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To better comprehend how the news media frames modern overtourism, content analysis was conducted on 202 news articles. Results suggest that root causes of overtourism are largely overlooked and the focus is on reporting tourist numbers and impacts on local. The growth agenda continues to be promoted in the backdrop of overtourism news, while responsibilities to mitigate negative impacts are attributed to cities, communities and tourists. There is a need to explore responsibilities of diverse tourism actors in addressing overtourism, along with discussions on alternatives to the pro-growth paradigm and the industrial work-home-travel model that fuel modern mass tourism.

For decades, global tourism has witnessed rapid, constant growth. The number of international tourist arrivals first reached 1 billion in 2012 and is forecast to nearly double by 2030 (UNWTO, 2017). This is coupled with an even more exponential increase of domestic tourism activities and other forms of tourism-related mobilities (Hall, 2015). Along with this unprecedented growth, the issue of 'overtourism' has captured global attention in recent years. Within tourism literature, 'overtourism' is certainly not 'new' as various concepts related to managing visitor numbers and resources at tourism destinations have been discussed as early as the 1970s. (e.g., carrying capacity – Sinden, 1975; Kuss & Morgan, 1980, community antagonism and Doxey's irritation index – Doxey, 1975). Contemporary overtourism issues continue many of these long-standing debates on tourism development, yet they now take place in a far wider range of destinations and with higher level of complexity that warrant further exploration (Milano, Novelli & Cheer, 2019). This research letter seeks to explore the major frames of contemporary overtourism being presented in the news media, in order to open up discussions on future research and actions.

The analysis of news media can produce important insight into emerging 'wicked' problems such as overtourism, as the news media can act as both a useful outlet for actors to convey their perspectives on an issue, and a powerful actor that can influence public opinions and actions (Schweinsberg, Darcy & Cheng, 2017). Content analysis was performed on 202 English news articles published in leading international/national newspaper outlets, utilising the assistance of qualitative analysis software Leximancer. Content analysis offers a systematic, replicable approach to interpret and code large volume of textual data. Leximancer is a qualitative analysis tool that interprets and visualises complex data by transforming 'lexical co-occurrence information from natural language into semantic patterns' (Smith & Humphreys 2006, p. 262). The use of Leximancer software helps to reduce bias and increase reliability, as the process of identifying key concepts and the creation of visual maps are conducted automatically.

The collection of articles was identified via Nexislexis (one of the world's largest electronic database for news and public-records) by using the keywords 'overtourism' or 'over-tourism'. No date range was specified, but after screening for duplicates and relevance, most of the remaining articles' publication time fall between the period of 2008 – 2018. Results show that overtourism is framed around four inter-related themes, each with its own main 'character' (i.e., tourists, locals, cities and the travel industry) (Figure 1). These key themes are heat-mapped to indicate the frequency of their appearance in the overall discourse. The 'hottest' theme is indicated by the red colour, followed by yellow, green and blue, according to the colour wheel.

<Insert Figure 1 here>

(1) Causes of overtourism, centering on '*tourists*': This is the most dominant theme, which cites the phenomenal growth of tourist numbers in recent years, along with tourists' tendency to travel to popular destinations during the same periods, as the leading causes of overtourism. Most news articles tend to report simple facts, especially the number of tourists, as well as where and when they visit a place. Only a few articles mentioned deeper causes of overtourism such as the complex nature of local/global tourism supply-chain, the falling cost of travel and the exceeding efforts destinations put into marketing (e.g., Hutton, 2018).

(2) Impacts of overtourism, centering on '*locals*': This theme highlights a range of negative impacts that local residents face when living in overcrowded tourism destinations. Of central concern to locals are problems related to the use of public places, congested streets and the rising cost of living (Groundwater, 2018). Tourism-phobia and protests against tourists therefore often take the headlines and occupy the second largest portion of the news discourse regarding overtourism.

(3) Overtourism context, centering on '*cities*' : Previous tourism literature tends to focus on overcrowding in the context of national parks and protected areas (e.g., Manning, 2001). 'Modern' overtourism however, essentially takes place in urban areas, with the three most-mentioned cities all located in Europe: *Barcelona* - 65 counts, *Venice* - 44 counts and *Dubrovnik* - 20 counts. This is unsurprising, given that Europe took in half of the 1.3 billion international tourist arrival in 2017 (UNWTO, 2017). In addition, '*cruise*' and '*ships*' are other notable sub-themes, indicating that the cruise industry is an important contributor to overtourism.

(4) <u>The growth agenda, centering on '*the travel industry'*</u>: An emerging narrative in the media discourse, this theme indicates the continued support for tourism growth within the backdrop of overtourism. The economic significance of tourism (especially in creating jobs and bringing revenue to destinations) is frequently mentioned, along with terms such as 'responsible growth' and 'managing growth'. The essence of this theme lies in the assumption that it is not the global travel industry's rapid expansion that creates overtourism, but rather 'bad management' of the growth momentum. The UNWTO is frequently cited as the key promoter of the need for constant tourism growth, despite the problem of overtourism (Pylas, 2017). Importantly, the sub-theme '*measures*' are positioned in the intersection of '*city*' and '*local*' in Figure 1. This indicates a strong distribution of responsibilities to mitigate the negative impacts of overtourism to individual cities and local communities, as opposed to the systematic macro level of the national/global travel industry. The collection of '*tourist tax'* is the most discussed measure with 173 counts, indicating also the transfer of responsibilities to individual tourists.

Overall, despite the growing attention to overtourism, the current public media discourse on this issue remains rather simplistic, focusing mainly on reporting facts of tourist numbers, as well as reactive measures of locals and cities. These findings are consistent with Hall (2019)'s criticisms of the neoliberal discourse promoted by the UNWTO and other major industry players, which simplifies complex 'wicked' issues such as overtourism and sustainable tourism development (in relation to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals) into 'tame' policy problems, to be readily addressed by management solutions and individual agency. The issue of overtourism arguably will worsen in the future if more active links are not established between the media discourse and the theoretical academic foundations in relation to overtourism's root causes.

As early as 1987, Krippendorf's seminal text 'The Holiday Makers' have warned readers of two key characteristics governing the modern industrial-social systems, including the phenomena of mass tourism: a destructive prioritisation of economic growth and the stifling industrial work-leisure models. To date, the pro-growth agendas are not only promoted by powerful tourism actors such as the UNWTO or the transnational tourism/hospitality companies, but they are also deeply embedded in the policies and operations of many local/national authorities within the tourism system (Bianchi, 2002). Similarly, the recreation cycle of human beings in industrial society, which consist of 'work-home-free time-travel', has continued to expand. Under this model, travel is predominantly used as a way of recovering from the routine-weary work and home. The 'holiday machines' as such are an inherent consequence of and an offset for the increased loss of nature, the shrinking of living and public spaces, increased stress in daily life, and the lack of fulfilling leisure and recreational activities one can experience at home (Krippendorf 1987, p.12).

Beyond these broader push factors for mass tourism, recent academic publications also unveil a range of direct causes of overtourism. These include, for instance, the falling cost of air travel, the expansion of tourism gentrification via sharing platforms, seasonality and the concentrated distribution of tourists in certain areas (Goodwin, 2017). Overtourism has also been linked to the Tragedy of the Commons, as tourism activities often rely on and heavily exploit public resources (Pintassilgo & Silva, 2007). Furthermore, overtourism is not only related to the objective increase in the number of tourists but also the subjective locals' perceptions that tourism's negative impacts outweigh its benefits (Koens, Postma & Papp, 2018). These perceptions can be influenced by a range of factors, such as tourists' behaviours, historical exposure to visitors and differing levels of community resilience (Lindberg, McCool & Stankey, 1997).

Overall, this research letter highlights the importance of better linking the contemporary overtourism phenomena with the historical academic debates on mass tourism and its impacts. Through a critical analysis of the media discourse, the letter also reveals a number of future research opportunities. First, whilst tourists, locals and cities are presented by the media, their diverse voices are not well-articulated. Future research can seek to both unveil these hidden perceptions and explore approaches to better integrate diverse actors into the process of sustainable tourism planning and development. Hartman (2018), for instance, highlights the importance of destination governance and the potential implications of resilience and adaptability theories in addressing overtourism. Second, as this research utilises only English news media, similar analysis using sources from other languages may help to create a fuller understanding of how the global media frame overtourism (e.g., destinations outside Europe such as Maya Bay, Thailand and Boracay, the Philippines are attracting more attention). Third, opportunities exist to link back, and continue to expand the literature on overtourism's relations with non-human actors (e.g., heritage, forest, river, wildlife and sea life), whose voices seem to be largely excluded from the current human-centred discourse of the news media. Arguably, more critical work could be done to further confront the prevalent managerial ecological approach that focuses on improving the efficient use of resources for tourism consumption and growth, without proper ethical considerations of the ecosystems' limits (see e.g., Hall, 2019).

Above all, discussions on overtourism should not be separated from the broader discourse on alternative models to the growth paradigm and the industrial existence of modern human beings. The seminal work of Gibson-graham (2006), for example, examines radical alternative economic

spaces, non-capitalist modes of exchanges and the multitude of value creation that go beyond the

hegemonic Western-derived visions of progress. Cave & Dredge (2018) have explored this

notion of diverse economies in tourism, taking into account the diverse values and dimensions of

the Sustainable Development Goals. Hall (2009) called for sustainable tourism development to be

more tightly woven into the broader de-growth movement, while Higgins-Desbiolles et al (2019)

argued for the importance of reshaping tourism and mobility through a social justice lens. Finally,

through investigating the frameworks that could enhance humans' fulfilment in their daily life,

tourism research could contribute to redefining the purpose and meaning of travel, and in turn

help to address the negative consequences associated with modern tourism.

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Figure 1. Conceptual heat-map of overtourism in the news media