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Research paper

Managing overtourism in collaboration: The case of 'From Capital City to Court City', a tourism redistribution policy project between Amsterdam and The Hague

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ABSTRACT

This article goes deeper into the need for redistribution of tourists at highly popular destinations suffering from overtourism on the one hand and the added value of collaboration on the other. The article shows the possibilities and constraints secondary destinations are facing which seek to promote themselves with the assistance of the tourism redistribution policy of a primary destination that suffers from overtourism. The study focusses on the tourism cooperation agreement 'From Capital City to Court City' between Amsterdam and The Hague in the Netherlands. The research was conducted by means of a mixed method approach (desk research, expert interviews and a visitor survey with 155 visitors assessed). The agreement has moderate success, but the balance between cooperation and competition is difficult. To some extent this is due to the fact that tourists expect a destination (in our case, The Hague) to have and promote its own, distinguishable profile that becomes a reason to travel, not related to the primary destination (here Amsterdam). Further, it is very difficult to make visitors change their minds about places to visit and activities to do *during* their stay, because they have little time and do not feel like changing plans. If they do, they might add rather than substitute days for visiting a secondary destination. A pre-travel promotion of an *integrated* product on the one hand with *distinguishable* DNAs on the other hand is recommended but challenging, since this implies a bridging of intrinsically opposite concepts.

1. Introduction

Amsterdam is a well-known example among cities which face difficulties regarding overcrowding and nuisance as a consequence of tourism (Gerritsma, 2019; Neuts & Vanneste, 2017). Similar problems have arisen in cities such as Venice, Barcelona, Dubrovnik, etc (Brandajs & Russo, 2019; Mendoza de Miguel et al., 2020; Panayiotopoulos & Pisano, 2019; Séraphin, Sheeran, & Pilato, 2018). The problem is not new or at least, the signs were detected already in the nineties (Van der Borg et al., 1996) and early 2000s (Russo & Van der Borg, 2002), but the use of concepts of overcrowding and especially overtourism have only recently become common practice. Due to the rapid growth in tourist arrivals globally, destinations like these are facing difficulties. Negative consequences of overcrowding imply overloaded infrastructure; less positive experiences of tourists; threats to or the destruction of culture, nature or heritage; and alienation from a local inhabitant's perspective. According to UNWTO (2018), several definitions of 'overtourism' have emerged such as "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way" (Skift, in UNWTO, 2018, p. 4) or "destinations where hosts or guests, locals or visitors, feel that there are too many visitors and that the quality of life in the area or the quality of the experience has deteriorated unacceptably" (Responsible Tourism Partnership, in UNWTO, 2018, p. 4).

One of the measures to counteract overcrowding and its negative consequences is to limit the amount of visitors that can visit a destination at once, as is the case in Dubrovnik (Coffey, 2017). One can attempt product differentiation and market segmentation (Romão et al., 2015) which might increase tourists' satisfaction, but not decrease their numbers. Another possible measure is the redistribution of tourists, aiming to shift visitors from the most overcrowded parts of a destination to less crowded or unknown parts within the destination but without consensus (e.g. the whole debate on the Golden Triangle in Bruges, Janusz et al., 2017). Therefore spill-over initiatives towards other

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destinations might be more successful. A redistribution strategy on a regional level is not new, but it was used particularly to develop underused tourism destinations in the vicinity of a primary destination (e.g. Bencivenga et al., 2017), rather than to lower tourism pressures in the primary destination in the first place. Notwithstanding that one can go with the other, this kind of redistribution needs specific actions and collaboration between destinations, and the willingness to do so is not to be taken for granted (Van der Zee, Gerrets, & Vanneste, 2017).

Many papers on tourism and hospitality are based on data gathered in the field and get blamed for lacking theorization. At the same time, much conceptual work on collaboration and networking claims positive effects while only limited evidence from the field is available; in other words, these papers neglect to explore the implementation gap (Stoffelen & Vanneste, 2016; Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015). Therefore, this research starts from a specific agreement on managing overtourism, trying to understand to what extent and why it did (not) work. Therefore, this article will concentrate on the implementation of a redistribution project *between* destinations, focussing on the conditions (and constraints) that make a redistribution between primary and secondary destinations (not) successful. The aim of the article can also be put in another way: to gain insights in the possibilities and constraints secondary destinations are facing which aim to promote themselves with the assistance of the tourism redistribution policy of a primary destination, in mutual collaboration. The tourism cooperation agreement 'From Capital City to Court City' between Amsterdam and The Hague in the Netherlands is the case, which allows us to go beyond general discourse on the benefits of collaboration. Pros and cons balance between 'generally valid' and 'very specific' due to the play of local contexts. The research question following from the aim expressed above can be formulated as follows: What are the lessons learned from a real life collaboration agreement between a primary and secondary destination in view of managing overtourism in the one and promoting more tourism in the other?

To elaborate on this aim, the research dives deeper into the 'From Capital City to Court City' campaign, after reviewing literature on overcrowding in tourist destinations, redistribution policies, collaboration versus competition in tourism, spill-over effects of tourism flows and destination selection of tourists. The purpose is to allow a broader interpretation of the results from the empirical research. The fieldwork addresses the supply side (interviews with experts) as well as the demand site (visitors survey). The latter focusses on the question if 'From Capital City to Court City', effectively gives rise to an overspill or, in other words, if incorporating a promotion of The Hague in Amsterdam (Klein, 2017; Van den Ijssel, 2017), leads to a shift of visitors to The Hague, for example as a day visitor or during a repeat visit. Therefore, this research monitors if the agreement is serving its purpose and how processes behind it should be understood. This also refers to the way collaboration is organised and experienced. Of course, an 'agreement' implies collaboration or cooperation, but since two different destinations are at stake, competition can continue to play a part. Therefore, the conclusion will try to give the coopetition between both destinations further consideration.

2. Understanding the concepts

'Overtourism' was already defined in the introduction as a key and umbrella concept for many others that are at stake. Trying to grasp the significance of these concepts is not only about their definition but also about the processes behind them, which will be discussed as well.

2.1. Overcrowding in tourist destinations

A growing number of visitors in a destination results in more people making use of infrastructure and open spaces of the destination. This especially applies to inner cities, as those cover tourist attractions and shopping facilities that are visited by local residents as well as (day) tourists. As a consequence, inner cities and historic parts of a destination are more often disturbed by too much bustle, known as overcrowding (Bauder & Freytag, 2015). Overcrowding can cause several types of problems and can arise in different kinds of destinations and on different scales from a small scale such as a museum or a beach to a meso scale such as a historic city centre to a macro scale such as a whole region. Symptoms of overcrowding are thus different per type of destination (McKinsey & Company & WTTC, 2017). Interpretations of overcrowding also depend on the type of person (tourist). This has to do with crowding as well as overtourism being psychological translations of (subjective) density (Neuts & Nijkamp, 2011).

Crowding plays an important role in the competitiveness and attractiveness of a destination in the social and physical environment. It can therefore have impact on the (dis)satisfaction of tourists about the destination (Vengesayi, 2003). This does not only count for visitors, but also for local residents. According to Dietrich and García (in Abdillah, 2016), locals are likely to have a positive attitude towards tourism when a destination is in the starting phase of tourism development. This attitude will become more negative as soon as the development has further developed. The attitude of local residents towards tourism is related to the way in which they can enjoy their lives in the destination (Jurowski and Brown, in Abdillah, 2016; Janusz et al., 2017), through which it is extra important to take measures against crowding in some destinations.

A destination can only grow in attractiveness if the quality of managing the destination will be improved (Sheng, 2011). As soon as a destination has reached its capacity limit, it is desirable to take action to be able to better manage tourism flows and for example to limit access to certain areas within the destination. From a technical point of view, many papers mention technical measures such as carrying capacity – the maximum capacity at which a system can still function safely – but its operationalisation is problematic (McCool & Lime, 2001), since overcrowding is not an objective fact.

2.2. Tourism redistribution policies

One of the possible actions is to stimulate the de-concentration or (geographical) redistribution of tourists. Several destinations opt for the de-concentration of tourists to be able to better manage tourism flows in overcrowded sites, aiming at a more balanced distribution of visitors among different neighbourhoods within the destination, or to different sites within the area surrounding the destination (Koens & Postma, 2017). It can also be effective for diminishing queues for attractions or crowding in infrastructure. Even though distribution of tourists is an effective measure, it can be quite challenging due to the fact that many first-time visitors want to visit the highlight attractions, through which it is advised to especially focus on repeat visitors (McKinsey & Company & WTTC, 2017). The main question is *how* to redistribute tourism flows. Bauder and Freytag (2015) point to the level of preparation before travel takes place (researched for Freiburg); Vanneste et al. (2016, annex) mention the feeling of safety (researched for Brussels) while De Ridder and Vanneste (2020) plead for a de-concentration of activities using e.g. the themed landscape technique.

According to Russo (2005), governments should intervene to redevelop tourism when an imbalance exists. However, because the consequences of overcrowding differ per type of site or destination, tourism policies differ. Examples of tourism redistribution are the promotion of less popular attractions or the creation of new tourism routes (McKinsey & Company & WTTC, 2017).

Koens and Postma (2017) state that it is important to include the interests of all stakeholders involved for guaranteeing sustainable tourism, as overcrowding is too complicated to be solved by a limited amount of stakeholders and because there is no fixed way to regulate visitor pressure. A one-serves-all policy remedy or tool does not exist. A management measure can work in one destination while failing in another. On islands or in national parks, with a limited number of entrances, one can count and limit the number of visitors or one can use the technique of zoning (Thede et al., 2014). For destinations with many 'gates' of access and public space, such as cities, this is much more complicated. Because of the complexity of tourism regulation, it is necessary that stakeholders within a destination cooperate, as this has ultimately an influence on its competitiveness on the overall tourism market (Gajdošík, 2015).

2.3. Tourism competition versus tourism collaboration

As with tourism competition, tourism collaboration exists on all levels. According to Chim-Miki and Batista-Canino (2017), collaboration is one of the few methods to reach profound tourism development in destinations. Maráková and Kvasnová (2016) add that collaboration in the form of networks or cooperation agreements is essential for the development of a competitive tourism product. Moreover, cooperation is important because the tourism product exists as a mix of several components, like] transport, accommodation and attractions (Gajdošík, 2015).

Even though several parties are concerned with providing tourism services, information, infrastructure, and so forth in a successful destination, a tourist experiences and consumes the destination as one interconnected unity (Haugland et al., 2011). Fyall et al. (2012) state that collaboration within destinations is not enough to reach objectives. For this, collaboration between destinations is also required. It is crucial for tourism organisations to increase their competitiveness through collaboration. The attractiveness of entire regions can be significantly strengthened through collaboration with other attractions within the region, through which collaborative parties can reach positive results if well managed (Gerrets et al., 2015).

Thus, both competition and cooperation are important. The concept of *coopetition* implies that no choice has to be made between both, because organisations can have competitive as well as collaborative relations with each other at the same time (Wang & Krakover, 2008). Coopetition is an enhancing factor of economic growth (Vodeb, 2012) and it is especially important because the tourism product exists as one of several components, which makes it necessary to coordinate the capacities and resources of several tourism stakeholders in an effective way (Wang & Krakover, 2008).

2.4. Spill-over effects of tourism flows

The tourism industry or activities in a certain destination are (can be) strongly connected to those in surrounding destinations, which is referred to as spill-over effects (Yang & Wong, 2012, 2013). Spill-over effects in the context of tourism can have positive or negative consequences. Positive spill-over effects include the increase in tourism arrivals in a destination as a result of the attractiveness of adjacent destinations or regions (Majewska, 2015). Negative spill-over effects can occur when attractions or destinations in a surrounding region have acquired a strong reputation, through which tourists create a preference to visit this particular, focal destination instead of the entire region (Bo et al., 2017). Therefore, it is recommended that Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) aim at interregional tourism cooperation by promoting different attractions (e.g. different cities).

While common promotion can be reached by creating tourism routes or by promoting each other's attractions, Bo et al. (2017) state that it is important that attractions clearly distinguish themselves, e.g. by using different thematic approaches. This is important for international visitors in particular, because they often choose the most 'attractive' destination due to limited information, time, and budget. Therefore, it is especially important when dealing with international visitors, to emphasise why a certain attraction is unique and why it distinguishes itself from other highlights (Bo et al., 2017). By collaborating and offering packaged products, destinations profit more than if they choose to promote themselves individually. Cooperation between destinations is thereby said to increase the quality of the tourism product (Hong et al., 2015; Van der Zee & Vanneste, 2015).

2.5. Destination selection of tourists

However, the attractiveness of destinations is also dependent on the demands and opinions of tourists about whether destinations are capable of satisfying their demands. Vengesayi (2003, pp. 1–3) presents the attractiveness of a destination as 'the perceived ability of the destination to deliver individual benefits'. For example, (high quality) transport infrastructure and accessibility are crucial aspects for developing tourism at a local level, because the accessibility of a destination reduces costs in time and money for visitors. Consequently, accessibility and transport infrastructure can be seen as tools to fuel the attractiveness of a destination and as factors influencing destination choice. Therefore, transportation is connected to the entire travel experience (Li et al., 2015).

In line with this, de-concentration to other (secondary) destinations is also dependent on the perception of distance and proximity (Vodeb, 2012). The HollandCity strategy (mentioned in section 3) tries to evoke the idea of the Netherlands being an entity with small distances between its components (NBTC Holland Marketing, n. d.).

The distances that tourists travel are not just limited to a physical distance but imply a mental distance related to their perception of the degree to which a destination meets these demands (Vodeb, 2012). It is therefore crucial to know the exact motivation of tourists (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004; Cho, 2010) and to be able to satisfy the constantly changing expectations and needs of visitors (Maráková & Kvasnová, 2016), and to be able to connect promotion, the expectations of travellers and the combination of destinations you want them to visit.

Because tourists decide which destinations to visit and which to skip, a typical consumption pattern based on preferences is created (Hsu et al., 2009). Destinations can assist in destination choice by promoting their uniqueness, as this makes several destinations and their characteristics and image distinguishable for visitors (Vinyals-Mirabent, 2019), but common promotion and networking can go beyond that and influence the entire consumption path which can benefit underused as well as overused sites and destinations (Hall, 2005).

2.6. Ambidexterity

At first, the concept of ambidexterity seems not applicable here since this concept is mostly used in relation with single (small) firms or organisations, regarding ways to foster entrepreneurship and handle situations with limited resources. Nevertheless the processes of exploration and exploitation behind the concept are interesting (Fu et al., 2020). Although Fu et al. claim that enterprises are "less likely to overexploit and under explore" (p.3), this is exactly what is at stake in our research, Amsterdam being an 'overexploited' destination and The Hague, maybe an 'underexploited' and certainly an 'underexplored' destination. Considering Amsterdam and The Hague as one, rather than two loose entities – the philosophy behind the agreement is to connect both destinations through combi trips – the idea of correcting an exploration-exploitation imbalance might be applicable and useful. The hypothesis that "[w]hen the exploratory and exploitative processes happen in complementary domains, EB [entrepreneurial bricolage] is likely to facilitate both processes simultaneously and provide add-up value" (Fu et al., 2020, p. 3) is very tempting, even if one has to change the concept of 'domain' by 'destination'. Nevertheless, this concept might be out of context since our question is not on how to stimulate growth performances but rather how to tackle overtourism. Of course, the concept of 'organisational ambidexterity' exists as well, while distinguishing rather exploitative from rather explorative DMOs (Séraphin, Sheeran, & Pilato, 2018). According to Séraphin, Smith, et al. (2018) an exploitative DMO or destination tends to handle the destination as an enclave and tends to separate tourists from the local population while tourists "are likely to be denied the opportunity to experience potentially more authentic parts of the [local] culture" (p.390).

3. Case and country context

Tourism in the Netherlands continues to grow. According to Statistics Netherlands, the Netherlands received 21.1 million international visitors and 25.8 million domestic visitors in 2019. International arrivals more than doubled between 2012 and 2019 (see Fig. 1). The majority of international visitors are from the neighbouring countries of the Netherlands: Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom (6.2 million, 2.5 million, 2.4 million guests respectively in 2019). Over half of all international visitors in the Netherlands are from one of these countries (Statistics Netherlands, 2020).

Like everywhere in the world, tourism growth can be advantageous for Dutch destinations. Not every region in the Netherlands, however, benefits from the growing number of (international) visitors (Statistics Netherlands, 2020). Fig. 2 illustrates the imbalance of tourism flows in the five big cities of the Netherlands. Taking into account that these figures are based on accommodation data (overnight stays), one can see that the number of visitors including day tourists in Amsterdam is even higher. Since it is extremely difficult to measure day tourism, one has only an approximation (SEO Economisch Onderzoek (2017) mentions 18 million in 2016 while other sources talk about 21 million for 2017 (e.g. Couzy, 2018).

This illustrates the need to alleviate the pressure on Amsterdam, and alarming messages in the press (AT5, 2018; Groenendijk, 2018; Kruyswijk, 2018) underline the urgency. At the same time, other Dutch destinations desire more visitors.

This, together with the fact that overtourism in Amsterdam causes negative effects, results in several projects and actions to redistribute visitors. The 'From Capital City to Court City' project is not the first nor the only attempt to redistribute tourists in the Netherlands. A national redistribution policy (HollandCity) tries to promote the Netherlands as a country with relatively small distances and cities and regions that are well connected (NBTC Holland Marketing, n. d.). Amsterdam, on the other hand, tried to develop spill-overs into its metropolitan area by the ABHZ (Amsterdam Bezoeken, Holland Zien or Visit Amsterdam, See Holland) to create a touristic city that happens to be more in balance (Amsterdam Marketing, 2015; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2015).

3.1. The 'From Capital City to Court City' cooperation agreement

Besides a national tourism redistribution policy and the redistribution policy of the capital city, less known Dutch cities and regions are cooperating to attract tourism flows from the main tourist destinations in the country. The 'From Capital City to Court City' agreement, incorporating a promotion of The Hague in Amsterdam, also serves this objective. The 'From Capital City to Court City' cooperation agreement was created in 2017 and aims at diminishing the overcrowding caused by tourism in Amsterdam while at the same time stimulating tourists in Amsterdam to undertake a trip to The Hague. This campaign is conducted through promotion in Amsterdam, including at Amsterdam Schiphol Airport, on internet channels of the DMO of Amsterdam and on posters in the capital city. This research aims to identify the possibilities and difficulties of the redistribution policy of primary destinations [in this case ABHZ in Amsterdam] for secondary destinations [in this case The Hague]. For this purpose, focus is laid on the effectiveness of this campaign and the results of this collaboration between Amsterdam and The Hague.

4. Methodology

This research is based on a mixed method approach. Besides text analysis, mainly of the 'From Capital City to Court City' cooperation agreement, information was gained on visions and perceptions of the supply/policy side and the demand side. The former could be approached through in-depth interviews but the latter stakeholder group is difficult to handle in a purely qualitative way. Therefore a street survey with face-to-face contacts with visitors and a mix of closed and open questions was developed, which allowed us to collect both facts as well as opinions and ideas. The street survey was very time intensive because of the small conversations with the respondent, but this allowed to better grasp the 'why's' and 'how's' relative to a purely quantitative method.

In-depth interviews were conducted with six experts in the first half of 2018 (Municipality of The Hague, The Hague Marketing Bureau, Municipality of Amsterdam, amsterdam&partners, NBTC Holland Marketing, tourism expert from LAgroup). The objective of the interviews was to capture views and opinions aboutn tourism redistribution in the Netherlands, and how stakeholders in different Dutch destinations (not only Amsterdam) experienced overtourism and their thoughts on how to solve it. All but one interview were semi-structured and conducted face-to-face. The interviews were analysed according to a pre-defined coding scheme which is closely related to the concepts developed previously.

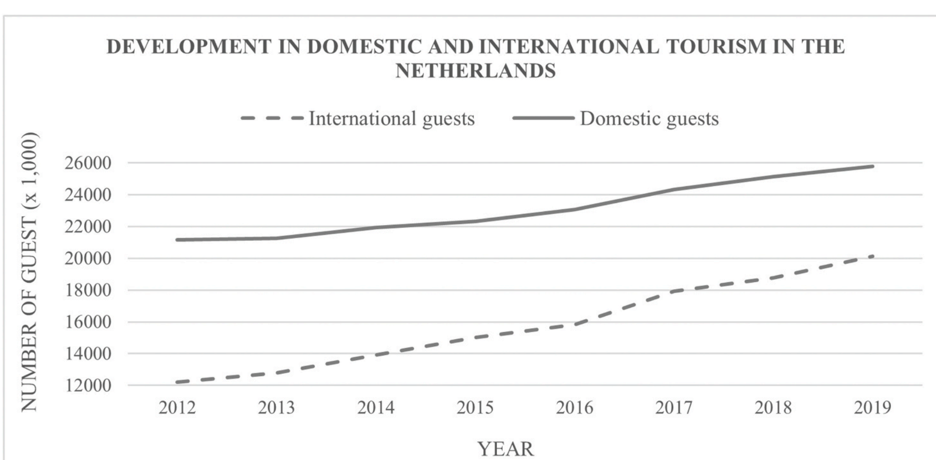

Fig. 1. Development in domestic and international tourism in the Netherlands.
Source: Statistics Netherlands (2020) * Guests (domestic and international guests) in all forms of accommodations (hotels, campsites, bungalow parks, group accommodations)

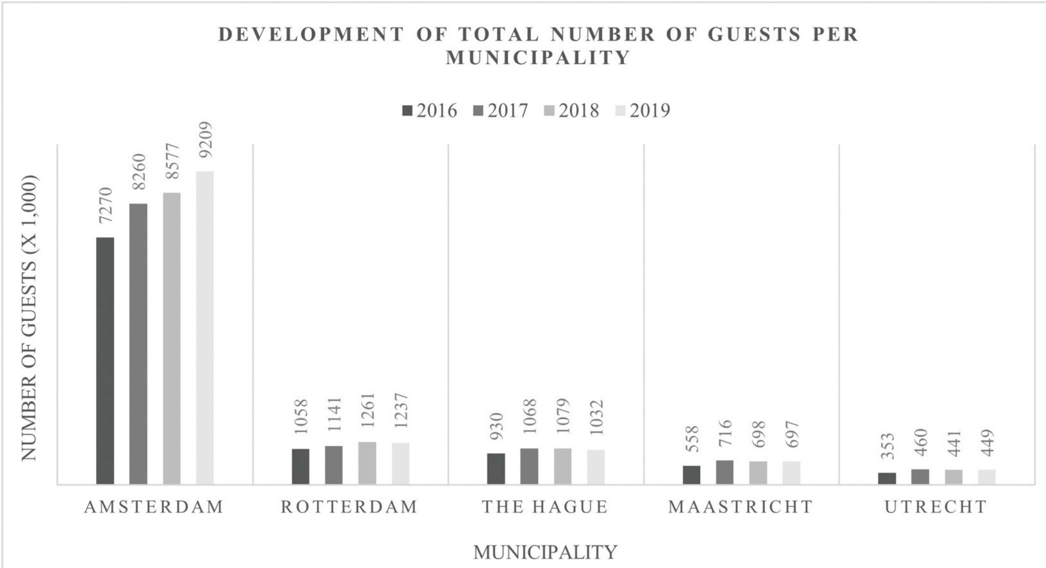

Fig. 2. Development of total number of guests per municipality.
Source: Statistics Netherlands (2020) * Guests (domestic and international guests) in hotels/motels/pensions/youth accommodations per municipality

Secondly, a visitor survey was conducted with 155 (inter)national respondents in Amsterdam, aimed at finding out motivations of visitors in Amsterdam and their interests in activities and (day)trips from Amsterdam to other destinations in the Netherlands in general and to The Hague in particular. The visitor survey was translated in Dutch, English and German, as these are some of the most spoken languages among visitors to Amsterdam. This implies that the short conversations were conducted in three languages as well. The respondents had to be visitors (not locals in their everyday environment), but no other conditions for participation were imposed. The survey was conducted in April 2018, in areas such as the Museumplein, Anne Frank Huis, and Rembrandtplein, and the respondents were chosen randomly. In total, 155 respondents participated, while non-response amounted to 282 persons (139 female and 143 male non-respondents). The majority of the respondents were female (n = 99). More details on age as well as on the country of origin can be found in Table 1, which shows a diversified sample. 93 respondents (60%) stayed in the Netherlands between 1 and 3 days, 45 (29%) stayed between 4 and 7 days, 15 (10%) stayed longer than 7 days and 2 respondents did not answer this question. 99 respondents (64%) were first-time visitors, while 54 (35%) were repeat visitors. These data were statistically processed. Nevertheless, not much attention is paid to statistical analysis in this paper, but rather to the qualitative information derived through open questions and short conversations with the visitors, which were put in an excel table according to a simplified version of the coding scheme used for the expert interviews.

Table 1
Visitor profile of respondents.

Variable	Category	(%)	Variable	Category	(%)
Gender	Male	31	Region of origin	Europe	54
	Female	64		North-America	30
	Unknown	5		Oceania	4
				South-America	3
Age	<30	31		Asia	3
	31–64	43		Middle East	3
	>65	22		Africa	0
	Unknown	5		Unknown	5
Type of visitor	First time visitor	64	Country of origin	United States	29
	Repeat visitor	35		United Kingdom	17
	Unknown	1		The Netherlands	9
				Germany	7
Duration of stay	1–3 days	60		Belgium	5
	4–7 days	29		Switzerland	3
	>7 days	10		Other	25
	Unknown	1		Unknown	5

Source: own survey (n = 155)

5. Results and discussion

5.1. Destination selection among tourists in Amsterdam

Previously in this article it was clarified that the process of destination selection is very complex. As destination selection is based on elements such as distance as well as income, lifestyle and cultural preferences (Bansal & Eiselt, 2004; Cho, 2010), the visitor survey incorporated motivations of visitors in Amsterdam to leave and visit another Dutch destination. Fig. 3 shows that respondents would be willing to leave Amsterdam mainly to visit natural landscapes and museums. Only one fifth would be willing to leave Amsterdam for architecture, which is surprising unless taking the visitors' idea into account that the best place to see historic (especially seventeenth century) buildings and city planning *is* Amsterdam. It can also be caused by ignorance about other Dutch destinations and their characteristics. Furthermore, it is clear that the beach is seldom on their minds. This result is in line with the opinion of the Tourism Expert of LAgroup, who stated that tourists in Amsterdam have a city tripper mindset, which is different from the mindset of beach visitors (Tourism Expert – LAgroup, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

'Other' activities for which respondents would leave Amsterdam include the Keukenh of (and flowers in general), culture and adventure. Going back to the intended spill-over towards The Hague, one could detect an opportunity with the interest in (additional) museums, but a threat in a low interest in architecture outside Amsterdam as well as in the beach, which means that its slogan 'The Hague City by the Sea' might be ineffective for pushing city trippers in Amsterdam towards The Hague. This already shows how important (common) promotion might be in terms of assets that might be attractive for tourists in Amsterdam to attempt a move to another, nearby destination. In other words, the integration or tuning of the tourism product seems important.

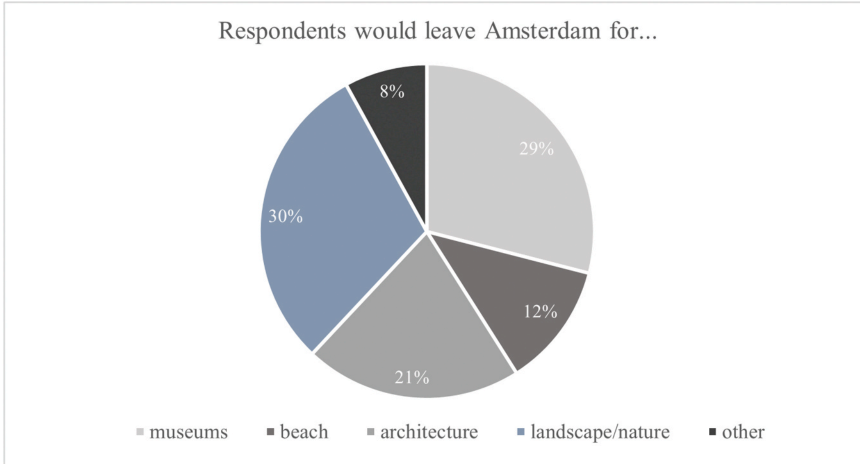

Fig. 3. Attractions which would inspire respondents to leave Amsterdam/visit other Dutch destinations.
Source: own processing; visitor survey, multiple answers possible; graph shows the share per category of total N. N = number of motives mentioned = 341 (2018)

5.2. *The chances of The Hague amongst Amsterdam visitors*

"Not this time, The Hague deserves a separate visit'', one of the respondents of the visitor survey answered when being asked about the interest to visit The Hague on a (day)trip or combi-trip from Amsterdam. Almost 40 percent of the respondents of the visitor survey who were asked the same question, answered in a positive way. Reasons for their interest include museums in The Hague, the International Criminal Court (ICC) and other international courts, the royal palace, the historic city centre and the beach. On the other hand, 37 percent of the respondents explicitly stated that they were not interested in visiting The Hague, amongst other reasons because they had limited time or simply no interest or lack of information and knowledge about The Hague. "I don't have information about The Hague'', according to one of the respondents. Another respondent stated: "I'm travelling with my children and they are possibly not interested in The Hague''. Logically, Dutch and Belgian respondents mostly stated that they did not think of combining both cities; that they preferred to make a separate trip to The Hague. It is noticeable that almost a quarter (24%) stated that "they did not know The Hague''. In many cases, the researcher was questioned about what The Hague is or had to offer. It should be taken into account that the number of respondents who did not know The Hague is possibly even higher, as it is imaginable that the non-response was caused by 'not knowing'. As can be expected, the number of respondents who did not know The Hague is considerably higher among first-time visitors than among repeat visitors. A possible explanation for this could be the fact that research has shown that repeat visitors tend to consult more information channels than first-time visitors (Jacobsen & Munar, 2012) or are more relaxed in terms of 'must sees'. From those who know The Hague to some extent, respondents expect The Hague to be smaller and more quiet than Amsterdam, more government and business related, and more chic and clean. They have different images about Amsterdam and The Hague (Table 2), but the question remains if this is enough to distinguish one from the other in the minds of the visitors, while still keeping a sense of (thematic) entity and to therefore foster spill-over effects of tourism flows from Amsterdam to The Hague. Furthermore, the number of respondents per question (a. Expectations about Amsterdam; b. Expectations about The Hague) shows that the non-response of a. Is much lower; most certainly caused by not knowing The Hague.

This list indicates that the name 'The Hague' does not ring a specific bell, while places should be identified and recognised by their name, implying associations and meaning (Kladou et al., 2017). Except for 'International Court of Justice' and political/governmental image, none of the elements reflect true reputation and excite imagination (Govers, 2018).

Table 2
A selection of frequently answered elements (expectations) of respondents for Amsterdam and The Hague.

Amsterdam	The Hague
Museums (Rijksmuseum, Van Gogh museum, Anne Frank House, etc.)	Museums
Tulips (flowers)	International Court of Justice
City canals	Image: political etc.
Culture	Culture
Cycling	Beach
Red Light District/coffee shops/night life	Government institutions
Boats/boat trips	Historic

Source: own processing; visitor survey; N = 58 for The Hague; N = 111 for Amsterdam (2018)

5.3. *Spill-over effects in the Netherlands*

Because Amsterdam is very popular among (inter)national tourists, adjacent destinations face difficulties to compete with the capital city. Most tourists therefore show a preference to visit Amsterdam, while it appears that they do not know or are uninterested in other destinations. It is, however, still possible to create positive spill-over effects. Positive spill-over effects can be succeeded through collective promotion, collective branding or through the packaging of tourism products to motivate visitors to participate in combi-trips to several destinations (Yang & Wong, 2012). It is important that adjacent regions clearly distinguish themselves by using different themes, however (Bo et al., 2017).

In the Netherlands, the national HollandCity-strategy aims to distinguish several Dutch regions by creating and promoting strong individual profiles. Moreover, HollandCity ensures that Amsterdam will be promoted less, while places outside of the capital will be promoted more (NBTC Holland Marketing, personal communication, April 12, 2018). Regions outside Amsterdam should create a stronger profile and should promote themselves in Amsterdam and worldwide to show (potential) visitors that the Netherlands has more to offer than just Amsterdam. The Hague, for example, tries to strengthen its profile by focussing on its royal character (Municipality of The Hague, personal communication, February 2, 2018). Interviewees state that the identity of a destination has to be clear and that a destination should limit the target groups that it aims to attract (Tourism Expert – LAgroup, personal communication, April 16, 2018). Also, product development should be the first step before promotion: a destination should be accessible and able to host visitors in its accommodations. A destination should develop tourist activities and be able to manage large numbers of visitors while at the same time bear in mind the interests of residents (NBTC Holland Marketing, personal communication, April 12, 2018), but distance and accessibility might be overlooked in a context of 'joining forces'.

Although all this is in line with destination development and promotion principles, the real issue might not have been addressed, being that tourists need more; "they need an emotional connection to commit and stay committed" (Favre, 2017, p. 555). It is quite significant that most of the tourists paying a visit to The Hague while being in Amsterdam did so mainly for two reasons: to see the painting 'Girl with a Pearl Earring' in the Mauritshuis and out of interest for The International Court of Justice. Both are not only unique to The Hague but excite imagination and emotion. Who is this mysterious girl on the exquisite painting of Johannes Vermeer (seventeenth century) and what is the origin of the pearl? What are the atrocities handled and judged and who is punished by the International Court of Justice? The visitor survey shows that 29 percent visited another Dutch destination beyond Amsterdam, mostly within the Amsterdam region; only 7 percent undertook a day trip to The Hague. The question remains about how these percentages can be interpreted. Almost one third of the visitors who visited other destinations beyond Amsterdam is probably not such a bad result, but the 7 percent who visited The Hague is rather disappointing, given the aim of the agreement to create a visitors' flow from Amsterdam to The Hague as a means to fight overtourism in Amsterdam. It is possible that the agreement between Amsterdam and The Hague was too recent to produce mature results when this research took place, but no sudden rise in numbers could be detected. Therefore, one sees doubts popping up as the citation below reflects:

"Cooperations such as 'From Capital City to Court City' are fine for stimulating day trips to The Hague. But what I think is important, is that The Hague presents itself internationally as a reason to travel. This means also aiming at another visitor profile than the tourists that visit the city centre of Amsterdam'' (translated from Dutch; NBTC Holland Marketing, personal communication, April 12, 2018).

This also implies another question: What can be expected from any collaboration in the short term? Agreements with such a high complexity, geographical and political layers, multi-channelled approaches in terms of branding and information, which are hard to impress upon a visitors audience (demand side) or even on the supply side? Spill-over effects enter into a long term, rather than into a short term focus and should be part of a broader framework towards a (more) sustainable and responsible tourism approach.

5.4. The 'From Capital City to Court City' cooperation agreement reviewed

Although the cooperation agreement 'From Capital City to Court City' between The Hague and Amsterdam was still young at the time this research took place, it was already clear that a more intensive approach is needed to actually move visitors from Amsterdam to The Hague (amsterdam&partners, personal communication, March 23, 2018).

"It is not our intention to hijack tourists from Amsterdam, but to create awareness for The Hague through which repeat visitors will come to the city'' (translated from Dutch; The Hague Marketing Bureau, personal communication, January 2, 2018).

In addition, a disadvantage of the cooperation between both cities is that people often choose a certain destination in advance (Municipality of The Hague, personal communication, February 2, 2018). This is confirmed by the visitor survey, showing that most respondents chose to specifically visit Amsterdam during a city trip. One of the respondents stated that "the decision to visit Amsterdam was made before departure'‘. It is therefore extremely important that The Hague promotes itself as a reason to travel abroad – before tourists arrive in the Netherlands. Promotion abroad can result in attracting target groups that match better with The Hague's profile to choose the city as their (main) destination, instead of only visiting Amsterdam (NBTC Holland Marketing, personal communication, April 12, 2018). But there is more; the 'double visit' can be promoted beyond the initiatives within Amsterdam, on arrival. This might be comparable to the promotion of the 'Flemish Art Cities' in Belgium, which goes beyond the promotion of cities such as Bruges and Brussels individually.

Interviewees claim that it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of an agreement such as 'From Capital City to Court City', because an increase in the number of visitors in The Hague does not have to result from the agreement. Nevertheless, the visitor survey shows that the agreement turned out to be not very effective: 137 out of 149 respondents mentioned not to have yet seen promotion for The Hague in Amsterdam (taking into account social media channels, the website of amsterdam&partners or brochures in tourism information points). This is a remarkable result, because it is precisely the method chosen to raise awareness about The Hague. Still, several respondents mention that the internet, with social media channels and TripAdvisor, are indeed the most effective way to promote a day trip from Amsterdam to e.g. The Hague, while offline means of promotion such as brochures, tourism information points, billboards, posters, etc should not be underestimated.

"In the theme year 'Mondrian to Dutch Design' (2017), we have actively promoted the Kunstmuseum of The Hague in Amsterdam […]. We even designed a bus stop in Mondrian style. Afterwards, when evaluating the campaign, the question raised: Did it have an effect? But this is difficult to measure.'' (translated from Dutch; Municipality of The Hague, personal communication, February 2, 2018).

Literature (e.g. Bauder & Freytag, 2015) states that it is essential for visitors to receive information – both online and offline – about a destination to become motivated to visit this place. Apparently, these information channels were not visible enough. Or did visitors capture the messages unconsciously, but without influencing their behaviour? The section above already suggested that it might not be the right information. Govers and Go (2009) make clear that before implementing place branding and information channels, one has to reflect on the place brand essence (identity, imagination, imagineering) and differences between projected image, perceived image and perceived identity. The agreement might be too focused on the projected and therefore on the supply side and not enough on the perceived image by the demand side, which, according to Govers and Go (2009), results in a 'performance gap'. There is more. If what is communicated is not fully in line with real and unique resources (identity), one can call it a strategy gap (within the supply side) and if the information channels do not support a (emotional) reputation, one is confronted with a satisfaction gap (Govers & Go, 2009).

5.5. The effectiveness of redistribution policies for counteracting overtourism

It is important to go back to the origin of redistribution policies: overtourism. The question remains if tourists are sensitive to redistribution policies if they do not feel affected by overcrowding. This question was put to the test in the survey by asking respondents if they experienced overcrowding and nuisance and if this is (could be) a reason for them to try to escape from Amsterdam. The expectations are in line with Vengesayi (2003, pp. 1–3), who states that overcrowding plays a role in the competitiveness and attractiveness of destinations, and as a consequence, also in the (dis)satisfaction of visitors and their attitude towards the destination. From the survey, 44 percent of the respondents considered Amsterdam too crowded; for 56 percent, on the other hand, Amsterdam was not (too) crowded and therefore crowding is not an incentive to escape from Amsterdam. For the respondents who did find Amsterdam too crowded, only half wanted to leave Amsterdam to visit another Dutch destination. The visitor survey thus proves that overcrowding stimulates only a minority of visitors (one fifth) to look for another destination. It shows that overtourism and problems related to overcrowding are less of an issue for tourists than for inhabitants or local policy makers and that tourists are hardly sensitive to it. The fact that tourism redistribution actions can have negative consequences, eventually relocating the overtourism problem to other destinations, should also be taken into account. One can mention examples, such as Marken, an island in the Markermeer northeast of Amsterdam which experiences the negative consequences of rising tourist numbers. The same counts for Amsterdam North, that did not receive big amounts of tourism flows until recently. Currently, this part of the city, promoted as hip, trendy and full of contrasts, has become so busy that the question rises how to manage the flows (Meershoek, 2018). Therefore, the principle of a redistribution policy is accepted by many (not all) but the transformation into an action (agreement) and the exact implementation are often questioned.

"Redistributing tourists could actually be seen as a reason to continue tourism growth while relocating the problem'' (translated from Dutch; Tourism Expert – LAgroup, personal communication, April 16, 2018).

Redistribution policies are thus not always effective, because different stakeholders often have different concerns and expectations. Therefore, tourism cooperation between several destinations becomes even more important as well as challenging because one is trying to bridge two intrinsically opposite elements: cooperation and competition. Expert stakeholders confirm over and over that, if destinations start to think from their own strengths and distinctive identity through emphasising complementary characteristics and assets, they might overcome the feeling of competition and missions can be merged (NBTC Holland Marketing, personal communication, April 12, 2018). It becomes difficult if one wants tourists to consider the different tourist products of a destination (or of linked destinations) as a coherent whole or an embedded construct (Cuenen & Vanneste, 2020; Haugland et al., 2011).

"A good example of cooperation are storylines. Cities such as Leiden, Delft & Haarlem all have a 17th-century character. Therefore they could be seen as competitors. But they actually work together and focus on their own unique identity that distinguishes themselves from each other. Their missions have been merged to promote their similar heritage from the 17th century, but they all claim other identities to still be able to distinguish themselves. This results in people looking more from their strengths and less from a competition angle. It's more like: how can we become stronger together?'' (translated from Dutch; NBTC Holland Marketing, personal communication, April 12, 2018).

6. Conclusion

It appears that in the case of Amsterdam a tourism redistribution policy towards The Hague only has moderate success. Strategies like this could be useful in promoting daytrips to other adjacent destinations, but even agreements will not guarantee a high degree of de-concentration. Moreover, a redistribution policy could potentially have the opposite result by increasing the attractiveness of the primary destination through expanding the offer. Redistributing visitors before they arrive in the Netherlands – as HollandCity does – will possibly be more effective, because it is more difficult to persuade them to alter their plans once they are on the spot.

It is recommended that destinations create their own profile that allows them to distinguish themselves from other destinations. The Hague can create combi-trips from Amsterdam but for redistributing visitors towards The Hague, a much clearer DNA of the city has to be promoted with potential visitors *before* they arrive in Amsterdam. What is interesting is that cooperation agreements, such as 'From Capital City to Court City', are effective methods for generating increased media value. This is in line with findings that collaboration initiatives are able to give rise to less visible results such as new, common tourism products and strategies (Vanneste & Ryckaert, 2012) or new formats of visibility. According to a recent check with The Hague Marketing Bureau, the agreement and campaign created a media value of one million euros (personal communication, July 2020).

Next to trying to create a unique profile, it is also recommended to focus on product development first. Interviewees notice that destination managers sometimes think that it is about the 'marketing mix' and that promotion will be the road towards success. However, product development is important, even if the product seems to be taken for granted like in historic cities with a huge heritage.

The question remains if these insights make the agreement successful and worth studying as a lesson learned. Put in another way: What can one expect from such an agreement? Managing overtourism and creating spill-overs as mentioned above is only possible when undertaken by a coalition of the willing. Ambidexterity (section 2) was mentioned as a competitive advantage, but its so called 'mediating role' is doubted in this research (Fu et al., 2020, p. 7). Balancing processes (e.g. exploitation and exploration processes) is something decided by people, by stakeholders. The same goes for coopetition. Earlier research showed how difficult collaboration and networking in tourism can be, and how crucial the role of a mediator or broker is (Gerrits et al., 2015; Vanneste & Ryckaert, 2011; Van der Zee, 2019). Therefore an agreement on mutual promotion is nice to have but it is not capable of putting a complicated network of governance in place. Tackling overtourism is not just about creating spill-overs based on promotion on arrival. It is about resource allocation beyond tangible symbolic landmarks. Some interviewees referred to the fact that 'distance' might be overlooked in this context of joining forces. It is clear that one was thinking of physical accessibility of The Hague from Amsterdam. But 'distance' has many meanings. Distance can prevent hosts and guests from meeting or can imply a gap between projected image and perceived image and identities.

Attention should be paid to the interests of inhabitants. It is crucial that the importance of redistribution is clear for all stakeholders, including visitors. This implies that they are aware of the problem of overtourism or overcrowding *for the locals* in Amsterdam and that they are open to try some other destinations as part of a sustainable behaviour, but they will probably be sensitive to an emotional return on investment. From this perspective, it is recommended to continue this research by enlarging the area for survey/interviewing the visitors as well as to differentiate more among visitors in terms of type and expectations. The role of the visitor is often underestimated. In the end, it is the visitors who decide about the selection of their destination and their behaviour confronted with a (subjective) sense of overcrowding.

In short, one has to take into account that such an agreement is only a tool or a lever to trigger a process. What the collaboration agreement aims at is very ambitious and complicated. It aims at developing a complex tourism experience at more or less integrated sites while respecting and even promoting the uniqueness of each site. Considered more closely, the specific theme (e.g. the historic Dutch city) is a common thematic layer or frame but coherence does not equal 'more of the same'. Therefore, collaboration on a visitors redistribution project is not only about promotion of linked tourism products; it is also about reflecting on a fair distribution of benefits for all, while reducing the costs for all and going beyond traditional branding, marketing and promotion It is about challenging imaginaries which are beyond this agreement. This does not mean that this agreement has little value. On the contrary, Amsterdam is a step ahead of other sites and destinations suffering from overtourism by creating an alliance with another destination which might be considered a competitor. Amsterdam makes clear that it is ready to break away from a kind of dominant enclave position (Séraphin, Sheeran, & Pilato, 2018). This reveals that even in mature destinations, not suffering from a lack of resources and not looking for growth but rather for de-growth, some ideas that are mainly applied to developing destinations, might be useful. It can be recommended to leave the exploitative approach for lowering the tourism pressure in Amsterdam and stimulating tourism in The Hague – being afraid for overtourism itself – for a more explorative approach. From that point of view, the agreement is probably too instrumental and traditional in its approach, focussing on promotion mainly, while a bridging broker or intermediary organisation negotiating this coopetition is lacking in this picture.

Author statement

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