

European historic cities and overtourism – conflicts and development paths in the light of systematic literature review

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Abstract

Purpose – *This paper aims to check if destinations with powerful similarities also show similar tourism/overtourism effects that differentiate them from other destinations. This paper gathers and compares data on overtourism in European historic cities already presented in the existing literature and points out features and problems typical for these destinations.*

Design/methodology/approach – *This paper was based on the systematic literature review method, which allowed the author to indicate the most commonly studied European historic cities and the characteristics of overtourism problems.*

Findings – *The results of this study reveal that several European historic cities share similar tourism development patterns and the overtourism problems manifest numerous similarities. Significantly, these problems are characteristic of historic cities only and partially different from those observed in European urban destinations such as metropolises.*

Research limitations/implications – *This study enhances a proper understanding of overtourism and the contradictory results published in the existing literature. This study is the first step in building a more situational approach to overtourism and adjusting the theory to particular destinations' features.*

Practical implications – *The outcome of this study offers local policymakers several hints regarding effectively facing the overtourism problems. Historic cities require special attention when actions toward lowering extreme tourism pressure in monumental zones are implemented and residents' concerns about the spread of tourism, including short-term listings, to residential quarters need to be addressed.*

Originality/value – *To the best of the author's knowledge, this is the first study based on a comparison of similar destinations aimed to develop theory and practical implications devoted purely to a limited number of destinations sharing numerous similarities. The set of coherent theoretical and practical implications designed for a narrow group of cities is to be an essential contribution to the development of research and practice in urban tourism.*

Keywords Overtourism, European historic cities, Historic zones, Systematic literature review, Tourism impact, Monumental zones

Paper type Research paper

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1. Introduction

Overtourism has been one of the most popular topics and key terms in tourism research for the past few years (Carvalho et al., 2020; Żemła & Szromek, 2023). However, the growing body of literature and numerous research have not yet enhanced the establishment of a coherent theory (Capocchi et al., 2019; Pasquinelli et al., 2021; Seraphin & Chaney, 2023). Those studies, often single case studies, offer diverse conclusions reached in different destinations, for example, located on different continents different climatic zones, offering various tourist activities (Barač Miftarević, 2023; Carvalho et al., 2020). Numerous negative impacts with different origins were identified (Namberger et al., 2019; Żemła, 2020). However, it is hardly possible to point to a single destination where all of them can be observed. The

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local conditions of particular examples make the results in different studies divergent and not often coherent. The need to encapsulate knowledge is evident in such a situation where numerous studies focus on specific examples. Several literature reviews are attempting to fill this gap ([Agyeiwaah, 2019](#); [Barač Miftarević, 2023](#); [Capocchi et al., 2019](#); [Carvalho et al., 2020](#); [Høegh-Guldberg et al., 2021](#); [Seraphin & Chaney, 2023](#); [Verissimo et al., 2020](#); [Zmyślony et al., 2020](#)), but summarizing results that are sometimes contradictory might not give satisfactory and precise conclusions. It might be expected that achieving more coherent results requires a more limited scope of analysis and focus on selected issues.

To deal with the presented shortcomings of contemporary scientific knowledge and previous literature reviews on overtourism, this paper offers a different perspective. This article aims to check if destinations with strong similarities also show similar tourism/overtourism effects. It is postulated that creating a coherent theory of overtourism impacts requires studying destinations of different kinds separately, and the most convergent results are reached when summarizing data collected for destinations showing solid similarities. To achieve this aim, it was necessary to compare numerous destinations located on the same continent, having similar morphology, tourism products and patterns of tourism flows. As European cities are among the most commonly researched tourism destinations in the context of overtourism, it was decided to follow this direction. Still, this group is composed of destinations having very different characteristics. To narrow the group, it was decided to focus only on historic cities with well-singled-out historical parts, which stand for the city's major or even the only attractions. The apparent consequence of this assumption is also a massive concentration of tourism traffic and the relatively small size of the tourist penetration zones ([Amore et al., 2020](#)).

The paper attempts to benefit the vast body of research focused on particular destinations and takes the systematic literature review (SLR) method as a base. However, this method was adjusted to fit the aim of the study better. The research questions that the analysis was expected to answer were twofold. The first question was focused on the methodological outcome of the study. It was connected with the coherence of the literature review results devoted to a small number of destinations having solid similarities. The second research question was what the specific features of overtourism are, what its impact is and what measures to deal with in historic cities and how they differ from what is found in other urban destinations. This approach clearly acknowledges numerous and apparent similarities in the origin of the phenomenon in all cities, but the differences mirroring local conditions in tourism products offered locally, history, contemporary politics, economic and social situation are expected to be found in the tourism impacts and measures taken in particular destinations.

The first step allowed us to identify over 800 papers on overtourism included in the Scopus database. The next step was identifying 56 papers presenting empirical research conducted in one or more cities fulfilling the set criteria. Altogether, 11 cities were studied in the selected papers. The final step included the in-depth analysis of selected papers in search of the problems typical for 11 evidenced destinations, including their origins and consequences. This allowed us to indicate topics researched in analyzed publications, which were then limited to two main broad issues to which most studies were related. The first issue concerns city residents' attitudes toward tourism and its development. The second issue is the gentrification processes visible in central parts of the cities.

This study contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, regarding the numerous contradictions in how overtourism appears in different destinations and its consequences, the presentation of the coherent pack of implications for the narrow group of important European urban destinations significantly contributes to our contemporary knowledge about urban tourism. Second, the indication of typical problems with overtourism in historic cities with well-singled-out old cities gives researchers and scientists a benchmark that can be used in the context of other similar locations that have not been studied yet. It was found that overtourism in these cities resulted from different processes

and development paths compared with other cities, such as big metropolises. Externalities of tourism development in studied historical cities are similar between particular cities and different than in other cities. This suggests that historic cities require tailor-made measures that must not be copied from the experiences of other destinations. The main reason for these dissimilarities between historic cities with well-singled-out old cities and metropolises is the spatial spread of tourism flows, which are intensely concentrated in studied cities, and the difference in tourism pressures experienced in different districts (central and the rest of the city) are extreme. Finally, practical implications for tourism management in studied cities are presented.

2. Conceptual background and the research gap

Cities have become increasingly popular tourist destinations lately (Namberger et al., 2019; Żemła, 2020). Amore et al. (2020) present data confirming the growing significance of urban tourism, which nowadays can be perceived as generating even more visits and more income than coastal tourism. Cities differ significantly from other destinations (Colomb & Novy, 2016). They provide visitors with various multifunctional, complex and multiuser environments (Koens et al., 2018). For many years, tourism was seen as one of cities' most sustainable economic growth strategies (Namberger et al., 2019). Especially after the last global financial crisis, it was perceived as a significant driver for economic recovery or growth (Goodwin, 2017; Koens et al., 2018; Żemła, 2020).

The perception of urban tourism has evolved significantly lately. Public transportation, infrastructure, roads, museums, attractions and other services primarily created for local use suffer from increasing tourist flows (Koens et al., 2018; Żemła & Szromek, 2021). This resulted in recent community unrest concerning tourism (Amore et al., 2020). It became apparent that city tourism generates more conflicts with local societies, which are diverse and often typical purely for cities (Colomb & Novy, 2016). The increasing number of visitor nights, expenditures and related investments toward urban tourism have created tension between tourists and residents (Amore et al., 2020). Urban destinations, in Europe in particular, have fallen short in redistributing services and facilities between residents and tourists (Amore et al., 2020; Colomb & Novy, 2016). What is more, the rising popularity of online accommodation services such as Airbnb and a desire to see "real" and "authentic" everyday city life has meant that tourism activities become further intertwined with local life, also outside of the main tourist areas in cities (Koens et al., 2018). Numerous authors agree that overtourism is most typically observed in cities (Goodwin, 2017; Namberger et al., 2019).

Previous research found that overtourism in cities may lead to numerous negative effects of a highly diverse nature. It is essential to notice that most of the typical negative effects brought by overtourism were identified many years ago by scholars studying tourism impacts (Hall & Lew, 2009; Johnson & Moore, 1993; Mason, 2020). However, they have evolved lately regarding their intensity and nature, enhancing new situations labeled as overtourism. Among identified negative impacts, it is necessary to point to diverse environmental impacts (Azzahra & Nugrahani, 2022; Cecchi, 2021); economic ones – especially those connected with malfunctions of the real estate market (Goodwin, 2017; Mendes, 2021) and inflation and high prices of everyday goods (Capocchi et al., 2019; Żemła & Szromek, 2021); influence on residents' quality of life – crime and the low level of sense of security (Namberger et al., 2019; Seraphin, 2020), congestion and traffic jams (Capocchi et al., 2019; Namberger et al., 2019), noise (Pinke-Sziva et al., 2019), misbehavior of visitors (Namberger et al., 2019) and loss of sense of belonging of residents with the place (Capocchi et al., 2019). To end this list, it is necessary to point out at least two more general issues: gentrification and touristification of whole quarters (Diaz-Parra & Jover, 2021; Kruczek & Szromek, 2020) and conflicts around the issue of access to public space which maintenance is financed from local taxes (Goodwin, 2017). Additionally, the reasons for those impacts are well-diverse in particular destinations, and the solutions offered and

implemented in specific places are different ([Żemła, 2020](#)). All those facts make the term overtourism difficult to define unequivocal ([Pasquinelli et al., 2021](#)). The conclusions delivered by particular scholars are mainly based on data gathered in a single destination ([Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019](#); [2019](#); [Montanari, 2020](#); [Namberger et al., 2019](#); [Pinke-Sziva et al., 2019](#)) often one of the European cities, and broader comparisons are highly demanded. Currently, the universal measure to indicate if overtourism is present in a destination does not exist.

As the realization of the paper's aims requires catching typical overtourism conflicts and dilemmas observed in urban destinations presenting very strong similarities, it was decided to focus on European historic cities which form a relatively coherent and homogenous group when considering tourism development and impacts. Cities with a large number of monuments and historical buildings, often castles, chateaux and churches dating several hundreds of years ago, usually included in widely detached monumental zones, are labeled in the literature with different terms: historic cities ([Gómez, 2020](#); [Wilkins & Honey, 2019](#)), heritage cities ([Kowalczyk-Anioł et al., 2021](#); [Rosin & Gombault, 2021](#)), monumental cities ([Shoval, 2018](#); [Smith, 2007](#)) and art cities ([Liberatore et al., 2022](#)). The term historic city is often used in the literature without an exact definition ([Hidalgo-Giralt et al., 2021](#); [Wilkins & Honey, 2019](#)), sometimes with different meanings. Usually, the term stands for a whole city containing numerous and valuable monuments ([Gomez, 2020](#); [Hidalgo-Giralt et al., 2021](#)). However, it is sometimes used to describe a historical part of a city ([Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2000](#)). In this paper, the first meaning is used.

Historic districts are certain historical and cultural heritage areas featuring distinctive social and economic traits, lifestyles and local elements of historical origination ([Lu et al., 2015](#)). European historic city centers have been identified as one of the core parts of European cultural heritage ([Skotis & Livas, 2022](#)).

To ensure even greater homogeneity of the research group, it was decided to focus on just one very narrow and specific group of historic cities. These are cities with vast concentrations of tourism traffic and tourism hotspots on a relatively small surface of central, historic quarters ([Amore et al., 2020](#)). The old cities are usually well-preserved districts giving visitors not only the possibility to see monumental, often medieval, buildings but also the experience of immersion in a historic ambiance ([Skotis & Livas, 2022](#)). The old cities are also usually inscribed in the UNESCO List of World Heritage, which underlines their historical value. However, the most characteristic feature of the cities under research is that almost all tourist attractions in the cities are solely located in the old cities, or the importance of attractions located outside is incomparably lower.

A group of cities limited by such criteria has not been studied so far; however, the comparison of the 15 most overtouristified cities in Europe by [Amore et al. \(2020\)](#) gives an interesting insight. Apart from metropolises such as London, Paris or Lisbon, this study also included Venice, Seville, Florence and Prague, which are typical for the cities analyzed here. [Amore et al. \(2020\)](#) calculated the area of tourist penetration in 15 European cities using the locations of the ten most popular city attractions listed on TripAdvisor. Their research underlined the extreme situation in Florence. The ratio of total overnight stays per square kilometer of the area of tourist penetration in this city accounted for 11.2, a value that is in sharp contrast with other key European cities such as Berlin (2.9), Madrid (3.8) or Paris (5.5). This is mainly because of the relatively small size of the historic city center of Florence and the proximity of all ten main cultural attractions listed on TripAdvisor ([Amore et al., 2020](#)). Still, it is worth mentioning that other historic cities included in [Amore et al. \(2020\)](#) study also achieved much lower indices than Florence: Seville (5.4), Prague (2.6) and Venice (1.9) being overtaken by London (9.4) and Paris (5.5), but still have much higher results than Copenhagen (0.7), Lisbon (0.3) or Barcelona (1.9). One more interesting conclusion can be derived from the presented study. All historic cities had a minimal size of the area of tourism penetration, ranging from 0.86 km² in Florence to 1.9 km² in Seville,

while in the case of other cities, this value ranged from 5.5 km² in Rome to even 42.5 km² in Lisbon. The only exception here is Venice, with the area of tourist penetration calculated as 6.3 km². But this city, located on several islands, is difficult to compare with other urban destinations regarding its spatial features. The total overnight stays per surface indicator was one of four indicators [Amore et al. \(2020\)](#) used to calculate the overtourism level in particular urban destinations in Europe. It is characteristic that Florence, Venice and Seville appeared to be the most overtouristified cities, and Prague ranked 6th among 15 researched destinations.

3. Study methods

The SLR method was the base for the research. A systematic review is a specific method that locates existing studies, selects and evaluates contributions, analyzes and synthesizes data and reports the evidence in such a way that it allows one to reach reasonably clear conclusions about what is known and what is not ([Buchanan & Brymann, 2009](#)). There are several approaches to the SLR method underlying the importance of different aspects of the procedure and dividing it into different numbers of steps, but the outline remains the same. For example, [Xiao & Watson \(2019\)](#) proposed three steps of SLR: planning, conducting and reporting the review; Snyder (2019) proposed a process comprising four steps: design, conduct, analysis and structuring and writing the review, while [Durach et al. \(2017\)](#) synthesized six common SLR steps:

1. defining the research question;
2. determining the required characteristics of primary studies;
3. retrieving a sample of potentially relevant literature;
4. selecting the pertinent literature;
5. synthesizing the literature; and
6. reporting the results.

The in-depth review of available approaches to SLR was made by [Sauer & Seuring \(2023\)](#). The SLR method was widely used in tourism research, and different approaches were implemented. For example, the PRISMA protocol was used by [Fotova Čiković et al. \(2022\)](#) and by [Takata & Hallmann \(2021\)](#), while the SALSA method by [Jaremen et al. \(2020\)](#).

The method is growing in popularity, especially when dealing with a topic characterized by the fast-growing body of literature, as the SLR method enhances a combination of scattered pieces of knowledge presented in published papers and books so far. The topic of overtourism fulfils this characteristic. This is confirmed by a few SLR studies on overtourism already published. Some of them ([Carvalho et al., 2020](#); [Verissimo et al., 2020](#)) were devoted to the general interpretation of the phenomenon, while the others searched for its relations with other issues like social conflicts ([Zmyślony et al., 2020](#)), sustainable visitor management ([Høegh-Guldberg et al., 2021](#)) or sustainable consumption of resources ([Agyeiwaah, 2019](#)); however, none of them was focused on specific type of destinations.

The search procedure is schematically presented in [Table 1](#). It was adapted from 14 decisions procedure offered by [Sauer & Seuring \(2023\)](#) based on [Durach et al. \(2017\)](#) six-step scheme. The Scopus scientific database was searched for publications having the words “overtourism” or “over-tourism” or “over-visitation” in the title, abstract or keywords. The set of 824 items published till the end of June of 2023 was developed. Within this set, abstracts of all items were scanned manually in search of empirical research conducted in one or several European historic cities. There was no a priori list of European cities that were looked for in the studied papers. Instead, every European city found in the publication set was analyzed regarding the criteria set in the research. The initial list of cities found in the

Table 1 The research methodology

Steps	Decisions to be made	Decisions made
Step 1: Defining the research question	(1) Specifying the research gap and related research question(s) (2) Opting for a theoretical approach (3) Defining the core theoretical framework and constructs	(1) Too diverse conclusions reached in numerous destinations claimed to be overtouristed. What are the specific features of overtourism and its impact in historic cities and how are they different from what is found in other urban destinations (2) Inductive approach: conclusions are built on the synthesis of observations made in numerous destinations (3) Tourism impact theory
Step 2: Determining the required characteristics of primary studies	(4) Specifying inclusion and exclusion criteria	(4) Search for publications presenting reasons, results, and proposed/implemented solutions against overtourism in European historic cities with a high level of concentration of tourism flows, attractions and infrastructure in the historical city center
Step 3: Retrieving a sample of potentially relevant literature	(5) Defining sources and databases (6) Defining search terms and crafting a search string	(5) Scopus scientific database (6) "Overtourism" OR "over-tourism" OR "over-visitation" in abstract, title or keywords
Step 4: Selecting the pertinent literature	(7) Including and excluding literature for detailed analysis and synthesis	(7) Abstract scanning of over 800 papers returned from Scopus in search for empirical research conducted in one or several cities fulfilling set criteria; 57 papers presenting data on altogether 11 European cultural cities accepted for future reading
Step 5: Synthesizing the literature	(8) Selecting data extraction tool(s) (9) Coding against (pre-defined) constructs (10) Conducting a subsequent (statistical) analysis (11) Ensuring validity and reliability	(8) Detailed reading of 57 papers (9) Indication of particular topics under search in particular research (10) Establishment of quantitative data: calculating the frequency of research on particular cities and on particular topics; in-depth analysis of context and conclusions connected with the most commonly researched topics; research measures typical for historic cities. (11) Research limitations analysis
Step 6: Reporting the results	(12) Deciding on the structure of the paper (13) Presenting a refined theoretical framework and discussing its contributions (14) Deriving an appropriate journal from the analyzed papers and explicating theoretical links to it	(12) Classic structure (13) Paper writing (14) <i>Journal of Tourism Cities</i>

Source: Own elaboration based on [Durach et al. \(2017\)](#) and [Sauer & Seuring \(2023\)](#)

previous step was shortened by eliminating cities studied only in big comparative studies, for example, presenting more than five cities, as the depth of information in such cases was not satisfactory for the presented research. Because of this limitation, several cities were rejected from further analysis, such as Braga, Cáceres, Druskininkai, Dun Laoghaire, Genoa and Rovaniemi (Szromek et al., 2022), Regensburg (Bouchon & Rauscher, 2019), Bruges (Amore et al., 2020) or Cordoba and Salamanca (Perles-Ribes et al., 2021). The detailed procedure is presented in Appendix. This three-step procedure allowed us to indicate 11 European cities out of 41 detected in the previous step using the existence of a singled-out old city, close location of the leading tourism attractions and the presence of forms of tourism other than typical for historic cities, for example, pilgrimage tourism or seaside tourism, with additional use of criterium of the old city being inscribed to the UNESCO list of material cultural heritage.

Many European, mainly large, cities do not have singled-out old cities. This is the case in Barcelona, Berlin or London, among others. In other cities, the tourism flows are more spread as numerous and/or significant tourism hot spots are located far from the old city. This is the case of Nymphenburg Chateau in Munich, the monumental Széchenyi Thermal Baths in Budapest or San Paolo Cathedral in Rome. Finally, in some places, typical urban tourism coexists with other forms of tourism, such as religious tourism or sea and sand tourism, which usually not only direct tourism traffic to places located outside old cities but also attract tourists with different behaviors and motivations. This was the case of Santiago de Compostela and Malaga, for instance.

The results are presented in Table 2. The list might raise some inevitable controversies as all criteria useful in detecting cities of the desired type are not totally sharp. In the cases that might be disputable, the inscription to the UNESCO list was used as an additional factor. Additional controversy regarding the list presented in Table 1 might derive from the fact that numerous cities that apparently fulfill the criteria that were set in the research, such as Pisa in Italy, Carcassonne in France, Segovia in Spain, Coimbra in Portugal, Eger in Hungary or

Table 2 European historic cities studied most often

City	No. of studies conducted in the city	Publications
Venice	23	Amore et al. (2020), Azzahra & Nugrahani (2022), Bertocchi et al. (2020), Bertocchi & Camatti (2022), Bertocchi & Visentin (2019), Bonato et al. (2022), Borelli (2021), Cecchi (2021), Celata & Romano (2020), Cooke et al. (2022), Ganzaroli et al. (2021), Goodwin (2021), Ignaccolo et al. (2023), Jurgens (2022), Pasquinelli et al. (2021), Rosin & Gombault (2021), Ruiz (2021), Russo & Salerno (2023), Salerno (2022), Salerno & Russo (2022), Seraphin et al. (2018), Szromek et al. (2022) and Wilkins & Honey (2019)
Krakow	13	Kowalczyk-Anioł et al. (2021), Kruczek (2019), Kruczek et al. (2022), Kruczek & Szromek (2020), Murzyn-Kupisz & Holuj (2020), Plichta (2019), Szromek et al. (2020, 2021, 2022), Żemła & Szromek (2021), Żemła & Szromek (2023), Zmysłony et al. (2020) and Zmysłony & Kowalczyk-Anioł (2019)
Florence	9	Alberti (2022), Amore et al. (2020), Celata & Romano (2020), Cooke et al. (2022), De Luca et al. (2020), Liberatore et al. (2022), Loda et al. (2020), Nevola et al. (2022) and Pasquinelli et al. (2021)
Seville	5	Amore et al. (2020), Diaz-Parra & Jover (2021), Hernandez-Maskivker et al. (2021), Jover & Diaz-Parra (2022) and Parra & Sequera (2020)
Dubrovnik	5	Abbasian et al. (2020), Camatti et al. (2020), Horvat & Ribeiro (2019), Panayiotopoulos & Pisano (2019) and Szromek et al. (2022)
Prague	3	Amore et al. (2020), Kacprzak (2021) and Lochman (2023)
Salzburg	3	Hof & Smigiel (2020), Kautzschmann & Hof (2021) and Koens et al. (2018)
Naples	2	Celata & Romano (2020) and Cerreta et al. (2020)
Tallin	2	Talk et al. (2023) and Koens et al. (2018)
Granada	1	Navarro-Valverde et al. (2023)
Toledo	1	Gómez (2020)
Source: Own evaluation		

Torun in Poland were not included in the initial list of 41 European cities, as no papers studying these place in the context of overtourism were found in Scopus.

It is apparent that among numerous European historic cities, only three – Venice, Krakow and Florence are frequently studied in the context of overtourism. Three other cities – Dubrovnik, Seville and Prague – also attracted a few studies, while the rest are represented only by one or two papers.

The further procedure included the detailed reading of all publications with empirical research conducted in selected European historic cities. The reading allowed us to indicate topics that were the subjects of interest in analyzed publications (Table 3). Research in most of the papers took either the perspective of the impacts of overtourism on the city or of solutions that might be implemented. However, the second group is much smaller. By far, the most often researched topic is how residents perceive this impact. Clustering particular topics in more broad headings makes it possible to indicate two issues that most studies were related to. The first issue concerns city residents' attitudes toward tourism and its development. The second issue underlines one of the most critical consequences of a massive concentration of tourism, which is the gentrification processes visible in central parts of the cities.

4. Results

Data from Table 3 suggests that the interest of researchers investigating overtourism in historic cities is very broad, and most of the topics appeared in a minimal number of

Table 3 Topics studied in the analyzed literature

<i>Studied topics</i>	<i>No. of studies</i>
Residents' perception of tourism impacts	29
Spatial planning	14
Gentrification and touristification	9
Residents' quality of life	7
The economic impact of tourism	7
Other stakeholders' perceptions of tourism impacts	6
Impact on the real estate market	6
The role of Airbnb and other sharing economy models	6
Competition for access to public space	5
Post covid reality	5
Tourists' misbehavior	5
Traffic and congestion	5
Environmental impact	5
Social conflicts (between different stakeholders)	5
Noise	4
Impact on monuments and museums	4
Impact on gastronomic and food market	4
Impact of low-cost airlines development	4
Management models, including the role of DMO and cooperation between stakeholders	3
Tourists' penetration zones	3
Need for more effective management solutions and strategies	3
Resident groups, segmentation	3
Implementation of solutions and fees on tourism traffic	3
Effectiveness of decongestion strategies	4
New technologies (including AR and VR) softening the overtourism impacts	2
Differences between different destinations	2
Impact of sea ports and airports management	2
Overall overtourism index	1
Destination branding as a tool for dealing with overtourism effects	1
Calculation of carrying capacity indices	1
Impact of EU policy	1
Impact of short visits market	1

Source: Own elaboration

studies. Most studies focused on understating the effects of overtourism and, eventually, its reasons. There are also a few publications researching some suggestions regarding tools that might be useful when dealing with overtourism in historic cities.

4.1 Residents' attitudes toward tourism

Residents' perception of tourism impact and analysis of their attitude toward tourism development is by far the most commonly undertaken approach to the analysis of overtourism in analyzed historic cities (Table 3). Moreover, almost all works presenting the analysis of particular impacts (economic impacts, noise, traffic, tourists' misbehavior, etc.), as presented in Table 3, also do this by asking residents for their opinions. Additionally, the issue of residents' quality of life is closely associated with this topic.

According to the results shown in publications presented in Table 3, the attitudes of residents of analyzed cities are diverse. A somewhat positive attitude was found in Salzburg (Kautzschmann & Hof, 2021) and Toledo (Gómez, 2020), while several conflicts between residents and tourism were noticed in Florence (Celata & Romano, 2020), Venice (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019; Borelli, 2021), Seville (Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2022), Prague (Kacprzak, 2021) and Krakow (Kruczek, 2019; Żemła & Szromek, 2021).

Studies in particular cities are difficult to compare as different aspects were analyzed. Papers presenting Seville (Díaz-Parra & Jover, 2021; Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2022) often focused on the social consequences of the Old City gentrification and the residents' alienation. Perception of a much more comprehensive list of numerous tourism impacts was analyzed in a more general way in the case of Kraków (Szromek et al., 2020; Żemła & Szromek, 2021; Zmysłony & Kowalczyk-Anioł, 2019). Interpreting residents' attitudes toward tourism in Italian cities is more challenging as most of the studies on these cities were comparisons of Florence with other Italian cities, and conclusions are focused rather on similarities and differences between these cities than on Florence itself.

Venice residents' attitude toward tourism development and its evolution is documented most convincingly. Venice seems to be a very specific historic city. Being among the top urban destinations for many years, its economy became a tourism monoculture (Salerno, 2022). Many city residents earned and still earn their incomes from services and goods sold to tourists (Jurgens, 2022). Despite this, the level of tourism pressure before the pandemic was so high that the city observed violent anti-tourism protests (Borelli, 2021; Goodwin, 2017). The number of people visiting Venice annually compared with the needs of the city as a whole became a problem so worrying that it required the development of even drastic solutions (Bertocchi & Camatti, 2022). However, Jurgens (2022) and Rosin & Gombault (2021) claim that the pandemic and undertourism of that time changed residents' attitudes radically. According to Jurgens's (2022) study, post-COVID-tourism in Venice is characterized by a general approval of tourism and a desire to turn away from fast-paced, "disrespectful" mass tourism and a turn toward high-quality tourism.

In most cases, studies among residents of historic cities were conducted without a deeper analysis of differences between particular groups. Kruczek et al. (2022) suggested that younger residents of Krakow are less skeptical of overtourism. However, this conclusion seems to reflect a more general phenomenon and is not typical for historic cities. The opposite might be supposed regarding the research by Żemła & Szromek (2021) conducted in Krakow and by Talk et al. (2023) in Tallinn, which proves that the opinions and attitudes of residents living in the city center differ significantly from those manifested by the rest of the population of the city. Residents outside the city center understood that the city might have been affected by numerous negative effects of overtourism. Still, generally, their lives were not disturbed severely. In contrast, city center residents univocally stress that their everyday lives were harmed, and they often exercised bad tourist behavior, noise, crowds and other negative results of excessive tourism (Talk et al., 2023). What is

interesting is the fact that residents of Krakow, especially those who live outside the city center, do not perceive excessive touristification of the old city as a major problem and accept that this part of the city became dedicated purely to tourists. Instead, their worries are connected mainly with what is happening in their everyday environment (Żemła & Szromek, 2021). They perceive the development of short-term rental offers in their neighborhoods negatively influencing the local real estate market and prices in local shops. That is why their objections regarding the future development of tourism in the city are mainly connected with the possible spread of tourism into their neighborhoods.

These conclusions align with findings reached by Kacprzak (2021) in Prague and Celata & Romano (2020) based on studies in numerous Italian cities, including Venice, Naples and Florence. In their opinion, the growing concerns about overtourism are not because of the rising number of tourists *per se*, but to their increasing penetration into the residential city. Such an attitude of residents focusing more on protecting their everyday environment and rarely entering the competition with tourists for access to public spaces of the old cities discovered in a few historic cities seems to be the consequence of the spatial organization of the city and is often not reflected in cities such as Barcelona or Paris where the conflicts based on competitive use of numerous public spaces between residents and tourists are well-documented (Elorrieta et al., 2022; Gravari-Barbas, 2017; Zmysłony et al., 2020).

4.2 Gentrification and touristification processes and spatial planning

The cities were selected for analysis based on their spatial organization, and similarities in consequences of this organization are among the most typical features of overtourism in studied historic cities. The most characteristic issue is the extreme tourism pressure exercised in the historic centers (Abbasian et al., 2020; Amore et al., 2020), accompanied by relatively low pressure in the other districts (Talk et al., 2023; Żemła & Szromek, 2021). While monumental zones in old cities undergo fast touristification, residents of the other districts of the cities do not complain too much about crowds, noise, security issues, etc. This creates a challenge for the city's spatial planning, and facing gentrification/touristification is a major task. However, the spatial organization of studied cities shows some differences regarding the influence of recent history. Dubrovnik, Tallinn, Krakow and Prague functioned in the communist system for decades, and the communist spatial planning influenced their contemporary shapes, often disturbing historic spatial organization. This is presented in more detail by Panayiotopoulos & Pisano (2019) on the example of Dubrovnik but is also the case in the Nowa Huta quarter of Krakow (Kruczek et al., 2022; Murzyn-Kupisz & Holuj, 2020).

Monumental zones of historic cities are among the most commonly presented examples of tourism gentrification or touristification. Gentrification is often defined as “a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment” (Clark, 2005; Diaz-Parra & Jover, 2021). Touristification can be interpreted as a particular case of gentrification (Salerno, 2022). However, while gentrification driven by other factors often leads to a replacement of contemporary residents with a group of new ones, tourism gentrification or touristification results in the disappearance of residents in favor of the establishment of tourism use in existing real estate and infrastructure or even replacement of this by a new one purposely built to cater visitors (Gravari-Barbas, 2017). As a result, the number of permanent citizens of historic zones is continuously diminishing (Diaz-Parra & Jover, 2021; Kruczek, 2019). For example, in Krakow, it dropped from over 49,000 in 2004 to 29,000 in 2020 (<https://krakow.stat.gov.pl/en/information-about-voivodship/capital-of-voivodship-381/population-436/>) and in Prague from 10,500 in 2001 to 6,500 in 2021 (www.czso.cz/csu/xa/casove_rady_lide_time_series_people). Similar changes observed in Seville were less sharp – the number of residents of the historic center dropped by 7% between 2013 and 2021 (Parralejo & Díaz-Parra, 2021). Presenting a more long-term view, Bertocchi & Visentin (2019) state that the

number of permanent residents of the historic center of Venezia has dropped by 70% since the 1950s.

Among the reasons for the outflow of residents from historic centers, the development of Airbnb listings is often pointed out. [Cerreta et al. \(2020\)](#) investigate the correlation between the development of Airbnb listings in the historic center of Naples and the fast gentrification of this area and point their text with a call for more strict regulations, even on the international level, of sharing economy accommodation systems. A considerable concentration of accommodation facilities was also recognized as a significant factor leading to the gentrification of the old city of Granada ([Navarro-Valverde et al., 2023](#)) and Florence ([Celata & Romano, 2020](#)). Apart from accommodation facilities, to understand the forces driving the gentrification processes, it is also worth analyzing the spatial spread of gastronomic offers in historic cities ([Lochman, 2023](#)) and all elements of tourism infrastructure ([Ignaccolo et al., 2023](#)).

However, in historic zones, touristification means much more than just the loss of permanent inhabitants. [Jover & Díaz-Parra \(2022\)](#) describe Seville's city center as a place that is becoming a privileged one, where the average Sevillian cannot afford to live and increasingly feels out of place. Another work by the same authors illustrates how residents of Seville lose the right to everyday life in the historic center and become alienated from their local spaces ([Díaz-Parra & Jover, 2021](#)). Further, they state that commodification and gentrification contribute to socio-spatial injustices and make the city "inauthentic" for visitors and residents ([Díaz-Parra & Jover, 2021](#)). A similar situation can be found in Krakow ([Kruczek, 2019](#); [Żemła & Szromek, 2021](#)) and Venice ([Salerno, 2022](#)). Results by [Żemła & Szromek \(2021\)](#) suggest that residents of Krakow not only cannot afford to spend their free time in the Old City but do not wish to do so as they perceive the district as lost and dedicated to tourists purely. As a result, the old cities of analyzed destinations resemble what is described in the literature as tourism bubble ([Jaakson, 2004](#); [Judd, 1999](#)), tourism ghetto ([Mansfeld, 1992](#); [Żemła & Szromek, 2021](#)), tourism enclaves ([Jaakson, 2004](#)), tourism monocultures ([Salerno, 2022](#)) or hyper-touristified central urban areas ([Gravari-Barbas, 2017](#)).

4.3 Measures to counteract overtourism in historic cities

Several publications were found that present measures being used in historic cities to deal with overtourism. However, particular ideas are often not verified in other publications, and more general statements about their effectiveness, different than case sensitive, are not possible currently. This regards, for instance, the interesting idea of branding support in more sustainable urban tourism development, which was tested in Florence and Venice ([Cooke et al., 2022](#)) or new technologies such as AR and VR discussed in the context of Florence UNESCO zone by [Nevola et al. \(2022\)](#).

Another topic being present only in a small number of publications is the problem of indices to calculate the level of overtourism. The composite overtourism indicator offered by [Amore et al. \(2020\)](#) and the proposition of the method to calculate the carrying capacity of historic cities by [Liberatore et al. \(2022\)](#) are to be mentioned as interesting and successful attempts to cover this topic. However, it is not possible to generalize their conclusions on the whole group of historic cities with singled-out monumental zones. [Amore et al. \(2020\)](#) tested this method on 15 cities belonging to the analyzed group and from the outside, while the proposition by [Liberatore et al. \(2022\)](#) was justified in the Florence conditions only.

The best documented is the issue of regulations imposed on different aspects of tourism traffic and tourism services. The most attention is paid here to regulating services of short-term rental accommodations ([Celata & Romano, 2020](#); [Cerreta et al., 2020](#); [García-Hernández & de Miguel, 2021](#)). [Bei & Celata \(2023\)](#) analyze solutions made in numerous European cities, including Florence and Venice, studied here as well as many other cities, such as Amsterdam, Barcelona and Berlin. They present several solutions implemented in particular cities, and the situation in Florence and Venice is not different than in other

studied cities. This might suggest that differences in solutions between cities reflect rather other local conditions, and any measures might be labeled as characteristic of historic cities. This is surprising as the scheme of the impact of short-term rental differs between historic cities and most other cities. In historic cities, a significant number of listing is located in the old city or nearby (Bugalski, 2020; Cerreta et al., 2020), which reflects the concentration of tourism attractions (Amore et al., 2020) and flows (Talk et al., 2023). In big metropolises, often, there are a few areas of concentration of short-term listings (Bugalski, 2020), and tourism flows are spread wider across the city (Amore et al., 2020). As a result, short-term rental systems are perceived in historic cities as an even more dangerous engine for the spread of tourism to residential areas, as these areas remain contemporarily relatively free from tourism pressure (Celata & Romano, 2020).

Some scholars (Kowalczyk-Anioł et al., 2021; Szromek et al., 2022) also point to stakeholder cooperation as an effective tool for minimizing the negative effects of overtourism. The importance of this postulate is rooted in the fact that overtourism in all destinations involves conflicting interests of particular stakeholders (Szromek et al., 2020; Zmyślony et al., 2020). Unfortunately, the reviewed literature points in the direction of required development rather than offers ready solutions. Additionally, there are no hints if there are any conditions and/or solutions within this issue that are typical for historic cities.

5. Conclusions and implications

5.1 Theoretical implications

The results of the SLR allowed to find answers to the research questions posed in the introduction and shape the theoretical output of the study. First, despite the different topics and aims of the analyzed studies on overtourism in historic cities, it was possible to find several features characteristic of this tourist destinations group. This allowed marking a typical development path of tourism in historic cities with singled-out old cities. This path includes numerous elements regarding both origins and consequences of tourism development. Specific spatial organization of tourism hotspots and flows (Amore et al., 2020) results in the very distinct attitude of residents. The competition between residents and visitors for access to public spaces typical for numerous big cities (Gravari-Barbas & Jacquot, 2019) is limited here as residents perceive monumental centers of their city as lost and often do not intend to spend their free time there (Żemła & Szromek, 2021). Extremely uneven distribution of tourism pressure makes a small and still diminishing number of residents of old cities complain strongly about all possible negative impacts of overtourism, while most of the other inhabitants rather observe overtourism and its impact on the city than exercise them in their everyday lives. They expect tourism not to appear in their everyday environment, and the biggest threat is the development of short-term rental listings in residential districts (Celata & Romano, 2020).

The abovementioned features of overtourism in historic cities not only are coherent between analyzed cities but also differ significantly from what is usually found in other urban destinations and metropolises especially. This comparison suggests that studies on overtourism and its impacts conducted on the narrow and homogenous group of destinations foster scientific knowledge on overtourism and might help to avoid contradictions in the scientific description of the phenomenon. More research is required to undoubtedly confirm that research conducted on narrow and homogenous groups of destinations allows to find similar results in these destinations, but presented SLR makes this statement much more probable. Such an approach is postulated here to be a proper answer for contemporary problems with scientific definitions and descriptions of overtourism. It is suggested that scholars should focus on comparing similar destinations and tailor-made conclusions dedicated to them are welcomed instead of the quest for the universal definition and description of overtourism. This is so even though numerous reasons and consequences of overtourism are the same for the biggest number of destinations.

5.2 Implications for management and policy-making

Properly understanding the nature of overtourism in destinations of a particular type gives tourism managers a priceless support. European historic cities with singled-out historic quarters require tailor-made solutions to follow their features. Lowering the pressure in the most crowded locations in particular cities often means attempts to direct tourism flows to other places in the city, which is often labelled in the literature as decongestion ([Camatti et al., 2020](#); [Goodwin, 2017](#)), deconcentration ([Hidalgo-Giralt et al., 2021](#)) or redistribution ([Sibrijns & Vanneste, 2021](#)) strategy, proved to be effective in several European cities such as Madrid, Brussels, Copenhagen ([Hidalgo-Giralt et al., 2021](#)) and Amsterdam ([Sibrijns & Vanneste, 2021](#)). However, in the case of studied cities, the choice of new directions for tourism flows needs to be extremely careful as more tourists in residential areas may lead to an emergence of new conflicts and protests of citizens and a general increase of anti-tourism attitudes among residents. Thoughtless implementation of redistribution strategy, following literature examples, is expected to be not only inadequate but also counterproductive ([Celata & Romano, 2020](#); [Talk et al., 2023](#); [Žemla & Szromek, 2021](#)). In many cases, demarketing activities ([Tiwari et al., 2020](#)) or administrative regulations ([Azzahra & Nugrahani, 2022](#); [Nepal & Nepal, 2021](#)) aimed at lowering partially the number of visitors in a city might be the better answer than lowering the pressure in the monumental centers via spreading tourism flows without diminishing the number of visitors. However, in most cases, limiting the number of visitors in an old city and/or entrance fees are difficult or even impossible to introduce. The exception is Venice, but it is its island location that enables the introduction of limits on access to the city ([Bertocchi et al., 2020](#)). Even though this measure cannot be copied easily to other historic cities, the direction of search is set ([Nepal & Nepal, 2021](#)). The risk of entrance fees is turning a tourism bubble ([Jaakson, 2004](#)) into a tourism amusement or thematic park ([González, 2018](#)) or living outdoor museum, which may eventually increase the satisfaction of visitors but hardly improve the status of residents ([Goodwin, 2017](#)). Additionally, high entrance fees may exclude poorer visitors, which remains against the intra-generation equality rule ([Žemla, 2021](#)), one of the cornerstones of sustainable development ([Hunter, 1997](#)).

Additionally, the problem of uncontrolled development of short-term rentals in typically residential areas needs to be addressed, and contemporary literature does not offer ready solutions ([Bei & Celata, 2023](#); [Bugalski, 2020](#)). Solutions implemented in Berlin, Barcelona or Paris ([Žemla et al., 2021](#)) seem to be irrelevant in the case of problems exercised in researched cities as they were targeted to the whole area of the city, while in the case of historic cities, there is a need of differentiation of solutions for the city center and for the other districts. However, legal and/or fiscal limits on the number of listings and their offer implemented in a proper and customized way tend to be a promising direction of diminishing tourism pressure in historic cities ([Celata & Romano, 2020](#)).

Based on the results, it is apparent that contemporary literature on overtourism in European historic cities falls short of delivering numerous tools to deal with the problem that proved to be efficient. Even though, it is possible to state that an observation that particular features of historic cities to some extent determine how overtourism is manifested opens wide opportunities for destination managers and policymakers to use data from other destinations as benchmarks, which is the most valuable outcome for managers and policymakers from the presented study.

5.3 Limitations and future research

There are limitations concerning the conclusions presented, which are typical for the SLR method. They are connected with the choice of a proper database and the search strategy used. However, irrespective of the choices made, there is always a risk that one or several publications important for the issues under analysis remain excluded.

The results of the SLR method allowed us to point out several examples of cities that followed the development path typical for historic cities and where overtourism and its consequences were already examined. However, this list cannot be perceived as complete. Even though all European historic cities are expected here to experience similar problems caused by excessive tourism development, more research, especially in historic cities other than those described here, is still necessary to confirm this expectation. Exceptions are unknown, but their existence cannot be excluded. Potential differences and their sources in how overtourism manifests in particular European historic cities are still to be studied. Additionally, studies summarizing results achieved for historic cities in other regions of the world, as well as analysis of similarities of destinations representing different groups, are also welcomed.

The list of issues connected with overtourism in historic cities limited here to two broad topics cannot be perceived as complete. Historic cities also exercise other problems that might differentiate their situations. These other problems might include, among others, transportation issues related to the location of international airports and seaports open for cruisers (Goodwin, 2021; Wilkins & Honey, 2019) perception of economic benefits and their distribution derived from tourism development among residents (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019; Żemła & Szromek, 2021); one-day visitors ratio (Goodwin, 2021; Salerno, 2022); seasonality patterns; etc. These problems were not studied in detail in most of the analyzed publications and do not constitute characteristic features of historic cities; still, future research acknowledging them is required.

Finally, the issue of the time span of the research is to be mentioned. The first scientific works on overtourism were published in 2017 (Goodwin, 2017), so the analysis included studies published within only seven years. However, regarding the dynamics of overtourism and the fact that this time included times of pandemic lockdowns and undertourism (Montanari, 2020), there exists the risk that works published in earlier years might not accurately describe the current situation in an analyzed destination. More research on overtourism conducted worldwide, including in European historic cities, is required to understand the post-pandemic situation with overtourism fully.

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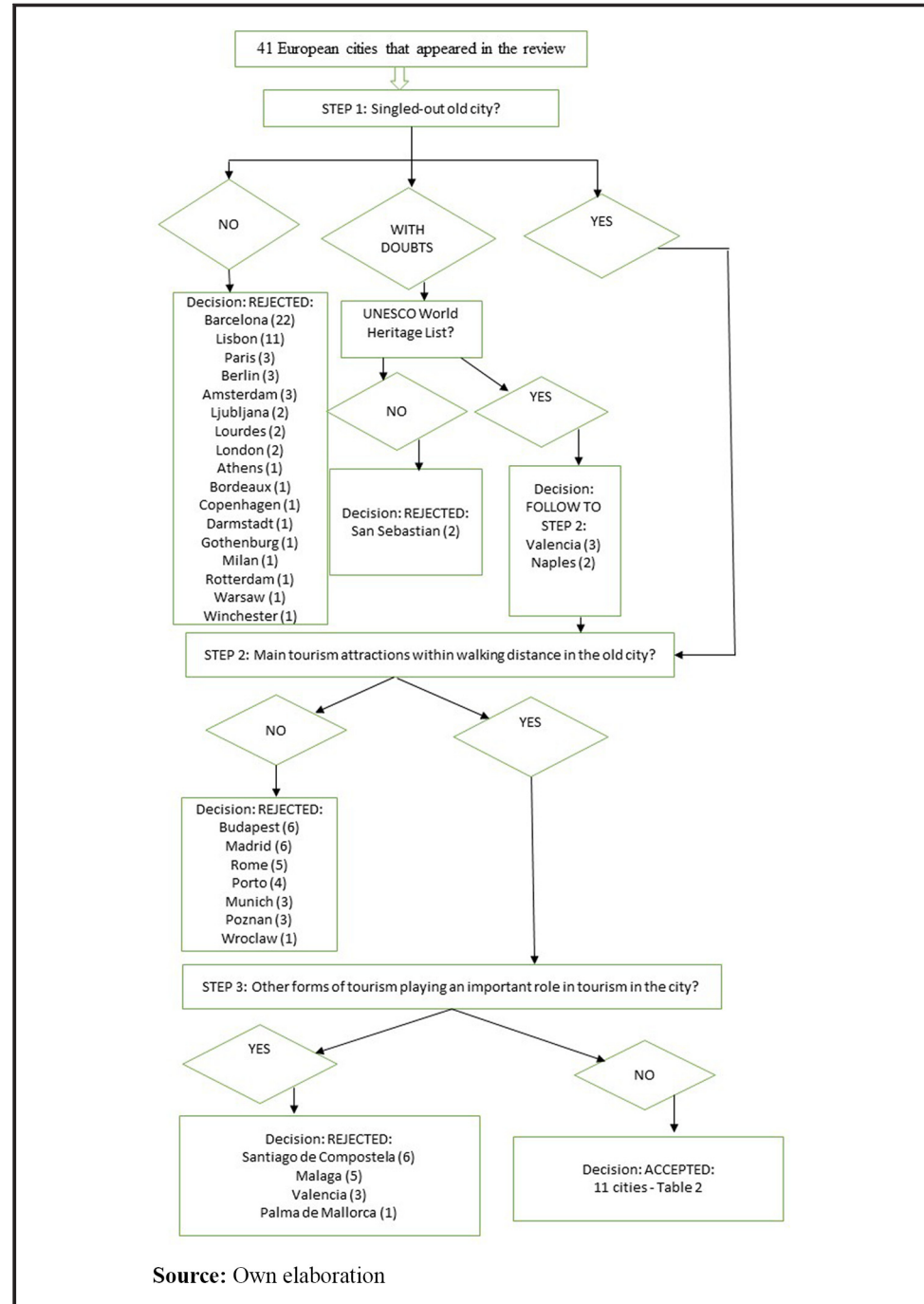
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Figure A1 Procedure of acceptance/rejection of particular cities to further analysis

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