

Tracing the Discourse on Overtourism

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Abstract: This study analyzes the discourse surrounding overtourism by synthesizing academic perspectives and media representations, highlighting the dynamics and diverse effects of this modern phenomenon. This study aims to critically analyze the evolution of overtourism as an interdisciplinary topic, examining its ecological, socio-cultural, and economic implications. The methodology comprises two analyses: a comparative computational media analysis using Media Cloud to investigate overtourism coverage in major global tourism destinations and a bibliometric analysis conducted with VOSviewer to assess scholarly outputs obtained from Scopus. The comparative media analysis from 2020 to 2024 reveals varying national perspectives on overtourism, highlighting ethical concerns in German and Swiss media in contrast to sensationalist and conflict-oriented representations in Spanish and French outlets. Japanese coverage prioritizes domestic issues, whereas British reports highlight international viewpoints. The bibliometric analysis from 2013 to 2024 reveals a rise in scholarly attention before the pandemic, followed by stabilization in the post-pandemic period. Key thematic clusters encompass strategic management, heritage conservation, environmental sustainability, urban transformation, social impacts, and post-pandemic tourism dynamics. The academic discourse emphasizes the impact of overtourism on ecological degradation, community tensions, cultural commodification, and economic disparities, underscoring the need for integrated governance and community involvement in effective tourism management. The findings indicate that overtourism has significant negative effects, including the exacerbation of socioeconomic inequalities, ecological stress, and cultural degradation. Additionally, tourismophobia is rising, leading to conflicts. Furthermore, they underscore the role of grassroots movements in promoting sustainable and equitable tourism practices. The study concludes by advocating for comprehensive governance frameworks, community-oriented solutions, and interdisciplinary research to promote sustainable and resilient tourism.

Keywords: Overtourism; Tourismophobia; Sustainability; Sustainable tourism; Media analysis; Bibliometric analysis.

Introduction

Tourism is not only an economic activity but also a cultural phenomenon with profound interdisciplinary aspects (Mihalic, 2020). The development of tourism has contributed in many ways to local development (Liu, Chiang, & Ko, 2023), but at the same time, it has determined some negative effects, too. Overtourism is one of them. Fortunately, solutions are available (Zovko & Dillon, 2023).

The phenomenon of overtourism has gained prominence in scholarly discourse, especially as global tourism destinations face escalating conflicts between visitor numbers and sustainability thresholds. Recent academic contributions since 2020 offer detailed analyses of overtourism, highlighting its complexities, theoretical foundations, and diverse implications (Milano, Novelli, & Russo, 2024).

Mass tourism can produce various adverse effects that compromise environmental and social sustainability. From an ecological standpoint, unregulated tourist influxes and insufficient planning have consistently been linked to environmental degradation, including biodiversity loss, pollution, and resource depletion. Unregulated tourism

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development in fragile ecosystems often leads to habitat disruption and the degradation of ecological capital, necessitating the implementation of stringent regulatory frameworks to prevent long-term damage (Baloch et al., 2022). A study by Lusseau and Mancini (2018) suggests that tourism-driven recreational activities pose a significant threat to the conservation of nearly 6,000 species worldwide, particularly in coastal and marine environments, highlighting the need for meticulous site management and effective species protection.

On the social front, tourism often generates tensions among stakeholders, including locals, residents, and tourists, resulting in cultural conflicts, overcrowding, and a decline in quality of life. Research on overtourism in urban areas presents conceptual frameworks that connect tourist demands with resident capacities, highlighting the potential for friction ranging from daily disruptions to organized protests (Zmyślony, Kowalczyk-Anioł, & Dembińska, 2020). The commodification of culture and competition for public spaces and services frequently leads to communal grievances, as local populations perceive their traditions and resources as being exploited for external benefit. Furthermore, in addition to social friction, tourism can intensify political or security challenges. Destinations affected by political unrest or inadequate institutional governance face heightened vulnerabilities, as violence discourages tourists and leads to economic instability, thereby exacerbating conflict dynamics (Beig & Nika, 2020).

Considering the complex ways in which overtourism negatively impacts various areas, it would be helpful to understand the evolution and specifics associated with this phenomenon. To this end, we investigated the evolution of overtourism, considering both media coverage and academic research. Discussions of the findings highlight the diverse conflicts associated with overtourism.

The concept of overtourism

Mihalic (2020) introduces a notable conceptual advancement through a sustainability-focused framework addressing overtourism. Their research defines overtourism as a systemic issue that arises when a destination's carrying capacity is surpassed, resulting in negative effects on environmental, socio-cultural, and economic aspects. The authors emphasize the importance of integrated governance, advocating for multidimensional management strategies that incorporate stakeholder collaboration to mitigate adverse impacts effectively.

Santos-Rojo, Llopis-Amorós, and García-García (2023) significantly enhance conceptual clarity by conducting a thorough bibliometric analysis of overtourism research from 2018 to 2021. Their systematic exploration demonstrates the academic consensus on the significant impacts of overtourism on destination sustainability, emphasizing issues such as resource degradation, community displacement, and economic disparity. This bibliometric analysis highlights the increasing scholarly attention to overtourism as an interdisciplinary domain that necessitates diverse research methodologies.

Gössling, McCabe, and Chen (2020) examine overtourism from a socio-psychological perspective, focusing on resident attitudes, perceptions, and emotional responses to the pressures exerted by excessive tourism. Their findings indicate that overtourism constitutes a significant socio-cultural issue when local identities and daily lives are markedly disrupted. These disruptions, characterized by diminished place attachment, reduced quality of life, and social conflicts, require focused interventions for socio-cultural sustainability.

García-Buades, García-Sastre, and Alemany-Hormaeche (2022) expand on this socio-cultural analysis by examining the impact of overtourism on residents' behavioral intentions, specifically focusing on their potential withdrawal or active resistance to the growth of tourism. This study examines the interactions among tourists, residents, and

governance frameworks, suggesting that effective governance and socially responsible tourist practices can significantly mitigate tensions arising from overtourism.

Blanco-Romero et al. (2018) articulate the economic implications of overtourism through their analysis of Barcelona's tourism-driven housing market, presenting empirical evidence of its consequences, including increased housing costs and community displacement. This foundational work, predating 2020, aligns closely with contemporary research trends that highlight economic sustainability challenges arising from unchecked tourism expansion.

Furthermore, research significantly enhances academic discourse by critically analyzing governance strategies in popular destinations impacted by overtourism (Goodwin, 2021; Petrić & Mandić, 2021; Romão, 2025). They promote governance models that prioritize participatory decision-making, transparency, and accountability to address the challenges of overtourism effectively. Their research highlights the importance of inclusive governance frameworks in reconciling stakeholder interests. The support and promotion of alternative forms of tourism are credited with diminishing or even eliminating the negative impact of overtourism (Koba, 2021; Temes-Cordovez et al., 2020). Regenerative tourism, although challenging to attain, is a constructive approach to addressing this phenomenon (Akhoundoghli & Boluk, 2025; Alhitmi, Rahman, & Bayram, 2024). Another facet of the solutions to overtourism aims for a long-term impact, such as overtourism education addressing tourists as well as locals to a certain degree (San Tropez, 2020). Practice shows that overtourism is a too complex phenomenon to be easily overcome (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2019)

Overtourism and sustainability

Environmental pillar

Overtourism and its environmental implications have garnered significant academic interest due to the clear ecological pressures arising from excessive tourism growth. The literature consistently indicates that overtourism significantly exacerbates environmental degradation via resource depletion, habitat destruction, pollution, and heightened carbon emissions.

Sustainable Travel International (2024) identifies the environmental risks associated with overtourism, focusing on direct consequences, including biodiversity loss, waste management challenges, and increased carbon emissions resulting from extensive travel. Overtourism significantly contributes to habitat loss and fragmentation, as infrastructure developments designed to accommodate tourists intrude upon natural areas. Ecobnb (2020) highlights these concerns by detailing specific ecological disruptions, including coral bleaching events and the degradation of hiking trails, directly associated with increases in visitor numbers.

Earth.org (2023) examines marine ecosystems, presenting evidence of the ecological impacts of overtourism, specifically highlighting the relationship between tourist density and coral reef degradation in Hawaii. The geospatial analyses indicate a significant decline in coral health, primarily due to physical damage from recreational activities and pollution resulting from increased tourism. This example supports broader academic arguments that overtourism directly compromises ecological resilience.

Recent literature also emphasizes practical responses to the challenges posed by environmental overtourism. The Guardian (2024) presents a case study of Spain's Cíes Islands, critically examining sustainable management practices. The implementation of strict visitor caps effectively reduced ecological damage by minimizing litter, limiting disturbances to wildlife, and decreasing erosion rates. This example illustrates strategies for achieving ecological sustainability via regulated tourist access and strict environmental regulations.

Mihalic (2020) presents a conceptual framework that highlights the need for integrated governance models in managing overtourism, with a focus on ecological sustainability. The analysis advocates for policy interventions that prioritize carrying capacity assessments and visitor management as essential measures to safeguard environmental integrity.

Academic discussions acknowledge the complexity of addressing the environmental consequences of overtourism, highlighting the interconnection of ecological impacts with other sustainability dimensions. Santos-Rojo, Llopis-Amorós, and García-García (2023) present a comprehensive bibliometric review that highlights the breadth and depth of current research, emphasizing key themes, including ecological degradation and the critical need for sustainable tourism management practices.

Literature establishes overtourism as a significant environmental issue, underscoring the need for strategic interventions to address ecological degradation. Environmental sustainability in overtourism contexts requires comprehensive, evidence-based management strategies that include thorough environmental monitoring, defined visitor limits, infrastructure regulations, and active stakeholder participation. Future research should refine these interventions by exploring adaptive management approaches that effectively balance environmental conservation and tourism growth. Addressing the ecological impacts of overtourism is essential for the long-term sustainability of tourist destinations and the preservation of global biodiversity.

Socio-cultural pillar

Overtourism has a considerable effect on the socio-cultural environments of local communities, affecting resident well-being, the preservation of cultural heritage, and social equity. Recent academic discussions emphasize overtourism as a contributor to social tensions, cultural commodification, and the erosion of authenticity in destinations that depend significantly on tourism economies. Overall, overtourism impacts the quality of life and well-being of residents in various ways (Koç & Küçükergin, 2021; Mihalic & Kuščer, 2021). At the same time, it can negatively affect tourist satisfaction and experience.

Gössling, McCabe, and Chen (2020) provide a comprehensive socio-psychological analysis of overtourism, highlighting its impact on the attitudes and behaviors of residents. The study highlights the relationship between place attachment and perceived disruptions caused by excessive tourism, leading to negative emotional responses that range from frustration to hostility. The dynamics indicate significant implications for community cohesion and the psychological well-being of residents, highlighting the necessity for careful management of interactions between visitors and residents.

Cheung and Li (2019) investigate the complex interactions between residents and tourists within the framework of overtourism. The research identifies factors contributing to conflict, including overcrowding, noise, and the degradation of daily living environments. The authors propose proactive governance strategies, emphasizing community engagement in tourism planning to reduce conflicts and maintain socio-cultural harmony.

Recent cases from Spain illustrate socio-cultural responses to overtourism, highlighting societal disruptions induced by this phenomenon. Teen Vogue (2024) reports on extensive protests in Barcelona and Mallorca, driven by residents' dissatisfaction with tourism-induced gentrification, rising living expenses, and the perceived erosion of local culture and identity. These reactions underscore the significant societal challenges posed by overtourism, underscoring the need for effective governance and equitable tourism policies.

Additionally, García-Buades, García-Sastre, and Alemany-Hormaeche (2022) empirically investigate the impact of overtourism on residents' intentions to withdraw, which serves as a critical indicator of declining socio-cultural conditions. The findings indicate that excessive tourism reduces residents' sense of community and significantly contributes to social withdrawal and decreased resident satisfaction. Their work underscores the significant mediating role of local governments and proactive tourist behaviors in mitigating negative socio-cultural impacts.

The conceptual frameworks developed by Mihalic (2020) reaffirm these findings, suggesting comprehensive models that explicitly incorporate socio-cultural sustainability into overtourism governance. Their research emphasizes the significance of community-driven tourism policies that empower residents and preserve cultural integrity, advocating for inclusive and participatory approaches to tourism management.

The synthesis of current literature suggests that the socio-cultural implications of overtourism have a significant impact on resident communities, intensifying conflicts, cultural commodification, and social displacement. To address these impacts, it is essential to implement intentional, community-focused strategies that emphasize resident involvement, equitable economic advantages, and careful cultural stewardship. Future research must further explore mechanisms of community resilience, effective practices in participatory governance, and strategies for balancing the socio-cultural benefits of tourism with its associated costs. Socio-cultural sustainability in overtourism contexts necessitates policies that promote inclusivity, equity, and cultural authenticity to achieve harmonious and sustainable tourism development.

Economic pillar

The economic effects of overtourism are increasingly apparent, impacting local economies through various mechanisms, including inflationary pressures, unequal economic benefits, and risks to long-term sustainability. Recent literature highlights the paradoxical relationship between the economic benefits of overtourism and the accompanying social and economic costs.

Ostheimer (2025) examines the impact of overtourism on local economic conditions, with a particular focus on Barcelona. The review indicates that substantial increases in tourist demand have led to significant rent inflation, reaching 68%, and heightened gentrification pressures, which have consequently reduced affordability and economic inclusivity for residents. Inflationary pressures extend beyond housing, resulting in price increases in goods and services that disproportionately affect lower-income communities.

Blanco-Romero et al. (2018) analyze the economic impacts, with a specific focus on the housing market in Barcelona. The analysis links heightened tourism flows to significant expansion in short-term rental markets, intensifying housing scarcity and affordability challenges for residents. This scenario exemplifies the dual economic implications of overtourism, wherein the short-term financial gains for property owners frequently result in community displacement and increased economic inequality.

Goodwin (2017) provides a foundational analysis of the economic sustainability of tourism, highlighting the long-term vulnerabilities associated with overtourism. The paper contends that excessive dependence on tourism economies, particularly those focused on volume rather than value, diminishes economic resilience. Destinations exhibit susceptibility to variations in visitor numbers, external disturbances, and crises, highlighting the need for economic diversification and the implementation of strategies that emphasize quality tourism experiences rather than mass-market expansion.

The World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) and UNWTO (2023) provide detailed data that elucidates the intricate economic implications of overtourism. While tourism

significantly enhances GDP growth in popular destinations, employment in this sector often remains precarious, low-paid, and seasonal. This dichotomy highlights essential issues of economic sustainability, suggesting that a high volume of visitors does not inherently lead to equitable economic benefits for communities.

Mihalic (2021) proposes integrative governance models to effectively address the economic impacts of overtourism. Their research highlights the need for inclusive economic strategies to ensure equitable distribution of tourism benefits. Furthermore, it is recommended that strategic interventions, including tourism taxation, visitor limits, and stricter regulations on short-term rentals, be implemented to redistribute economic benefits for the greater societal good.

The current literature extensively documents the economic complexities of overtourism, highlighting the negative repercussions that accompany the immediate financial gains from high tourist densities. Addressing overtourism from an economic perspective requires the development of resilient models that prioritize quality over quantity, ensure equitable distribution of benefits, and involve comprehensive stakeholder participation. Future research should concentrate on identifying effective strategies for economic diversification, examining mechanisms for redistributing tourism revenues, and improving regulatory frameworks to promote balanced and sustainable tourism economies.

Overtourism in real life

Overtourism, a concept that has gained prominence in recent years, has transitioned from theoretical frameworks to tangible, often contentious situations in various global destinations. Destinations such as Barcelona, Venice, the Canary Islands, and Mallorca exemplify the profound impact of overtourism on local communities, resulting in social unrest, environmental degradation, and economic pressures.

Barcelona consistently serves as a focal point for conflicts related to overtourism. Protests in 2024, primarily driven by increasing rents and a surge in tourist apartments, reflected underlying socio-economic tensions. Academic analysis correlates with real-world occurrences, as identified by Blanco-Romero et al. (2018) and Ostheimer (2025), indicating that increases in tourist numbers directly resulted in significant rises in living costs and the subsequent displacement of residents. This phenomenon highlights the economic aspect of overtourism, demonstrating how uncontrolled tourism expansion intensifies economic disparities in urban areas.

The Canary Islands, facing analogous tensions in 2024, illustrate the convergence of environmental stress and social unrest. Protests emerged in response to issues concerning mass tourism, significant housing shortages, and critical water shortages. These challenges correspond with findings from Sustainable Travel International (2024) and Ecobnb (2020), highlighting resource depletion as a primary outcome of overtourism. These cases illustrate the interconnection between ecological limits and societal well-being, with notable implications for local communities.

Venice experienced significant protests in 2021 following the resumption of cruise ship tourism after the pandemic. The protests highlighted ecological concerns, particularly environmental degradation caused by large cruise ships and the excessive influx of visitors that overwhelms the delicate lagoon ecosystem. Research by Earth.org (2023) on coral reef degradation reflects the ecological challenges faced by Venice, illustrating the detrimental impact of overtourism on sensitive marine ecosystems worldwide. The situation in Venice supports academic arguments for rigorous management policies and strict visitor limits to protect fragile environmental settings, as demonstrated by The Guardian's case study of Spain's Cíes Islands (2024).

The anti-tourism demonstrations in Palma de Mallorca in 2017 exemplify radical reactions to mass tourism, highlighting significant socio-cultural disruptions resulting from overtourism. Contributions by Gössling, McCabe, and Chen (2020) and Cheung and Li (2019) provide context for these social tensions, analyzing the psychological and community effects resulting from excessive tourism. These sources demonstrate that overtourism disrupts residents' daily lives and fundamentally alters community identity and cohesion, leading to considerable local opposition.

Mihalic (2021) emphasizes the need for integrated governance solutions that incorporate comprehensive stakeholder participation to effectively address the multifaceted impacts of overtourism. The bibliometric analysis conducted by Santos-Rojo, Llopis-Amorós, and García-García (2023) underscores the need for strong governance frameworks, promoting evidence-based and interdisciplinary approaches to address overtourism.

Overtourism can manifest in some of the most unlikely places, such as Mount Everest (Bhateja, 2025; Limbu, 2024) or Easter Island (DW, 2018). Nevertheless, the usual victims of overtourism are the most famous tourist destinations, such as Barcelona, Mallorca, Amsterdam or Venice. For instance, some of the main issues related to the impact of overtourism in Barcelona are housing prices and the increase in anti-tourist sentiment (CBS News, 2024). In Mallorca, mass tourism led to inequalities and protests against tourists (Reuters, 2024). Venice experiences depopulation and pollution related to cruise ships, among other factors (González, 2018). Unfortunately, these are not the only negative effects of overtourism, and these destinations are not the only ones facing them.

Some of the main concerns that are transparent in news outlets related to overtourism include housing crises and gentrification, environmental degradation, cultural erosion resulting from tourist behavior, economic inequalities leading to social tensions, and a decline in the quality of life. Cities such as Berlin (Plucinska, 2016), Florence (Reuters in Florence, 2023), and Lisbon (Reuters, 2024) tend to experience problems related to house crises. Airbnb and tourist rentals lead to reduced housing options for locals and contribute to increased housing costs. Also, some urban centers are depopulated for tourist use. Environmental degradation related to overtourism is most evident in beautiful and popular natural sites, such as Komodo Island (Reuters in Jakarta, 2022), the Canary Islands (The Guardian, 2024) or Machu Picchu (Nolan, 2024). Nevertheless, cruise ships and overuse of infrastructure can lead to the same effects in many other destinations, such as Dubrovnik (Müncheberg 2024), Venice (ITV News, 2021), Florida (Key West - Love, 2021), or in Greek islands (Santorini, Mykonos - The New York Times2024). Waste and water overuse determine additional negative issues. Cultural erosion is linked to the disrespect for local ways of life and inappropriate behavior by tourists, as seen in Kyoto (Wilson, 2019) and Amsterdam (Holligan, 2023). Overtourism may also lead to the loss of traditional ways of life, as seen in Bali (Ratcliffe, 2023). Social tensions and economic inequalities also attract the attention of mass media in many popular tourism destinations. A primary concern is that the economic benefits of tourism do not reach locals while they experience increased costs of living. In the past few years, there have been mass protests against tourists, especially in Spain (France24, 2017), but also in other places (Korea Times, 2018; Majorca Daily Bulletin reporter, 2019; Vasquez, 2024).

The experiences of cities like Barcelona, Venice, Mallorca, and the Canary Islands underscore the crucial need to transition tourism policies toward sustainable, equitable, and resilient strategies. Real-world examples, supported by rigorous academic research, offer valuable insights for developing effective strategies to manage overtourism sustainably. This ensures balanced socio-economic growth, environmental preservation, and improved quality of life for local communities.

Methodology

This study aims to map the state of knowledge in the field of overtourism, considering both academic and real-life concerns. Therefore, two types of literature reviews are considered. One focuses on the coverage of mass media in some of the most relevant countries from a tourism perspective, while the other conducts a bibliometric analysis of mainstream academic research.

The first part of the investigation consists of a comparative media analysis using Media Cloud. The use of automated tools to analyze large datasets of media texts enables an understanding of how the investigated topics are framed in various media ecosystems. This type of research enables the observation of how different cultural, political, and economic contexts influence the coverage of phenomena. Media Cloud is an open-source platform that allows the examination of media coverage on specific topics over time, dating back to the beginning of 2020. A primary advantage of this platform is its comprehensive data collection, which extends beyond mainstream media. Although it has strong analytical capabilities, this tool is not without flaws, determined by various technical and resource constraints (Roberts et al., 2021).

For a very comprehensive mapping of the news on overtourism, we selected several collections available on Media Cloud corresponding to the top tourist countries, according to the Travel & Tourism Development Index 2024 (World Economic Forum, 2024): United States, Spain, Japan, France, Australia, Germany, United Kingdom, China, Italy, and Switzerland. The period considered for this research was January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2024. For a broader investigation, we utilized the most comprehensive collection, encompassing both national and local news for each country, and focused on a single keyword – “overtourism.” Several synonyms for this term are sometimes used, such as “tourism overcrowding,” “excessive tourism,” “mass tourism pressure,” and “tourism saturation,” but “overtourism” is the most common, well-recognized, and comprehensive. Therefore, we opted only for this term, adding translations in other languages for each country, except for China and Japan. For all countries investigated, we used two collections – national and states & local – for broader coverage. The number of media outlets varies by country, considering its unique characteristics. For instance, the number and diversity of media titles were much broader in the case of the US – almost a continent in itself - while in the case of China and Japan, the number was much smaller due to language considerations.

The second component of the methodology involves a bibliometric analysis of the academic environment's interest in overtourism. To this end, we developed a mapping of the research using VOSviewer. Compared to other software in this field, VOSviewer offers several advantages, including flexibility and reliability, although it cannot simultaneously utilize multiple databases (Arruda et al., 2022). We chose to use only Scopus as the reference source because it is very comprehensive, features consistent research, and is compatible with VOSviewer, allowing for complex analysis. Research by Gulati, Duggal, and Kumar (2024) shows the reliability of this database for tourism studies. Additionally, Scopus covers a greater number of articles in the tourism field than other databases (Gulyas & Molna, 2023), which offers a high potential for nuanced investigation and detailed cluster analysis.

To cover as many relevant articles as possible, we used the broad topic of *overtourism* as the search keyword. Several concepts could be used instead of overtourism, but none of them really captures the complexity of this concept. Some related terms might be “tourism saturation,” “excessive tourism,” “mass tourism,” “tourism pressure,” “uncontrolled tourism,” or “tourismphobia.” We observe that none of these terms, which tend to focus on a specific aspect with little complexity, cover all dimensions – including resident conflict, environmental degradation, and infrastructure pressure. Considering all the mentioned concepts, “excessive tourism” tended to be used more

frequently until overtourism became the standard, probably also because the former is more quantitative in nature, while the latter is more qualitative.

The analysis comprised several steps. First, we searched Scopus and then vetted the articles that were not related to the phenomenon investigated or possible duplicate papers. We also excluded all 2025 publications to accurately observe the evolution of completed publication years and track trends. Ultimately, the clean database comprised 658 contributions. Finally, we analyzed the database considering three main lines: the research structure, authorship, and the co-occurrence of topics investigated.

Findings and discussions

Comparative computational media analysis

A computational media analysis assessed overtourism coverage in various countries, quantifying the frequency of articles and their thematic framings. The United States recorded the highest number of articles at 4,500, whereas China exhibited significant fluctuations associated with state narratives. National variations were evident, as German and Swiss media focused on ethical considerations, Spanish media employed sensationalist framing, and French media underscored conflict. Japanese coverage was primarily focused on domestic issues, while British coverage emphasized international effects. Italian media have closely associated overtourism with domestic policy. This analysis examines the various cultural and linguistic narratives that shape the discourse on overtourism globally.

United States

For the US, the number of articles covering the topic is relatively high, with around 4,500 stories published primarily in the past year, as reflected in Figure 1.

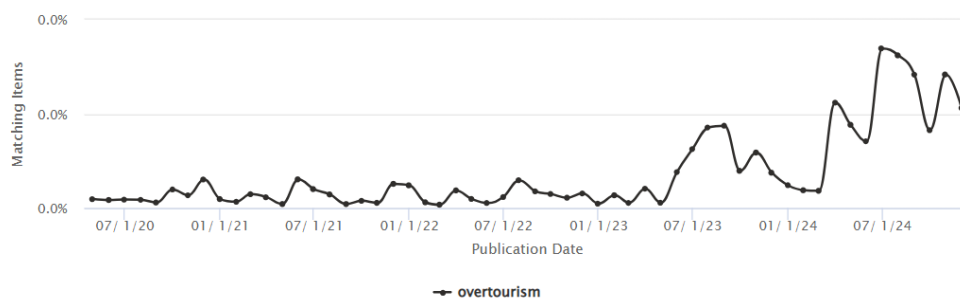


Figure 1. United States - monthly attention over time

The titles demonstrate an international focus in this field, with news covering destinations such as Venice, European cities in general, Fuji, Rome, Japan, and Greece. Considering the local destination, Hawaii has caught the attention of the media in this field. Airbnb and cruise tourism also stand out among the perspectives considered.

Spain

Considering only the English term, the search revealed 252 articles covering it. Adding the Spanish equivalent of “turismo excesivo,” 406 stories are identified, distributed mainly since March 2024 over the tourist season in the country, as presented in Figure 2.

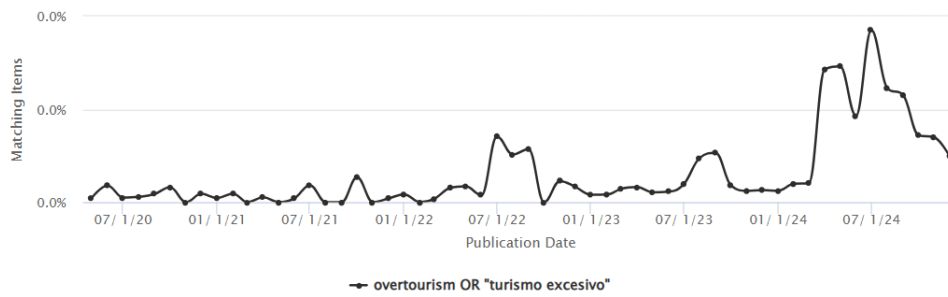


Figure 2. Spain – monthly attention over time

Almost half of the articles are in Spanish, a third in English, and 16% in German. The primary interest is in covering the situation in Spain, especially in Mallorca. There are also references to Germany. Considering foreign destinations, the Acropolis and Paris caught the eye of Spanish journalists, likely mirroring the interests of their readers. We also observed a tendency for more dramatic presentations compared to other countries, reflected by the use of words such as “drama” or “shock.”

Japan

Attention has increased over time, especially in the past two years, as shown in Figure 3. Several coverage picks are observed in September 2023, June 2024, and October 2024.

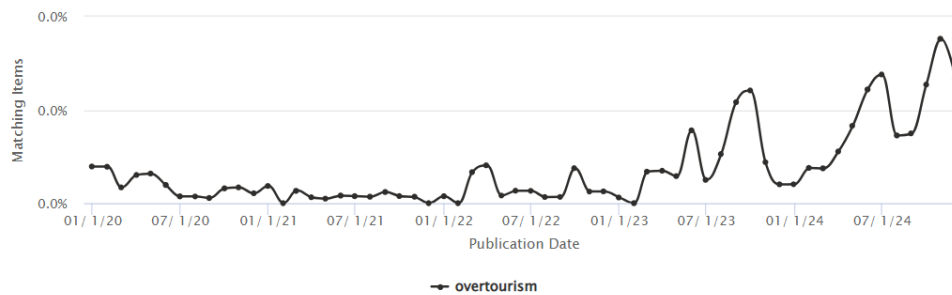


Figure 3. Japan – monthly attention over time

The top words cloud identified, considering the titles, shows that the primary focus is on Japanese tourism destinations such as Kyoto, Fuji, Shiboto, or Tokyo. Venice and Amsterdam appear to be the only foreign destinations that have caught the attention of the Japanese media.

France

In this case, the search consisted of two keywords: “overtourism” and “surtourisme.” We observe two main periods of higher coverage: mid-2023 and mid-2024 (Table 4).

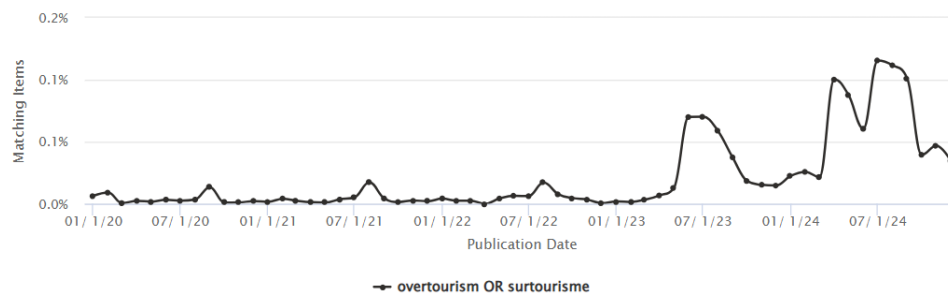


Figure 4. France - monthly attention over time

Almost 10% of the coverage is included in *Le Figaro*. France is an area of concern, in general. Considering foreign destinations, on top three places are Venice, Fuji (Japan), and Barcelona. Airbnb tends to be singled out in titles as well. The conflictual nature of the phenomenon is also signaled by the frequent presence of “lutter” (“to fight”) in media titles.

Australia

Most articles covering this phenomenon were published in the summer of 2024, as shown in Figure 5.

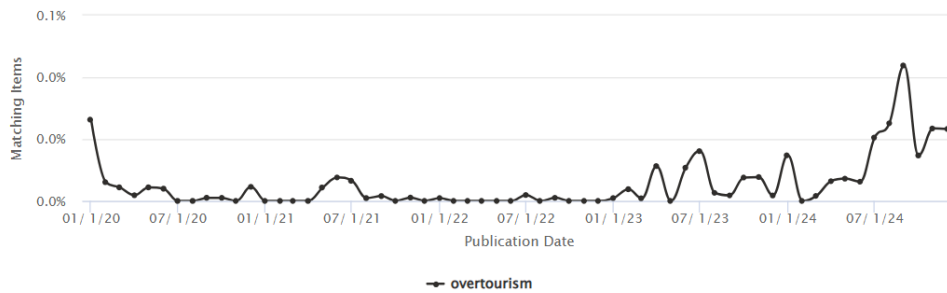


Figure 5. Australia - monthly attention over time

Considering the titles, media coverage of overtourism often frames the issue through the lens of global travel trends, highlighting the impact of tourists on iconic destinations and heritage sites, such as Venice and the Colosseum, or in countries like Italy and France. Headlines tend to strike a balance between offering insights and tips for travelers in 2024 and discussing broader concerns, such as sustainability, crowd reduction, and the post-COVID tourism recovery.

Germany

One observes that during the pandemic, when some travel has been reinstated, the German media has been more concerned with overcrowding than in other countries. Figure 6 also shows that the interest in the topic increased constantly since the beginning of 2023, with a decline during winter 2023-2024.

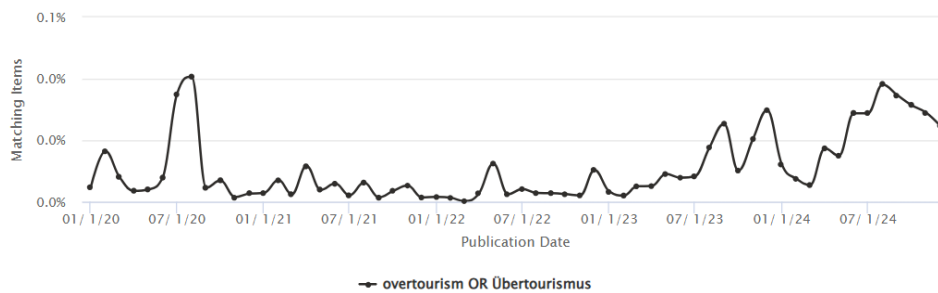


Figure 6. Germany - monthly attention over time

In most countries, a few main media outlets typically included the majority of articles documenting this phenomenon. Germany stands out in this regard – the articles are relatively evenly distributed across many media publications. Also, 5% of the articles are in English. At the center of the discussion is the concept of holiday (Urlaub), which is mostly viewed through the lens of popular travel destinations like Venice, Croatia, and Mallorca, highlighting the strain caused by mass tourism.

United Kingdom

Interest in overtourism in the British media increased rapidly in 2024 (Figure 7).

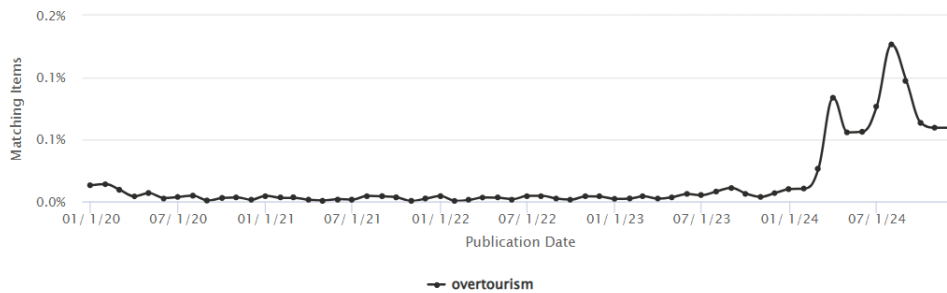


Figure 7. United Kingdom - monthly attention over time

Almost a third of the articles are included in the *Daily Express* – a right-leaning tabloid. The following two publications, with more than 10% each of the articles, are *The Birmingham Mail* and *The Independent*. The primary concern is tourism in Spain, both the mainland and the islands.

China

The search in English revealed only seven articles. To extend the database, we translated the term into Chinese - "过度旅游" (guò dù lǚ yóu) (Figure 8).



Figure 8. China - monthly attention over time

We do not know Chinese. Therefore, we are unable to independently verify the accuracy of the results. However, the data reveals a markedly different pattern. Interest in the topic within Chinese media began to rise in 2020, followed by a decline in early 2022, coinciding with nationwide lockdowns prompted by the Omicron variant of the COVID-19 pandemic. Notably, from January 2024 onward, media attention to the subject diminished significantly and has since nearly disappeared. This might suggest that the term "overtourism" may no longer align with the current tourism narrative of the state, which controls the media (RSF, 2024).

Italy

The awareness of the Italian media related to this topic increased slowly in 2023, with a sharp increase in the second half of 2024 (Figure 9). The cases primarily covered are located in Italy, including Venice, Florence, Rome, Naples, and Cinque Terre.



Figure 9. Italy - monthly attention over time

Switzerland

The interest of Swiss media in this topic increased slightly in the summer of 2023. It registered a higher spike in the summer of 2024, followed by a decline in the subsequent winter (Figure 10).

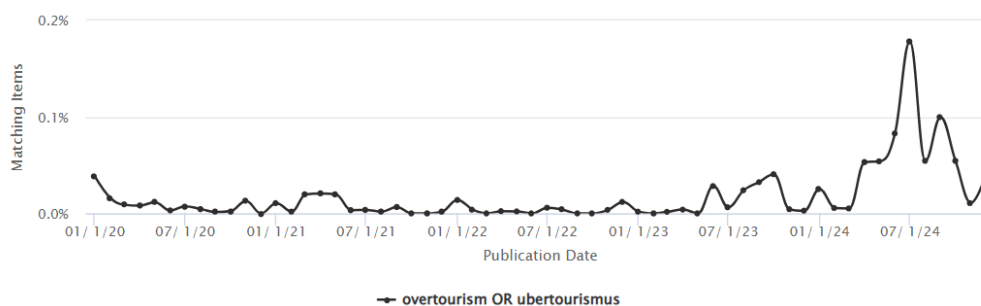


Figure 10. Switzerland - monthly attention over time

The coverage of the topic is spread among several media outlets, with the highest coverage of 11% in Neue Zürcher Zeitung, one of the most respected and influential media organizations. The two main lines of analysis considered are overtourism in Swiss tourist regions and tourist behavior.

Overall media coverage in the main tourist countries

The extent of media coverage of a specific topic is an indicator of public interest and awareness of that phenomenon. Therefore, it is relevant to analyze it to understand the public perception. To this end, we present in Table 1 the county situation, considering the percentage of articles dedicated to overtourism and tourism, as well as the actual number of articles that show various facets of overtourism.

Table 1. Comparative coverage of the phenomenon of overtourism

	Coverage of tourism in media (%)	Coverage of overtourism in media (%)	number of stories on overtourism
United States	0.7747	0.0061	4552
Spain	3.5790	0.0015	406
Japan	0.1492	0.0011	144
France	1.4700	0.0195	2187
Australia	1.6910	0.0048	286
Germany	0.0275	0.0105	2839
United Kingdom	0.9627	0.0140	2056
China	5.8160	2.4250	59325
Italy	2.1570	0.0077	805
Switzerland	0.8949	0.0160	509

Excluding Japan and China, which are irregular due to language accessibility. Spain and Italy have the highest percentages of tourism-related articles among all articles. The lowest interest in covering tourism-related topics is registered in German media. Nevertheless, interest in overtourism is relatively high in Germany, accounting for almost half of the stories on tourism. It suggests a high moral standard among German journalists and their readers. Generally, data shows that overtourism is only a small part of the tourism-related topics covered by media – even in the case of countries where tourism is an essential economic sector contributing to their prosperity. For instance, Spain, a major global tourist destination, has 3.5790% coverage of tourism but only 0.0015% on overtourism. Besides Germany, the smallest gaps are registered in Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Bibliometric analysis

The bibliometric analysis examined the overtourism literature from 2013 to 2024, indicating a rise in scholarly focus prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a period of stabilization. Original research was predominant, highlighting interdisciplinary approaches and conceptual complexity. Prominent journals include the *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* and the *International Journal of Tourism Cities*. Hugues Seraphin, Claudio Milano, C. Michael Hall, and Rachel Dodds have made substantial contributions to the discourse. Authorship mapping revealed a fragmented collaboration, with Spain, the UK, Italy, Germany, and the US at the forefront in terms of publications and citations. Six thematic clusters were identified: strategic management, heritage conservation, environmental sustainability, urban transformation, social impacts, and post-pandemic dynamics, indicating potential areas for future interdisciplinary research.

Structure of the research

The oldest entry in the selected database is the book *Managing Sustainable Tourism: A Legacy for the Future*, published in 2013 (Edgell, 2013). It addresses numerous challenges, including overtourism and the impact of tourism on both natural and cultural environments. It also included international case studies and practical strategies for sustainable development, advocating for collaborative planning among stakeholders for sustainable development in tourism. This contribution was updated and republished in 2019 at Routledge. Figure 11 illustrates the evolution of research on this topic as covered by Scopus up to 2024.

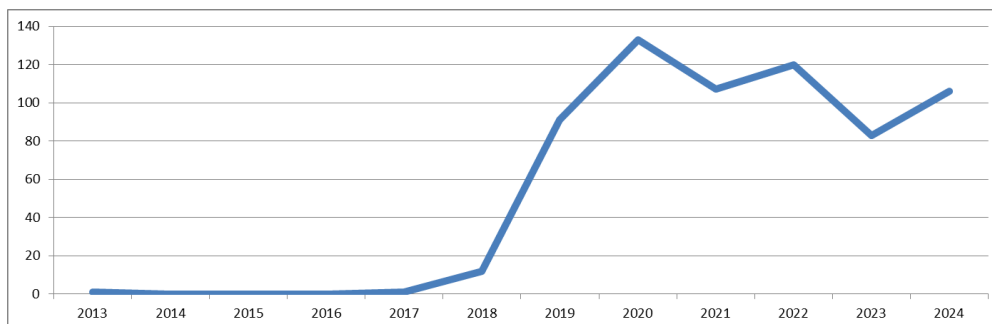


Figure 11. No. of articles on overtourism, as included in Scopus, by year

We observed a steep increase just before the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by a gradual decline in interest rates since then. The academic interest in this phenomenon appears to be relatively stable over the past few years, unlike the media framing, which has imposed a sense of urgency since 2023, especially in 2024. All contributions, except for 44, are in English, and half of them are open-access, ensuring wide access to the findings.

The structure of the database, in terms of the types of publications, is presented in Figure 12. We did not include reviews in the database because our goal was to include

only original works with new contributions in the field, thereby avoiding citation inflation and enhancing thematic specificity. Compared to other bibliometric investigations in Scopus on sustainable tourism, the percentage of conference proceedings in the overall body of knowledge seems to be smaller (Pilelienė, Grigaliūnaitė, & Bogoyavlenska, 2024; Soh, Puah, & Arip, 2023). This might be explained by the topic's conceptual and interdisciplinary nature. Overtourism stimulates theoretical discussions, which are interdisciplinary in nature, considering their complex significance and implications—forms of research that are more commonly published in books and edited volumes than in conference proceedings.

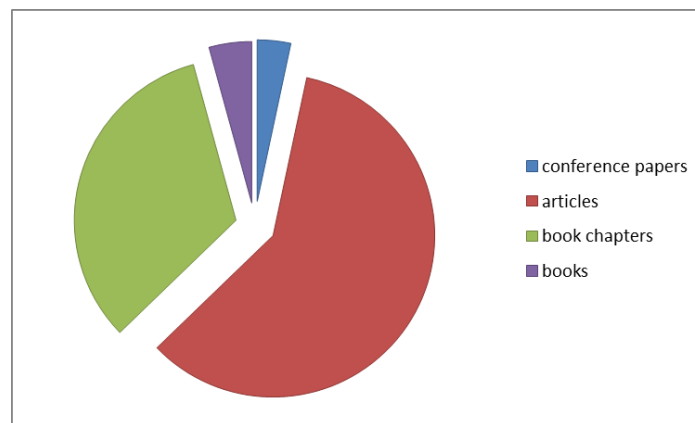


Figure 12. Typology of contribution on overtourism

Table 2 presents the journals that include at least 10 contributions on this phenomenon.

Table 1. Journals with the highest scholarly output on overtourism

journals	no. of articles
Journal of Sustainable Tourism	23
International Journal of Tourism Cities	23
Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes	18
Sustainability	14
Tourism Planning and Development	12
Current Issues in Tourism	12
Annals of Tourism Research	12
Boletín de la Asociación de Geógrafos Españoles	10

Authorship map

1242 authors have contributed to scholarly research associated with this database. Of them, only 19 scholars have more than five papers. Hugues Seraphin from the Oxford Brookes Business School (UK) has 18 papers included, while Pinaz Tiwari (Department of Tourism and Hospitality Management, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, India), and Emil Drápela (Technical University of Liberec, Czech Republic) are represented with eight papers each.

The most cited authors are Claudio Milano, C. Michael Hall, and Rachel Dodds. C. Milano is affiliated with the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB), Barcelona, Spain, and has been cited more than 450 times in Scopus. C. Michael Hall represents the Department of Management, Marketing, and Entrepreneurship at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand. He is included with 353 citations. Rachel Dodds is affiliated with the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management at Toronto Metropolitan University, Canada, and has been cited 307 times in Scopus.

Figure 13 shows the collaborative relationships between authors with at least three publications included in the database. We reduced the minimum number of contributions to create a more comprehensive map. The map also shows when the authors were mostly active. The low density of the map indicates that there is fragmentation in the field, as well as that collaboration on this specific topic of tourism studies, is not very high.

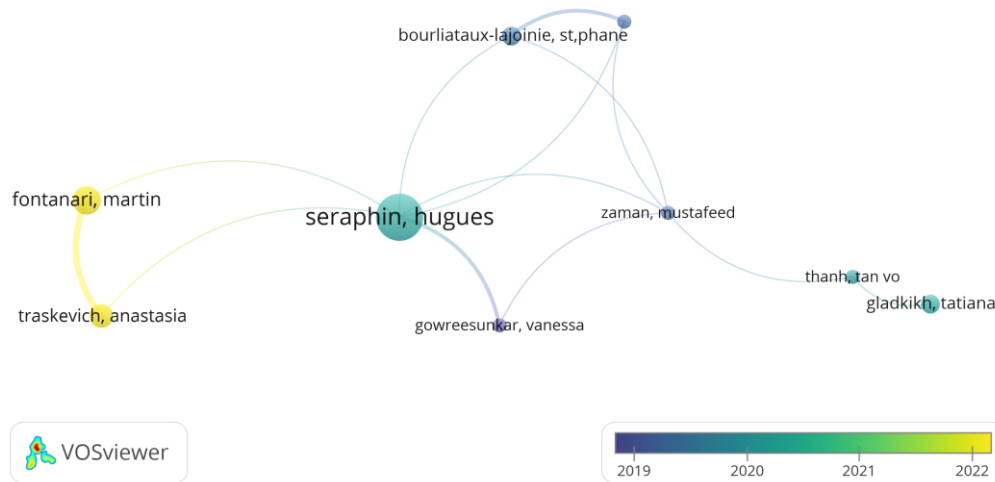


Figure 13. Author map

The map of contributing countries is quite varied (Figure 14). It shows a mixture between regional cooperation and one based on cultural affinities.

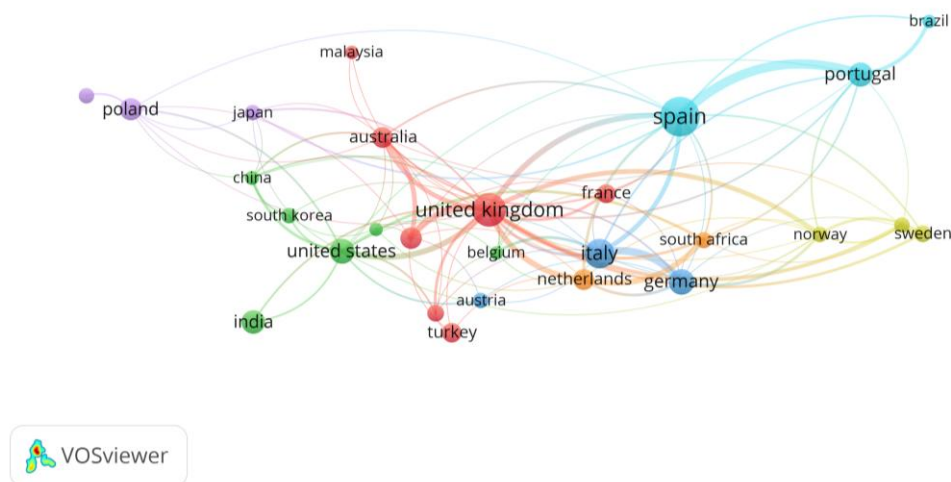


Figure 14. Country map

The database includes a total of 78 countries, of which 27 have more than 10 papers included. The most prolific countries are Spain (117 documents), the United Kingdom (81), Italy (61), Germany (44), and the United States (40). The top-cited research, considering country affiliation, differs, with the United Kingdom in first place (2,467 citations), followed by Spain (2,455), Canada (1,151), Italy (912), and Australia (864).

Thematic coverage

For a more comprehensive approach, we considered both author and index keywords for the co-occurrence topic mapping. Before conducting the analysis, the keywords were standardized to either singular or plural forms, consolidated for semantically similar terms, and ensured a consistent and coherent representation of the topics addressed. Figure 15 presents the resulting –cluster map.

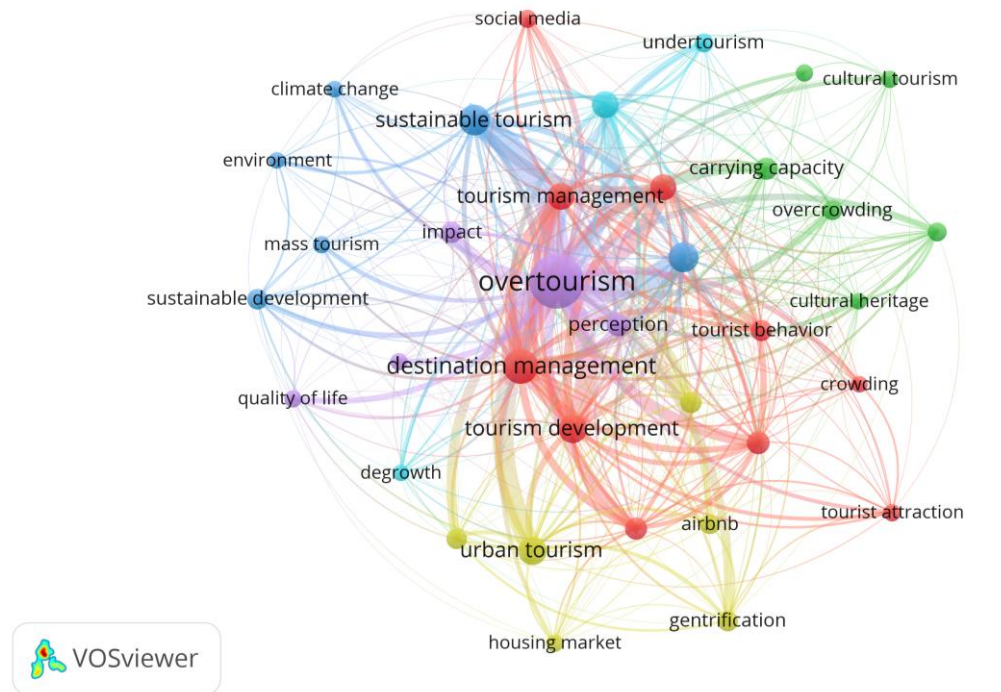


Figure 15. Research clusters

Six clusters have been identified, grouping 36 main topics (Table 2)

Table 2. Thematic clusters

Red Cluster	Green Cluster	Blue Cluster
Strategic development	Tourism and heritage conservation	Environmental sustainability of tourism
Crowding Destination management Ecotourism Social media Tourism development Tourism economics Tourism management Tourism market Tourism attraction Tourist behavior	Carrying capacity Cultural heritage Cultural tourism Heritage tourism Overcrowding World heritage	Climate change Environment Mass tourism Sustainability Sustainable development Sustainable tourism
Yellow Cluster	Violet Cluster	Light Blue Cluster
Urban transformation	Overtourism / social impact	Post-pandemic tourism
Airbnb Gentrification Housing market Stakeholders Touristification Urban tourism	Impact Overtourism Perception Quality of life Tourismphobia	COVID-19 Degrowth Undertourism

Not surprisingly, the central concept included is overtourism. Nevertheless, one of the clusters, the violet one, effectively encompasses this topic, along with a few other

concepts that illustrate the **social impact of overtourism**. The small number of keywords associated with this cluster suggests that the investigation into how overtourism affects host communities is not very diversified. This research gap might be considered in the future for interdisciplinary investigations of resident-tourist dynamics and the social sustainability of tourism. However, a more multi-dimension investigation might be welcomed. Additionally, we emphasize that the conflict between tourists and residents, which may lead to tourismphobia, is an important topic for academic investigation.

Tourismphobia emerges as a multifaceted response to the negative impacts of overtourism, often characterized by community resistance, socio-spatial tensions, and cultural or economic anxieties. Some studies emphasize how mega-events, such as the Olympics, provoke collective resistance framed by identity conflicts (Duignan, Everett, & McCabe, 2022), while other studies find this phenomenon to be context-specific (Vetitnev, Chigarev, & Afanasiev, 2021). Sociodemographic factors determine various levels of annoyance and spatially uneven impacts (Almeida-García et al., 2019). Several studies also document how the intensification of urban tourism, especially in historic and central districts, leads to population displacement and demands for more just tourism governance (De la Calle Vaquero et al., 2023; Hidalgo Giralt et al., 2023; Magalhães, 2022). Some research focused on how tourismphobia is not only lived locally but also shaped discursively through media, populist narratives, and socio-economic fears, reinforcing the need for nuanced policy responses and further research into sustainable tourism models (Screti, 2022; Velasco González & Carrillo Barroso, 2021). A literature review in the field revealed that tourism phobia is often linked to problematic destination development, the negative impact of tourism, and the need for better tourism regulation and policy (Veríssimo et al., 2020). The increased tourismphobia determined concerns for analyzing tourism-related conflicts.

The most significant cluster is the red one, dedicated to **the strategic management** of tourism. This suggests that the academic landscape identifies strategic management, with a strong emphasis on ecotourism as a means of achieving sustainable development. Three main lines of research discourse are associated with this cluster: sustainability, strategic development and planning, and digital and behavioral dimensions.

The green cluster is the second-largest in terms of the number of keywords it contains. It focuses on **cultural tourism** and its connection to overtourism. Heritage management and conservation are at the center of this research line. Special attention is given to the stain of tourism on UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The blue cluster is dedicated to the **environmental sustainability of tourism**. Previous literature reviews indicate that studies on overtourism tend to focus on socioeconomic factors rather than the negative ecological impact (Lochman & Vágner, 2021). This clustering suggests that environmental aspects are linked with a more systemic evaluation of overtourism and the means that should be taken for sustainable development.

The yellow cluster includes research on the **urban transformation** that overtourism imposes on cities and their historic centers. As confirmed by previous literature reviews, Airbnb is at the center of the overtourism debate, being part of the broader growth of urban tourism and driving unregulated accommodation and gentrification (Nilsson, 2020). The rapid expansion of Airbnb and similar short-term rental platforms has intensified touristification and gentrification processes in urban areas, reshaping local housing markets and displacing long-term residents. These dynamics have fueled growing conflicts among stakeholders as the interests of residents, tourists, policymakers, and tourism operators increasingly clash under the pressures of urban tourism and overtourism.

Padilla et al. (2019) developed an interesting research study pointing out both positive transformation and conflicts leading to social transformation in the context of overtourism. The study reveals that while overtourism exacerbates urban inequality, commodified housing, and the erosion of local identity, it has also catalyzed positive outcomes, including stronger local social movements, increased demands for environmental and spatial justice, and a shift toward more sustainable, community-centered tourism and governance models. Purwandani and Pakan (2022) consider a Japanese case study and highlight how potential conflicts arising from overtourism are mitigated through culturally rooted social capital and empathetic communication between locals involved and uninvolved in tourism, reflecting Javanese values of harmony and tolerance.

The smallest cluster, the Light blue one, concentrated on the evolution of tourism during the **COVID-19 pandemic** and afterward. It documents the degrowth registered at the time and the subsequent recovery.

Conclusions

Conflicts generated by overtourism are related not only to the environment but also to the relationship between tourists and host communities. The deep conflicts are triggered by overtourism, including urban inequality, the commodification of housing, and the erosion of public space and local identity, driven by profit-oriented, high-density tourism models. In response, these tensions have sparked grassroots movements advocating for stronger rights, direct democracy, and sustainable urban practices, pointing toward a resolution through community-led governance and a shift toward low-impact, locally rooted tourism.

Conflicts arising from overtourism are significant, impacting not only environmental conditions but also the dynamics between tourists and host communities. Overtourism leads to substantial and enduring conflicts characterized by urban inequality, the extensive commodification of housing, and the degradation of public spaces and local identities. These issues are intensified by profit-oriented, high-density tourism models that prioritize short-term economic benefits over community welfare and sustainability. These pressures result in resident displacement, gentrification, and a feeling of alienation in local communities, thereby significantly diminishing their quality of life.

Moreover, overtourism exacerbates socio-economic inequalities by favoring large corporations and external investors, while small, locally-owned businesses and marginalized communities frequently suffer the adverse effects. The resulting cultural erosion and loss of authenticity reduce the intrinsic value of destinations, compromising vital heritage sites and natural landscapes that are essential to community identity and tourist attraction. Moreover, these pressures result in significant resource strains, contributing to environmental pollution, heightened waste generation, and the degradation of fragile ecosystems.

Disruptions in daily life due to overtourism, including significant traffic congestion, increased noise levels, and overcrowded public spaces, exacerbate community frustrations, leading to heightened tensions and an increase in overt conflict. In response, grassroots movements have emerged, advocating for strong measures to protect local rights, enhance direct democratic engagement, and implement sustainable urban practices. The movements highlight the essential need for a shift towards governance structures and tourism models that are community-driven, prioritize low-impact practices, and are culturally sensitive and locally anchored.

Resolving these intricate conflicts necessitates robust regulatory frameworks for tourism infrastructure, proactive and sustainable visitor management strategies, and a focused prioritization of tourism quality over quantity. Policy interventions should be inclusive, engaging local communities in decision-making processes to guarantee

equitable distribution of tourism's economic benefits and to mitigate its negative impacts. Improving education and awareness regarding responsible tourism for both visitors and residents fosters a cohesive, resilient, and harmonious relationship between tourists and local communities.

Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations. The dependence on secondary data sources, including media articles and bibliometric analysis, restricts the depth of qualitative insights regarding local community perspectives. These methods offer extensive coverage; however, they may not capture the nuanced insights that direct interviews or case studies can provide. Secondly, the choice of sources and data primarily from mainstream media and academic platforms may lead to bias, as alternative or grassroots viewpoints might be inadequately represented. Linguistic constraints in media analysis, especially in countries such as Japan and China, restrict the comprehensiveness and comparability of findings across diverse cultural contexts. Finally, the evolving characteristics of overtourism, influenced by external factors such as global pandemics or economic crises, suggest that the findings discussed may change rapidly, necessitating ongoing updates and longitudinal analyses to maintain accuracy and relevance.

Considerations for further research

Future research should integrate a broader range of qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews, ethnographic studies, and community-based participatory research, to enhance understanding of local experiences and perspectives. Examining overtourism in lesser-known or emerging destinations may yield significant comparative insights and improve the comprehension of its effects across diverse socio-cultural contexts. Longitudinal studies can facilitate the monitoring of the changing dynamics of overtourism, particularly in terms of recovery and resilience following the pandemic. Further interdisciplinary research is necessary to integrate insights from sociology, urban planning, environmental studies, and economics, thereby developing comprehensive and practical solutions that address these complex issues. Investigating the effectiveness of various governance models and community engagement strategies would significantly enhance the development of sustainable tourism frameworks.

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