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THE RISKS OF OVER-COMMERCIALIZATION VERSUS CONSERVATION IN INTERNATIONAL TOURISM

Vanessa TODEA, Alex Tiberius OANCEA, Ioana Camelia CHEBELEU

University of Oradea, Faculty of Environmental Protection, Gen. Magheru street, no.26, Oradea, Romania

Abstract: *Given our current time, the risks of over-commercialization are met quite frequent in tourism internationally speaking, thus, conservation becomes difficult sometimes but not impossible. In this scientific paper, we give examples of countries that overcome this kind of problems with innovative ideas that work practically not only theoretically.*

• Introduction.

- The UNWTO defines overtourism as: "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitor experiences in a negative way".

• Material and method

The methodological framework involves the critical examination of texts and case studies in order to identify patterns, relationships, and recurrent themes related to tourism commercialization and conservation efforts. The research focuses primarily on pedestrian and nature-based tourism, as these forms of tourism are particularly susceptible to the negative effects of excessive commercialization.

• Results and discussions

The methodological framework involves the critical examination of texts and case studies in order to identify patterns, relationships, and recurrent themes related to tourism commercialization and conservation efforts. The research focuses primarily on pedestrian and nature-based tourism, as these forms of tourism are particularly susceptible to the negative effects of excessive commercialization. Also, noise pollution caused by tourists in large cities disturbs the locals, the general prices are high and the damage done to historical sites is alarming.

The best way to conserve tourism, according to UNWTO is to practice ecotourism and maintain, protect natural, cultural and social resources that make a destination attractive. Some interesting measures are those taken by UNESCO by limiting the number of visitors, constructions and commercial development around sites. UNWTO, takes another initiative, durable tourism along with balance between economical development, environmental protection and wellbeing of the locals. UN at the Convention on Biological Diversity mentioned a "carrying capacity" concept which indicates the maximum number of visitors a place is capable of carrying without any damage to it. The most popular and used methods of protection are limiting number of visitors, ecotax, tourist education, development of alternative tourism and urban planning, architectural protection. There are programs like "Leave NO Trace" or local companies which teaches tourists how to pay respect to nature or the culture of the site.

In order to preserve areas of historical and cultural value and achieve a healthy symbiosis between built heritage elements and tourism-related activities, which can provide the necessary financial reserves, in addition to funding mechanisms at the national level and beyond, a more profound is needed, as well as a more sustained awareness raising activity for local residents and site staff, including targeted marketing specialists.

- In Romania we have the following normative acts regarding the issue:
- Decision 1252/2000, version of 19 Nov. 2022
- Decision No. 77/2003 on the establishment of measures for the prevention of mountain accidents and the organization of mountain rescue activities
- The 2004 regulation on the authorization of conservation and restoration laboratories and workshops

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Italy, especially Venice, faces extreme tourist overcrowding, which leads to pollution, higher prices and a decline in the quality of life for locals. Measures include a 5-euro tourist access tax introduced in 2024, limiting the number of large cruise ships that can enter the lagoon, and encouraging sustainable tourism in less-visited areas of the Veneto region. Barcelona in Spain also struggles with tourist overcrowding, noisy visitors and protests from locals, along with the loss of cultural identity and traditional commerce. Measures taken include limiting tourist numbers, promoting tourism in less-visited regions, creating a sustainable tourism plan and encouraging visits to rural areas. In France, sites such as Mont-Saint-Michel and areas in Paris face degradation of UNESCO heritage due to the large flow of tourists. The measures taken include lengthening visiting routes, imposing strict rules around monuments and running awareness campaigns about heritage conservation. Japan, particularly Kyoto, experiences overcrowding in historical areas and inappropriate behavior toward locals and temples. Measures include educational campaigns ("Respect Kyoto"), restricting access to certain streets and promoting tourism outside peak seasons.

• Conclusions

Over-commercialization in tourism presents a complex challenge, as the pursuit of economic growth often comes into conflict with the preservation of natural, cultural, and social resources. Concentration of tourists in popular destinations, driven in part by social media and global accessibility, has led to environmental degradation, the disruption of local communities, and the erosion of cultural heritage. At the same time, unregulated development, such as the conversion of residential properties into vacation homes, contributes to rising housing costs and social tensions. Ultimately, sustainable tourism depends on integrating economic objectives with environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Only by aligning development with conservation principles can tourism continue to provide benefits without compromising the very resources that attract visitors. Failure to do so risks further protests, environmental degradation, and the loss of cultural and natural heritage, undermining both local well-being and long-term tourism viability.