

The Influence of Overtourism on Decent Work of Employees in the Tourism Industry

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Abstract: This paper studies the relationship between overtourism and employment in the tourism industry. By proposing a conceptual model of the influence of overtourism on decent work, this study analyses the influence of overtourism on tourism employment. The result demonstrates that the enormous number of tourists increase the pressure of tourism work, rise more productivity for employees and worse the working conditions. Additionally, the wage level would not rise resulting from the profit-motive system of tourism business, low-skills work and hourglass economy in overtourism context. Meanwhile, the increase in living cost and more productivity because of the overtourism would reduce the actual spending power of employees. Overtourism exacerbates the working conditions of employment and affects further employers and tourists. This paper firstly explores the relationship between overtourism and employment, which will contribute to the policymakers to consider the sustainability of tourism.

Key words: overtourism; decent work; employment; employees; sustainability

JEL codes: Z390

1. Introduction

Overtourism tightly relates to the massive influx of tourist flow (Seraphin, Sheeran & Pilato, 2018; Jang & Park, 2020), which bring colossal tourism demand, increase living costs and residential rentals prices, and influence the quality of employment, positively or negatively (Koens, Postma & Papp, 2018; Koens, Melissen, Mayer & Aall, 2019; Walmsley, 2017). Meanwhile, the tourism sector employs a high number of women and employees with a low level of education, which is not known for providing optimal working conditions (Koens et al., 2019). Besides, decent work, as one of the critical sustainable development goals (UN, 2015), lacks notable progress in the tourism sector, manifesting extended working hours, limited social protection, gender discrimination and low wages (ILO, 2017), as well as low working conditions, and precarious work (Winchenbach, Hanna & Miller, 2019). In the context of overtourism, working conditions become worse (Koens et al., 2019; Walmsley, 2017). However, limited attention is paid for the impact of overtourism on decent work in the tourism industry. Development of tourism depends on the management approaches regarding the employees as one of the

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stakeholders. Therefore, examining the influence of overtourism on tourism employment becomes a vital topic in tourism management. This study aims to understand the impact of overtourism on decent work as a sustainable development agenda to achieve focusing on the wage level, productivity and living cost. This paper contributes to policymakers to consider the influence of overtourism on the labour market in the tourism industry.

This paper starts by referring to the literature review about the factors of overtourism, decent work and the influence of overtourism on employment, employees, employers and tourists in section 2 and 3. Section 4 clarifies the relationship between overtourism and employment and concludes this paper.

2. Conceptualization of Overtourism

Overtourism refers to the excessively negative impact of tourism on quality of life perceived by hosts or locals or tourists' perceived experience, suffering from the excessive influx of tourist flow in the destinations (The Responsible Tourism Partnership, 2017; UNWTO, 2018;), which happens when the visitor number excess the destination is carrying capacity (Seraphin et al., 2018). The enormous number of tourists associating with substantial and fortuitous demand for the destination is identified as a primary reason of overtourism (Seraphin et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2018; Leadbeater, 2017). Another root driving factor is related to the profit motive of the tourism business. Maximization of profits, or shareholder value, is not the only thing driving tourism businesses (Ateljevic & Doorne, 2000; Shaw & Williams, 2004), but drive rapid and excessive tourism development. Particularly the desire for short-term gains, and possibly the fear of losing out to competitors, results in expansion at any costs (Walmsley, 2017). The issue of Hardin's (1968) the tragedy of the commons remains. Moscardo (2008) states that tourism development history acts as the one where the local community or the destination as a resource to be exploited. Although sustainable tourism criticizes tourism as an economic activity (Jafari, 2001), tourism still operates within a profit-driven system (Britton, 1991). Winner-takes-all capitalism sees profit as the card that trumps all others, growth is not inclusive, and from a tourism perspective, destinations are simply a resource to be exploited (Walmsley, 2017). Bramwell (2006) revealed that in Malta the governments' intervention to growth limits are more affected by business consideration and technical rationality and are more directly influenced by a trade association who is influenced by concerns about profitability.

Additionally, the impacts of overtourism are associated with environmental degradation such as overcrowding, waste resource, noises and insecurity, and traffic jam, social impacts including alcohol and drug consumption and the problem of prostitution (Carcia et al., 2016; Lindberg & Johnson, 1997; Koens, Postma & Papp, 2018; Martin et al., 2018; Yagi & Pearce, 2007). Meanwhile, the economic impact mainly manifests living cost increase, tourism gentrification and touristification (Gravari-Barbas & Guinand, 2017; Koens et al., 2018). Martin et al. (2018) determined the increasing cost of living resulting from the increase in residential rentals prices and the tourist-oriented market with higher prices in destinations is an essential factor lie behind the residences' attitude of rejection towards tourism. Moreover, the online platforms of vacation rentals, such as Airbnb, directly stimulate the residential rentals price increase.

3. Decent Work in Tourism

Decent work refers to opportunities for everyone to get work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration. It is also vital that all women and men are given equal opportunities in the workplace (UN, 2017),

dividing into psychological, organizational and social dimensions (Di Fabio & Maree, 2016). Furthermore, decent work contains respect and self-respect, as well as safe, fair, productive and meaningful work in conditions of freedom (Baum, 2018). Additionally, decent work includes not only good work but also excellent work, which should pay a living wage (a wage that is high enough to maintain a usual standard of living, i.e. that covers necessary living costs at a minimum) (Taylor, 2017).

In the context of the tourism industry, decent work and socially responsible tourism emphasis on non-discriminatory working environments, fair wages and an excellent work-life balance, as well as worker involvement and social dialogue (ILO, 2017). Winchenbach et al. (2019) reveal the dignity-promoting and dignity-violating features of work from three spheres of the individual worker, organizational context and broader social-economic and policy context in tourism, in which physical and mental health, working conditions, remuneration, overwork and underpay are mentioned. However, tourism work has long been controversial. Baum (2007) noted the lack of any notable progress in human resource management in tourism, existing a discrepancy between the rhetoric around tourism employment and what is done on the ground, the reality, for workers (Riley et al., 2002; Wood, 1997). The same situation happens in many hotel chains (Font et al., 2012). ILO (2017) summaries the work deficits in the tourism sector, such as extended working hours, limited social protection, gender discrimination and low wages. Other aspects contain:

- Working conditions is another crucial component of decent work.
- Tourism not providing employees with formal training;
- Requiring excessive amounts of overtime (often not remunerated)
- Physically demanding;
- Often dangerous work;
- Providing short term, part-time contracts (precarious work).

4. Decent Work in the Context of Overtourism

Walmsley (2017) assumed that overtourism would exacerbate the tourism working conditions by analyzing the potential outcomes of the increase in tourists' number.

4.1 Tourism Wage Level

Tourism wage level might increase because of the absence of workers labours, which could lead to a series of reflection and result in increasing of wages in tourism and non-tourism sectors. However, Walmsley (2017) considers it is an unlikely scenario. One reason is that nominal wages are sticky according to Keynesian theory and do not change in proportion to shifts in demand for labour or profit levels (Fan, 2007). Tourism employers see disbursement to employees as a cost to minimize it and exploit the workers in order to seek for maximizing profits. Even though the demand for labour increases, tourism wage level will not rise.

Another reason would be the low-skilled work in the tourism industry. Bell's (1973) indicator of white-collared knowledge workers in post-industry society has not materialized. Frenkel et al. (1999) mentioned that there was to be an increasing demand for knowledge workers, particularly in the service sector where complexity and a lack of standardization would lead to reduced demand for lower-skilled work and an increase in demand for higher-level competencies. However, much tourism employment undoubtedly falls within low-skilled employment (Baum, 2006; Riley et al., 2002). This character may result from the narrow definition of skills, which emphasizes on cognitive rather than social skills (Burns, 1997; Walmsley, 2015). However, it is not these

latter skills that are generally referred to in the context of the knowledge economy (Thompson et al., 2001). Depending on the type of jobs being replaced, tourism growth may result in a move away from the traditional notion of the knowledge economy, and simultaneously offer a shift towards the hourglass economy (Walmsley, 2017). Employers often hire more short-term and temporary workers to meet the demand of labours as Clegg (2017) mentions that one in five of workers on zero-hours contracts was employed in the tourism industry in 2017 in the UK. For reasons given above, the wage level cannot increase in the overtourism context.

4.2 Productivity of Tourism Work

Theoretically, the more productivity an employee, the higher their wages should be (Walmsley, 2017). However, the assumption associates two problems. One is that not every employer pays for the additional work. The second is that even the additional work is paid, the employees will lose their leisure time, which leads to other problems, for instance, families. Walmsley (2017) reveals that employees have to under additional works facing the employers' pressure even if they would rather not most by getting more done in a given period, which leads to some real downside of overtourism on employment and worse the working conditions:

- The demand for labours does not rise in proportion to the increase in tourist;
- Longer hours;
- More physically, emotionally and mentally demanding work;
- Lower real per hour wages are given non-payment of overtime

In short, overtourism forces workers to take on more work and exacerbate tourism working conditions.

4.3 The Living Cost of Employees

Tourism gentrification and touristification-determined the increasing cost of living resulting from the increase in residential rentals prices and the tourist-oriented market with higher prices in destinations, which force the residents moving out of the city centre, especially the tenants of apartments in city centres and the citizens with a low or medium-income (Gravari-Barbas & Guinand, 2017; Koens et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2018). Overtourism would raise employees' living cost to reduce the real purchasing power. Therefore, based on the preceding explanation, the framework (Figure 1) is designed to analyze the relationship between overtourism and tourism employees.

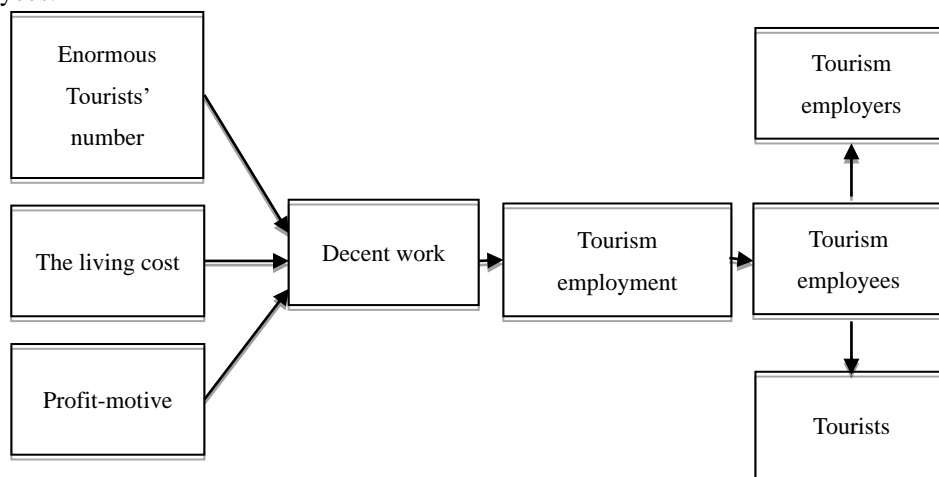


Figure 1 A Theoretical Model

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