourism information portal;
- PR realisation;

- Active cooperation with tourism information centres and
- Preparing the development strategy of the destination (Holešinská & Šauer, 2015).

In Holešinská and Šauer's (2015) research, the most actively collaborating actor in the tourism field was the regional municipality, while the local inhabitants were rated the lowest. The outcomes of this research also point toward unsystematic creation and closing of DMOs; external or private motives for establishing a DMO; significant dependency on grants (and grant submissions taking up too much valuable time) and ineffectiveness; activities of DMOs that do not reflect the demand (which can also be attributed to grant titles and requirements); and low collaboration and trust among the market actors due to disharmony between the needs of business subjects and the DMOs. Holešinská and Šauer (2015) also explain that too many stakeholders are interested in a destination's politics, and the destination management organisation is seldom granted the responsibility and means to resolve conflicting issues (i.e., economic and environmental needs). In reality, collaboration often only exists on the level of providing and exchanging information about accommodation and other hospitality services with an apparent disinterest in a more in-depth partnership on the part of businesses. Only some subjects - usually the more prominent businesses - are starting to understand the need for collaboration for better market competitiveness of the destination. Other market players or local government representatives often participate in influencing the direction the destination is taking for economic or political advantages.

These problems are not specific to the Czech paradigm or recent. Heath, in 1999, proposed that: "most tourism destinations have a fragmented and myopic approach to management, which is to say that there is insufficient and inappropriate cooperation between the public and private sectors and the absence of strategic, systematic, and information-based management," which, from personal experience, continues to be problematic today.

One of the concerns that many DMOs must persistently take into account is overtourism. Overtourism significantly challenges DMOs due to its potential negative impacts on destinations and local communities. It strains infrastructure, threatens cultural heritage, and disrupts the delicate balance between tourism and sustainable development. Effectively addressing overtourism is crucial for DMOs to ensure destinations' long-term viability and attractiveness while preserving their cultural and environmental integrity.

b. Overtourism

i. Definition

Continuously growing amounts of tourists in many destinations have already started to generate adverse effects on the destinations themselves, not only in the environmental sphere but also in the daily life of local communities. Riedler and Shermer (1967) were the first to work with a notion of overtourism. They investigated a possible danger of cultural overtourism in rural areas as a threat to the "folk culture". Middleton and Hawkins (1998) warn that this growth happens at the expense of the environment of popular destinations. Not only does the physical environment suffer, but many destinations report unhappiness and lower quality of life for residents. At the same time, a combination potentially jeopardises the future profits of tourist destinations and tourism organisations. According to Gilmore et al. (2007), this negative effect of tourism is particularly distinct in natural and cultural landmarks of the World Heritage. As mentioned by Lansing and De Vries (2007), the sociocultural aspects of overcrowded destinations are essentially immeasurable, and that – apart from damaging the physical environment – also rising prices or social differentiation in endangered destinations might potentially be the outcome (Stonich et al., 1995).

Although the term 'overtourism' has recently resonated among academia, the phenomenon of overcrowded tourist spaces and the study thereof is not new (Perkumiene & Pranskuniené, 2019). It has been discussed in the academic sphere since it first became a problem in some destinations over 40 years ago.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) sees overtourism as an impact that tourism has on a destination where the life quality of the residents and visitors' experience deteriorates due to excessive tourism (UNWTO, 2018). Bouchon and Rauscher (2019) explain: "… overtourism is a much more complex phenomenon in which the impact of tourism exceeds physical, environmental, social, economic, psychological, and political capacity thresholds. These thresholds are subject to space and time dimensions. Overtourism is now a question of feeling and perception among impacted parties" (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019). The concept refers to an excessive influx of visitors that a destination cannot comfortably accommodate over a specific period, while threshold for "too many" visitors varies for each destination, relative to its population of locals, hosts, business owners, and tourists (Bertocchi & Visentin 2019).

Contemporary research, represented in works such as those by Alvarez-Sousa (2018) and Tsaur, Yen and Teng (2018), expands upon established frameworks, emphasising persistent challenges in balancing relationships between hosts and guests amidst the continuous expansion of tourism. Socially and perceptively, tensions arise between tourists and residents as they increasingly share urban amenities, spaces, and places, particularly in heritage cities (Bertocchi & Visentin 2019).

The emergence of "overtourism" and "tourism phobia" stems from unsustainable mass tourism practices, prompting reactions from scholars, industry professionals, and social groups alarmed by the adverse effects on urban, rural, and coastal regions utilised for tourism. Decision-making influenced by commercial interests among policymakers, destination managers, and prominent figures in the tourism industry has contributed significantly to these concerns. Researchers like Doxey (1975), Butler (1980), and O'Reilly (1986), along with international bodies such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 1983), have conducted comprehensive investigations into various aspects of tourism. Their studies encompass the contentious interactions between residents and visitors, the developmental phases of tourism, the concept of carrying capacity, and apprehensions regarding tourism reaching a saturation point. These inquiries reflect enduring concerns regarding the implications of overwhelming visitor numbers on destinations.

ii. Causes of overtourism

Overtourism's red flags are complex. Most authors agree that although overtourism may consist of numerous factors, recently mainly supply sources such as new hospitality options (e.g. Airbnb) and lower costs of international travel (primarily via air) are the cause of the overcrowding of some tourist destinations (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019). Other aspects of overtourism may not necessarily be linked to the tourism sphere alone and are often furthered by economy-driven societal narratives. Among them, Bouchon and Rauscher (2019) list: the new simplicity of travelling connected to more accessible immigration practices and the growth of cruise ships and low-cost air carriers; new tourist behaviours concerning their approach to accommodation in a destination and the resulting strain on the residential housing market; the shift of the urban lifestyle prioritising creativity, experience and the quality of life; and technological progress spurs information dissemination and thus facilitates independent travel. Peeters et al. (2021) examine tourist density, vacation rentals, travel access, and regional features. High tourist concentration (bed-nights per area/resident) and unregulated Airbnb growth are warning signs. Destinations near airports and with many cruise ship visits are also at risk. Interestingly, a high concentration of World Heritage Sites is another indicator.

Nepal and Nepal (2019) attribute the significant increase in tourism congestion to economic, social and technological causes. They include, for example:

- the rise of the global middle class,
- more affordable travel thanks to sharing and joint consumption (Trivett, 2013),
- the rise of the millennial generation (consumers born between 1980 and 1999), who prefer to spend their income on new experiences rather than on previously familiar products (Singapore Tourism Board, 2017),
- and finally, technologies that facilitate and support the mass promotion and purchase of tourism services.

Among the contextual overload factors identified by Weber (2017) in his case study, the factors include:

- lack of facilities in the destination (toilets, drinking water, parking, ATMs, public transport),
- high dependence of the inhabitants of the destination on tourism (also Peeters et al, 2021),
- seasonality and type of tourism (one-day trippers, cottages or summer residences, significant one-off events),
- concentration of capital (unequal distribution of benefits).

The UNWTO (2018) mentions the increasing urbanisation, booming tourism sector, fast economic development, lower transportation and travel assistance costs, and the burgeoning middle class in most economies as causes for cities becoming popular destinations crowded by tourists. This study also highlights the potentiality of poor management and unchecked development as some of the high overtourism risk factors (UNWTO, 2018). Seraphin et al. (2018) also overwhelmingly suggest that the branding strategies of destination organisations or other tourism organisations in the destination may be the cause of overtourism. The problem of overloaded public facilities is a serious feature of almost all destinations suffering from overtourism. Because these facilities – for example, toilets, drinking water, ATMs or means of mass transport – need to be used by residents and visitors, their shortage usually becomes critical with the onset of the primary season (Bimonte, n.d.). The uneven distribution of benefits from tourism (whether they flow to private foreign entrepreneurs or the city coffers, which inefficiently redistributes them) often causes the construction and maintenance of public facilities to be neglected in favour of other projects, usually aimed at a quick profit (Holešinská, 2007). The concentration of capital also causes a widening of the differences between residents, especially those who make a living from tourism and those who have other sources of income. The higher the dependence of the destination on income from tourism (especially in the absence of another strong sector), the deeper the differences between the residents will be and the more the management of the destination will be oriented towards attracting a large number of visitors regardless of sustainability. Milano et al. (2019) point out that an essential factor in the congestion of destinations is the concentration of individual businesses and DMOs on the promotion and sale of an already overloaded product. The main product of a destination is usually its main attraction or set of attractions, which can take many forms, from very general parameters (e.g. the sea) to particular ones (Koh Samui beach). According to the main attractiveness, visitors usually choose their destination and only choose from the offer of secondary products or services (accommodation, hospitality and others) (Beránek, 2013). Using notorious and enticing attractions to promote the destination will attract crowds of visitors who will further support many local entrepreneurs. Offering the same attraction over and over without developing new products that would also lead visitors to alternative attractions in the destination or entice them at a different time naturally results in an unbearable concentration of visitors in a place and, at the same time, a limited time spent in the destination before moving on further (e.g. a one-day visit to Venice while on holiday in Italy). The solution is, according to Milano et al. (2019), strategic planning for the next tourist seasons and the continuous development of new tourism products to disperse the influx of visitors in the place, increasing the offer so that it is interesting for visitors to spend a longer time in the destination and thus use its services for a longer time, and finally to extend the period of the main season for several months. (Milano et al., 2019).

iii. Examples of affected destinations

In Europe, the most overcrowded destinations include Dubrovnik, Santorini, Cinque Terre, Amsterdam, Venice, Balearic Islands, Budapest, Dublin, Barcelona or Prague (Stanchev, 2018; Benner, 2020 & Amore et al., 2020). The usual examples of spaces affected by overtourism include historical or cultural cities or towns (Paris, Venice, Barcelona), smaller picturesque towns with limited space (Hallstatt, the villages of Cinque Terre), whole vacation islands (Mallorca, Galapagos, Santorini), monuments (Roman Colosseum, Egyptian pyramids, …), and even some natural sites (beach resorts in Spain, Yellowstone national park, Fjadrárgljúfur

Canyon) (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019). In large cities, the problem in recent years has escalated to such heights that the locals have started organised protests or other social movements against tourism and, as such, have also received substantial media coverage (Hughes, 2018.) In 2017, Barcelona and several other Catalan cities experienced a surge of anti-tourism mobilizations led by activists. In Venice, hailed as the epitome of overtourism, social movements opposing tourism have arisen in response to significantly unsustainable tourist influxes after the MSC cruise ship "Opera“ collided with a wharf in 2019. Other destinations have also witnessed waves of anti-tourism protests in enduringly popular European cities like Amsterdam, Rome, and Dubrovnik, as well as in other regions globally, including Central America (Cañada, 2010) and Southeast Asia (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019).

iv. Determining overtourism

Overtourism comprises numerous influencing factors. The indicators of overtourism in a destination, as set by the European Parliament (2018) study, follow:

1. tourism density by defined the bed-nights per km2 and tourism intensity calculated by the bed-nights per resident;
2. the share of Airbnb bed capacity of the combined Airbnb and booking.com bed capacity;
3. the share of tourism in regional Gross Domestic Product;
4. air travel intensity is seen as the arrivals by air divided by the number of residents and
5. the closeness to airports, cruise ports, and UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Selby links the term 'overtourism' to firstly the "congestion and failing infrastructures" and secondly to "increased resistance toward and protest against tourism among marginalised and displaced inhabitants" (Coca-Stefaniak et al., 2016). He stresses the importance of the problem in the future, mainly because of its potential threat to the relationship between the local inhabitants, the visitors, and new technologies. Gössling et al. (2020) propose that the resident perspective is crucial in understanding overtourism. They define it as a situation where local residents perceive significant negative social, economic, or environmental changes caused by a rise in visitor density. This perception can lead to feelings of overwhelm, irritation, and dissatisfaction. Residents may feel they have no control over tourism or tourist behaviour, and this psychological decline in their sense of place can ultimately breed resentment towards tourists. When these disruptions reach a tipping point, residents may resort to avoidance behaviours or even aggression (Gössling et al., 2020). According to Goodwin (2017), overtourism arises simply when the residents or tourists notice that the space feels overcrowded and starts to lose its nature and genuineness and causes the residents more irritation than happiness or tranquillity. Main tourism areas are usually found in the city centres, which usually suffer from overcrowding. In the cases of larger urbanised spaces, overtourism can be felt across more expansive or multiple areas (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019).

v. Negative externalities

The recent surge in discussions about overtourism stems from its wide range of negative consequences, encompassing social, cultural, economic, and ecological spheres (Drápela, 2023; Peeters et al., 2021; Gössling et al., 2020). Overtourism can negatively affect residents‘ perceptions of their own neighbourhoods. Studies by Bellini et al. (2017) and Lawson et al. (1998) suggest residents feel a decline in the liveability, desirability, and economic viability of their communities due to overtourism. Residents in affected destinations often express concerns about the loss of cultural identity, displacement of traditional retail stores, property price hikes, environmental degradation, and resource overuse (Stanchev, 2018). Seraphin et al. (2018) further highlight the erosion of privacy and peaceful daily life, overburdened public transportation and infrastructure, congestion of everyday facilities, and an unpredictable and elitist housing market.

Residents bear the brunt of rising living costs as housing, goods, and services become more expensive due to increased tourist demand (Drápela, 2023; Peeters et al., 2021; Gössling et al., 2020). The rapid growth of short-term rentals like Airbnb further squeezes housing availability for residents, pushing up rental prices and disrupting the delicate balance between tourists and locals (Koens et al., 2018 in Gössling et al., 2020; Lee, 2016). The rise of Airbnb rentals, especially whole-house rentals, further disrupts equilibrium. It reduces available housing for residents and changes the local cultural fabric (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019). While Quattrone et al. (2016) suggest that room rentals can promote cultural exchange, entire-house rentals cater to a high-end tourist market and displace traditional accommodation options.

Residents may find their own homes unsuitable due to crowding, noise, and a sense of displacement (Neuts & Nijkamp, 2012). Competition for local jobs intensifies, and cultural clashes arise due to differences in customs and tourist behaviour (Drápela, 2023; Peeters et al., 2021). This can manifest as increased noise, disruption, and littering (Koens et al., 2018; Peeters et al., 2021). Residents may feel marginalised and unwelcome in their own communities, and local traditions may be modified to cater to tourists, leading to a sense of cultural inauthenticity (Peeters et al., 2021). A key resident concern is the lack of local say in tourism development. Frustration with profit-driven tourism strategies can lead to resentment towards tourists (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019). This sentiment is exacerbated by uncontrolled tourism growth, which can force residents out of city centres as everyday amenities like shops and restaurants are replaced by tourist-oriented businesses like souvenir shops and international chains (Dumbrovská, 2017; García-Hernández et al., 2017). This homogenises destinations, making them less unique and appealing (García-Hernández et al., 2017).

The environment suffers as tourist activity rises. Air and noise pollution increase, along with waste generation, leading to a decline in environmental quality (Koens et al., 2018; Peeters et al., 2021). Natural habitats and ecosystems are degraded (Peeters et al., 2021). Overcrowding in natural areas damages ecosystems and detracts from the very experience tourists seek (Peeters et al., 2021).

Both residents and tourists rely on the same facilities and infrastructure, leading to competition for resources. While residents may initially appreciate the social and economic benefits of tourism, the constant tourist presence can eventually strain relations (Koens & Postma, 2017). The economic benefits of tourism may not be evenly distributed. Large corporations and international chains often reap the windfall, while local businesses struggle (Drápela, 2023). Destinations over reliant on tourism become vulnerable to economic downturns or shifts in tourist preferences (Drápela, 2023). Local shops and services are displaced as businesses cater to tourist preferences, leading to a process of gentrification (Koens et al., 2018; Peeters et al., 2021). Overtourism strains infrastructure, requiring increased costs for maintenance and expansion. A destination's reputation can be tarnished by overcrowding and negative tourist behaviour, deterring future visitors (Peeters et al., 2021).

The very essence of a destination's culture can be eroded by overtourism. Traditional practices become commercialised, losing their significance (Drápela, 2023). Historical and cultural sites suffer damage from increased visitor numbers and improper behaviour (Drápela, 2023). Tourists themselves can become frustrated by the overwhelming crowds and loss of authenticity in destinations struggling with overtourism. I believe that while tourists contribute to the problems of overtourism, they can also be part of the solution (Krajíčková et al., 2022).

Tourists may have different tolerance levels for congestion and other negative impacts compared to residents (Puczko & Ratz, 2000) and they can be aware of both positive and negative impacts (Moyle et al., 2013). Naturally, tourists who perceive mainly negative impacts might be less likely to return (Jalilvand et al., 2012). Their emotional connection to a destination can influence their perception of its tourism impacts including environmental concerns (Su & Swanson, 2017; Joo & Woosnam, 2019). However, by being mindful of their behaviour and supporting responsible tourism practices, tourists can help mitigate the negative impacts of overtourism (Joo et al., 2019).

Saarinen (2006, p. 1121) foresaw the need for alternative, more sustainable tourism practices, and Saarinen (2013, p. 10) emphasised the urgency of stronger regulations to limit tourism growth. Hall (2019, p. 13) further argues that a fundamental shift away from growth-focused tourism models is necessary. Moving forward, exploring tools and approaches to prevent overcrowding and mitigate existing negative impacts is crucial.

c. Approaches and tools to address overtourism

i. Marketing tools and methods

Scientific literature offers a range of mechanisms to prevent, reduce, or mitigate the impacts of overtourism. These approaches can be broadly categorised into targeted destination management (Buckley, 2011), economic changes and restrictions (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019; Martín Martín et al., 2018), and marketing efforts (Capocchi et al., 2019; Veiga et al., 2018).

Destination management plays a critical role. Regulatory measures such as establishing protected areas, access restrictions, and entrance fees can be implemented to safeguard natural and cultural environments (Weber, 2017). Legal measures are another tool, allowing authorities to regulate tourist access to already crowded areas or limit access to housing facilities in residential neighborhoods (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019; Martín Martín et al., 2018). Additionally, minimum or maximum lengths of stay, creation of temporary accommodation licences, and zoning regulations for tourist accommodation can be implemented (Martín Martín et al., 2018). Strengthening environmental protection should also be a priority consideration for destination management practices (Buckley, 2011). Destinations across Europe have put in place various strategies. Some of their approaches include regulating tourists' access to already crowded areas or limiting access to housing facilities in residential areas. Among legal measures, Bouchon and Rauscher (2019) note several remedies that the public and private actors use to battle overcrowding problems. These include also:

- "Setting minimum or maximum lengths of stay;
- creating a temporary accommodation licence; and
- establishing zoning allowing tourist accommodation" (Martín Martín et al., 2018).

Economic changes and restrictions can also be utilised. Implementing tourist taxes or fees (Drápela, 2023) can deter excessive crowds, particularly in sensitive areas (e.g., high fees in some African parks). Regulations on accommodation options, such as those for short-term rentals (Drápela, 2023) or limitations on lengths of stay (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019; Martín Martín et al., 2018), can help manage visitor pressure.

Marketing efforts play a significant role in influencing tourist behavioir. Encouraging tourists to visit less crowded areas and times through selective marketing campaigns and off-season promotions can help distribute visitors more evenly (Peeters et al., 2021). Real-time information about crowded areas can be utilised to suggest alternative options to visitors, and dynamic caps on access to popular destinations can be implemented (Peeters et al., 2021). Another critical approach is to educate tourists about other appealing attractions or neighbourhoods and provide incentives (i.e., cheap or free transport) for these spaces to improve the patterns of visits. This may, for example, be observed in London's arising urban art excursions into previously non-touristy neighbourhoods (Veigaet al., 2018). Pearce (2018) argues that the symptoms of overtourism may be alleviated through monitoring tourist flows via an IT application and real-time data transfer by identifying the crowded spaces and redirecting the crowds. To gain control over tourist flows and de-crowd most popular spaces, Veiga et al. (2018) mention, for example, a Discover the City application, which notifies its users when chosen attractions are overcrowded and suggest alternative spots to visit. Redirecting tourist flows away from the main tourist hubs may also help battle crowding and distribute the wealth connected to tourism to surrounding areas and secondary destinations (Capocchi et al., 2019). Maitland (2013) also recommends establishing a more adventurous tourist approach through a 'different tourism experience', which can mean offering off-the-beaten-path or learning about the local activities. While this approach may lessen the impact of overtourism in the primary destinations, it may also lead to residents' displeasure as they might feel that the tourists are invading their private spaces (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019).

Product diversification is another strategy. The dependence of the inhabitants of the destination on tourism and its seasonality could be mitigated by diversifying tourism. Introducing new products or forms of tourism (e.g. community-based tourism) would further help distribute profits and benefits more evenly. By offering alternative experiences besides popular attractions, destinations can distribute tourist flow and reduce pressure on specific sites (Drápela, 2023). Ensuring residents benefit from tourism through economic opportunities and improved living standards fosters greater community support for responsible tourism (Peeters et al., 2021; UNWTO, 2019). Educating tourists about responsible practices through tourist education programs and providing incentives (e.g., cheap or free transport) to encourage visits to less crowded areas are additional tools (Veiga et al., 2018).

I strongly resonate that it is mainly collaboration and planning that are essential for successful implementation of mentioned tools and strategies. Proactive destination management by DMOs is crucial. By planning and managing tourism development before a location becomes overwhelmed, they can help prevent overtourism in the first place (Seraphin et al., 2019). Collaboration among all stakeholders (residents, businesses, and DMOs) is essential (Drápela, 2023; Peeters et al., 2021). Furthermore, it is key that tourism authorities are in constant contact with central political stakeholders and try to influence them to create favourable tourism conditions (Weber, 2017). Capocchi et al. (2019) believe that:

> "To safeguard the economic benefits of tourism, shifting the focus of tourism development toward qualitative growth and drawing on market segments with higher localised value added and lower social, cultural and environmental impact will be necessary to balance the economic effects desired, such as generating localised value-added, tax revenues, and employment, with the social, cultural and environmental sustainability that is indispensable in the long term."

I agree that resorting to absolute demarketing or simply abandoning tourism (Texit) is not an effective solution because it ignores the root causes of overtourism (Seraphin et al., 2019). Martín Martín et al. (2020) stress the importance of a clear strategy incorporating sustainable principles. They propose diversifying activities and destinations and reducing seasonality rather than preventing the tourists from arriving. Such an approach must, in all cases, stem from the needs of local communities. Veiga et al. (2018) sadly note that although the tourism industry has proposed several remedies to overtourism, an accurate assessment of the practices' effectiveness needs to be more attainable. These approaches may, theoretically, alleviate overcrowding and ease some overtourism symptoms, there is, however, little to no proof of their efficacy in practice. Overtourism has been identified as one of the most pressing issues some DMOs must contend with (Escudero Gómez, 2018) and scientific research offers a range of solutions whose applicability and effectiveness in practice has not been adequately studied.

Table 1 summarises the strategic approaches, stemming from theoretical research, a DMO may adopt to compabt overtourism.

Category	**Strategy**	**Applicability**	**Source**
Reducing Tourist Numbers	Quotas/Caps on tourist numbers	Mitigation & Prevention	Butler & Dodds (2022)
	Entry permit limits for attractions	Mitigation & Prevention	Drápela (2023)
	Regulations on short-term rentals	Mitigation & Prevention	Drápela (2023)
Distributing Visitors	Spreading tourists across locations/seasons	Mitigation & Prevention	Peeters et al. (2021); Drápela (2023)
	Real-time information on crowded areas	Mitigation	Peeters et al. (2021)
	Dynamic caps on popular destinations	Mitigation	Peeters et al. (2021)
Economic Tools	Tourist taxes	Mitigation	Drápela (2023)
	Regulations for tourism operations/traffic management	Mitigation	Peeters et al. (2021)
	Higher attraction entry fees	Mitigation	Drápela (2023)
	Regulations on tourist accommodation length of stay	Mitigation	Bouchon & Rauscher (2019); Martín Martín et al. (2018)
	Higher park entry fees	Mitigation	Drápela (2023)
	Regulations on tourist accommodation length of stay	Mitigation	Bouchon & Rauscher (2019); Martín Martín et al. (2018)
Distributing Visitors & Product Diversification	Offering alternative experiences	Mitigation	Drápela (2023)
Community Engagement	Resident benefit programs (economic opportunities)	Mitigation & Prevention	Peeters et al. (2021); UNWTO (2019)

Destination Management (Regulatory Measures)	Protected areas/access restrictions/entrance fees	Mitigation & Prevention	Weber (2017)
	Regulating tourist access to crowded areas	Mitigation	Bouchon & Rauscher (2019); Martín Martín et al. (2018)
	Limiting access to housing in residential areas	Mitigation	Bouchon & Rauscher (2019); Martín Martín et al. (2018)
Marketing Efforts	Attracting higher-value tourists	Mitigation & Prevention	Capocchi et al. (2019)
	Promoting alternative destinations	Mitigation	Capocchi et al. (2019); Veiga et al. (2018)
	Tourist education on responsible practices	Mitigation	Veiga et al. (2018)
	Incentives for visiting less crowded areas	Mitigation	Veiga et al. (2018)
Collaboration & Planning	Collaboration among stakeholders (residents, businesses, DMOs)	Mitigation & Prevention	Drápela (2023); Peeters et al. (2021)
	Proactive destination management by DMOs	Prevention	Seraphin et al. (2019)

Table 1. Streategic approaches to overtourism from literature research.

ii. Other approaches

Strategic management principles seem to be applicable in the case of tackling the problem of overtourism by the destination management organisation.

Strategic thinking. The DMO managers or other responsible persons need to adopt the principles of strategic thinking, such as a systematic understanding of complex structures and the impact of their decisions on all the structure's parts. That way, many conflicts or misunderstandings amongst destinations' stakeholders can be avoided. The willingness to consider the opinions of employees, associates or other stakeholders (such as local inhabitants or visitors) is crucial in establishing an atmosphere of trust and collaboration within a destination and for effective problem-solving. Time-oriented planning that focuses not only on fast turnover and revenues but also on the future perspective of the destination and the economic and cultural sustainability of current processes and activities. Smart goal setting and goal orientation that considers the broader perspective of the destination and all the players within – again – not only the economic or other short-term aspects present in the simple, budget-based planning. The ability to follow up and achieve (and evaluate) set goals, not only setting them for securing financing through specified grant systems. A systemic challenge: the need for a grant system that does not force the DMOs to create unrealistic or unnecessary goals. Innovation, creative management and problem-solving to appeal to more diversified target groups. The need for a strict role division in a destination between the local municipality, government, and the DMO, as well as clear direction from one institution or manager to avoid conflict and confusion when fulfiling or financing tasks. The top-down approach to developing corporate and business strategies while setting and fulfiling goal-oriented tasks does not only consider economic or personal profits or benefits.

Among economic interventions against destination congestion, Nepal and Nepal (2019) mention variable pricing, entrance fees, tourism tax, equitable revenue sharing, vacation and leave reforms, and government regulation of accommodation, restaurants and cruise ships.

Nepal and Nepal (2019) believe that fees and variable pricing are critical components of strategies to manage excessive tourist inflows. However, they point out that it is a double-edged tool that can dampen the number of visitors and, at the same time, negatively affect their behaviour by creating the impression of "pre-paying" for the possibility of pollution or overloading the capacity of the destination. Currently, the fees collected primarily supplement corporate, municipal or state coffers, are used to repair inadequate infrastructure and rarely reflect the actual costs of correcting cultural or ecological failures (Nepal and Nepal, 2019). Nepal and Nepal (2019) also draw attention to the insufficient understanding of the demographic characteristics and motivation of tourism participants and tour operators to visit paid natural protected areas (parks, reserves).

The costs associated with the maintenance of the infrastructure or the improvement of the residents' standard of living can be offset by the administration of the destination or city by collecting a special tourism tax, the so-called accommodation fee. The accommodation fee is usually collected for the overnight stay of one visitor in an accommodation facility in the destination (Rinaldi, 2014). Dwyer et al. (2016) state that the fiscal tax function, which provides income for municipal or regional budgets, significantly influences the destination. Revenues from tourism taxes are rarely limited to further use only for tourism because it is necessary from the municipal budget to ensure the management of public goods that both visitors and locals use, such as public lighting or street cleaning. Even a higher local tax on tourism traffic rarely affects a destination's demand.

The destination should purposefully develop and offer its products and attractions so that visitors are ideally dispersed in place and time. However, developing and promoting new attractions may require investment, part of which can be financed through collected tourist tax revenues. The longer-term focus should be to create healthy tourism density (number of visitors per square kilometre) and tourism intensity (number of tourists per inhabitant) across destinations. Milano et al. (2019b), however, also warn that the problem is often the behaviour of visitors and their concentration in one specific place rather than their total number.

The aim of managing overtourism, regardless of the specific characteristics of the locality and destinations, should be to address social disparities in a targeted manner by finding the right balance in meeting the needs of key stakeholders, i.e. local businesses, residents and tourists. Nepal and Nepal (2019) offer a long-term solution in integrating the national tourism policy with the national energy, environmental and socio-economic policy. Integrated approaches to tourism development are essential to prevent overtourism.

While the mechanisms proposed may, in theory, seem relatively straightforward, few researchers have studied whether a destination has been able to implement them with success.

3. Methodology

The aim of the paper is to identify the marketing strategies and tools used by DMOs in response to tourist destination congestion in the context of the available literature and the current state of knowledge, and to suggest needs and directions for further research based on case studies focused on selected tourist destinations.

Researching the practice of mitigating overtourism in various DMOs is crucial to understanding and solving the complex problems it brings. The research questions arose from previous theoretical studies.

The main research question is as follows:

What are the current research needs in the area of preventing and mitagating overtourism in destinations?

Partial research questions are:

RQ1: What are the tools and practices that are being used in the practice of destination management organisation to mitigate overtourism and the harmful effects thereof in affected tourist destinations?

RQ2: Are the explored DMOs facing the same problems using the same tools?

RQ3: How do the practices of the DMOs studied correspond with available theories and what further research is needed?

To gather relevant information about destination management marketing practices, case studies from multiple destinations around the globe are put together and examined.

Case studies

A case study research, according to Zainal (2007): "...allows the exploration and understanding of complex issues. It can be considered a robust research method particularly when a holistic, in-depth investigation is required." It is mostly seen as useful when researching fields such as education, sociology and community based problems such as poverty, unemployment etc. (Johnson, 2006). Zainal (2007) stipulates that quantitative methods are greatly limited when it comes to providing holistic explanations of social phenomena studied. Through the case-study method, a researcher can analyse the data within a given context in great detail. This may include both qualitative and quantitative data, which can help analyse the problematic through observation, reconstruction and analysis. Case studies may explore not only data and phenomena, but also their relationships, predicting future outcomes. The case studies of chosen destinations and destination organisations will be created with the help of primary and secondary data collecting methods: brief situatianal analysis of the destination based on publicly accessible data, and semi-structured interviews with destination marketing representatives.

Interviews

There are three types of interviews: unstructured, semi-structured and structured (Adams, 2015). For this study, semi-structured interviews will be used for their numerous advantages. Firstly, rather than following a closed set of questions slavishly, the conversation may drift around various topics of concern in the field and thus also uncover previously unexpected issues. It is guided with only one interviewee at a time through a mix a closed and open ended questions and can be followed up by further unplanned questions if necessary, therefore it also offers a more in-depth understanding of a given problematic. However, it still adheres to certain guidelines so that the topic of the interview is not lost. On the other hand, it is rather time-consuming, labour-intensive and requires deep focus by the interviewer, therefore it is only recommended if only a small number of respondents are participating in the given survey (Adams, 2015).

Initially, a small number of destination organisations' marketing professionals were interviewed during semi-structured interviews that allowed for slight changes in topic and new inputs. The interviews focus on the situation in their destination, marketing practice and its effects. The basic structure of the interviews remains identical in all studied destinations. The results of semi-structured interviews are to be analysed later and the approaches and tools in use compared among the destinations. The interviewees were selected based on their practical involvement in the marketing operations of chosen destinations: either marketing representatives, higher managers, or directors of destination management organisations or other institutions with a corresponding function.

To design the interview as comprehensively as possible, the following questions need to be answered in addition to the main research question:

- *Do the destination management and marketing representatives of the researched destination view overtourism as a problem that affects and endangers their destination and how?*
- *Did the destination management put in use certain tools or practices to mitigate overtourism and which are they?*
- *Does the destination management collect data in order to analyse the success rate for their tools and practices and does the data support their usefulness?*

Based on the research question and additional questions, the following interview questions were selected:

1. What are your opinions and thoughts on overtourism and overcrowded destinations?
2. Do you see it as a problem in your destination?
3. Why (or why not) do you see it as a problem?
4. Are there specific locations where you are (or previously were) concerned about overcrowding? Which locations and why?
5. Are there specific periods when you are (or previously were) concerned about overcrowding? Which periods and why?
6. What are the data figures on how many visitors spend the night/shopping and restaurant revenues/transport?
7. Do the data suggest overtourism?
8. What are the marketing and other measures that may be taken against overtourism and overcrowding?
9. Which marketing tools or approaches do you use/have used?
10. How do you measure their success?
11. According to your evaluation, are or were the measures successful?
12. Are there any problems regarding overtourism that you expect in the future?
13. How are you preparing for anticipated problems?

I opted to interview professionals from these destinations due to my personal acquaintance with these tourism landscapes. Český Krumlov, my hometown, underwent a slow and harrowing transformation into an insincere tourist backdrop during my teenage years and inspired my research of overtourism. Vannes was chosen because one of my dissertation consultants is affiliated with the local university, where I also conducted a research stay for a month and had a chance to explore the destination and interview local destination marketing management professionals. This connection also facilitated my study of Colmar, another French destination. Additionally, I spent 14 days in Melaka as a visiting lecturer, providing firsthand exposure to the unsustainable aspects of tourism there and enabling face-to-face interviews with industry professionals.

Destination	**Number of inhabitants**	**Tourist arrivals (year)**	**Visitor/ inhabitant ratio**

Český Krumlov	13,000	1,850,000 (2018)	142
Vannes	54,000	3,000,000 (2019)	55
Colmar	70,000	1,700,000 (2017)	24
Melaka	454,000	18,000,000 (2019)	40

Table 2. Visitor / inhabitant ratio.

All four cities are very well established tourist destinations with various degrees of crowdedness. While Melaka saw almost 18,000,000 visitors yearly (before Covid-19) and Český Krumlov has the highest visitor-to-inhabitant ratio, Colmar suffers from overcrowding in shock waves during the Christmas season, and Vannes continues to be a rather calm destination even during the height of the season (see Table 2).

The interviews from four destinations (Český Krumlov, Vannes, Colmar and Melaka) took place between the years 2020 and 2023, three of them face—to-face and one digitally led. They were recorded, transcribed and analysed. A simplified deductive and inductive approaches were used for the transcribed data. The inductive analysis proces involves solely relying on the participant experiences to inform and shape the entire analysis proces (Azungah, 2018). That's why the interviews were first summarised, the emerging relevant topics were selected, compared to the other interviews and grouped. Then, the deductive proces began. The deductive approach employs a structural framework consisting of themes during the coding process, as outlined by Burnard et al. (2008). This framework is utilised in the analysis with an expectation that specific fundamental concepts are present within the data, aligning with the findings of Bradley et al. (2007). Based on the research question that arose from the literature reseach, the interviews were again analysed to identify key ideas pertaining to the prevention and mitigation of overtourism.

4. Research results

a. Český Krumlov

i. Introduction

Český Krumlov is one of the most important cultural-historical urban destinations in Central Europe. (Škarvadová, 2011). It is located in the south of Bohemia, in an especially prestigious position not further than three hours by car from Prague, Vienna, Hallstatt, Salzburg or Munich. It is one of the most visited places nationwide with a wide range of attractions for tourists. Inscribed on the UNESCO list (JCCR, 2019). The picturesque historic town offers authentically renovated renaissance and baroque buildings, churches and parks, towered by a large castle complex with a chateau and gardens. During the 20th century, the area of Český Krumlov was severely neglected due to its location in a former Sudetenland, having been repopulated and its historic building used e.g. for storage or military purposes (Novotná & Kunc, 2022). After 1990, enormous investments took place in Český Krumlov in the modification and renewal of the desolate city, both in terms of construction and architecture, as well as infrastructure. Subsequently, tourism started to flourish gradually.

Český Krumlov was chosen as one of the best-known cases of overtourism in Czechia that the destination management itself admits and actively tries to amend. My own experience with the effects of tourism on the character of the town and the local community also influenced the choice of this destination for my work.

ii. Tourism

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the main tourist flows originated from the neighbouring and richer Western countries, after 2010 the town saw an ever-growing influx of organised tourist groups from Asia. Český Krumlov, a town of 13,000 inhabitants (CSO, 2018) welcomed over 1,850,000 visitors in 2018. Coincidentally, the Český Krumlov area shows the lowest number of visitor days in the whole of South Bohemia: only 3,360,000 visitor days were spent in the destination (JCCR, 2019). This reflects the nature of the incoming visitors, where only 550,000 tourists arrive who spend more than 1 night in the destination for over 1,305,000 day-trippers, the majority of which travelled from abroad (JCCR, 2019). In this work, I choose not to include statistical data from 2020 and onwards as they do not reflect the overall tendencies of local tourism industries due to Covid-19-related restrictions. Understandably, the local inhabitants are uncomfortable with the progress of tourism in Český Krumlov and, despite its stagnation during the pandemic, they often state that the destination does not feel “like their home” anymore. Many inhabitants chose to move away from the town centre or simply to move away from Český Krumlov completely either due to inconvenience or local inflation affecting the prices of amenities and housing.

iii. DMO structure

DMO Český Krumlov Region z.s. is in charge of the management and marketing of the destination and is tasked with the development and support of tourism. It is also the medium charged with promoting and communicating, working closely with partners at the local, regional, national and international levels. It should safeguard Český Krumlov to remain a sought-after tourist destination and a "good place to live". It should also "systematically participate in the management of the sustainable development of tourism concerning the unique value of the historical heritage of the city of Český Krumlov" (Destinační Management Oblasti Český Krumlov Region, n.d.). The destination management organisation in Český Krumlov has had many forms since 1990. At first, it was established and financed by the municipality and directed as a division of the municipal office. In 2020 it has finally been integrated into the official DMO network of the Tourism Authority of South Bohemia. Officially, „the company for destination management of the tourist area Český Krumlov Region was established (…) as a joint initiative of the city of Český Krumlov, the Český Krumlov Tourism Association and the Český Krumlov Development Fund, which are also founding members of the association" (Destinační Management Oblasti Český Krumlov Region, n.d.). The director of the Český Krumlov DMO has since then been changed three times and although it defies the proposed ideal practice of DMOs, the organisation itself is largely being directly or indirectly managed by the municipality. At the time of conducting my interview, Terezie Jenisová was the director of the DMO and the interview was realised with her and Ing. Jitka Boháčová, who has been a part of Český Krumlov destination management since 2004.

iv. Interview summary

The interview was conducted in March 2022 in the context of slowly waning pandemic restrictions and the recent invasion of Ukraine. The conversation focused on the challenges faced in destination management and tourism in the Czech Republic, particularly in relation to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and recent developments in their long-term plans.The discourse touched on various facets of tourism management, addressing the issues of the lack of systematic management, the intricate relationship between local government and private enterprises, and the financial uncertainties faced by destination management organizations (DMOs). Ms. Jenisová reflects on the changing dynamics of tourism behaviour post-pandemic, emphasizing the shift in travelers' preferences and decision-making criteria. Additionally, she highlights infrastructural challenges, such as traffic congestion and capacity issues in popular tourist areas. The conversation sheds light on the complexity of tourism management, the need for systematic approaches, and the anticipation of potential challenges in specific seasons or during major festivals and events. Despite the proactive measures taken by the destination, they remain cautious about future pressures on the tourism infrastructure, especially during peak seasons like July-August and key events like the Five-Petalled Rose celebration.

The discussion then shifts to the challenges faced in gathering and analyzing tourism data for the Český Krumlov destination. Ms. Jenisová acknowledges the lack of comprehensive visitor statistics and the difficulties in establishing an efficient data collection system. Collaboration with regional tourism authorities is mentioned, aiming to set up a suitable data system for local tourism without excessive resource consumption. However, challenges persist due to financial and personnel constraints. Ms. Jenisová expresses the need for diverse data, including visitor trends, accommodation occupancy rates, and parking space utilization. While some data is available, it's limited to larger accommodation facilities. Discussions involve exploring various data sources like mobile operator data for visitor numbers, but financial constraints hinder direct access.

The conversation progresses towards marketing strategies to mitigate tourism impacts, emphasizing the importance of promoting extended stays and exploring surrounding areas to alleviate congestion in the central tourism hub. Strategies discussed involve creating inspirational content, diversifying visitor routes, and leveraging online platforms for promotion. Additionally, plans for employee training in the tourism sector are highlighted, acknowledging the significance of educating and collaborating with local businesses to improve destination promotion. Ms. Jenisová expresses the necessity for better communication, overcoming barriers, and fostering cooperation among stakeholders, including the need for in-person workshops and discussions. While acknowledging the successes and challenges faced by other destinations, they emphasise the need for effective personnel management and knowledge exchange within their region. They aspire to learn from successful models and collaborations while navigating competition among tourism regions and seeking inspiration from external experiences.

Ms. Jenisová indicated a previous consideration of over-tourism issues and strategies, specifically concerning tour buses and the regulation of unlicenced guides, drawing parallels from experiences in Třeboň. Initiatives aimed at educating cyclists about proper conduct were discussed, emphasizing the importance of interventions beyond punitive measures. Evaluation methods for these marketing strategies were discussed. While metrics like social media engagement, website traffic, and performance analytics were monitored, the challenge lay in correlating online engagement with physical visitation. Google Analytics, social media metrics, and PPC campaigns were used, but regular survey-based assessments to measure visitor satisfaction and preferences were yet to be initiated. Concerns about destination overload and measures to gauge its impact and address potential issues were contemplated. However, preparations for such scenarios were still in a nascent stage, with a focus on data collection, qualitative feedback, and stakeholder engagement. Challenges in evaluating the success of marketing tools persisted due to the multitude of data sources and the need for sustained resource allocation. Discussion about crisis management plans highlighted gaps in preparedness, notably regarding the absence of a pre-existing plan before the pandemic. Efforts were being directed towards formulating strategies to handle crises effectively and understanding the implications of certain events, although the responses were still in developmental stages.

Overall, the conversation reflected an awareness of the complexities in destination marketing, the necessity for comprehensive evaluation techniques, and the importance of proactively addressing potential issues through informed planning and stakeholder involvement.

v. Key ideas

Ms Jenisová believes that overtourism is a serious problem that generally stems from the lack of communication and non-existent methodology and strategic management in the destination. Overtourism is recently not as prominent as it was until 2020. They believe that issues relating to overcrowding are most prominent during July and August, and while the five most important town festivals take place. Crowding then mostly arises at the main traffic intersections and then (on foot) on the main axis between the city centre and the castle. Some issues also occur concerning tour bus parking, the management of waste and wastewater, and greater costs for maintenance of public spaces, green maintenance, and cleaning.

Ms. Jenisová lists several ideas that she believes are crucial to combating overtourism, including its prevention:

- systemic and continuous management of the destination,

- setting and monitoring limits,
- rigorous but targeted data collection on a national or regional level and quality statistical analysis of this data,
- effective communication between interested parties in the destination including large tour operators and the destination’s inhabitants,
- cooperation of the public sphere,
- sufficient independent funding,
- and independent decision-making not reliant on the municipality.

The DMO is quite optimistic regarding the expectations for future development in tourism, believing that the situation until 2019 will not come to repeat itself. They believe that the pandemic has significantly changed people's view of travel, people have started to consider where they will go and where they will spend their time more and the visitors now also focus more on the quality of services. A strategic mid-term plan is being developed in Český Krumlov that aims to prevent future overtourism. It is, however, difficult to follow due to insufficient financial and personnel capacities, and the most ambitious plans for the destination are often hindered by the lack of funding or miscommunication.

Table 3 summarises the marketing tools that the Český Krumlov DMO actively uses to prevent overcrowding.

Strategy	**Description**
Promotion of Alternative Attractions & Routes	DMO offers alternative attractions and tour routes through their official website and social media platforms.
Targeted Promotion	DMO utilises PPC (pay-per-click) advertising and social media campaigns to promote these alternative attractions.
Off-Season Campaigns	DMO uses online campaigns to encourage visitors to explore Český Krumlov during the off-season.
Multi-Day Destination Appeal	DMO creates marketing materials highlighting Český Krumlov as a multi-day destination, showcasing connections to other regional attractions.
Educating Tour Groups	DMO educates organised tourist groups on responsible tourism practices to manage visitor flow.
Preventing Unlicenced Guiding	DMO takes measures to prevent unlicenced guiding services that can contribute to overcrowding.

Table 3. Marketing strategies to prevent or mitigate overtourism in Český Krumlov.

The DMO plans to introduce a new smartphone application that can monitor visitor flows, collect data and offer alternative attractions and routes. It is also starting a series of educational meetings with the first-line employees and social media workshops for hospitality business managers to create a community and try to establish a common tourism strategy. Sadly the DMO is currently not evaluating the effectiveness of used marketing tools in any way apart from simple PPC campaigns and social media statistics. They plan to interconnect these online tools with some uncertain form of qualitative survey in the future.

This interview highlighted overtourism as a significant issue stemming from communication gaps and a lack of strategic management in destinations. While overtourism has diminished post-2020, peak crowding occurs during town festivals, especially in July and August, primarily at main traffic intersections and key city routes. Terezie Jenisová proposed critical steps to combat overtourism, advocating for systemic management, data-driven limits, effective communication, public cooperation, and autonomous decision-making. Despite optimism for tourism's future, challenges persist in implementing preventive measures in Český Krumlov due to financial and personnel limitations hindering ambitious plans. The DMO employs diverse marketing tools to prevent overcrowding, including online campaigns, educational initiatives, and a forthcoming smartphone application for visitor monitoring. However, there's a lack of evaluation of these tools beyond basic statistics, with plans to integrate qualitative surveys in the future.

b. Vannes

i. Introduction

Vannes, founded over 2000 years ago and situated in the Brittany region of France. The market town positioned at the delta of two rivers offers rich cultural heritage. Its historical significanc is predominantly rooted in medieval architecture and the well-preserved Old Town. Vannes is positioned near the Golfe du Morbihan, a scenic coastal area, which has led to a steady influx of tourists over the years. In 2022, Vannes reported to having approximately 54,000 inhabitants (Insee, 2017a). The town's primary sources of income predominantly stem from tourism, and from a variety of industries including commerce, services, and a growing technology sector. The town's economy thrives on tourism, complemented by its traditional festivals and local culinary specialties (Visit Vannes, 2022). The town's geographic location adjacent to the Golfe du Morbihan prompts considerations regarding the intersection of tourism development and environmental sustainability, fostering potential inquiries into the delicate balance between economic growth and preservation.

ii. Tourism

Vannes began to gain significance as a tourist destination in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Visit Vannes, 2022). The town's historical heritage and proximity to the Gulf of Morbihan, attracted attention from travelers seeking cultural experiences and coastal landscapes. The advent of easier transportation and promotion of its historical and architectural value contributed to its growth as a tourist destination. Vannes offers 2500 beds and in 2019 it welcomed over 3 million overnight stays, of which 89% were domestic tourists and foreign visitors arrived mainly from Belgium, Spain and Germany (Rapport d'activités 2019, 2020).

iii. DMO structure

Tourism in Vannes operates chiefly through the local tourism office, structured to supply information, promote attractions, and aid tourism-related activities. This office, within the broader Office du Tourisme in Morbihan, established in 2017, completes various tasks, including information dissemination, communication for promotion, marketing endeavors, and project oversight. Their overarching aim is the development of a territorial marketing policy, "Golfe du Morbihan Vannes Tourisme," to bolster tourist numbers and diversify their base. (Privacy Policy - Golfe Du Morbihan Vannes Tourisme, 2021). Across five Tourist Information Offices stationed strategically in Vannes, Arzon, Sarzeau, St Gildas de Rhuys, and Grand-Champ, the office's function is meticulously outlined in the service of visitor information, marketing efforts, visitor services, and the promotion of sustainable tourism practices to ensure the endurance of the tourism sector. The entire Office du Tourisme is directred by M. Arnaud Burel.

iv. Interview summary

During an interview with M. Arnaud Burel, the Director of Office de Tourisme Golfe du Morbihan, discussions mostly revolved around the impact of tourism, particularly focusing on issues related to overtourism and its effects on destinations. The interview took place in February 2020 and shed light on the situation in the Morbihan region.

M. Burel initially outlined the distinctive nature of Brittany's tourism, emphasizing that overtourism wasn't a prevailing concern due to the region's geographical setting, which attracts visitors for longer stays, particularly during the summer. He highlighted a peak season between mid-July and mid-August but clarified that the overall tourist influx throughout the year, managed by the six tourist offices under his supervision, averaged around 500,000 visitors.

Insights into visitor profiles, their preferences, and behaviours were discussed, showcasing a comprehensive understanding of the tourist demographic. Burel stressed the importance of comprehending visitor expectations and motivations, which guided their efforts in promoting the region. The conversation delved into the economic impact of tourism, portraying it as a multifaceted industry benefiting various sectors beyond accommodation and hospitality, such as construction and cultural activities. Burel emphasised the need to educate stakeholders and locals about the economic benefits derived from tourism. Concerns emerged regarding underutilised periods outside the peak tourist season, prompting discussions on the potential for developing alternate tourism experiences during these off-peak times. Burel highlighted opportunities for niche tourism, like birdwatching, and acknowledged the need to challenge stereotypes associated with the region's weather to attract visitors year-round.

One pressing issue discussed was the disparity between wealthy property owners and the limited accessibility of housing for younger generations or those seeking long-term residency due to high costs associated with coastal living and the rising trend of summer homes. Burel highlighted the challenge of balancing tourism development while preserving local communities and providing affordable housing options.

Concerns about the potential threat of overtourism were discussed, focusing specifically on the town of Arzon, an area heavily developed for tourism during the 1970s without community consensus. Burel highlighted the abrupt transformation of a previously rural area into a bustling tourist hub during the summer months, leaving it deserted and lacking opportunities for locals during off-peak periods. The issue extended to the imbalance in housing prices, making it unaffordable for younger generations, leading to challenges in retaining a sustainable community. Efforts by local authorities to generate employment opportunities for the youth were mentioned, emphasizing the importance of maintaining a balanced economy beyond the seasonal rush. Burel acknowledged the discontent among some locals regarding disturbances caused by tourism, such as increased traffic and longer waits at local establishments. However, he emphasised the necessity of tourism for sustaining local employment and the economy, encouraging a nuanced perspective among the community regarding its benefits.

Strategies employed by the tourist office aimed at promoting year-round tourism were elucidated, focusing on educating visitors about respectful and sustainable tourism practices. Burel detailed an initiative involving a 'Charte of the Traveler' designed to welcome tourists while fostering respect for the local environment and culture, a pioneering effort in France. Regarding foreign tourism, Burel discussed the region's underdevelopment in attracting international visitors, attributing it to limited promotional efforts and language barriers. He highlighted the potential in marketing the region to Northern European countries, aiming to showcase its untouched natural beauty while emphasizing the importance of preserving its pristine state.

The discussion then focused on strategic organization and economic models linked to tourism in the region. M. Burel emphasised the need for clear communication, especially in English, regarding available accommodations, which totaled 50,000 beds, resulting in approximately 3 million overnight stays annually. The economic model was underscored by a tax system, where visitors contribute to the local budget through accommodations. M. Burel highlighted the need for improved transport organization to manage the increasing tourist footfall. He also discussed recent changes in the law requiring smaller territories to merge and collaborate, necessitating the tourism office to unify efforts across multiple areas. Regarding marketing and potential issues like over-tourism, M. Burel stressed the importance of sustainable growth and discussed plans for infrastructure improvement, such as investing in sports and enhancing amenities like public transport, parking, and sanitation facilities. M. Burel also expressed a vision for innovation, wanting the region to become a tourism laboratory, showcasing innovative approaches from other parts of the world. Concerns about environmental impact were acknowledged, with an emphasis on the necessity of proactive measures to prevent harm to the region's nature, aligning with a broader understanding that without proactive measures, tourism could negatively impact the environment.

v. Key ideas

The interview with Arnaud Burel showcased his insights into the dynamics of tourism in the Golfe du Morbihan and, specifically, Vannes, emphasizing the need for sustainable and inclusive tourism development while addressing challenges related to seasonal fluctuations, economic impacts, and community integration within the region. The interview reflected on the delicate balance required to harness the benefits of tourism while addressing the challenges associated with overtourism and ensuring sustainable development in Vannes.

The initiatives to counteract overtourism in Vannes (Table 4) involve varied marketing strategies highlighted by M. Burel.

Strategy	**Description**
Visitor Education	Educate incoming visitors on responsible tourism practices.
Sustainability Messaging	Utilise marketing messages that emphasise environmental and community preservation.
Targeted Clientele	Scrutinise visitor profiles and target only non-problematic and advantageous clientele.

Table 4. Vannes' marketing strategies to counteract overtourism

Additionally, the marketing approach emphasises several measures aimed at mitigating overtourism. These measures can be seen in Table 5.

Strategy	**Description**
Seasonal Promotion	Promote tourism beyond peak seasons.
Strategic Visitor Spending	Strategically leverage visitor contributions to the local budget.
Alternative Experiences	Craft alternative tourism experiences outside of the Old Town center and main seasons.

Table 5. Vannes' additional measures to mitigate overtourism

In contrast, non-marketing strategies entail a plan focused on enhancing transport organization, infrastructure, and amenities to alleviate potential crowding issues. Interestingly, the Office du Tourisme does not actively monitor the effectiveness of these specific tools and activities in combating overtourism. However, according to M. Burel's observations, there is presently no pronounced issue with overcrowding in the destination. This circumstance might be attributed to the geographical positioning of Vannes as well as the efficacy of their ongoing marketing endeavors.

c. Colmar

i. Introduction

Colmar, located in the Alsace region of France, is a municipality known for its historical relevance and architectural heritage. Dating back centuries, it has evolved into a center of regional significance due to its strategic position and economic activities. The town's establishment traces its roots to ancient settlements and subsequent growth during medieval times, ultimately developing into a hub for trade and cultural exchange. Over the years, Colmar has maintained its traditional architectural style, characterised by well-preserved medieval and Renaissance buildings. The ca. 70 000 ihabitants of Colmar (Insee, 2017b) enjoy a high standard of living and draw its main income from various sectors. Tourism is a significant revenue generator and, addtionally, manufacturing, including the production of machinery, textiles, and food processing are crucial sources of income. Agricultural activities incuding wine production in the surrounding areas also contribute to the city's income through farming (Insee, 2021).

ii. Tourism

Colmar, France, represents a typical French destination characterised by its historical significance and architectural features. The city boasts well-maintained medieval and Renaissance buildings, offering a glimpse into Europe's ancient town structure. Visitors can explore cobblestone streets and traditional half-timbered houses and the Unterlinden Museum houses various artifacts and artworks, showcasing the region's cultural heritage. Colmar's location in the Alsace wine region attracts tourists interested in vineyard tours and wine tasting experiences along the Alsace Wine Route. For more than 70 years, Colmar has been the host of the biggest annual commercial event as well as the largest festival in Alsace: the Alsacian wine fair (The Alsace Wine Fair, 2022). This event has been a topic of multiple academic studies. Haller, Hess-Misslin and Mereaux (2020), for example, discovered a significant need for a change of approach in promotion and execution of the wine fair and wine tours, focusing more on experiential and aesthetic aspects of it insead of considering primarily its educational dimension. Overall, Colmar stands as a familiar destination for tourists seeking a conventional cultural experience in France. Colmar and its greater offers ca. 5000 beds and receives ca. 1.700.000 tourists annually, especially during peak seasons (Fromm, 2010).

iii. DMO structure

Colmar does not have a DMO operating under that specific title. However, the city has a local Tourist Office for Colmar and surrounding regions that is dedicated to promoting tourism and managing destination-related marketing and initiatives. The Tourist Office of Colmar operates as a non-profit association, overseen by Eric Loesch and led by M. Claire Weiss, comprising a team of 23 individuals alongside around twenty guide lecturers. The primary objective centers on providing tourist assistance encompassing reception, information dissemination, advice, and facilitating excursion bookings. A secondary mission involves the promotion of Colmar as a destination, targeting both the general public and industry professionals. Participation in tourism fairs and accommodating travel agencies constitute strategies employed by the Office to promote the city. Public promotion is predominantly executed through the Agency's online platforms, notably leveraging social media platforms like Facebook. Moreover, the Office orchestrates numerous events that draw substantial tourist footfall, significantly bolstering the city's renown and appeal (Visit Alsace, 2023).

iv. Interview summary

In the interview with Mme Weiss, the nuanced challenges of overtourism and its impact on Colmar awere discussed, focusing on the specificity of each destination's issues and the importance of understanding a destination's DNA to preserve its attractiveness.

Mme Weiss emphasised that overtourism is not a continuous issue in Colmar but occurs during peak periods, mainly in summer and around Christmas. The challenges include noise pollution, difficulties in mobility, and the transformation of accommodations into tourist rentals. The impact varies across different neighborhoods, with the city center residents experiencing the most significant disturbances. Local perceptions differ regarding commerce catering to tourists versus locals. While some inhabitants feel that certain streets are dominated by tourist-oriented businesses, objective analysis reveals a more balanced distribution catering to both tourists and residents.

Tourists visit Colmar for its rich cultural heritage, museums, Alsatian gastronomy, and the renowned wine route. Additionally, events like the Alsace wine fair attract visitors regionally and internationally, fostering a strong local tradition with an intergenerational appeal. The overflow of tourists not only affects Colmar but also nearby villages like Eguisheim and Kaysersberg, which struggle to manage the influx due to their smaller size.

Weiss addressed the issue of overtourism in Colmar, identifying specific periods—particularly Christmas and certain summer weeks—when visitor peaks cause challenges like noise pollution, accommodation transformations, and difficulties in transportation. Residents, especially in the city center, perceive these peak periods as problematic due to overcrowding-related issues. Mme Weiss mentions recent methods of data collection, including mobile telephony tools, to measure tourist numbers and trends, focusing on variations rather than absolute values to understand the ebb and flow of visitors accurately. Measuring tourist numbers remains a challenge. While data from mobile networks provides insights into excursionists, it requires calibration with on-ground observations. Weiss also discussed the lack of accurate tools to manage visitor flow effectively, expressing attempts to guide tourists toward less crowded times without success. Regarding economic impacts, Weiss differentiated between residents' concerns and those of businesses. While the economic benefits of tourism, especially during Christmas markets, are substantial, residents, primarily in the city center, report more nuisances during these high-traffic periods.

The interview delved into the types of tourists attracted to Colmar, such as cultural enthusiasts drawn by museums and architectural heritage, along with gastronomy and wine tourism aficionados. Weiss pointed out events like the Alsace wine fair as significant draws, especially during the summer. Measuring tourist numbers remains a challenge. While data from mobile networks provides insights into excursionists, it requires calibration with on-ground observations. Weiss also discussed the lack of accurate tools to manage visitor flow effectively, expressing attempts to guide tourists toward less crowded times without success. The interview shed light on the limitations in quantifying visitor numbers in stores and restaurants. Weiss highlighted the importance of conducting economic surveys among tourism professionals to gauge satisfaction and progress of visitor flows.

Regarding managing overtourism, Weiss emphasised the need for comprehensive approaches, including addressing specific issues like parking and transportation. She discussed the complexities of implementing demarketing strategies, emphasizing the need for careful consideration due to potential long-term consequences on the destination's reputation and economic sustainability. Weiss discussed the use of unconventional tools like Facebook to monitor reactions and opinions of Colmar residents concerning events like the Christmas market. The observations drawn from social media indicated varying sentiments, with negative comments surfacing in 2019 and 2022 after the market's conclusion. However, the absence of the market in 2020 did not lead to criticisms, indicating the complexity of public perceptions.

Regarding overtourism management tools, Weiss highlighted the impracticality of fixed flow control measures such as entry tickets or quotas due to operational challenges and the importance of preserving Colmar's cultural integrity. She explained the limitations of diverting tourists to neighboring wine villages, citing logistical difficulties and tourists' desire to experience Colmar's specific attractions. Concerns about potential future overtourism issues were raised, especially concerning increased visitors from China and India. Weiss expressed worries about handling such substantial increases, emphasizing the need for strategic communication targeting specific high-value customer segments to avoid overwhelming the city.

Weiss addressed measures taken to regulate furnished tourist accommodations, outlining stringent requirements imposed on property owners seeking to convert residences into tourist accommodations. These constraints aimed to curb speculation-driven price increases and maintain housing availability for residents. The interview also touched on rising prices for overnight stays, with Weiss attributing the increase more to heightened demand and inflation rather than specific regulatory measures.

v. Key ideas

Weiss highlighted the challenges faced during peak tourist periods and the ongoing efforts to manage and balance the benefits and drawbacks of tourism on the city and its residents. She emphasised the necessity of carefully balancing the preservation of the city's cultural appeal with regulatory measures to maintain a sustainable and livable environment for residents amid growing tourism demands.

The Tourism Office in Colmar uses some marketing tools that have the potential to aid the prevention of overtourism (Table 6).

Tool	**Description**
Selective Marketing Campaigns	Target favorable customer segments while avoiding problematic markets.
Economic Surveys of Tourism Professionals	Assess satisfaction levels and monitor visitor flow trends.

Table 6. Colmar Tourism Office's Marketing strategies to prevent overtourism.

Table 7 summarises the strategic marketing approach that the Tourism Office of Colmar, recognizing the necessity for a comprehensive approach, employs to mitigate the adverse externalities of overtourism.

Strategy	**Description**
Addressing Infrastructure Issues	Address specific problems like parking and transportation within the region.
Resident Surveys	Identify areas facing challenges due to excessive tourism through surveys with local residents.
Data Collection	Employ diverse methods like mobile phone data to understand tourist numbers and trends, focusing on variations.
Social Media Sentiment Analysis	Utilise Facebook to gauge resident sentiment regarding tourist influxes (e.g., Christmas market).
Regulation of Tourist Accommodation	Establish regulations concerning furnished tourist accommodations.
Restrictions on Property Conversion	Impose stringent requirements on property owners converting residences to tourist lodgings.

Table 7. Colmar Tourism Office's strategy to mitigate overtourism impacts

However, the success of these measures remains debatable. The lack of precise tools to effectively manage visitor flow has been highlighted during the interview, with attempts to guide tourists towards less crowded times yielding limited success. Additionally, limitations persist in redirecting tourists to neighboring wine villages, indicating the complexities involved in alleviating overtourism solely through diversionary measures.

d. Melaka

i. Introduction

Melaka, located on the southwest coast of the Malay Peninsula, has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 2008, marking its historical importance. The region accommodates a population of around 940,000 individuals, comprising various ethnic backgrounds (Department of Statistics Malaysia Official Portal, 2021). Melaka city itself is a home to ca.

454.000 inhabitants (Population and housing statistics, 2022). Melaka showcases remnants of diverse civilizations that influenced its cultural landscape over time. Its significance lies in serving as a trading hub that amalgamated Malay, Chinese, Indian, and European influences. Melaka's cultural diversity is evidenced through its culinary diversity, festivals, and traditional art forms, contributing to its vibrant cultural identity. Economically, the city mostly relies on tourism, followed by manufacturing, services, and agriculture in the surrounding areas. Finding a balance between preserving its heritage and enabling modern development poses an ongoing challenge for authorities (bin Jailani & Rahim, 2014).

ii. Tourism

Tourism in Melaka is characterised by its rich historical and cultural significance, attracting visitors due to its UNESCO World Heritage status and diverse heritage sites. The city's tourism revolves around its well-preserved architectural landmarks, such as A Famosa fort, Jonker Street, and St. Paul's Hill, showcasing a fusion of influences from various civilizations including Portuguese, Dutch, and British colonial periods, as well as traditional Malay, Chinese, and Indian cultures. Additionally, Melaka's culinary scene provides tourists with a multifaceted experience. The city's strategic location as a port historically and its ongoing efforts in cultural preservation continue to draw both domestic and international tourists, contributing significantly to the region's economy. Tourism is a major revenue earner for the Malaysian government, which has also invested significantly in the sector (Aman et al., 2013). While in 2023 Melaka state hopes to attract 6.000 000 tourists, in 2019, 18.000.000 visitied the state, most of them also passing through the core zone: the historical center of Melaka (Kaur, 2022). The visitors mainly visit the old town, causing an ever-occuring traffic jam. A lot of weekend travellers arrive year round, with domestic tourism reaching its peak during the summer months and international tourism peaking during the winter months. Teo et al. (2014) delved into visitor behaviour at cultural heritage sites in Melaka. The findings underscore tourists' demonstration of responsible tourism behaviour and acknowledgment of the cultural significance inherent in heritage buildings and local customs. Visitors also showed a keen awareness of environmental considerations within the tourist environs. Notably, these tourists actively sought memorable experiences tied to both tourism and cultural heritage. The study categorises heritage visitors into distinct groups, including seekers of memorable tourism experiences, individuals valuing cultural significance, responsible tourists, those exhibiting a willingness to pay, and environmentally conscious tourists (Tao et al., 2014). Tourism authorities encounter a significant challenge in promoting sustainable and responsible heritage tourism by urging visitors to adopt behaviours that minimise both environmental and experiential impacts (Brown et al., 2010). Despite this challenge, there is a notable willingness among visitors to pay more for responsible heritage tourism experiences. Consequently, employing strategies that leverage responsible heritage tourism as a pivotal component in destination marketing initiatives becomes crucial, emphasizing tourist activities as forms of responsible consumption.

iii. DMO structure

Tourism in Melaka is directed through a combined approach involving both public and private sectors, emphasizing heritage preservation, cultural promotion, infrastructure development, and marketing strategies. The government of Melaka focuses on preserving its historical sites, ensuring their maintenance and conservation to retain their authenticity. The Tourism Promotion Division of the government of Melaka is then responsible for marketing to promote Melaka as a tourist destination. This involves collaborations with travel agencies, online platforms, and participation in tourism fairs to attract a broader audience. No destination management organisation as such exists in Melaka; the tourism being fully managed by the governmental division with Mr. Sa’ari Basiron as its director. His vision for the nature of tourism in the area is „Melaka as a premier tourist destination in Asia with the theme ‘Visiting Historic Melaka Means Visiting Malaysia" (Tourism Promotion Division, 2019). Mr. Basiron’s division focuses on continually growing the number of incoming visitors. As he stated in a 2022 press konference: „We want to make it even more vibrant and intend to develop it further as a city of entertainment.We are looking at several sites that we think when transformed, can attract local and international tourists. The arrival of tourists will increase hotel occupancy in Melaka. 5-star and boutique hotels may be able to reach occupancy rates of more than 80 per cent." (Kaur, 2022)

iv. Interview summary

In February 2023, an interview was conducted in Melaka with Mr. Saari Basiron, the state general manager for tourism. The interview was uniquely structured to navigate potential reluctance among Malaccan interviewees in addressing the issue of overtourism while still extracting essential insights.

Mr. Basiron posits that among the primary challenges facing Melaka is the daily traffic congestion in the old city center, prompting the tourism office to strategise on diverting tourist influx to peripheral areas. Additionally, collaboration with other states has been initiated to develop combined tourism packages, driven by the imperative to escalate tourist numbers. To address the diversion of tourism flows, various approaches have been employed. Identified threats, notably COVID-19, are acknowledged during the interview. Intriquingly, the enduring issue of traffic congestion is perceived as a marketing opportunity by Mr. Basiron—turning the inconvenience of being stuck in traffic into a promotional message for Melaka. While the promotional division acknowledges that overcrowding commonly occurs in Melaka, Mr. Basiron posits that local residents willingly refrain from visiting the core zone in favor of accommodating tourists. This positive attitude to perceived sacrifice for the tourism industry is attributed to the mature understanding among locals regarding tourism's substantial contribution to the GDP, fostering a sense of appreciation for the associated employment opportunities without complaints or grievances. In the anticipation future challenges, Mr. Basiron shifts the focus of tourism in Melaka toward diversifying locations, extending the main season, innovating new products, and fostering collaborations. He stresses the need for a higher budget allocation. Notably, a considerable portion of the budget is currently allocated to advertising and promotion, digitally targeting both foreign and local audiences through different strategies. The local inhabitants are, however, never addressed directly by the Tourism Promotion Division itself. The communication towards the locals is managed through local NGOs with emphasis on the security measures during crises, such as COVID-19 and the crucial portion of the GDP that tourism represents in Melaka. Melaka's tourism endeavors to navigate challenges by attracting an ever-higher number of visitors, implementing diverse strategies, leveraging collaborative efforts, and employing targeted marketing approaches while anticipating and preparing for future complexities.

v. Key ideas

The strategies implemented do not as such intend to prevent overcrowding. However, some measures aimed at prolonging the main seasons, attracting the visitors during the work week and drawing the tourists towards less-visited spots have a potential for crowd management (Table 8). The key initiatives include:

Strategy	**Description**

Eco- & Agrotourism Products	Introduce novel eco- and agrotourism products.
MICE Melaka	Establish MICE Melaka (Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, and Exhibitions) to attract business travelers.
Competitive Packages	Develop competitive tourism packages.
Cultural Heritage Experiences	Partner with Dutch and Portuguese embassies to curate cultural heritage experiences highlighting Dutch and Portuguese influences.

Table 8. Melaka Tourism Division's Initiatives to Diversify Tourism Offerings

While the Tourism Division decided to treat the traffic congestion as a key feature in their marketing messages, they also propose multiple non-marketing solutions to the traffic congestion (Table 9).

Strategy	**Description**
Cable Car	Introduce a cable car system.
Car-Free Zones	Establish car-free zones in specific areas.
Tourist Shuttle Service	Implement a dedicated tourist shuttle service.

Table 9. Melaka Tourism Division's Solutions to Address Traffic Congestion

5. Discussion

The interviews focused on the issue of overtourism in four different cities. In all four destinations, the destination management professionals observe peak crowding periods during festivals and specificly high seasons, mostly the summer holidays. The key areas affected by crowding seem to usually be traffic intersections and main city routes, while the crucial challenges are generally related to car and tour bus parking, waste management, increased maintenance costs and general discontentedness of local inhabitants. From previous literature research, a research question arose:

Research question 1*: What are the tools and practices that are being used in the practice of destination management organisation to mitigate overtourism and the harmful effects thereof in affected tourist destinations?*

While overtourism has somewhat diminished post-2020, peak crowding still occurs ocassioanlly. Ms. Jenisová underscores overtourism as a substantial issue stemming from communication gaps and inadequate strategic management in destinations. To counter this, critical steps proposed theoretically include systemic management, data-driven limits, effective communication, public cooperation, and autonomous decision-making.

Consensus among researchers studying overtourism suggests a multifaceted approach to tackling this issue of overtourism (see Table 1). DMOs of the studied destinations employ various marketing tools aimed at preventing overcrowding. The strategies visualised in Table 10 were mentioned most often:

Category	**Strategy**	**Description**
Marketing & Promotion	Selective Marketing Campaigns	Target beneficial customer segments.
	Promoting Alternative Options	Offer alternative attractions and routes through official channels.
	Off-Season Promotion	Encourage off-season visits through online campaigns.
Education & Awareness	Tourist Education	Educate organised groups and independent visitors on responsible tourism.
	Combating Unlicenced Guiding	Prevent unlicenced guiding services.

Table 10. DMO overtourism prevention strategies.

The DMO marketing tools to manage and alleviate the adverse impacts of overtourism in affected areas include (Table 11):

Category	**Tool**	**Description**
Data Collection & Analysis	Resident Surveys	Identify areas facing challenges due to excessive tourism through resident surveys.
	Data Collection	Employ diverse data collection methods (including mobile data) to understand tourist trends.
	Social Media Analysis	Monitor social media sentiment regarding events to gauge local perceptions.
Regulation & Management	Regulation of Accommodation	Regulate furnished tourist accommodations to control price hikes.
	Economic Surveys	Assess tourism professional satisfaction levels and monitor visitor flow trends through economic surveys.

Communication & Collaboration	Communicating with Residents	Communicate with local inhabitants about the state and positive aspects of tourism.
	Visitor Monitoring App	Utilise a smartphone application for visitor monitoring.

Table 11. DMO Marketing Tools for Overtourism Mitigation

Some non-marketing tools that are utilised by the DMO also rose from the discussions:

- Developing strategic mid-term plans to prevent future overtourism,
- Educational meetings for hospitality business managers and first-line employees,
- Initiatives focused on transport organisation, infrastructure improvement, and amenities.

Research Question 2: *Are the explored DMOs that are facing the same problems using the same tools?*

Key challenges identified across all four destinations is traffic congestion and capacity limitations. Tourist influxes, particularly during peak seasons, strain infrastructure and lead to traffic jams. This problem is most acutely felt in the historic city centres of Český Krumlov, Colmar, and Melaka, where narrow streets and limited parking create bottlenecks (see Table 12). Overtourism itself emerges as a prominent concern in three of the destinations. Český Krumlov, Vannes, and Colmar all grapple with the negative consequences of excessive tourist numbers, including noise pollution, overcrowding in popular attractions, and disruption to the lives of local residents. Notably, Melaka, while not explicitly mentioning overtourism, experiences issues with overcrowding and limited tourist attractions, suggesting potential future challenges if they continue to solely focus on attracting higher numbers of visitors. Another common difficulty is the lack of comprehensive visitor data. DMOs in all four destinations struggle to accurately measure tourist numbers and their impact on different areas. This makes it challenging to assess the effectiveness of marketing strategies and develop targeted interventions for overtourism. In response to aforementioned shared issues, several DMOs have implemented strategies to encourage tourist dispersal. Český Krumlov, Colmar, Vannes, and Melaka all utilise methods to divert visitors to peripheral areas beyond the main tourist hubs. This can involve promoting alternative activities, developing combined tourism packages with neighbouring regions, or simply providing better information about lesser-known attractions.

However, the specific tools employed by DMOs vary depending on the unique characteristics of each destination (Table 13). Data collection methods, for instance, differ across locations. Český Krumlov and Colmar leverage mobile phone data to track visitor trends, while Vannes relies on more traditional methods and Melaka acknowledges data limitations without mentioning specific solutions. The communication with residents regarding tourism's impact takes different forms. Český Krumlov prioritises stakeholder engagement through workshops and discussions, Colmar uses social media monitoring to understand resident sentiment, while Vannes and Melaka focus less on directly communicating with residents.

While some tools, such as strategies for tourist dispersal, are employed across multiple locations, the most effective solutions will depend on the specific context and resources available to each DMO.

Issue	Description	Destinations
Traffic Congestion & Capacity Limitations	Tourist influxes strain infrastructure, causing traffic jams in peak seasons.	Český Krumlov, Colmar, Melaka, Vannes
Overtourism	Negative consequences of excessive tourist numbers (noise pollution, overcrowding, disruption to residents).	Český Krumlov, Colmar, Vannes
Data Limitations	DMOs struggle to measure tourist numbers and their impact.	Český Krumlov, Colmar, Melaka, Vannes

Table 12. Issues related to overtourism common to all destinations.

Response	Description	Destinations	Tools Used (Examples)
Tourist Dispersal	Strategies to encourage visitors to explore peripheral areas beyond main attractions.	Český Krumlov, Colmar, Melaka, Vannes	Promoting alternative activities, combined tourism packages, information on lesser-known attractions
Data Collection	Techniques to gather visitor data and trends.	Český Krumlov (mobile phone data), Colmar (mobile phone data)	Mobile phone data (where possible)

Resident Communication	Strategies to engage residents on tourism's impact.	Český Krumlov (workshops, discussions), Colmar (social media monitoring)	Stakeholder engagement, social media monitoring (where applicable)

Table 13. Responses to common overtourism issues.

Research Question 3*: How do the practices of the DMOs studied correspond with available theories, and what further research is needed?*

Scholars investigating overtourism propose a holistic approach to address the growing challenge of overtourism (e.g., Capocchi et al., 2019; Martín Martín et al., 2020). This includes strategies like selective marketing targeting beneficial tourist segments (Weber, 2017), promoting alternative attractions and routes (e.g., offering eco-tourism experiences), and encouraging off-season visits. When examining the practical application of these strategies (Table 12), a DMO's toolbox reveals a strong focus on aligning with some theoretical approaches. The DMOs' selective marketing campaigns directly target desirable tourist segments (all examined destinations), mirroring recommendations by Weber (2017). Similarly, DMOs promote alternative attractions and routes through official channels, which corresponds with theoretical suggestions. Encouraging off-season visits through online campaigns aligns with strategies discussed in the research literature. DMOs also emphasise tourist education for both organised groups and independent visitors, a concept highlighted by various scholars (Capocchi et al., 2019; Veiga et al., 2018). Furthermore, they actively work to prevent unlicenced guiding services, addressing a potential concern raised in theoretical discussions.

There are, however, some strategies suggested in theory that are not explicitly reflected in DMOs' practice, based on the available information. A shift towards higher value-added tourism segments, for instance, is mentioned in the research but not directly addressed by the DMOs' current strategies. The same applies to collaboration with policymakers beyond residents and tourism professionals, although communication with residents is a clear focus. Similarly, while the DMO utilises data collection methods, they are too financially restricted to fully make use mobile phone data collection, a tool suggested by e.g. Padrón-Ávila, H., & Hernández-Martín (2020). Offering incentives for exploring less-crowded areas, another strategy proposed in the research, is also not explicitly mentioned in the DMO's practices.

Category	Strategy	Applicability	Practical DMO Approach	Used in Practice (Yes/No, Location)	Source
Reducing Tourist Numbers	Quotas/Caps on tourist numbers	Mitigation & Prevention	Parking regulation	Yes (Český Krumlov)	Butler & Dodds (2022)
	Entry permit limits for attractions	Mitigation & Prevention	-	No	Drápela (2023)
	Regulations on short-term rentals	Mitigation & Prevention	-	No	Drápela (2023)
Distributing Visitors	Spreading tourists across locations/seasons	Mitigation & Prevention	Selective Marketing Campaigns, Off-Season Promotion (Table 10)	Yes (all studied destinations)	Peeters et al. (2021); Drápela (2023)
	Real-time information on crowded areas	Mitigation	-	No	Peeters et al. (2021)
	Dynamic caps on popular destinations	Mitigation	-	No	Peeters et al. (2021)
Economic Tools	Tourist taxes	Mitigation	Tourist overnight tax	Yes (all studied destinations)	Drápela (2023)
	Regulations for tourism operations/traffic management	Mitigation	Regulation of Accommodatio, Regulation of traffic or parking)	Yes (Český Krumlov, Colmar))	Peeters et al. (2021)
	Higher attraction entry fees	Mitigation	-	No	Drápela (2023)
	Regulations on tourist accommodation length of stay	Mitigation	-	No	Bouchon & Rauscher (2019); Martín Martín et al. (2018)
	Higher park entry fees	Mitigation	-	No	Drápela (2023)
	Regulations on tourist accommodation length of stay	Mitigation	-	No	Bouchon & Rauscher (2019); Martín

					Martín et al. (2018)
Community Engagement	Resident benefit programs (economic opportunities)	Mitigation & Prevention	Communicating with Residents	Yes (Český Krumlov, Vannes, Colmar)	Peeters et al. (2021); UNWTO (2019)
Destination Management (Regulatory Measures)	Protected areas/access restrictions/entrance fees	Mitigation & Prevention	-	No	Weber (2017)
	Regulating tourist access to crowded areas	Mitigation	-	No	Bouchon & Rauscher (2019); Martín Martín et al. (2018)
	Limiting access to housing in residential areas	Mitigation	-	No	Bouchon & Rauscher (2019); Martín Martín et al. (2018)
Marketing Efforts	Attracting higher-value tourists	Mitigation & Prevention	Selective Marketing Campaigns	Yes (Český Krumlov, Vannes, Colmar)	Capocchi et al. (2019)
	Promoting alternative destinations	Mitigation	Promoting Alternative Options	Yes (Český Krumlov, Colmar, Melaka)	Capocchi et al. (2019); Veiga et al. (2018)
	Tourist education on responsible practices	Mitigation	Tourist Education	Yes (Vannes)	Veiga et al. (2018)
	Incentives for visiting less crowded areas	Mitigation	-	No	Veiga et al. (2018)
Collaboration & Planning	Collaboration among stakeholders (residents, businesses, DMOs)	Mitigation & Prevention	Collaboration of DMO with businesses	Yes (Český Krumlov)	Drápela (2023); Peeters et al. (2021)
	Proactive destination	Prevention	Developing strategic mid-term plans	Yes (all studied destinations)	Seraphin et al. (2019)

	management by DMOs				

Table 14. Overtourism Mitigation Strategies: Theory vs. DMO Practices

The analysis highlighted the significance of proactive measures, stakeholder engagement, and the strategic deployment of technology to disseminate information and regulate visitor flows. Overall, the DMOs demonstrate a strong alignment with several key theoretical strategies to mitigate overtourism. However, a deeper understanding of the strategies'effectiveness might be necessary for a more complete picture.

When searching for an evidence of success, however, the tools and plans implemented in some DMOs show promise but evaluation beyond basic statistics is lacking. There's no active monitoring of specific tools' effectiveness in Vannes but observations suggest no pronounced overcrowding issues currently. Some success in managing visitor flow and redirecting tourists to neighboring villages is evident in Colmar but the DMO is aware of its limited potential and past dissapointment. Strategies and initiatives in Melaka then focus more on prolonging peak seasons and attracting visitors to less-visited spots, with some potential for crowd management.

In a half of the analysed DMOs, a notable lack of tool evaluation beyond basic statistics is observed, with plans to integrate qualitative surveys in the future. While there are indications of some success in managing tourist flows and addressing overcrowding, the lack of comprehensive evaluation methodologies hampers a nuanced understanding of the effectiveness of these interventions. While various strategies and tools have been implemented across different destinations to combat overtourism, the absence of robust evaluation mechanisms limits the ability to measure their true impact. Efforts towards preventive and mitigative measures continue, albeit with ongoing challenges in assessment and efficacy monitoring. The lack of comprehensive evaluation practices prevents a more thorough analysis of potential effectiveness of used marketing tools, which makes it impossible to determine whether some of the used strategies may be universally applicable in any destination affected by overtourism.

The analysis of these interviews, however, provided profound insights into the intricacies of DMO functions, unveiling their intricate role in destination sustainability. The findings underscore the imperative for DMOs to navigate a delicate balance between tourism promotion and conservation.

Theoretical implications

The conducted research analysis provides a basis for developing theoretical frameworks concerning overtourism management strategies. It emphasises the need for a holistic approach integrating marketing, data-driven decision-making, stakeholder engagement, and technological innovations. This study did not take into account any perspective on destination overcrowding other than the views of destination management marketing representatives. As such, the existence of overtourism (ort he lack thereof) in the examined destinations is not yet verified. Following Goodwin's (2007) point that *the phenomenon of overtourism arises simply when the residents or tourists notice that the space feels overcrowded and the destination causes the residents more irritation than happiness or tranquillity*, and Gössling's et al. (2020) notion that *overtourism is a resident-perceived negative phenomenon with social, economic, or environmental impacts due to increased tourist density*, further analyses need to be conducted through questionnaire surveys to understand the situation from the local inhabitants' perspectives. Only then can the tools and processes gleaned from this research be properly analysed as to their efficacy and usefulness in other destinations.

An apparent lack of practice in assessing and evaluating the efficacy of employed tools emerged as an underlying issue in most DMOs. Academic discourse should investigate the qualitative and quantitative measures to gauge their success. In order to ascertain the potential universal applicability of identified tools, a credible assessment of their efficacy and practical applicability is imperative. Given that marketing managers in the studied destinations do not actively monitor their effectiveness or deem it feasible to do so, alternative solutions must be sought. A suitable approach for seeking answers presents itself in various forms of brainstorming among professionals in the field. For instance, a Delphi study or a multicriteria decision (MCDA) analysis on the subject under investigation could shed more light on the issue.

The lack of comprehensive evaluation inhibits understanding whether strategies employed in specific destinations could be universally applicable. Academic research should also focus on identifying transferable strategies and their adaptability in different overtourism-affected destinations by identifying best practices that could be universally applied across various geographical and cultural contexts.

The study highlights the intricate role of DMOs in balancing tourism promotion and destination conservation. It prompts discussions on sustainable tourism development and the role of DMOs in maintaining this delicate balance. Understanding how DMOs collaborate with various stakeholders to achieve sustainable tourism goals is also essential; exploring the dynamics of stakeholder engagement and its impact on destination sustainability could be a promising area of research.

The emerging emphasis on education could spark discussions on the efficacy of education-based interventions in altering tourist behaviour and expectations. Some insights into shaping visitor behaviour towards more sustainable practices could emerge by exploring behavioural change theories and their application in the context of overtourism. Studying the impact and effectiveness of involving local communities in overtourism management could also shed light on the role of community participation in sustainable destination management. Communication with the population, aimed at reducing the sense of destination overload, thereby preventing negative resident reactions, constitutes a prospective avenue. The methodologies and subjects pertaining to such communication could warrant further research scrutiny.

This study indicates the importance of technology in managing overtourism. Exploring the role of emerging technologies like AI, Big Data, and predictive analytics in devising more effective strategies could pose another interesting path for fostering a more profound understanding; however, discussions on the ethical implications of using diverse data collection methods such as mobile telephony) would need to complement that discourse. A discussion of efficient communication with the visitors about ethical and mutually beneficial ways of gaining their information and real-time data needs to be opened.

Finally, investigating the potential for enhanced collaboration between academia and DMOs to bridge the gap between theoretical frameworks and practical implementation could pave the way for more effective overtourism management strategies.

6. Conclusion

The functions and tasks of DMOs stand as integral pillars in sustainable tourism development. By exploring the roles undertaken by DMOs in Vannes, Colmar, Melaka, and Český Krumlov, this study uncovered their various responsibilities. The semi-controlled interviews conducted with marketing representatives from these institutions have provided valuable insights into the nuanced challenges posed by overtourism and the array of tools available to DMOs for its prevention and mitigation. The debate on overtourism unveiled a pervasive concern across diverse destinations, ranging from established European locales to Asian landscapes, recognizing overtourism not merely as a problem of overcrowding but rather as an interplay of economic, socio-cultural, and environmental factors. As the tourism landscape continues to evolve, DMOs must adopt a forward-thinking approach, implement innovative strategies, leverage available technology, foster stakeholder collaborations, and continuously evaluate the efficacy of tools deployed. While the identified tools, strategies, and insights garnered from the experiences of diverse destinations do not yet offer a universal foundation for DMOs worldwide to avert or mitigate overtourism, this work may help inspire the destination marketing teams to begin creating a more sustainable and resilient tourism landscape. This research also contributes by identifying potential avenues for future research and highlighting knowledge gaps that need to be addressed to effectively manage overtourism.

7. Limitations

This study was by a large part undertaken during or directly after the Covid-19 pandemic. Although some preventive measures were applied, such as primarily considering the destination tourism data collected before 2020 and discussing the situation pre- and during the pandemic with the marketing representative interviewees, the data and the experience may still largely reflect the pandemic situation instead of general tourism flow tendencies.

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