

# Tourism Overcrowding and Sustainable Tourism: A Review of Residents' Perceptions and Governance Approaches

**Dr.Suvarna Raagavendaran**, Assistant Professor & Head ic, Dept of Economics, VISTAS. E-Mail: [telu.sms@velsuniv.ac.in](mailto:telu.sms@velsuniv.ac.in)

**Dr.Md.Mokshud Ali**, Associate Professor, Dept of Business Administration, Bangladesh University. Mail: [md.mokshudali@gmail.com](mailto:md.mokshudali@gmail.com)

## Abstract

Tourism overcrowding has emerged as a significant challenge for global tourist destinations, leading to environmental degradation, cultural erosion, and growing dissatisfaction among local residents. This literature review examines the concept of tourism overcrowding in contrast to sustainable tourism, with a specific focus on how residents perceive the impacts of tourism on their communities. The study reviews existing academic literature on tourism overcrowding, sustainable tourism practices, and governance mechanisms aimed at mitigating negative consequences. Through an in-depth analysis of scholarly sources, the paper identifies recurring themes in resident perceptions, including economic benefits, infrastructural pressure, environmental concerns, and social disruption. In addition, the review highlights innovative strategies implemented worldwide to manage tourism sustainably, such as visitor capacity limits, community-led tourism governance, and the application of smart tourism technologies. The findings emphasize the importance of a collaborative approach involving policymakers, tourism businesses, and local communities to ensure long-term sustainability in tourism development.

**Keywords:** Tourism Overcrowding, Sustainable Tourism, Residents' Perception, Tourism Management, Community Well-being, Tourism Governance

## 1. Introduction

Tourism is a vital economic sector for many countries, contributing significantly to gross domestic product (GDP), employment generation, and cultural exchange (UNWTO, 2021). However, the rapid expansion of tourism in popular destinations has resulted in tourism overcrowding—a condition in which excessive visitor numbers place immense pressure on local infrastructure, natural resources, and host communities, thereby threatening sustainability (Goodwin, 2019). Cities such as Barcelona, Venice, and Amsterdam have experienced strong resistance from residents due to congestion, environmental deterioration, and the commercialization of local heritage (Seraphin et al., 2018).

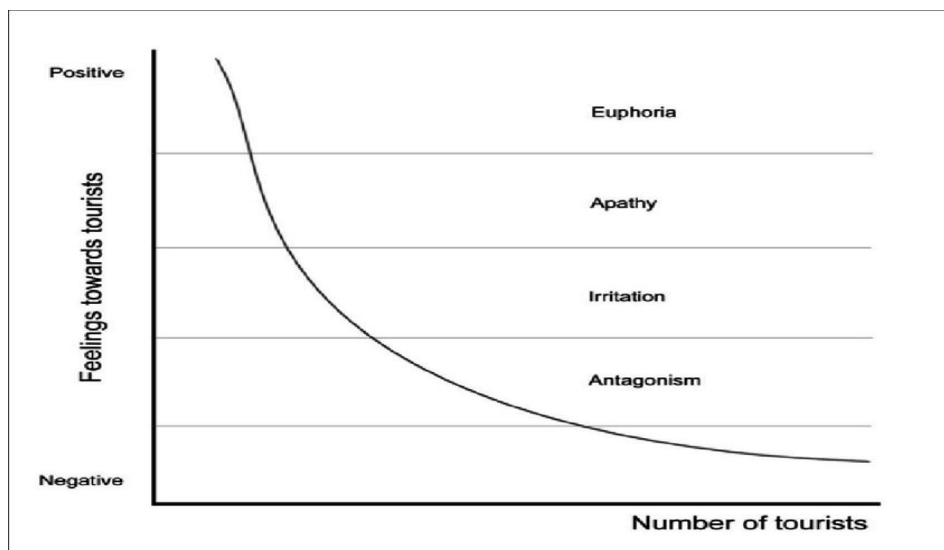
In contrast, sustainable tourism seeks to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social well-being (Butler, 1999; Saarinen, 2006). Understanding residents' perceptions of tourism overcrowding is crucial, as local acceptance plays a key role in determining the long-term success and sustainability of tourism destinations. Policymakers and tourism planners increasingly recognize that residents' attitudes significantly influence destination competitiveness and governance effectiveness (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012).

## 2. Literature Review

### Doxey's Irridex Model and Resident Attitudes Toward Tourism

Doxey's Irridex Model (1975) provides a foundational framework for understanding how residents' attitudes toward tourism evolve as visitor intensity increases. The model outlines four stages reflecting the progression of tourism development and resident response:

- i. **Euphoria:** In the early stages, residents welcome tourism and appreciate its economic benefits and employment opportunities (Nunkoo & Gursoy, 2012).
- ii. **Apathy:** As tourism becomes routine, residents become indifferent and interact with tourists mainly for economic reasons (Sharpley, 2014).
- iii. **Annoyance:** Increasing visitor numbers lead to congestion, environmental degradation, and cultural dilution, resulting in frustration among residents (Gössling & Hall, 2019).
- iv. **Antagonism:** At this stage, residents openly oppose tourism, perceiving it as exploitative, which may lead to conflicts between locals and visitors (Seraphin et al.,



Doxey's Irridex model Source: Adapted from Reisinger (2009:221)

Doxey's model remains highly relevant in the context of tourism overcrowding, as many global destinations have progressed toward the later stages, characterized by public protests and demands for stricter tourism regulations (Dodds & Butler, 2019). Understanding these stages is essential for designing policies that mitigate social conflict and promote sustainable tourism development.

### **Key Themes in Residents' Perceptions of Tourism Overcrowding**

Existing research highlights several recurring themes in how residents perceive tourism overcrowding and sustainable tourism:

- **Economic Impacts:** While tourism generates employment and income, residents frequently express concerns regarding rising living costs, housing shortages, and economic inequality (Smith & Hughes, 2020; Gursoy et al., 2010). Excessive dependence on tourism also increases vulnerability to external shocks such as pandemics and political instability (Hall, 2020; Prayag, 2020).
- **Environmental Concerns:** Tourism overcrowding contributes to pollution, ecosystem degradation, and resource depletion, leading to dissatisfaction among local communities (Jones et al., 2019; Dodds & Butler, 2019). Sustainable tourism approaches emphasize conservation, carbon footprint reduction, and responsible waste management (Buckley, 2012; Gössling & Hall, 2019; Mihalic, 2020).
- **Cultural Disruption:** Tourist behavior may conflict with local traditions and social norms, resulting in cultural tension and loss of authenticity (Fernandez & Lopez, 2021; Diedrich & García-Buades, 2009). The commodification of culture in heavily visited destinations has been widely documented (MacCannell, 1973; Cohen, 1988; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006).
- **Infrastructure Strain:** High tourist concentration places pressure on transportation systems, housing markets, and waste management infrastructure, negatively affecting residents' quality of life (Hall & Williams, 2018; Milano et al., 2019). Smart tourism technologies, including IoT-based crowd management and digital monitoring systems, have been proposed as potential solutions (Gretzel et al., 2015; Buhalis, 2020).

To address tourism overcrowding, strategies such as visitor caps, promotion of off-season tourism, and increased community participation in tourism governance have been recommended (Weeden, 2015; Peeters et al., 2018; Seraphin et al., 2020). However, the

literature indicates a need for more empirical research to assess the long-term effectiveness of these measures.

### **3. Methodology**

This study adopts a qualitative research design based on a systematic review of academic literature. Peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and international case studies related to tourism overcrowding and sustainable tourism were analyzed. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns in residents' perceptions and to evaluate governance mechanisms and sustainability strategies across destinations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data sources included Scopus-indexed journals, reports from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and documented case studies from tourism-intensive cities worldwide (Gössling et al., 2021). This study adopts a qualitative research design based on a systematic review of academic literature. Peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and international case studies related to tourism overcrowding and sustainable tourism were analyzed. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns in residents' perceptions and to evaluate governance mechanisms and sustainability strategies across destinations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data sources included Scopus-indexed journals, reports from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and documented case studies from tourism-intensive cities worldwide (Gössling et al., 2021). This study adopts a qualitative research design based on a systematic review of academic literature. Peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and international case studies related to tourism overcrowding and sustainable tourism were analyzed. Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring patterns in residents' perceptions and to evaluate governance mechanisms and sustainability strategies across destinations (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data sources included Scopus-indexed journals, reports from the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and documented case studies from tourism-intensive cities worldwide (Gössling et al., 2021).

### **4. Findings and Conclusion**

The literature review indicates that although tourism generates economic opportunities, the negative social and environmental impacts associated with tourism overcrowding often outweigh these benefits. Key findings include:

- **Economic Dependence and Social Disruption:** Tourism-driven development can lead to gentrification, displacement, and erosion of local identity despite increased income generation (Gursoy & Rutherford, 2004; Sharpley, 2020).
- **Environmental Degradation:** Unregulated tourism growth contributes to pollution, biodiversity loss, and ecological stress, prompting the adoption of sustainability initiatives such as carbon-neutral tourism and green certification programs (Gössling, 2002; Hall et al., 2021; UNEP, 2020; Mowforth & Munt, 2015).
- **Resident-Led Sustainable Tourism Governance:** Destinations that implement participatory, community-led tourism governance models report higher resident satisfaction and stronger social acceptance of tourism activities (Bramwell & Lane, 2011; Dodds & Butler, 2020). Empowering local communities in decision-making processes is increasingly recognized as essential for managing tourism overcrowding sustainably (Dredge, 2016; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2018).

To balance tourism growth with community well-being, destination managers must adopt integrated sustainability strategies, including controlled visitor flows, investment in green and smart infrastructure, and active involvement of local stakeholders in tourism planning and governance. Future research should focus on empirical case studies to evaluate best practices and develop evidence-based frameworks for managing tourism overcrowding in a sustainable manner.

## 5. Bibliography

- i. Bramwell, B., & Lane, B. (2011). Critical research on the governance of tourism and sustainability. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 19(4-5), 411-421.
- ii. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- iii. Buckley, R. (2012). Sustainable tourism: Research and reality. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 39(2), 528-546.
- iv. Buhalis, D. (2020). Technology in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 82, 102875.
- v. Butler, R. W. (1999). Sustainable tourism: A state-of-the-art review. *Tourism Geographies*, 1(1), 7-25.
- vi. Cohen, E. (1988). Authenticity and commoditization in tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 15(3), 371-386.

- vii. Diedrich, A., & García-Buades, E. (2009). Local perceptions of tourism as indicators of destination decline. *Tourism Management*, 30(4), 512-521.
- viii. Dodds, R., & Butler, R. (2019). Overtourism: Issues, realities and solutions. *De Gruyter Studies in Tourism*.
- ix. Gössling, S., & Hall, C. M. (2019). Sustainable tourism transformation. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 27(7), 1117-1133.
- x. Hall, C. M. (2020). Crisis and tourism. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 23(14), 1816-1831.
- xi. Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2018). Sustainable tourism: A transformative perspective. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 26(3), 425-443.
- xii. UNWTO (2021). Tourism and sustainable development. *United Nations World Tourism Organization Report*.
- xiii. Mowforth, M., & Munt, I. (2015). Tourism and sustainability: Development, globalization and new tourism in the third world. *Routledge*.