ANALYZING MEDIA PORTRAYALS OF CROWDING IN THE CITY OF AMSTERDAM

A research study for Amsterdam Marketing

Authorship statement

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A research study for Amsterdam Marketing

Author's name: ROBIN STOCK
Bachelor degree programme: BSc Tourism
Educational Institutes: NHTV Breda University of Applied Science and Wageningen University, NL

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Abstract

Many destinations throughout the world are overcrowded. In fact, this occurs if the number of tourists at the place is rising and not managed properly. However, some places could be managed, others not. For example, Amsterdam, The Netherlands is full of tourists leading to overcrowding within the city resulting in negative impacts on tourist experience, the city's image and reputation. Nowadays, media influences tourist decision-making, as well as a city's reputation to a great extend.

This thesis aims on analysing written media, in the context of Amsterdam and crowding, for various source countries. The questions of what is being said about the issue of overcrowding, as well as why it is said are going to be addressed. Involving a discourse analysis as method will help as examination on how language constructs phenomena. This research seems to indicate that countries assessments about crowding issues within the city differ to a great extent.

Keywords: Crowding, Amsterdam, Media representations, Discourse analysis

1   Introduction

Overcrowding is an ongoing issue for many cities throughout the world. According to the Global Sustainable Tourism Council "overcrowding is becoming a major issue at many global touristic destinations". Typical examples like the Las Vegas Strip with 39.7 million annual visitors and the New York Times Square with 39.2 million annual visitors provides only a glimpse of the issue of overcrowding. As more and more people are travelling, higher numbers at tourist destinations are unquestionable, but how many tourists is a city able to handle? When is overcrowding becoming an issue to local people and tourists? To what extend do crowding issues create barriers to tourist experiences? Putting forward these questions there is strong need to identify potential drivers of and solutions to overcrowding.

As prior research, by PvdA Amsterdam has proven that Amsterdam is losing its attraction due to overcrowding, it is important to study its impacts on the city itself. Amsterdam, The Netherlands, is an ideal destination to study media portrayals of overcrowding. In fact, available literature and travel guides create discourses of the city's image. An example is demonstrated by Dahles (1998) describing the city as unique within Europe's metropolises. In comparison to other cosmopolitan cities, Amsterdam is pretty small but augurs plenty of benefits of a world city – a variety of historic sights, world-famous museums and a buzzing nightlife. Amsterdam offers tourists more than canals, coffee shops and the Red-Light district. The city has an international atmosphere and tries to capture everybody's imagination. It starts with beautiful building throughout the city, canal boat tours, shopping trips, museum visits and a lot of other activities. Everything can be easily reached by bike, foot or public transport. If it comes to tourist arrivals, the city of Amsterdam attracts many international tourists.

In this thesis, Amsterdam has been selected as example to analyze these impacts, as it is an internationally-known tourist destination attracting 18.3 million international and domestic tourists in 2015 (DutchAmsterdam.nl, 2016). By looking at these numbers, crowding and overcrowding becomes crucial in many aspects influencing tourism. According to the definition by Stokols (1972) crowding develops over time as a result of spatial limitations which place constraints upon social activities. Crowding phenomena especially emerge in popular tourist destinations, like the city center of Amsterdam (Canestrelli & Costa, 1991; Riganti & Nijkamp, 2008).

Furthermore, Amsterdam Marketing requests an in-depth analysis of media portrayals of potential source countries. Source countries for the city of Amsterdam are identified as Germany, UK, Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Scandinavia, Russia, USA, Canada, Brazil, China, Singapore, Australia (NBTC Holland Marketing, 2015). In order to be able to analyze different types of media, this research study focuses on the German- and English-speaking source countries, limiting media portrayals to the countries of Germany, Austria, UK, USA, Canada, Singapore and Australia. These countries were chosen for this research study due to language barrier of the researcher and diversity of available media publications.

This thesis aims on composing a typology on which discourses are created relating to source market media from German- and English-speaking countries: Germany, Austria, UK, USA, Canada Australia and Singapore. First of all, a literature review will discuss relevant concepts in order to assemble a main research question, as well as constructing a theoretical framework. Secondly, the methods includes desk research and discourse analysis. Accordingly, the research will discuss media, from all the six source markets, of what is said about crowding perception in the city of Amsterdam. Following, the analysis will identify of what is said by whom and what is portrayed. Thus, the outcome of the discourse analysis from the different source markets will be discussed in the results section.

The following literature review will discuss the main concepts used, crowding and discourse, as well as identify the research gaps.

2   Literature Review

This literature review will first describe the concept of crowding, followed by an understanding of developing crowding phenomena at various destinations. Thirdly, the concept of discourse and its analysis will be discussed, explaining what it is and what the intended purpose for this study will be. Fourthly, the research gaps are identified and the relevance for the study of media portrayals of Amsterdam will be put forward.

2.1   Concept and development of crowding

Crowding is an emerging event and starts with an overall increase in tourist numbers, leading to an extensive use-level, which in the end results in crowdedness (Vaske & Donnelly, 2002; Lee & Graefe, 2003). Crowding is defined as "a negative evaluation of a certain density or number of encounters" (Desor, 1972; Stokols, 1972, Shelby & Vaske, 1989). Therefore, crowding can be understood as limitation of space due to high numbers of tourists and locals at destinations, resulting in restrictions of place and social activities (Stokols, 1972).

In fact, every person has different perceptions of crowding (Santana-Jiménez & Hernández, 2011). Thus, perceived crowding combines the density level experienced with the negative evaluation of that density by the individual (Vaske & Shelby, 2008). According to Arnberger & Haider (2007), two factors influence the way on how people perceive the feeling of crowding: low resource availability and high tourist numbers. Furthermore, "crowding involves a value judgement requiring information about the setting, the desired activity, and the individual making the evaluation" (Vaske & Shelby, 2008). For example, 20 people are eating in a restaurant one day and 100 the next. Definitely, density is higher the second day, but is the restaurant crowded? If the restaurant has 300 seats available, 100 people is not a crowd. But, if the restaurant has 150 seats people might feel the squeeze. Regarding that, crowding is perceived differently in the society.

According to some scholars, crowding is studied on the natural environment, parks, as well as on special events, festivals (Arnberger & Haider, 2007; Lee & Graefe, 2003). The focus lays on establishing visitor flows, especially on events where high tourist numbers are expected, in order to reduce nuisance and crowding. If crowding is not properly managed, the outcomes are severe, leading to social-density and unsustainability (Vaske & Donnelly, 2002; Neuts & Nijkamp, 2012). Existing research has proven that rising numbers of tourists bring problems for site management, "notably in areas as ecological impacts, including but not limiting to soil erosion, trampling of vegetation, water pollution and facility damage" (Jin & Pierce, 2011; p.326). For potential tourist destinations throughout the world this results in damage of the socio-cultural carrying capacity. In fact, this contributes towards negative tourist and locals experiences.

As mass tourism destination, Amsterdam has to deal with the issue of crowding, making research of the impacts of overcrowding on the city valuable. Amsterdam has been selected to analyze these impacts, as the city attracts high numbers of tourists throughout the year creating social-density. By creating social-density, tourism crowding comes into play. According to Neuts & Neijkamp (2012) tourism crowding is seen as too many tourists want to visit a particular destination at the same time, accelerating crowds, leading to overcrowding. In fact, overcrowding can occur in two types, between tourists and between tourists and locals (Neuts & Nijkamp, 2012).

Urban tourism is flourishing and overcrowding is acknowledged as a crucial problem in tourist cities (Popp, 2012). Nevertheless, according to Popp (2012) the way tourists perceive crowding is still a squalid topic in tourism research. Research of crowding in urban environments, cities, is rather limited. By investigating research on media representations on the issue of crowding, the city of Amsterdam might be able to manage overcrowding in the future. In fact, no scientific research exists on how media portrays the phenomenon of crowding within cities.

The following part of the literature review, namely discourse, is based on the book "Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction" by Phillips and Hardy (2002).

2.2   Discourse

The concept of discourse is complex and disputed, referring to "interrelated set of texts, and the practices of their production, dissemination, and reception, that brings object into being" (Parker, 1992). According to Nelson (2012), discourses are about the production of social reality and how destinations are seen and represented, particularly through textual sources such as tourism guidebooks. On the one hand, they examine the ways in which meanings attached to destinations are rooted in norms and values. On the other hand, discourses show that destinations do not have singular identities but multiple, visualizing social reality. Furthermore, discourses challenge different opinions showing a reproduction of images in marketing (Dann, 2001).

According to Schiffrin (2001) and Howarth (2000) discourses are synonyms to the social system, including "anything behind the sentence, language use and a broader range of social practice that

includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language" (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999; 2002). Moreover, approaches to discourse combine a detailed analysis of language, its use, and the analysis of cultural practice and social structure (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999).

The authors Phillips and Hardy (2002) claim that without understanding discourses, no understanding of the reality and experiences exist. Therefore, it is argued that discourses construct meanings and ways of seeing the world (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Discourses are very powerful, also in the tourism sector. Tourism discourse is a language of static and moving pictures, written texts, audio-visual offerings and virtual reality. Therefore, through discourses, attached meanings are circumstantial, showing how destinations are represented and how their are perceived (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

According to Winch (1958), discourse analysis shares the interest of all qualitative approaches with the expressiveness of social life. An analysis of multimodal texts can be seen as discourse analysis, attempting to add a thoughtful questioning of attached meanings (Winch, 1958). It is argued that, "our social lives are constructed in and through language/discourse, whether in the moment-to-moment social interchanges of everyday talk or in the beliefs, understandings and principles that structure our lives" (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005: 5). Regarding that, discourse analysis is a systematic approach to grasp the study of modalities other than language, for instance, music or visual images (Jaworski & Pritchard, 2005).

The main difference between traditional qualitative approaches and discourse analysis is that in fact traditional approaches attempt to understand the meaning of the social world for participants, whereas discourse analysis "tries to explore how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created in the first place and how they are maintained and held in place over time" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.6). In fact, various media about Amsterdam are able to show how crowding was produced in the first place and how it developed over time. Doing discourse analysis on the way in which social reality is produced rather than interpreted or understood gets revealed. Discourse analysis considers how language assembles phenomena, for instance media writing about crowding (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

2.3   The role of discourses within the tourism setting

It is claimed by Osti et al. (2009), that tourists increasingly abandon package tourism towards more individually organized travel. This shift mainly occurs because of the fast growing technologies and published travel guidebooks. While technologies try to make everything easily accessible and smart about destinations, travel guidebooks try to sell a destination in its desirable aspects. However, travel guidebooks still remain as one of the most important sources of information for travellers (Nishimura et al., 2007). It is claimed by Carter (1998) that independent travellers are more inclined to use travel guidebooks in order to reduce risk. The risk may include psychological, financial, social, performance and physical risks. According to Uysal et al. (1990), different cultures may place different emphasis upon different types of risk and seek different information to reduce risk.

Because every country differs from each other and in fact, has a different culture it is recommended by Osti et al. (2009) and Venkatesh (1995) that authors should customize the contents of guidebooks to meet the obligations of each culture. Moreover, it is argued that there is a significant difference between independent travellers and package travellers (Osti et al., 2009). On the one hand, independent travellers organize their trip as well as travel arrangements entirely by themselves. Moreover, they make personal decisions about how to travel to the destination and what to experience there. These tourist types steer for more accessible information and travel guidebooks. On the other hand, package travellers have fewer adjustments to organize in the planning stage. In fact, package travellers do have less free time available during their vacation than independent tourists (Osti et al., 2009). According to Nishimura et al. (2007), it is proven that a higher amount of social activities during travel correspond towards higher usage of guidebooks prior and during travels. In terms of pre-purchase search or planning, the package travellers also use guidebooks (Nishimura et al., 2007). Guidebooks are heavily used to get an idea of a country or city. Moreover, it is proven that they are used on a higher level compared to other information sources (Snepenger et al., 1990; Schul et al., 1983).

The phenomenon tourism crowding links tourists perceptions of a destination with its diminishing effects. However, data of the role on tourist perceptions in particular cities is to a great extend limited. In the following section knowledge gaps between crowding and discourse are put forward.

2.4   Research gaps

One can conclude that there has been quite some research on crowding issues (Stokols, 1972; Vaske & Donnelly, 2002). But, in fact, while existing research focuses on environmental aspects of crowding (Vaske & Donnelly, 2002; Neuts & Nijkamp, 2012) and tourism crowding (Arnberger & Haider, 2007; Neuts & Nijkamp, 2012) the link between tourism crowding and discourse, analyzing written media at major tourist destinations, has not been dealt with. Accordingly, no research studies investigated on media representations of crowding in urban tourist destinations so far.

Without doubt, crowding becomes a characteristic of the destination, creating negative aspects, social-density and unsustainability, on tourist decision making, reputation and tourist experience (Vaske & Donnelly, 2002; Neuts & Nijkamp, 2012). By analyzing existing media, user-generated content and blogs, Amsterdam Marketing will gain important knowledge on what is being said about crowding and how to tackle these problems in future.

The concept of crowding has been studied from different perspectives. Those can be seen as socio-cultural crowding, tourism crowding, as well as common-pool resources. In other words, the destination overuse leads to rivalry between different user groups, for instance between locals and tourists, and crowding stands for a decreasing value of experiences. For Amsterdam Marketing it is crucial to gain an understanding of what is being said by the media of potential source tourist markets, in order to mitigate tourist crowds within the city of Amsterdam. At this stage, there is no recipe on how Amsterdam is able to deal with crowding and mitigate its impacts like sustainable usage and social density. Scientific research on how the traditional and less traditional media - blogs, websites, social media - portrayals crowding in Amsterdam is absent.

However, there is clear evidence that travel guidebooks and Internet-based information are creating discourses (Osti et al., 2009; Venkatesh, 1995). These sources market a destination by exaggerating its positive attributes rather than being objective. Discourse analysis has been applied to many destinations throughout the world, "examining how language constructs phenomena, not how it reflects and reveals it" (Phillips & Hardy, 2002, p.6). The effective use of discourse analysis has been made in disciplines like globalization, the natural environment and cultural studies.
This thesis aims to fill those gaps by using a discourse analysis on data sources about Amsterdam and

thus constructs new knowledge on particular countries regarding the image of the city of Amsterdam. In fact, its findings may put pressure on Amsterdam to find solutions and act upon those within the near future.

3 Research problem and objective

The importance of media publications on tourism destination is indisputable. With the rise of the Internet, tourists are able to easily communicate, read and share experiences. However, the relationship between media and crowding discourses is yet limited. There is data available on crowding from different media, but the link towards discourse has not been established yet. In fact, this would reveal insights into country's media and enables a systematic approach on how those countries represent crowding in Amsterdam. This may also show differences and similarities in representation by the different source countries. Thus, the objective of this research is to distinguish the role of discourse in media publications for the city of Amsterdam from the perspective of the source country.

4 Research questions

The two research questions this thesis will answer are: "How does media represent crowding in Amsterdam?" (RQ1) and "Does the country of publication have an impact on how media represents crowding?" (RQ2). The theoretical framework shown in Figure 1 provides a visual overview of the concepts included, as well as the corresponding research questions.
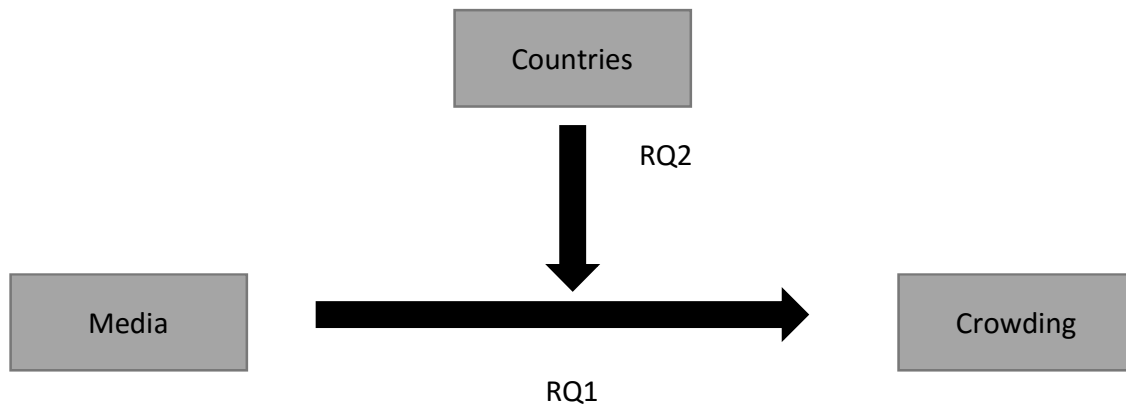
Figure 1. Theoretical Framework

5   Methods

This research is a descriptive research focusing on what is written and said, rather than why it is written and said. Due to the timeliness of the issue, results for this study will be based on recent media publications from between 2013 and 2017. The research will be conducted using a mixed-methods approach. Desk research and discourse analysis will be applied to the relevant research questions. A fairly small sample size of media publications about Amsterdam was chosen in order to make sense of single connections of variables rather than of the case as a whole (Adler & Clark, 2012).

In order to be able to analyze different types of media, this research study focuses on the German- and English-speaking source countries, limiting media portrayals to the countries of Germany, Austria, UK, USA, Canada Singapore and Australia. These countries were chosen for this research study due to language barrier of the researcher.

5.1   Data collection and sampling

The case study design made sense of the existing media, as the main goal is to describe data and characteristics of what is being studied (Vaus, 2001). For this case, analysis of recorded data from

media and a qualitative method, discourse analysis, was chosen. To answer the research question "How does media represent crowding in Amsterdam?" desk research took place. This was done through an analysis of a variety of relevant media and online consumer generated contents, presenting crowding in Amsterdam. In approach to the second research question "Does the country of publication have an impact on how media represents crowding?", the sources of those articles were evaluated.

In order to gain a coherent picture of existing media publications, a precise sampling criteria for data collection is of need in order to establish a scheme of investigation for media samples The following paragraph will discuss relevant Internet domains and search terms in order to provide a sample.

5.2   Sampling criteria for data collection

The main question throughout this thesis is to answer "what do media say about crowding in Amsterdam?". First of all, the Internet search engines **Google.com** and **Google.de** were used to collect relevant data. The search engine Google was chosen as it is considered as the most accurate, as well as the most available for inhabitants of the English- and German speaking countries. However, it is crucial which specific search terms will be entered in order to collect useful data. Therefore, within the platform *Google.com* and *Google.de* following search terms have been entered:

- Google.com: "Amsterdam crowding"
- Google.com: "Crowding in Amsterdam"
- Google.com: "Amsterdam crowding media"
- Google.de: "Amsterdam überfüllt"
- Google.de: "Amsterdam überfüllt Medien"

First, the use of Google is helping to gather available online media. Therefore, the first 20 results from each above-mentioned search term were chosen, as they appeared as the most relevant ones for this research.

Second, Google was used to access the relevant country-by-country digital medias. Regarding that, the following search terms are entered:

- "Amsterdam überfüllt Deutschland"
- "Amsterdam überfüllt Österreich"
- "Amsterdam crowding UK"
- "Amsterdam crowding United States"
- "Amsterdam crowding Canada"
- "Amsterdam crowding Singapore"
- "Amsterdam crowding Australia"

These terms reveal important digital medias from source countries about how Amsterdam crowding is represented. Again, the first 20 results will be taken into account for data collection. As the algorithm for search results from Google changes frequently, the search was done on the same day. In fact, this prevents alterations in research findings and false conclusions.

Google.com uses advanced search features, which can be accessed via https://www.google.com/advanced_search (image 1). Those advanced search features were used to obtain precise and relevant online sources. Within this domain, the functions: Find pages with… "all these words", "this exact word or phrase" and Then narrow your results by… "language" and "terms appearing" will be adjusted. The same procedure was also used for Google.de. Therefore, the inputs for the English domain Google.com were as follows: Find pages with "Amsterdam crowding media", "Crowding Amsterdam". Then narrow your results by "English" and appearing "anywhere in the page". For the German domain Google.de the inputs used were: "Amsterdam überfüllt", "Amsterdam überfüllt Medien". Then narrow down your results by "German" and appearing "anywhere on the page".

Image 1: Google's advanced search

With this method, less traditional media, called new media, was collected. The Internet domains of the first 20 results were studied respectively, leading to a variety of Internet sources. Those include, e.g. tripadvisor.com, tripadvisor.uk, as well as various newspaper articles. Because of the nowadays high demanding services on the Internet, the sample will include online- and paper-based medias.

In addition to that, traditional, paper-based media with the widest circulation by each country was considered. Moreover, the research includes the most sold daily newspapers in order to consider the flow of information. Those will be the following:

- **Germany:** Bild, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, Die Welt, Handelsbatt, Tagesspiegel
- **Austria:** Krone Zeitung, Der Standard, Heute
- **UK:** The Sun, Daily Mail, The Times and The Guardian
- **USA:** New York Times, USA Today, Daily Times, Los Angeles Times

- **Canada (English):** Toronto Star, The Globe & Mail
- **Singapore (English):** The Straits, The New Paper, Time
- **Australia:** Sydney Morning Harald, Harald Sun, The Australian

Archives of each newspaper listed above was investigated for articles including both terms "Amsterdam" and "crowding". As with online publications, the articles considered were limited to the years of publication from 2013 to 2017.

According to Adler and Clark (2011), sampling is the process of drawing a number of individual cases from a larger population. Moreover, sampling leads to higher data quality of the research. The target population of the study are country-by-country media discussing crowding in Amsterdam. The sampling frame for the Google researches is defined by google hits and consists of any media sources, traditional and less traditional, like newspapers, travel guides, TV, social media, blogs. For the investigation of print-based articles, all considerable articles based on the sampling criteria were used.

The data are from a variety of media sources, using a country-by-country nonprobability sample of existing medias, addressing crowding in the city of Amsterdam. The nonprobability sampling is used in exploratory research, being unable to all identify members of the population.
According to Adler and Clark (2011), for many exploratory studies and qualitative research, purposive sampling is of need. Purposive sampling is defined as "a non-probability sampling procedure that involves selecting elements based on the researcher's judgment about which elements will facilitate his or her investigation" (Adler & Clark, 2011). The used method, discourse analysis, is based on this sampling procedure.

5.3   Data analysis

Freely available media publications and consumer-generated content will be analyzed. Those will be studied using a discourse analysis, as this approach shares benefits in the practical effects of language and are an unintentional and interpretive technique of analysis (Parker & Burman, 1993).

Regarding that, discourse analysis empowers the researcher's own perceptions of meanings attached, in this case, to media representations. On the one hand, discourse analysis will commit a set of assumptions respecting the practical effects of language. On the other hand, the techniques for qualitative analyses of texts will not be administered. Thus, discourse analysis will enable the close examination of linguistic repertoires of media representations which are subject to differences within the social world.

Thus, discourse analysis allows to investigate how the media construct an argument and how this argument corresponds into broader social practices. Actually, it is crucial to get granular on author's statements when analysing media publications. This analysis can be divided in several steps, which are described below.

First step: Establish the context
In order to start, it is important to gather all of the material, know where it comes from and how it fits into the big picture. The relevance lies in the social setting and historical context of the sources used. Establishing the context contains identifying the sources' language, where it is coming from, when was it written, who wrote it, who published it and when. These sources get analyzed within their context of publication. All the references will be in the reference list and other data will be in the appendix.

Second step: Prepare sources for analysis
Before the main analysis, the researcher has to precisely prepare the gathered material. This step concerns questions like what data should be included or left out for analysis in order to receive the best outcomes. Referencing and digitalised sources were available.

Third step: Coding
As third step, open-coding has been implemented by summarizing media publications. As mentioned in the sampling criteria each country was taken into account to identify codes considering of what is being said, linking Amsterdam and crowding. These codes were chosen closely related towards the first research question "How do media represent crowding in Amsterdam?".

Fourth step: Examine the structure

Following, with the existing discourse strands of the codes, structural features of the text were identified. Structural features were seen as overpowering statement or phrase in connection to the discourse. Do different discourse strands imbricate within the text? Important in this step is to see if the arguments are putting forward, one-by-one, or are they considered the same throughout the text? Another example, does the argument first make an opposing-real case, only then to discredit that case and put forward the main argument?

Fifth step: Collect statement/arguments

For the fifth step, these main statement was used to establish a set of arguments based on what the media has written about crowding issues in Amsterdam. Discourse fragments with specific codes made it possible to identify their meaning, moreover what they have to say on the particular discourse strand. Collecting statements was found to be the best way of analyzing the validity the text establishes on each topic.

Sixth step: Identify linguistic tools

The last, sixth step, enlighted the outcome of the discourse analysis, moreover after identifying how the statements perform at the level of language. Here, separate coding of the data set were necessary in order to identify word groups, modalities, grammar features and evidentialities. In order to identify influences of a specific phenomenon, the researcher had to look specifically for the linguistic tools of the data set (Phillips & Hardy, 2002).

To conclude, in order to represent the media's discourses of crowding in Amsterdam, these steps were applied on each of the articles in the sample.

5.4 Limitations to Methodology

The methodology of doing discourse analysis has its limits. For the researcher it became difficult to successfully analyze collected data. First, according to Phillips and Hardy (2002) standardized methods that exist in quantitative approaches are not suitable for discourse analysis, as well as it concerns too mechanical and systematic examinations of text and language. Second, as the aim is to identify multiple meanings assigned to texts, systematic forms (like in content analysis) are prejudicial because of their fast unification of categories. Third, discourse analysis aims on reading between the lines, putting forward a set of arguments which are written between the lines. However, there is no profitable data analysis specified.

Limitations regarding the data collection appeared as different search terms showed the same or very similar results. Through that the number of different articles used decreased and the sampling size appears bigger than it actually is.

6 Results

15 out of 100 online media articles, as well as three consumer-generated blogs link the issue of crowding and Amsterdam between 2013 and 2017. In terms of the respected countries, USA, UK and Germany were identified writing about crowding in Amsterdam. But, also The Netherlands contributes addressing this issue. In fact, the countries Austria, Canada, Singapore and Australia did not produce any relevant data on the issue of crowding in Amsterdam. Most published media articles addressing crowding in Amsterdam were found online. However, the German and British newspapers Die Zeit (2017), Tagesspiegel (2017), Süddeutsche Zeitung (2017), The Guardian (2016) and Daily Times (2016) published articles about crowding both online and in their print version. No articles solely published as print version were found.

The data was analyzed through discourse analysis. For that the articles and statements were firstly coded and subsequently analyzed. Based on 15 media articles and consumer generated contents, general findings as well as four key aspects were found.

General findings

Online-based media findings revealed certain issues regarding overcrowding in Amsterdam. Media reporting about overcrowding sees it as an issue to be solved. Discourse analysis showed that much media tried to call attention to the issue but also support Amsterdam in solving this problem. The articles mainly approach the topic in four different ways which are giving advice, calling out warnings, comparing the issue with other touristic cities and finding reasonable solutions. It was found that the way of reporting differs between traditional and less traditional media. While traditional media publishers like NLtimes (2016) analyse the problem and give advice based on overcrowding, less traditional media often includes striking warnings and refers to a stakeholder interview. There has also a difference between German and English speaking articles identified. Whilst German newspapers aim to advise its readers about how to increase the tourism experience, English speaking articles address several issues regarding the impacts of overcrowding. Furthermore, it was found that the country of search did not influence the relevant output. In fact, the search result addressing this topic were identical. However, the google.com search did not only display content generated by newspapers from the respective source countries but also from Dutch English-speaking media like the NLtimes (2016) itself. In additions to those general findings, more detailed information can be extracted regarding those four key aspects.

Advices

Several media publications were found to advise Amsterdam about issues and, in their opinion, most feasible solution to an overcrowding problem. In fact, problem descriptions are followed up by advices for improvement. Those advises address the mitigation of crowding effects as well as decreasing crowding by limiting the demand.

The Netherlands was found to be already advised by the issue of crowding. The NLtimes (2016) reports about a seven step plan to reduce problems of crowding. Amsterdam is said to take efforts to reducing crowding by improving traffic infrastructure, and "considering the limits of growth and the effects private rentals have on the cities' tourism effects" (NLtimes, 2016). It was found that the Destination Management Organisation Iamsterdam (2017) publishes tourism advice in German, English and Dutch to better reach its main target groups. Main discussion points range from advance planning, flexible opening hours, the Rijksmuseum, the Anne-Frank house and exploring the city by

bike. This information can be found easily accessible on the Internet. In an google.com internet search, also American publications about crowding mitigation are found.

The US-American online news pages Citiscope (2015) and Citylab (2017) advise structural changes. Citiscope (2015) here publishes about crowding from an opportunistic perspective. They cite Amsterdam's mayor Eberhard van der Laan who sees crowding indeed as a problem, however as "luxury problem" (para. 5) which shrinking municipalities in the Netherlands "would love to have" (para. 5). Concrete structural changes like new hotel concepts and attractions outside the city center are used as advices for change.

Also the US-American online newspage Citylab (2017) advises for structural changes. They published that the cycling organization 'Amsterdamized' claims that it is of need to rethink the infrastructure use, "as cycling dominates city transit of between 65 to 70 percent of journeys take place by bike, but only get 11 percent of road space." The main statement put forward is to advise Amsterdam to follow Utrecht on using bike couriers instead of vans. To do so they advice Amsterdam to extend bike lanes and reduce the car's shared space.

A second well advised topic by Dutch publishers are ways of balancing the cities growth with the local's quality of life. According to Iamsterdam (2015), respective measures are taken for the limits of growth. It is clearly underlined that Amsterdam attracts high numbers of tourists. The number of residents as well as the number of visitors is growing. The signal sent out to the public states that "it is time to determine a course that ensures the city remains attractive for everyone, residents and tourists" (iamsterdam, 2015). Referring to the document "City in Balance", which explains the city's success, the document provides a list of regulations Amsterdam is investigating with to improve the current situation. Here, the media tries to awaken locals to think about the future for their own city. Underlining the importance of keeping the typical Amsterdam feeling within the city and not losing it due to lack of infrastructure and nuisance. According to Amsterdam Marketing (2015), technology, called iBeacon, is tested to reduce nuisance caused by overcrowding at festivals in the inner circle of Amsterdam.

On the other hand, targeting the demand side, the Westdeutsche Zeitung (2017) takes action in advising tourists to travel in low periods. It publishes that Autumn would be the right time to travel to the Dutch capital as the city is too crowded with tourists during summer season. The German media publisher therefore advises German tourists to change their time of travel to reduce overcrowding for an enhanced tourism experience, an advice which tries to solve the problem in the demand rather than to mediate its effects. Also Iamsterdam (2017) addresses important tips for tourists to avoid crowds, establishing a schedule for visitors to explore the city during off-peak hours.

Next to advising, some newspapers take a step further and call out warnings about crowding effects. Rather than advising the city of Amsterdam or tourists on certain steps, here the attention of the problem is called upon.

Warnings

This section will discuss the potential warnings about negative impacts Amsterdam has to deal with. Signals of warning include statements regarding negative effects on tourism and local life due to crowding.

Firstly, warnings about Amsterdam losing its tourism attraction due to tourist overcrowding are discussed. The importance of the overcrowding problem is emphasized by stating warnings like "it gets worse", "something needs to be done" and "Amsterdam is losing its attraction" (NLtimes, 2016). According to the NLtimes (2016) "Amsterdam is getting overcrowded with tourists and forecasts show that this will only get worse". Moreover, the Dutch publisher NLtimes, approaches tourists critically and makes tourists responsible for crowding effects.

Secondly, Citiscope (2015) warns about the impact of high numbers of tourists on the every-day life of Amsterdam's citizens. Regarding that, Iminternational.nl (2017) draws its attention to the fact that Amsterdam citizens suffer from the overcrowding created by tourism. Due to the high economic potential in tourism, companies focused on Amsterdam's citizens get replaced by companies focused on tourists, making the city center a less and less appealing place of own identity and for its own residents. "The fear is that this encourages citizens to avoid the city center, leading to a city center without soul" (Iminternational, 2017), creating negative externalities. Since 2001, Amsterdam

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experienced a market increase in tourism with visitor numbers of up to 25 per cent (Iamexpat, 2016) especially during the summer months (Westdeutsche Zeitung, 2016).

Thirdly, warnings addressed by Citylab (2017) include crowding issues on Amsterdam's roads and infrastructure problems. It is highlighted that "even the Dutch might be struggling to keep up with the demand for bike lanes" (Citylab, 2017). It draws a picture of bike lanes filling up and tourists and locals squeezing through the streets which decreases the tourism experience. The idea of using bikes to deliver parcels is seen critical.

Furthermore, Iamexpat.nl (2016) writes about Amsterdam's future vision. The main questions raised are "What will Amsterdam be like in the future?" as well as "What kind of developments will the city experience over the next 20 years?". The publisher reports about crowding in the city and visitor types stating that "Amsterdam relies heavily on tourism. The city is currently experiencing a market increase in tourism with visitor numbers to cultural institutions and festivals rising more than 15 and 25 percent since 2001 respectively." As concluding statement "Fragmentation is the future" another discourse is created, "Amsterdam will be to maintain solidarity in a fragmented society" (Iamexpat.nl, 2016).

The Guardian (2016), on the other hand, addresses crowding issues in context of hotel facility provision. As Airbnb, a website allowing house owners around the world to rent out their spare room, creates enormous influx of visitors, it becomes of danger that some of Europe's most attractive historic cities would transform negatively. According to Mark Tanzer, chief executive of the Association of British Travel Agents, "overcrowding in key destinations is becoming a pressing issue. Without controls, we know tourism can kill tourism." Here, tourism can kill tourism is an important aspect of the article making the reader closely think of how this phenomenon would work. The idea behind it is hidden in the media's statements. First, by having unregulated, private houses used as hotel facilities of guests, the city will definitely will become even more crowded. This in fact leads to more crowding within the inner city of Amsterdam creating negative impacts on the city, negative tourist experiences and maybe a bad reputation of Amsterdam's image. Second, with rising tourist numbers due to uncontrolled facilities like Airbnb, the city will focus even more on serving tourists needs leading to minimizing local needs.

Solutions

Different from advises, solutions are measures presented by international media which are known to be already implemented by policy makers and local stakeholders. Those measures are published in multiple articles and address the expanding of tourism space and decreasing tourism numbers.

Firstly, "Amsterdam Schiphol airport opened a new temporary departure hall to alleviate crowding in the busy summer season" (DutchNews, 2017) in order to decrease overcrowding on departure desks, baggage handling and passport control. The new temporary departure hall only handles travelers within the Schengen area and is therefore a direct response to the high increase in European short term visitors to Amsterdam.

Secondly, ongoing investigations of the question *How can "touristification" be solved?* is addressed by iminternational.nl (2016), stating decreasing mass tourism and increasing the number of tourists with high spending is essential. By attracting tourists with higher purchasing power, "such as families, instead of less affluent backpackers and young people", this reorientation in target groups is seen as the most feasible solution. Therefore, the municipality of Amsterdam starts a concept to steer towards regulation by managing the tourist offer like hotels, ice-cream shops, and other tourism-focused facilities (iminternational.nl, 2016).

Thirdly, the Amsterdamse Binnenstad Vereiniging (2016) proposed limiting the tourism supply. Regulations on how many tourism-based facilities can be there will protect companies that already exist. The aim is to decrease market competition and increase prices. Herewith, an decreasing demand and less overcrowding is hoped for (Iminternational, 2016). Regarding that, existing companies will receive higher profits. However, by decreasing competition, innovation becomes less of a desire.

Fourthly, iminternational.nl (2016) suggests a solution for touristification by establishing a so called Pigouyian tax, imposed on products and services having negative externalities. Negative externalities are seen as "when two people make a deal (say, you pay a hotel to sleep in their room for a night), and a third person ends up with a problem because of this (say, you make a lot of noise outside the hotel at night, keeping the neighbours awake)" (iminternational, 2016). To solve negative externalities of

touristification, like overcrowding in the city centre, drug abuse, overmuch tourist facilities and crowding out services, taxes are established. These taxes will help Amsterdam to solve current problems regarding "public transport, cleaning the city center, or preventing public disturbances caused by tourists" (iminternational, 2016).

Amsterdam versus Berlin

The last theme addresses the comparison of crowding between Amsterdam and another city with similar issues. Within the sample, one media publication on the comparison between Amsterdam and Berlin was found.

The Tagesspiegel (2017) compares the German capital, Berlin, with the Dutch capital, Amsterdam. The city of Berlin is complaining about too many tourists visiting the city, destroying the atmosphere and uniqueness of the German capital (Tagesspiegel, 2017). Creating a discourse, Berlin's famous street "Unter den Linden" (engl. "under the lime") could be redefined as "Unter den Touristen"(engl. "under the tourists") (Tagesspiegel, 2017). The article immediately reacts to this statement reporting Berlin should not complain. Compared to Amsterdam, Berlin has four times as many inhabitants in an area which is ten times as big which makes the tourist share and density lower. Creating a discourse, Amsterdam is here outlined as an extreme case which Germans have not seen before.

Regarding that Tagesspiegel writes about space and compares the two cities with each other, being in favor of Amsterdam's tradition and world-openness: "The city of Amsterdam is friendly to everyone, and adjusted them to nowadays globalized world standards" (Tagesspiegel, 2017).

Further the author draws upon tourists getting around town. He highlights that biking in Berlin is worse than in Amsterdam, not in numbers creating crowding but in terms of respecting other people on the streets. The idea behind contradictory: bikes create crowding in Amsterdam but using them still is safer than using a bike in the German capital. However, there the bike is not of tradition and people tend to use, due to Berlin's large space, cars or public transport to go around town. Tagesspiegel claims that intervening this makes Berlin much more relaxing, for all citizen as well as visitors from all around the world. In its discourse, a negative travel advice for Amsterdam due to issues on crowding.

Summary

The results show discourses about crowding around four topics, namely advises, warnings, solutions and comparisons. The topic of crowding and crowding mitigation appears to be a greatly contested topic with many different positions. Media publishing about crowding in Amsterdam may target one of the following stakeholders. Firstly, citiscope (2015) was found to address young and creative tourists which are interested in the unique atmosphere of Amsterdam and are looking for possibilities to avoid tourism crowds. Secondly, several articles were found to target locals either to draw attention to the need to local co-creation in solving the issues (iamsterdam, 2015) or to inform about future developments (imexpat.nl, 2016). Herewith often hard facts are used and academic language, on the one hand, makes content appear statistically correct but, on the other hand, directly targets educated people and locals. Articles targeted towards locals or composed by locals were found to touch upon a hostile attitude by making tourisms solely responsible for crowding effects (NLtimes, 2016) and describe them as the "traffic" (Tripadvisor, 2017).

Also the feasibility of solutions is highly debated and many questions remain unanswered. There are media publications which make the reader ask himself: why are all these great plans not implemented? (citiscope, 2015) or whether crowding leads to fragmentation of Amsterdam's inhabitants (imexpat.nl, 2016). There are articles which consider crowding just being a part of Amsterdam (imexpat.nl, 2016) and those which openly call spatial planning to account of crowding (citiscope, 2015). With the help of comparisons the publications try to illustrate and support their point of view. They help the reader to realize the dimensions of overcrowding (DutchNews, 2017) and make him think how the phenomenon works (The Guardian, 2016). Comparisons may also influence tourism decision making by describing it as more crowded than Berlin (Tagesspiegel, 2017) or German Christmas markets (Tripadvisor, 2017).

Furthermore, stylistic devices are used to deliver a message. Next to the way of phrasing as discussed earlier, they also use, for instance, irony like in the statement of "Amsterdam is just too beautiful" (Westdeutsche Zeitung, 2016). Also the thematic construction of the paragraph supports the readers leaded understanding. This can seen in the article of NLtimes (2016) which draws upon problems and immediately after comforts the reader by explaining the efforts Amsterdam takes against those.

7   Discussion and Reflection

For discussion the results and literature review will be put in context. The literature review shows that no link between crowding and tourism destinations have been researched yet. In fact, this link has been able to be drawn within the results. Media of various countries do present crowding and address issues as well as suggest solutions. Thus, this research present adds to this research gap. Various literature with the link between crowding and Amsterdam were identified whereas some countries appeared to be interested solely in tourism, others also in the local population.

The present findings extend existing research linking tourist crowding to the destination of Amsterdam, by analyzing source countries media in four ways. First, the findings strengthen the research by Stokols (1972) that overcrowding results in restrictions of place and social activities. Hereby, tourism crowding diminishes positive tourist experiences, leading towards dissatisfaction during travels. Second, perceived crowding varies highly by person. Findings uncover that one person might see Amsterdam as overcrowded, while the other might not. However, perceived crowding gets intensified by low resource availability and high tourist numbers, but also by origin. Therefore, German media perceives crowding issues different than for instance Dutch media. While Dutch media concentrates on solving issues, German media sees it as a part of Amsterdam which needs to be lived with.

Third, findings strengthen existing crowding research in the field of the urban environment. The results disclose important insights on how to deal with crowding in context to destinations. By establishing four themes, namely advices, warnings, solutions and Amsterdam versus Berlin, tourist destinations might be able to assess their issues. Fourth, findings from the applied discourse analysis exposes how written texts, discourse language, assemble phenomena, tourist crowding. In fact, results from the discourse analysis address how different source countries see Amsterdam's position as tourist destination and reveal valuable signals to either steer, deal or mitigate overcrowding.

Advising Amsterdam

The discourse finding, advices, extend existing research in four ways respectively. Firstly, a major finding contributes to the fact that the Netherlands is already advised by the issue of tourist crowding. Media reveals that Amsterdam established measures to limit growth as well as to improve infrastructure. Amsterdam Marketing has a stake on addressing this issue and is steering for solution. By advising German, English and Dutch speaking tourists, Amsterdam Marketing tries to put less pressure on the inner city center.

However, secondly, because of the work done by Dutch publishers on advising tourists, a secondary crowding might evolve adding towards the research gap. Secondary crowding is seen as the media tries to mitigate overcrowding by advising tourists, but in fact creates new crowds. This occurs for example by publishing about visiting timeframes for the Anne Frank house or Rijksmuseum.

Thirdly, findings uncover that media advises about structural changes, like issues on infrastructure make crowding possible in first place. Thus, no research study has been investigated on that topic. Structural changes include new hotel concepts as well as steering Amsterdam's tourist offer outside the inner circle of the city, advising for change.

Lastly, especially the German media advises people to visit Amsterdam during low season as during summer season the Dutch capital will be overcrowded and overused. The media demonstrates that negative externalities are created by attracting too many tourists and having low resource availability. It is argued that in summer the city will be joyless, packed tourist sights hinder positive experiences on sites like Dam Square and Leidseplein. Established schedules for visitors might work during low season, however, second crowds will be unavoidable.

Warning Amsterdam

The discourse findings, warnings, further extend existing research in four ways. Firstly, the link between media's tourism crowding representations and discourse has been established. Warnings are signals which are send out by the creation of negative aspects Amsterdam has to deal with. Here, perceived crowding can lead to these negative aspects, like negative tourist experiences (Vaske & Shelby, 2008). Secondly, the impact of high numbers of tourists on the every-day life of Amsterdam's

citizens is put forward. This is a contested topic as locals perceive crowding different than tourists not coming from a major tourist destination. However, results also uncover that tourists coming from a tourist destination like Berlin or Barcelona perceive crowding differently. In fact, Amsterdam has to manage crowding, in order to avoid loss of reputation and unsatisfied tourists.

Thirdly, findings uncover that Amsterdam is turning into a complete tourist city, pushing local citizen out of the inner city center. This warns Amsterdam about the fact of losing its identity and soul. The city has to start managing tourists, organizing tourist flows or even implement rules and regulations (Popp, 2012), so the traditional feeling within the Dutch capital won't be ruined. How would Amsterdam be like in future? a topic discussed by Iamexpat.nl (2016) signals the above-mentioned point as well.

Fourthly, findings on the warning discourse reveal that "without controls, tourism can kill tourism" a point mentioned by The Guardian (2016). Higher tourist numbers increase the demand for hotel facilities and other tourism-based services, diminishing local services. This gives rise to uncontrolled hotel provisioning like Airbnb's. In fact, increasing tourist numbers lead to negative aspects like social-density and unsustainability as researched by Vaske and Donnelly (2002) and Neuts and Nijkamp (2012). The media discusses potential issues of overcrowding resulting in future fragmentation of the city and its society.

Solutions

The discourse findings, solutions, extend existing research in three ways. Firstly, the link between advices and solutions has been established. Advices for Amsterdam have been announced without the city's reactions on that topic, solutions include reactions as well as implementations of regulation measures. Some media is steering for solutions, respectively, all from the Netherlands. Solving the issue of crowding starts by handling the increasing number of tourist arrivals in Amsterdam. Neuts and Nijkamp (2012) discussed that tourism crowding is seen as too many tourists visit a particular destination at the same time. However, DutchNews (2017) reports the the airport Amsterdam Schiphol solves crowds by opening an extra departure hall.

Secondly, a major finding crucial for Amsterdam's future is how "touristification" can be solved. Prior research on socio-cultural crowding by Arnberger & Haider (2007) addresses that this might lead towards "touristification" if it is not properly managed. "Touristification" is a major issue many destinations have to deal with, not only Amsterdam. It can be seen as crowding, transforming the city into a tourism metropolis. In order to stop "touristification", Iminternational (2016) addresses to mitigate mass tourism by attracting tourists with high purchasing power. The municipality of Amsterdam already works on regulating the tourism offer.

Thirdly, to mitigate "touristification", overcrowding, posing taxes on products and services with negative externalities (Iminternational, 2016) thrives for solution. This adds to the research by Popp (2012) as urban tourism flourishes and overcrowding is acknowledged. With taxes the city of Amsterdam can solve crowding, preventing public disturbances and nuisance.

Comparing Amsterdam

The discourse finding, comparison, is found in one media publication revealing crowding issues within Berlin and Amsterdam. Berlin is a major tourist destination like Amsterdam. However, how come that urban tourism might diminishes in one of the cities more than the other? According to the Tagesspiegel (2017) Berlin is much bigger than Amsterdam leading to less potential of tourism crowding than in Amsterdam. Amsterdam troubles with handling tourist masses while the same situation in Berlin is rather on traditions and world-openness than overcrowding. Berlin's soul of the globalized world has not been established. However, due to lacking management of crowds and infrastructure, negative travel advices are created.

Limitations

I acknowledge a number of limitations of the findings. The sample of 15 media articles constraints reasoning to larger populations outside of the study. Moreover, as with most empirical social science studies, a higher number of media publications would have improved the validity of the findings. Concerns about processing collected data and analyzing data, regarding the selected method discourse analysis, prevented myself from an detailed step-by-step research procedure (Phillips & Hardy, 2002). Discourses in general can be interpreted and analyzed in different ways. Therefore, the

discourses put forward by the media are perceived findings demonstrating the meanings behind, constructing phenomena. Furthermore, the reviewed literature addresses the issues of crowding in general and tourism crowding. However, the findings uncover thoughts represented by the media, which in fact cannot be generalized towards existing social science research.

8   Conclusion and further research

This thesis answered the research question "How does the media represent crowding in Amsterdam?". It becomes clear that all media from the respective source countries acknowledge crowding in Amsterdam as a problem to which tourism highly contributes. Structural changes and tourism specific changes are advised in all publications. Seven articles call upon warnings about negative development for both locals and tourists. Furthermore, reports about official methods against crowding in Amsterdam can be found. Finally, Dutch media was found to highly contribute to the online findings with the aim to steer tourism in the city. However, this has to be seen critically as secondary crowding may arise.

The second research question about how the media's source country influences crowding portrayls brought one main finding forward. All countries media agree on the problem, but aims to act upon the fact in two different ways. German media concentrates on advising tourists to mind peak time visits while Dutch. US-American and British publications discuss the overall issue. Also the tripadvisor statements of tourists from different source countries did not add additional knowledge to what was found in traditional and less traditional media publications. Within the English-speaking language area google.com search results did not differ. This leads to the conclusion that the differentiation in typology of crowding should not be done by source countries but rather by function in problem involvement, namely tourists, locals, tourism businesses and policymakers.

For this thesis further research is of need and should be investigated. First, as only German- and English-speaking countries have been studied, follow-up research could incorporate Dutch and other source countries media analyzing its representations of the connection between crowding and

Amsterdam. Thus, Amsterdam Marketing wants a detailed analysis of their Dutch media archive. In fact, this can be combined with this thesis. As media, published in English, of the Netherlands were already existing and analyzed, identifying weaknesses the city has to deal with, as well as to mention potential drivers and possible solutions, analyzing it with the knowledge of the Dutch language might support this research respectively.

Second, to approach this thesis from a different angle changing the methods as conducting questionnaires and interviews at the destination might be essential. Accordingly, where crowding becomes an issue, insights on the image of Amsterdam as well as crucial information about tourist experiences and opinions about overcrowding might be revealed.

By linking these two approaches with each other, Amsterdam Marketing could use these results to further gain knowledge about this topic, but also find possible solutions leading towards tourism regulations to mitigate crowds.

9   Acknowledgements

10   References

Note: *References on the sources of research findings can be found in Appendix 11.1 and 11.2.*

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11   Appendix

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