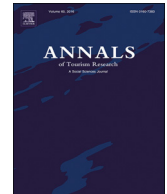


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Research note

Solastalgia: An application in the overtourism context

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Introduction

Urban tourism has increased significantly year-to-year, however, many cities have not completely considered the risks associated with this unfettered growth (Clavé, 2019; Novy, 2019). This strategic failing has led to a tense ratio of residents-to-visitors in some urban spaces and is starting to generate additional difficulties for residents who must compete with tourists for local resources (Clavé, 2019; Mody, Suess, & Dogru, 2019). Clear examples of this phenomenon include urban destinations where historical visitor centers have been converted into visitor-oriented environments that service an excessive number of unpredictable tourists in search of a personalized experience (Fayos-Solà & Cooper, 2019). Not only do such processes of homogenization lead to a lack of diversity, they also encourage emerging concepts such as ‘disneyfication’ (lack of surprise) or ‘Mcdonaldization’ (lack of risk) (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018; Novy, 2019) to take hold and dramatically change urban landscapes in new and untold ways. The term ‘overtourism’ is in place here (Novy, 2019), which as Namberger, Jackisch, Schmude, and Karl (2019) state is illustrated by a jeopardized social carry capacity in destinations, resulting in residents suffering from the consequences and changes to their lifestyles and general well-being. As a result, an increasing number of critical residents’ groups are speaking up in an attempt to protect their everyday life and local practices (Colomb & Novy, 2016; Füller & Michel, 2014; Seraphin, Sheeran & Pilato, 2018).

Governments have started to respond to urban tourism demands by underwriting initiatives to improve public spaces and landscapes in order to reinforce their attractiveness for visitors and stimulate investment capital (Clavé, 2019), however, there appears to be no clear win-win situation for all stakeholders. The relationship between the growth of urban tourism and the subsequent socioeconomic restructuring of high frequented urban destinations raises fundamental questions for practitioners and academics and has been under close scrutiny. A large number of studies have observed residents’ attitudes toward urban tourism developments and identified a list of factors that influence those attitudes. However, there is a decided lack of research on how residents perceive tourism and the potential distress that tourism may cause them. Thus, this paper is led by the question of whether concerns about tourism in an urban destination can lead to feelings of distress among residents.

In environmental psychology, a relatively new measure of residents’ responses to negative changes in their home environment is referred to as *solastalgia*. Borrowing from the idea of nostalgia, Albrecht introduced the concept of solastalgia in 2007 as “the homesickness you feel when you’re still at home.” Albrecht (2010) intended to describe solastalgia as an existential melancholia experienced as a consequence of the desolation of a loved home environment, also perceived as ‘looking back’ to a positively perceived feeling associated with a given place in the past. Residents who experience feelings of solastalgia lack the comfort of the current relationship their ‘home’ previously offered (Albrecht, 2010). In the context of environmental studies, the concept has been applied to understand places that have been drastically transformed due to climate change or external forces (Askland & Bunn, 2018).

This study focuses on the resident as the subject of interrogation who is located on the periphery of urban tourism queries, arguing

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Table 1
Summary statistics — measurement constructs.

Item	M (SD)	Factor loadings	α	AVE
Positive affective feelings (Von Wirth, Grêt-Regamey, Moser, & Stauffacher, 2016)	2.65 (0.98)		0.90	0.86
<i>How do you feel about tourism in your city?</i>				
Hopeful	2.52 (1.30)	0.98		
Happy	2.54 (1.29)	0.89		
Excited	2.54 (1.26)	0.95		
Proud	3.02 (1.29)	0.90		
Curious	2.89 (1.33)	0.90		
Negative affective feelings (Von Wirth et al., 2016)	2.26 (0.84)		0.84	0.85
<i>How do you feel about tourism in your city?</i>				
Angry	2.32 (1.20)	0.94		
Threatened	2.08 (1.17)	0.92		
Shocked	2.15 (1.25)	0.91		
Frustrated	2.71 (1.36)	0.92		
Tourism concern (Chen & Tung, 2014)	3.74 (0.82)		0.85	0.65
I am extremely worried about the state of tourism and what it will mean for my future	3.39 (1.13)	0.82		
Tourists are severely harming the city	3.26 (1.25)	0.79		
I think tourism-related problems are very important	3.78 (0.94)	0.81		
I think tourism-related problems cannot be ignored	4.30 (0.75)	0.77		
I think we should care more about tourism-related problems	4.06 (0.93)	0.83		
Solastalgia (Albrecht, 2010)	3.30 (0.94)		0.83	0.76
Sad when city is degraded due to tourism	3.57 (1.21)	0.91		
I am worried that valued aspects of the city are being lost	3.55 (1.20)	0.90		
I am sad that habits and an authentic lifestyle are disappearing	3.31 (1.23)	0.78		
I am ashamed of the way the city looks now	2.98 (1.24)	0.85		
The sense of belonging to the city is undermined by tourism	3.19 (1.34)	0.92		

Note: '1' strongly disagree–'5' strongly agree.

that the loss of the distinctive attractiveness and distortion of cultural identity in urban destinations can be perceived as a drastic unwanted transformation for residents (Searle & Gow, 2010). In doing so, this paper has two aims; to introduce a new framework for tourism scholars in order to measure residents' responses to excessive tourism developments in their urban home environments and to consider residents' affective feelings and concerns regarding contemporary urban tourism.

Sample and measurement

The capital of the Netherlands, Amsterdam, was used as the study setting, given that the destination has significant challenges with large tourist arrivals and negative spill-overs effects (Koens et al., 2018). An extensive panel supported by the municipality resulted in a total of 1023 surveys. As seen in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha (α) and AVE are above the recommended cut-offs, and the square root of the AVE for each construct was higher than the inter-construct correlations, thus, showing the scale reliability and discriminant validity (Hair, Anderson, Babin, & Black, 2010).

The respondents' profile demonstrated the following distribution of gender: 55.6% (576) men, 41.7% (423) women, and 0.1% (1) other, and an average age of 55.97 ($SD = 13.56$). The respondents live in various neighborhoods of Amsterdam that have varying levels of tourist density. Only 3.4% indicated that they work in the tourism industry directly. The majority of the respondents also reported that they have lived in the city for more than 30 years (59.4%) in comparison to one-third of the respondents who have lived in the city for 10–30 years (31.8%), and the smallest sample that has lived in the city for less than 10 years (0.9–1.0%).

Findings

Based on the sample mean, residents' positive affective feelings toward tourism are slightly significantly higher than their negative affective feelings (positive; $M = 2.65$, $SD = 0.98$, negative $M = 2.25$, $SD = 0.84$, difference $M = 0.41$, $p < .001$), residents feel proud but they also experience feelings of being angry. In terms of solastalgia, residents' are in particular sad to see how the city is degraded due to tourism. Furthermore, those residents that think cities should care more about tourism-related problems, are also worried that valued aspects of the city are being lost ($p < .001$).

To test how tourism concern and affective feelings can explain the feeling of solastalgia, hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. The set of variables on personal traits (age, gender, and length of residency) were entered first, followed by the affective feelings (positive and negative), and the third step, tourism concern, was added to the model (see Table 2).

Model 1, including the personal traits, explained 10% of the variance in solastalgia ($R^2 = .10$, $F = 4.931$) = $p < .001$). In particular, the role of gender ($\beta = 0.102$, $t = 3.198$, $p < .01$) significantly influences the distress caused by tourism, more specifically women, given that as Warsini (2015) postulates, women tend to be more reactive to psychological distress. Model 2, the affective feelings, positive emotions ($\beta = -0.302$, $t = -12.021$, $p < .001$) and negative emotions ($\beta = 0.501$, $t = 20.015$, $p < .001$), are significantly related to solastalgia. The model adds 38.4% explanatory power to the model (R^2 change = .38, F

Table 2
Results from the hierarchical multiple regression.

	Solastalgia					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β	ΔR^2	β
<i>Step 1: Personal variables</i>	0.010**		0.10**		0.10**	
Age		0.009		0.038		0.012
Gender		0.102**		0.063***		0.037***
Length of residency		0.053		0.029		0.038
<i>Step 2: Affective feelings</i>			0.38*		0.38*	
Positive feelings				-0.302**		-0.113*
Negative feelings				0.503**		0.220*
<i>Step 3: Tourism concerns</i>					0.22*	0.592*
R^2	0.010**		0.39*		0.61*	
F	4.931**		130.086*		262.957*	
ΔF	4.931**		314.455*		559.354*	

Note: β = standardized beta coefficients.

* $p < .001$.

** $p < .01$.

*** $p < .05$

change = 314.455, $p < .001$). Lastly, tourism concern was added to the model ($\beta = 0.592$, $t = 23.651$, $p < .001$), demonstrating an additional 21.8% explanation of the variance of solastalgia (R^2 change = .22, F change = 559.354, $p < .001$). The best-fitting model that is able to explain solastalgia is model 3, including the personal variables (only gender), affective negative and positive emotions, and tourism concerns.

Discussion

This work indicates that residents who experience negative affective feelings about their changing home environments as a result of contemporary urban tourism developments also feel distressed about it. The fact that residents are starting to feel distanced and sad about the development of their home environments should be alarming for urban planners. The promising R^2 value of solastalgia hints at a need to further explore this concept in order to better understand the effects of the continued development of urban destinations. Additionally, these results add much-needed empirical evidence to the debate on transformative and problematic destinations while also laying the foundation for future research on this important issue in tourism research. As this present study is a part of a larger investigation to understand the role of contemporary tourism developments in determining residents' sense of place and associated feelings of distress, more research is needed to increase our understanding of how residents perceive their homes destinations and which factors moderate residents' feelings of solastalgia.

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