Post-Pandemic Re-Positioning in a Cultural Tourism City: From Overtourism to E-Tourism ⊗

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Abstract

The aim of the chapter is to provide recommendations for cities that are aiming to reposition themselves in the post-pandemic period in terms of image, product development, and the attraction of different segments of visitors. It is aimed at those readers who seek to understand the role that digital tools can play in the information provision and promotion of cities, especially for younger tourists who may have been more attracted by night-time activities in the pre-COVID period and who could be redirected to other activities or areas in future strategies. A case study of Budapest is presented that is typical of a European cultural tourism destination that has also suffered from overtourism in recent years. Primary data is used to identify tourists' preferred activities in the destination as well as their choice of digital tools for finding information and optimizing experiences. Both theory and primary data are used to make recommendations for repositioning cultural cities post pandemic with the assistance of appropriate digital tools.

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Introduction

Cultural cities that were suffering from overtourism before COVID-19 may be exploring ways to re-position themselves in the post-pandemic period. Overtourism can be defined as "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors' experiences in a negative way" (UNWTO, 2018, p.4). This deterioration had been experienced in numerous cities and various solutions were being sought to address issues and problems ranging from overcrowding, price increases and resident discontent to visitor behaviour, flow management and decreasing satisfaction. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic abruptly ended concerns about overtourism in terms of visitation, but it also afforded an opportunity to re-think future tourism strategies.

One element of future strategies could be the re-positioning of destinations to create a different image or to attract alternative segments of visitors. This can include *real repositioning* with changes to services offered as well as *psychological repositioning* to change tourists' perceptions of the destination (Crompton, 2009). The aim might be to attract segments for whom culture and heritage are primary or core motivations or tourists who are interested in off-the-beaten-track activities outside crowded city centers. The use of new technology can be central to this process, as it encourages independent exploration and can help to manage visitor experiences and flows.

The following sections provide an overview of the overtourism phenomenon in cultural tourism cities including its causes and consequences. A case study of Budapest is presented which is typical of a European cultural tourism destination that has also suffered from overtourism in recent years. Primary data is used to identify tourists' preferred activities in the destination as well as their choice of digital tools for finding information and optimizing experiences. One of the proposed solutions to overtourism is the diversification of the product into activities that attract smaller numbers of more educated tourists (e.g. cultural, creative or off-the-beaten-track experiences). Both theory and primary data are used to make recommendations for re-positioning cultural cities post-pandemic with the assistance of appropriate digital tools.

Overall, the main aim of the chapter is to provide recommendations for cities that are aiming to re-position themselves in the post-pandemic period in terms of image, product development and the attraction of different segments of visitor. It is aimed at those readers who seek to understand the role that digital tools can play in the information provision and promotion of cities, especially for younger tourists who may have been more attracted by night-time activities in the pre-COVID period and who could be re-directed to other activities or areas in future strategies.

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