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Overtourism and the night-time economy: a case study of Budapest

Ivett Pinke-Sziva, Melanie Smith, Gergely Olt and Zombor Berezvai

Abstract

Purpose – *The purpose of this paper is to analyse the phenomenon of overtourism with specific reference to the night-time economy (NTE) in Budapest, Hungary.*

Design/methodology/approach – *The research took place between September and December 2017 in the so-called “party quarter” of Budapest – District VII. The chosen methods included mapping, observation, interviews and questionnaires with local residents, visitors and tourists.*

Findings – *Partying opportunities are valued highly by tourists and the majority of customers in the bars are tourists. Many people feel that there are too many tourists in the area, although few had a bad experience with tourists. The most common complaints were the dirt and litter, public urination, street crime and noise. Most respondents would welcome a better cleaning service, more bins, more police, more public toilets and better street lighting.*

Research limitations/implications – *The research was not undertaken in the high season, older residents were slightly under-represented and wider research across the whole city would give a more balanced perspective.*

Practical implications – *Recommendations are made for managing the NTE better in order to improve the experience of tourists and visitors and to improve the local resident quality of life.*

Social implications – *It is hoped that this research may prompt local authorities to take local resident perceptions and experiences into account by creating better management measures and regulations.*

Originality/value – *This is the first paper to provide data from the perspective of three main stakeholder groups in the context of the NTE in Budapest.*

Keywords *Budapest, Overtourism, Party tourism, Ruin bars, Stag and hen parties, Night-time economy (NTE)*

Paper type *Research paper*

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Introduction

Overtourism was defined by the Responsible Tourism Partnership (2018) as “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”. It is therefore more specific than the term “mass tourism”, which is used as “a loose umbrella term for different kinds of large-scale and popular tourism segments” (Vainikka, 2013, p. 280). It does not necessarily imply that residents are “anti-tourism”, a critique which suggests that the practice of tourism *per se* is not welcome, especially when it is not responsible and where control and regulation are lacking (Aramberri, 2015). However, overtourism narratives in recent debates suggest that the concept represents negative rather than more positive aspects of tourism.

The concept of “overtourism” has recently been framed within discourses related to protest and resistance in cities, most of which represent resident discontent and a form of “politicisation from below” (Colomb and Novy, 2017). The concept of resident dissatisfaction in the context of tourism is far from being a new concept, however. Sharpley (2014) dates the “host-guest” literature back to the 1960s and suggests that it has been one of the most researched subjects in tourism studies. Doxey’s 1975 “Irridex” already indicated how destinations would be affected socio-culturally according to their stage in the lifecycle model

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(Butler, 1980). However, much of the past research focused on unequal relationships between hosts and guests, often in the context of developing countries. It seems now that even relatively well-off urban residents are being affected by overtourism. This paper suggests that one of the reasons for this relates to the night-time economy (NTE) of cities. Shaw (2010, p. 893) defines the NTE as the portion of activity that relates to night-time entertainment and retail provision in cities. This can include bars and clubs, but also cultural activities. However, many NTE studies have focussed exclusively on alcohol-related activities. Despite the relative success of initiatives like the Purple Flag programme in the UK (2012), many European cities have now succumbed to the curse of “party” or “alcohol” tourism e.g. Berlin (Novy, 2017), Prague (Pixová and Sládek, 2017), Lisbon (Colomb and Novy, 2017), including “stag and hen” parties (Eldridge, 2010; Iwanicki *et al.*, 2016).

This paper considers how Budapest in Hungary is managing its NTE in its over-touristed “party district” and presents questionnaire data which reflects the opinions of both residents and tourists. The first part summarises the recent literature on overtourism in cities and the changing nature of resistance of local residents. The subsequent section summarises the role of the NTE in overtourism, including tourist behavioural issues. The latter part of the paper presents mixed methods data relating to overtourism and the impacts of the NTE in Budapest. The paper aims to shed further light on the role of the NTE in exacerbating the impacts of tourism, as well as highlighting the importance of local authority regulations in managing the NTE and the consequences of overtourism.

Overtourism in cities: the changing nature of resistance

The phenomenon of overtourism is certainly not a recent concept in cities; however, the nature of resistance has changed significantly in the past few years. It is also important to note that there are many emerging or growing tourist markets, for example, from China, Russia, India and the Middle East. These contribute to tourist numbers as well as to property purchasing for investment, visa or second home purposes. Smith and Richards (2013) suggest that many cities used to attract cultural tourists who were viewed as “good” tourists because of their relatively higher levels of education and spending. Indeed, Tokarchuk *et al.* (2017) report positive impacts of cultural tourism on resident wellbeing in several German cities. However, the growth of budget airlines, the sharing economy and social media have led to an increase in sheer numbers and a broadening and diversification of the market to include “night-life” and “party” tourists too. Even cultural tourism can have negative consequences if it is not managed well. Du Cros and McKercher (2015) note that unsustainable forms of cultural tourism have led to “overuse”, which includes congestion, loss of privacy, amenity and local services, gentrification and out-migration, as well as competition over resources and space. Venice is a clear example of this. Du Cros and McKercher (2015) argue that this is often coupled with flawed or absent planning which results in developments that are contrary to local communities’ interests.

The work of Colomb and Novy (2017) provides a detailed analysis of several cities’ developments and the subsequent manifestations of discontent, resistance and protest, most of which emanate from the local residents. As stated by Bock (2015), this resistance is becoming widespread in many European cities and elsewhere, with “overtourism” and “anti-tourism” becoming two of the major challenges facing cities today. Examples include Barcelona, Prague, Berlin, Paris, to name but a few. Sommer and Helbrecht (2017) note that in Berlin, heated debates about overtourism began because of loud groups on pub crawls, noise complaints and the conversion of apartments into holiday homes. Pinkster and Boterman (2017) similarly describe the crowdedness, disruptive behaviour of tourists and Airbnb-related problems as impacting the most on local residents’ lives in Amsterdam. The processes of gentrification and tourism are often inextricably linked, especially in the context of inner city areas. However, as stated by Gravari-Barbas and Guinand (2017) although tourism gentrification is a critical force in shaping the socio-economic landscape of cities, it is difficult to grasp due to the changing patterns of tourism flows. Mermet (2017) suggests that much of the literature has been devoted to indirect tourism gentrification, but her own research in Reykjavík shows that the “Airbnb syndrome” leads to neighbourhood changes which

are very close to the main features of gentrification. Wachsmuth and Weisler (2018) argue that Airbnb has intensified gentrification in cities like San Francisco in housing markets that are already tight by encouraging the conversion of affordable long-term rental units into short-term vacation rentals. Regulations are perceived as being ineffective and most apartment owners do not comply. Although it can be argued that Airbnb affords local residents the income that they need to remain in “hyper-gentrified” areas (Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot, 2017), many reports are not so positive.

It is important to mention the vast body of literature going back to the 1960s, which focuses on host-guest relations, which was summarised somewhat comprehensively by Sharpley (2014). Much of this emphasises the negative impacts of tourism for residents, which includes the gentrification and commodification of destinations, as well as the appropriation of culture. It also includes the positive social benefits including renewal of cultural pride and strengthening of identities (Smith, 2015). However, the nature and form of urban tourism has changed in recent years. Dirksmeier and Helbrecht (2015) suggest that the idea of New Urban Tourism emerged in the early 1990s when tourism started to become one of the strongest economic forces in the regeneration of western cities. This so-called New Urban Tourism often results in the alienation of a city’s residents in areas where tourists have encroached on “their” neighbourhoods. Such New Urban Tourists often want to explore urban neighbourhoods which are “edgy” or off-the-beaten-track (Maitland and Newman, 2014; Pappalepore *et al.*, 2014; Füller and Michel, 2014; Dirksmeier and Helbrecht, 2015). Pinkster and Boterman (2017) describe how residents and tourists alike enjoy the “shabby chic” of Amsterdam or the “bohemian” and “artsy” areas of Berlin (Füller and Michel, 2014). The same is true of tourists in Budapest who enjoy most the area which has the highest concentration of so-called “ruin bars” (Smith *et al.*, 2017). However, Baudry (2017, p. 141) wrote in the context of Rome that “by becoming alternative places with a touristic potential, these spaces are no longer such “alternative” places, but are transformed into trendy places”. Pinkster and Boterman (2017) suggest that the continuous search for authentic experiences on the part of tourists can trigger processes of commodification, and that short-term rental arrangements like Airbnb have created borderless interactions between tourists and other users of the city. This point is also emphasised by Füller and Michel (2014) and Dirksmeier and Helbrecht (2015).

Colomb and Novy (2017) claim that the negative effects of tourism have been exacerbated by urban policy makers assuming that tourism is an easy sector to promote and one which requires little public investment. Indeed, Pixová and Sládek (2017) suggested that local residents in Prague are unhappier about the laissez-faire and corrupt approach of the municipal government than they are about tourism *per se*. Novy (2017) also notes the relative inactivity of local authorities in Berlin when addressing tourism-related issues leading to mobilisations “from below” instead. Pinkster and Boterman (2017, p. 470) state that “new tensions are rising between residents and governing institutions about the need to regulate urban tourism vs the need to generate revenues for the city”. Sommer and Helbrecht (2017) note that existing literature lacks contributions dealing with the way administrative bodies problematise crowding, noise and littering, which are major reasons for discontent amongst many local residents.

Pinkster and Boterman (2017) describe how the international tourism industry is redefining historic city centres into sites of tourism consumption which are not always evaluated positively by locals. They describe the peculiar irony of the case of Amsterdam, where middle class residents who may originally have been key instigators of gentrification are now protesting about the transformation of their neighbourhoods into sites of cultural consumption for tourists. On the other hand, in some cities like Paris, where there have been relatively few anti-tourism protests “residents adapt their daily mobility practices to the rhythms of tourist flows” by avoiding major tourist sites and areas around them (Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot, 2017, p. 34). Adapting resident behaviour can work up to a point, but the logical extreme of this process is out-migration, which has been a major problem for Venice which has become less and less of a “lived city” (Vianello, 2017). Pinkster and Boterman (2017, p. 470) state that “further research is needed to explore how residents collectively contest recent developments and the potential political backlash of the observed feelings of discontent”.

Colomb and Novy (2017) suggest that many of the resident contestations in cities surround tourism rather than being about tourism. One example of this is government-led bids for “flagship” projects or mega-events like the Olympic Games, which are often met with considerable resistance from local inhabitants. For example, Boykoff (2017), Lauermaun, and Lenskyj (2017) provide reasons for the rejection of such events because of high costs, social displacement and broken legacy promises. Sommer and Helbrecht (2017) describe tourism in Berlin as a catalyst for local discontent but not necessarily the only cause, and Füller and Michel (2014) describe how tourists in Berlin are blamed for everything from noise levels to gentrification and rising house prices. Dirksmeier and Helbrecht (2015, p. 276) state that increasing numbers of residents see new urban tourists as “scapegoats for gentrification and other annoyances in the neighbourhood like noise, dirt, or crowded bars, cafés, and public transport”. However, the authors argue that it will become more important in future research to distinguish between stereotypes, prejudices and the real direct impacts of urban tourism. Novy (2017) suggests that those responsible for the city’s development and the regulation of tourism activities need to take greater responsibility. Rouleau (2017) discusses some of the new regulations in Barcelona which are not “anti-tourism” but rather advocate more dispersed and sustainable forms of tourism.

Not all forms of tourism lead to the same degree of protest and discontent. For example, business and cultural tourism cause relatively few problems if tourism is managed well (Venice is perhaps an exception to this due to the sheer numbers of tourists). On the other hand, “alcohol tourism”, “party tourism” and “stag and hen tourism” are much harder to manage, especially from a resident perspective. Rouleau (2017) refers to the Catalan description of *turismo basura* or “junk tourism”, which followed the unacceptable social behaviour of tourists in Barcelona. Füller and Michel (2014, p. 1314) suggest that “Nightly party crowds in a residential neighborhood” are one of the main sources of conflict with residents in Berlin, and Rouleau (2017, p. 59) contends that “Barcelona’s current crisis of tourism is deeply linked to its night-time cultural scenes”. Even in Paris, where there have been few resident protests about tourism, the nocturnal noise and disturbance of neighbourhood life have led to residents’ complaints and new regulations (Gravari-Barbas and Jacquot, 2017).

The authors of this paper argue that the mis-managed NTE of cities is one of the main culprits in the exacerbation of residents’ negative attitudes to tourism. Although it is challenging to test such a research proposition, some of the data collection suggests a correlation between the growth of tourism and increased resident discontent and gentrification.

The night-time economy

Shaw (2010, p. 893) defines the NTE as the portion of activity that relates to night-time entertainment and retail provision in cities. This can include bars and clubs, but also cultural activities. Rowe and Lynch (2012) cite numerous examples of activities that might be included in the NTE, including shopping, live music, clubs, restaurants, café culture, art exhibitions, theatres, museums and events. However, many NTE studies have focussed on alcohol-related activities, sometimes exclusively. Hadfield (2015) notes that the urban night tends to have a more permissive and relaxed social atmosphere than the day. Partly as a result of this, the term “night-time” or “evening economy” has frequently become almost synonymous with the so-called “booze economy” (Shaw, 2010). Although Shaw (2014) argues that NTE studies present an empirically narrow view of the urban night if they only focus on alcohol-orientated activities, other pastimes (e.g. dining, culture) create far fewer controversies.

Critical urban geographers have reflected on the neo-liberalist approach to regulation of the evening economy of cities and changing ownership structures, noting that local producers have often been squeezed out by chain bars (Shaw, 2010). Hadfield *et al.* (2001) suggested that the alcohol and leisure industry flourished the most within cities because they were in the best position to take advantage of cheap development opportunities and that local authorities had little power over planning decisions that encouraged this. Such developments have often destroyed hopes of urban regeneration which consists of a multi-industry night in which alcohol and leisure would only form a portion of the activity (Shaw, 2014).

Despite attempts in the 1990s at re-configuring the pub-dominated evening economy of British cities to reflect a “continental European lifestyle” with elegant cafés and cultural activities (Bianchini, 1993), alcohol consumption often seems to be the focus not only of leisure, but also tourism activities in many European cities. Such cities are now experiencing “party” or “alcohol” tourism, e.g. Berlin (Novy, 2017), Prague (Pixová and Sládek, 2017), Lisbon (Colomb and Novy, 2017), Budapest (Smith *et al.*, 2017), including “stag and hen” parties (Eldridge, 2010; Iwanicki *et al.*, 2016). Rouleau (2017) describes how policy makers in Barcelona originally promoted its vibrant night-life as a means of facilitating the city’s regeneration and attracting tourism. However, the noise, overcrowding, drunkenness and unsavoury activities like public urination have created anxiety and discontent among local residents, neighbourhood associations and grassroots movements. The NTE is indeed complex and challenging to manage. Rowe and Lynch (2012, p. 143) outline some of the difficulties of managing the NTE, stating that “there are conflicts and disagreements among drinkers, residents, dancers, revellers, theatre and museum goers, police, paramedics, commercial organisations and the state concerning the competing interests of governance, leisure, residency and commerce”.

Eldridge and Roberts (2008) warn against the creation of (false) binaries between “binge drinkers” and more “civilised” users of the NTE, arguing that many consumers engage in both forms of consumption at different times. For example, “stag and hen” parties tend to involve heavy alcohol consumption for all participants who may not be heavy drinkers otherwise. On the other hand, a proliferation and concentration of “stag and hen” parties in any one city will have a significant impact whether the tourists are regular drinkers at home or not. The development of the NTE is determined by weather, seasonality and cultural practices as well as regulation. Hadfield (2015) emphasises the new wave of research that focuses on the dramatic differences between the urban night in the cultures of the Global North compared to the Far East, for example (Yeo and Heng, 2014). The latter is often characterised by strolling, meeting people and browsing through street markets, for example. In comparison, British cities are still struggling to “stay alive after five” because of the limited retail offer after this time. Heavy drinking is usually concentrated in time and space between 8 p.m. and 11 p.m. in Britain, but the time span has been extended in many cities in Europe with the addition of night clubs, leading to late-night noise and rowdy behaviour when the bars and clubs close.

All cities that are attempting to manage their evening economies better could take some ideas from the Association of Town and City Management in the UK (ATCM, 2018), whose Purple Flag initiative was launched in 2012. Purple Flag status is awarded to those cities that can offer entertaining, diverse, safe and enjoyable nights out. Standards include low crime rates, few incidents of anti-social behaviour, hygiene, range of visitor attractions, safe ways to travel home, among others. In other cities, some hard measures have been taken, for example, fines for walking around half naked or drinking in public spaces (e.g. Hvar in Croatia); removing or fining Airbnb properties that have not been vetted by the city government (e.g. Barcelona); earlier bar closing times (e.g. Lisbon). Softer measures have included sound-proofing of bars and clubs; distribution of free water; bars opening their toilets to the public; better cleaning services funded jointly by bars and clubs; codes of ethics for clubbers. Many Italian cities have introduced other measures, such as banning selfie sticks, paddling in fountains, al fresco picknicking, as well as drinking alcohol in public spaces (O’Sullivan, 2017). There are also many smart solutions that are being implemented in cities which could help to control tourism and improve the management of the NTE. For example, Copenhagen has prohibited the establishment of new bars and restaurants and Amsterdam is using Apps and chips in City Cards to monitor tourist behaviour and redistribute visitors to less crowded areas.

Background to the NTE in Budapest

Tourism in Budapest has increased and flourished in recent years since EU accession (2004) with the influx of budget airline tourists, coupled with the growing reputation of the city as a location for cheap entertainment (namely alcohol) and parties. There has also been a rapid growth in the availability of Airbnb accommodation, much of which is competitively priced compared to other European cities. One area of the city (Districts VI and VII) has gained a

reputation for being a “creative district” (Tóth *et al.*, 2014; Egedy and Smith, 2016), which affords locals and visitors unique entertainment, mainly in the form of “ruin bars”. Lugosi *et al.* (2010) described “ruin bars” or pubs as temporary (often seasonal) or semi-permanent hospitality venues which have been established in abandoned residential or office buildings, many of which are dilapidated. It was expected that “ruin bars” would be temporary, but it has proved to be much more than a “pop-up” phenomenon after 15 years of developments. At first, only local residents (mainly creative and bohemian individuals) tended to frequent the “ruin bars”, but since the early 2010s (which also coincided with the development of Airbnb) tourists have become the main consumers. Dudás *et al.* (2017, pp. 27-8) stated that the “high density of Airbnb locations can be found in places which are popular places among tourists and offer a lot of facilities serving the needs of them [...] there is no significant correlation between the price and the location of the Airbnb accommodation in Budapest”. This means that central districts are as affordable as outlying ones, leading to a preference for choosing the inner city and a high concentration of tourist accommodation in certain districts.

In terms of tourism, District VII plays a very important role in the city. Although there are no traditional tourist attractions located in the district, one-tenth of the restaurants in Budapest and one-fifth of private accommodation are located here and District VII has the highest occupancy rate in commercial accommodation in Budapest (CSO, 2016). Smith *et al.* (2017) suggest that the nature of the Airbnb accommodation in District VII seems to cater more for groups of friends, supporting the idea that this area is suitable for parties. The needs of local residents have become more apparent in recent years, both in terms of the rapidly increasing property prices and consequent displacement, and the unreasonable noise levels and behaviour of tourists. A Daily News Hungary (2015) report suggests that tourism is growing year on year in Budapest (e.g. 5.2 per cent growth from 2013 to 2014) but that tourists spend significantly less than in Prague. The low spending is attributed to the popularity of “low-budget party tourism” based on the “age of ruin pubs” and a “flourishing” Airbnb market. It is suggested in the article that local residents need to tolerate it or to pack up and move out. One major question is whether the state of the NTE plays a significant role in this.

Researching overtourism and the NTE

Prior to undertaking research on the NTE in Budapest, the researchers considered many of the methods that have been used in other cities to collect data on perceptions of participants, residents and tourists. Previous researchers make use of observation or “flânerie” to identify which areas of cities contain the highest concentrations of night-time activities (Eldridge, 2010; Yeo and Heng, 2014). This can include documenting activities using cameras, videos, notebooks and audio-recorders. Researchers supplement this with mapping techniques based on short interviews with passers-by (Yeo and Heng, 2014), questionnaires or focus groups (Brands *et al.*, 2014; Roberts, 2015). Other researchers chose to use online questionnaires to capture data from young adults, especially students (Brands *et al.*, 2014) or focus groups with different age groups (Roberts, 2015). They were asked about the activities they undertook and what role alcohol plays in their nights out. In-depth interviews are also conducted with participants, e.g. 60 young adults aged 18–24 in Melbourne, Australia (Duff and Moore, 2015). Much of the research is supported by analysis of newspaper articles, policy documents and regulations (Roberts *et al.*, 2006; Shaw, 2010). One other innovative approach included a month of participant observation in the control room of a regional taxi company, as well as interviews and a focus group with six taxi drivers from a different taxi firm (Shaw, 2014). They were questioned about their experiences of working in the city at night.

The research for this paper selected several of these methods and the research took place between September and December 2017 in the so-called “party quarter” of Budapest – District VII. The research was undertaken using a team of researchers in two languages: English and Hungarian. The chosen methods included mapping, observation, interviews, and questionnaires. The mapping, observations and interviews helped to inform the questionnaire design.

For the mapping and observation exercise, District VII was divided into ten areas and each team of four or five researchers was required to focus on a different area for their observation.

The first exercise was to make a list of the types of night-time venues that exist in that area, including bars and pubs and “ruin pubs”. They were asked to note if the main function is to serve alcohol and whether there was an opportunity for music and dancing. They were also asked to go inside the venues and observe the average age of the customers, and to try to identify if they were mainly local customers or tourists. The number of bars, pubs or clubs varied between 6 and 37 in any one area of the district, and the researchers altogether listed 180. They then selected 20 of the most popular ones in which to undertake further observations and interviews.

The observation method was inspired by Yeo and Heng (2014) and used a similar form of “flânerie”, in which the researchers observed customer and tourist behaviour in streets and bars in the defined study area between 10 p.m. and 12 p.m. They made notes, took photos and created short 30–60sec videos, as well as undertaking short interviews with local residents, visitors, tourists and bar or pub employees. The total number of interviews was 48, which included 20 bar employees, 18 tourists, six local residents and four visiting non-local residents. It should be noted that the observation was not undertaken during the tourist high season (Summer months), but in September and October when the weather is still relatively fine, but the numbers of tourists are not at their peak. Although the Summer season may have been more intense in terms of the impacts of overtourism, it is worth noting that in October and November (2017) 16 per cent of the total guest arrivals were recorded in Budapest (KSH, 2017).

The researchers also undertook six in-depth interviews with two marketing experts, two hospitality and hotel experts and two tourism experts. These experts were personally known to the authors of this report who have been working in the fields of city development, tourism, hospitality and marketing in Budapest for many years. The following questions were asked:

1. What is the brand image of Budapest?
2. What is your opinion about the ruin bar area?
3. What kind of role do ruin bars play in the image of Budapest?
4. What kind of role should ruin bars play in the communication strategy of Budapest?
5. There have recently been many articles about the negative tourism image of cities because of mass tourism (e.g. in Barcelona, Venice, Amsterdam). What is your opinion about whether Budapest could go the same way and if yes, how should the tourism flow and the tourism image be managed?

Two questionnaires were designed: one in Hungarian for local residents of District VII as well as Hungarian visitors from outside the district (mainly from Budapest), and another in English for foreign tourists.

Each questionnaire contained five main questions about experiences and perceptions of the NTE in District VII, followed by demographic questions relating to gender, age, family status, travel status, visit status, accommodation, education level, occupation). The questionnaire was distributed face-to-face. In total, 574 questionnaires were received in Hungarian (283 local residents and 291 visitors to the district) and 368 valid questionnaires from tourists. Quota sampling was used for both residents and tourists. In the case of residents, the results of the latest Census (2011) were used as baseline to create a sampling for age groups. According to the census, 11 per cent of the population in the district were students aged 18–23, 56 per cent were active (aged 24–60) and 33 per cent were pensioners aged 60+ (unfortunately, it was not possible to find more up-to-date statistics for quota sampling, although the researchers attempted to distribute the questionnaires according to this information). In total, 283 valid answers were collected from residents living in the local area. The sample of the active population (18–60 years) was slightly over-represented in the sample, while the senior category (60+) was under-represented. In the case of visitors to the area and tourists, the sampling was based on the observations and interviews that were undertaken prior to questionnaire distribution. The majority of the customers (80 per cent) were aged 18–40, so the questionnaires were distributed accordingly. The researchers visited the district

at different times of the day and week in order to capture some data from older residents or parents of young children who may not be partaking of night-time activities. This included local markets, playgrounds and squares. Most of the tourist questionnaires were distributed in the evening, however.

Findings

This section analyses the findings from the data collection in Budapest starting with the pre-questionnaire data (expert interviews, resident and visitor interviews and observations), followed by a presentation of the resident and visitor questionnaire data. The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics software. Descriptive statistics, crosstabs, ANOVA, independent samples *t*-test and multiple response set were applied.

Pre-questionnaire data

The industry experts explained that the night-life in Budapest has started to play a positive role in creating a different image for the city away from being a former socialist city. The interviewees agreed that ruin bars and thermal baths are seen as two of the unique selling points in the Budapest brand, and that ruin bars helped to place Budapest in the top five to ten of tourist destinations. Ruin bars have started to play a vital role in Budapest's tourism and first-time visitors are surprised and impressed. However, ruin bars have also given Budapest an image as a party city. It was also considered that the ruin bar area is nice to visit but that it was not so nice to live there now, and that resident quality of life should be considered. Authenticity of place should also be maintained as the area is changing from being a cool, edgy, trendy alternative to the traditional cultural tourism product, and instead a popular playground for tourists looking for cheap alcohol. The ruin bars are seen as being mainly for 25–40 year old tourists and are marketed by word-of-mouth in many countries, e.g. Britain. It was thought that Budapest has not yet reached a peak and visitors will keep coming. The hotel industry is growing and there are many investments, however, the average cost of tourist accommodation is too low.

Short interviews with bar employees suggested that the district symbolizes parties and drinking for the younger generations and that tourists come to "ruin bars" because "this is one of the things Budapest is famous for". Some bar employees stated that they have "stag and hen" parties almost every night and especially at weekends, when there is sometimes more than one per day. Around 80 per cent of their customers are aged under 50 and they tend to be mainly foreigners. One bar employee lamented the loss of local customers, stating that "sometimes I really do miss making contact with people from my country. Don't get me wrong, overall, the visitors pay more than most of the Hungarians, but still" (Bartender, male, aged 32). Some places suggested that tourists tend to use their venues between 5 p.m. and midnight, whereas Hungarians came after midnight. The bars are considered to be expensive for Hungarians although they are cheap for foreigners.

Short interviews with local residents revealed positive aspects of the district including cosy bars, many restaurants, a wide variety of food, unique atmosphere, small boutiques, great public transport. They like the fact that the bars are easy to access because they are close together. However, they also noted that the streets are full of tourists and it can be hard to walk. Some of the bars are too crowded and noisy, there are too many tourists and the prices are too high. One respondent stated that "I used to really like the area but over the last 1-2 summers, things have really got out of hand with the foreign party tourists. It's a challenge to go anywhere at night as there are so many rowdy people in the streets and crowding the pubs" (Graphic designer, female, aged 29). Other complaints included the area becoming a "big public restroom", the throwing away of litter, as well as drug trafficking, prostitution and homelessness in the area. A small number of visiting Budapest residents (from outside District VII) was interviewed and they confirmed the positive and negative aspects of the area adding that "I would never move here (or any of the inner districts). I'm willing to commute half an hour more for a good night's sleep, so I can understand the concerns of the local citizens" (University student and part-time beer brewer, male, aged 24).

Short interviews with tourists of several different nationalities revealed that they were motivated by several factors to visit including business trips, a hen or stag party, cheap prices, friends' recommendations or friends living in Budapest. They like the fact that the area is cosy, vibrant, youthful and cool and find the art, architecture and design attractive. One commented on how he liked the "upcycling" instead of demolishing of buildings. Respondents mentioned the "fantastic streets" where you can feel history and the mix of old and modern. There was a consensus that most bar staff members were polite and speak English. On the other hand, they often found the security guards rude. They also complained about the number of drunk and homeless people, the noise ("because there is always a party somewhere" (Marketeer, female, German, aged 33), rubbish, dirt and smell.

The observations described how the area became noisier as the evening went on, especially by 12 a.m. when the bars are very crowded. The videos showed that the queues for bars were relatively short, but this can be worse in the high season. It was noted (and the sound recordings and videos supported this) that the noise levels were not acute, but instead consisted mainly of loud chatting and laughing. Those smoking outside were not unduly loud, but the noise is ongoing and persistent. In addition, music could be heard coming from almost every venue. By late evening, traffic jams in the small streets were significant. The smell of the air and streets becomes worse as the evening progresses, and the streets are incredibly dirty and littered with trash, especially on Saturday and Sunday mornings. Photos showed streets covered in cigarette ends, for example, and overflowing bins. There are many homeless people and drug dealers walking around, as well as some prostitutes. By 12 a.m., the security guards from the bars are actively trying to calm everyone down. It was observed that the average profile of consumers in the bars is 20–30 years old, around 60 per cent men and 40 per cent women, and that 70 per cent of the customers are foreign tourists (these numbers may vary during peak and low seasons). It was suggested that there are very few "seniors" (aged 50+), concluding that the majority of consumers are aged 18–40.

Questionnaire data

The age range of the respondents varied because of the quota sampling approach with 55.4 per cent of tourists and 63.6 per cent of Hungarian visitors to the district aged 18–29, but only 36 per cent of residents were from this age group with close to 40 per cent aged 50 or above. The profile of the tourist respondents was surprising as most of these so-called "party" or "alcohol" tourists are educated to at least BA level (81 per cent). It was also expected that more of them would be staying in Airbnb accommodation (only 21 per cent). The main motivations to visit Budapest were cultural and heritage attractions (42.7 per cent of the respondents chose this option); ruin pubs (31.0 per cent of the respondents); thermal baths and spas (29.3 per cent of the respondents); and cheap bars and pubs (29.1 per cent of the respondents). Although the most quoted motivation to visit Budapest is culture and heritage, the combination of cheap bars/pubs and ruin pubs mean that the main motivation for these tourists is actually more closely connected to the evening economy. However, this does not necessarily reflect the motivations of all tourists to Budapest and those who visit and stay in other districts. The profile of District VII visitors is relatively young and more than 50 per cent of them stated that they wanted to enjoy a good party in the city.

Figure 1 shows a few differences in evening activities between the groups of respondents. It is unsurprising that local people go to cultural venues more than tourists, because there is the obvious language barrier as well as ticketing issues. Closer analysis of the data showed that younger visitors prefer pubs, bars, ruin pubs, clubs and discos, and that older visitors prefer cultural venues and restaurants. It is most interesting that tourists enjoy the atmosphere of the location more than anything else and significantly more than other user groups. This is one of the unique elements of District VII and corresponds to Shaw's (2014) theory that atmosphere is as important or more important than other aspects of the evening economy.

In total, 63 per cent of the 18–29 year olds spend around HUF10,000 in one night, and almost 10 per cent of them spend more than double this amount. Hungarians spend less than tourists. This may be because they eat dinner at home and go out later, or that they have relatively less disposal income to spend (salaries in Hungary tend to be one-fifth or -sixth of their Western equivalents). The Hungarian respondents gave a high score to the question which asked them whether they had perceived price rises because of tourism.

Figure 1 What respondents enjoyed most in the area after 18:00 (% , multiple responses)

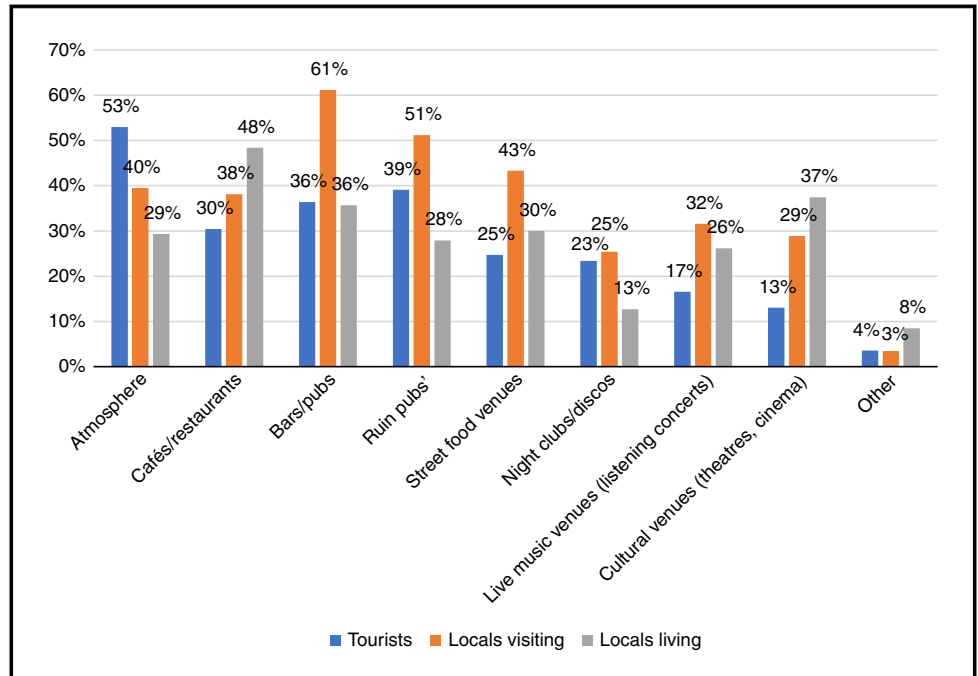
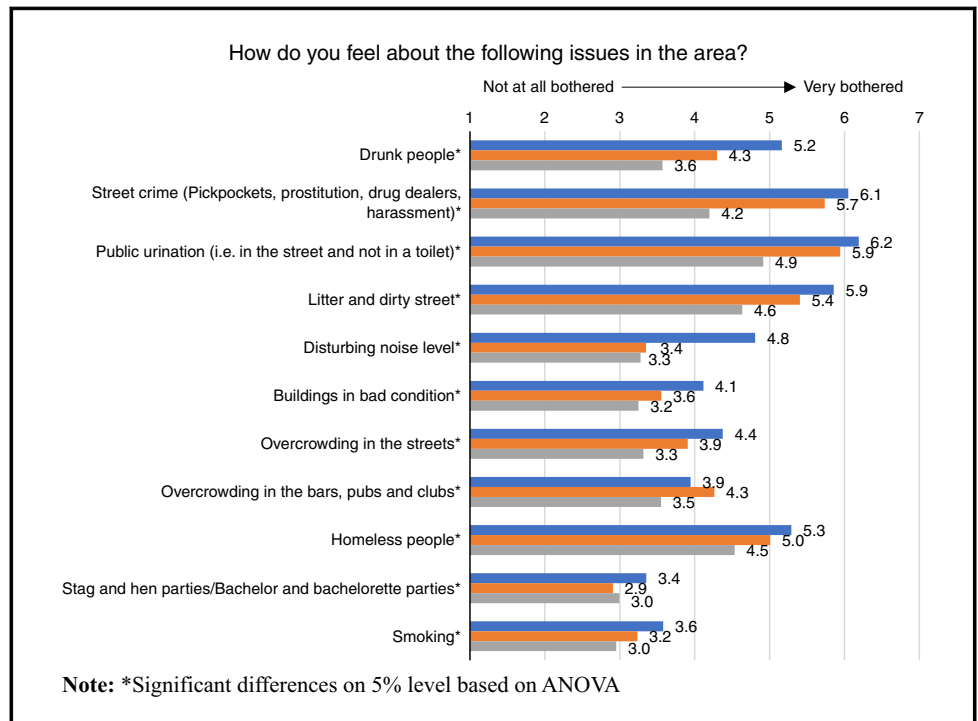


Figure 2 shows the main issues that concern the different groups of respondents in the district. Unsurprisingly, local residents are more concerned about almost all issues than other groups. However, it is surprising that noise levels are not their first concern and that public urination, street crime, dirt and litter, homelessness and drunkenness are more disturbing. It is not clear why

Figure 2 Main issues concerning respondents



tourists are more bothered by “stag and hen” parties than local residents, but it is perhaps because they have to share their bar space with rowdy, drunken groups.

At first glance, there appear to be relatively few differences between the three groups with respect to their concerns about these issues. This is certainly true in the case of street crime and overcrowding in the bars, pubs and clubs. However, cross-tabulations on two age groups – under 30 and over 50 – show that older residents are more upset about many issues than younger ones. For example, those who are aged over 50 are significantly unhappier than under 30s about drunk people, smoking, public urination, litter and dirt in the streets, disturbing noise levels, buildings in bad condition, overcrowding in the streets, homeless people and stag and hen parties.

Figure 3 shows how the respondents think that the management of the district could be improved in the evenings. It is not surprising that those who live in the district are more concerned about having a better street cleaning service. Closer analysis of the data showed that better street lighting and public transport are more important for women. This is no doubt connected to feelings of safety. Older respondents and those with higher spending patterns felt a greater need for taxis. Older respondents also wanted to see a stronger police presence and more of them supported midnight closing of bars. Younger respondents wished that there were more non-stop shops and public toilets.

Respondents were also asked about their overall perceptions of Budapest. The results are generally very positive and it is considered to be a safe city, especially by tourists. Although there are increasing complaints about “overtourism” in Budapest, it seems that the number of tourists is not yet too overwhelming for any of the groups. Service levels are ranked relatively high although interviewees sometimes complained that the security staff members were rude (Table I).

Conclusions

Overall, it seems that partying opportunities are valued highly by tourists in District VII and the majority of customers in ruin bars these days are tourists. Cultural activities are less important, even though cultural and heritage attractions seem to be the most important motivation for visiting Budapest. Many people feel that there are too many tourists in the area, but few have had a bad experience with tourists. All groups agree that they feel safe in Budapest, and relatively safe in the District even after 18:00. The most common complaints

Figure 3 Desired improvements to the evening economy as rated by respondents (% , multiple responses)

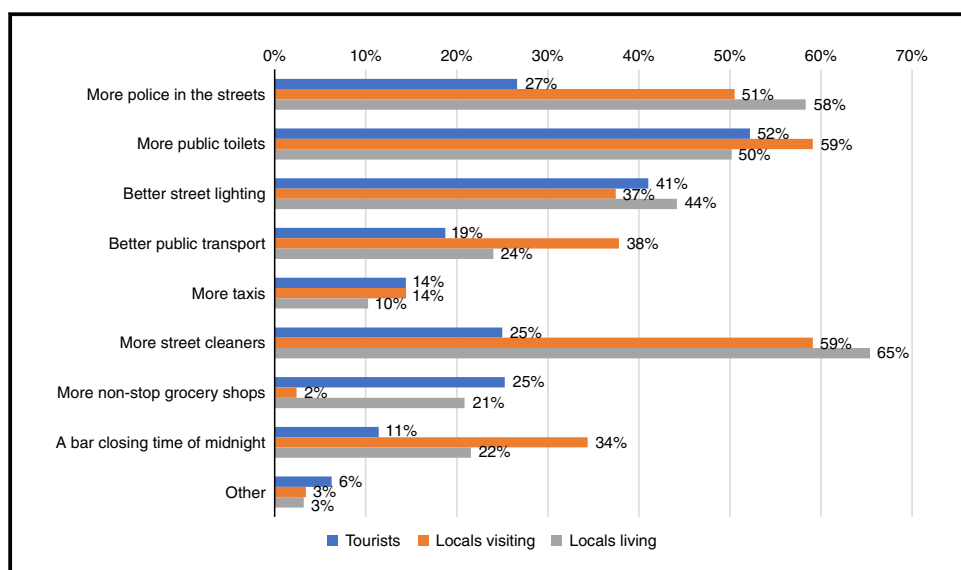


Table 1 Tourists overall satisfaction with Budapest

Which of the following statements do you agree with regarding the area and Budapest?	Valid n	Min	Max	Mean	Median	SD
Budapest is a wonderful city	356	1	7	6.23	7	1.16
The bars and pubs are generally cheap in the area	356	1	7	5.65	6	1.41
Budapest is a safe place	356	1	7	5.62	6	1.32
I feel safe in this area in the evening	362	1	7	5.46	6	1.34
Ruin bars differentiate Budapest from other destinations	325	1	7	5.32	6	1.59
Budapest has become trendy recently because of its nightlife	315	1	7	5.19	5	1.63
The service is generally good and friendly in the bars, pubs, clubs in this area	358	1	7	5.07	5	1.59
There are too many tourists in the area	361	1	7	4.16	4	1.81

Notes: 1, do not agree; 7, strongly agree

were the dirt and litter, public urination and street crime. Many respondents are also concerned about homelessness (which has recently been declared “illegal” by the national government in Hungary), but it is not unique to this district. Most respondents would welcome a better cleaning service, more bins, more police, more public toilets and better street lighting. Midnight closing is not popular with visitors to the District or tourists but is supported more by residents, especially older respondents. In total, 18 per cent of local residents are planning to move out of the district. They were not questioned further about their reasons for this. Given that property prices have risen by around 40 per cent in Budapest in the past five years, this may have as much to do with costs as it does with social problems. It was also difficult to assess how far the problems associated with the evening economy are caused by tourists as opposed to local residents or visitors from other parts of the city.

The authors concur with Colomb and Novy (2017) that the greatest challenge may be local authorities’ inaction when it comes to overtourism. The attitude of local authorities in Budapest towards the planning and regulation of the NTE and tourism is still ambivalent and hesitant (Smith *et al.*, 2017; Olt and Lepeltier-Kutasi, 2018). On the other hand, disturbance caused by the NTE and tourism cost votes and council seats for the ruling party in the local elections in 2014. Since 2010, certain local entrepreneurs have had very good connections with the ruling party. The opposition parties in the “illiberal” Hungarian context (Szelényi and Csillag, 2015) are rather passive even in this conflictual local issue. As a consequence, instead of searching for a technical solution or facilitating stakeholder negotiations, local politicians try to avoid the problem. Unfortunately, this also means that besides residents’ complaints and general claims of entrepreneurs, expert opinions are also silenced.

Overall, the research indicates the central importance of policy, planning and regulation in the context of overtourism, especially in the case of the NTE, which is likely to cause more negative impacts for local environments and communities than other forms of tourism (e.g. cultural, business). The research also shows that regardless of the different trajectories of European cities, post-socialist cities (e.g. Prague, Budapest) are now suffering from similar impacts of tourism to cities that have been established destinations for much longer (e.g. Barcelona, Berlin). One research gap to be filled may be to explore the history of post-socialist city tourism trajectories since 1989 and how the political processes contributed to the phenomenon of overtourism. Future research could also explore more closely the past studies of host-guest relations and socio-cultural impacts of tourism, especially in urban environments, and their implications for cities suffering from overtourism today. Finally, global guidelines for cities ideally need to be adopted in all cities suffering from overtourism regardless of national government apathy or hidden agendas. However, enforcement will be a major challenge as it already is in the case of sustainability.

Limitations

The main limitation of this paper was that the research was not undertaken during the peak season of tourism, which would have been the Summer months in July and August. This was due

to lack of availability of the researchers at this time. Second, the census data used to quota-sample local residents are already several years old and therefore only represents an approximation. Third, the political and regulatory situation is not totally transparent and it is difficult to find unbiased representatives without a vested interest to interview about these issues. It would also be useful to compare tourist numbers, motivations and behaviour in different districts across Budapest to compare District VII with these.

Recommendations

Expert interviewees recommended promoting the cultural dimensions of the district better and the ruin bar experience (e.g. local character, design, contemporary local culture). It is recommended that there should be more regulation to rectify some of the problems of safety, security, crime and the black market, as well as a better balance between local residents' daily life and tourism in the area. More dialogue is needed between stakeholders, e.g. among the various stakeholders (airport, bars and restaurants, private apartments, DMO) and a central agency should be responsible for destination management and image development. Pub crawls should be strictly controlled and banning beer bikes was a step in the right direction. Tourism should be channelled in a positive direction. Marketing should focus on other segments and encourage people to spend a longer time in Budapest as well as in the rest of Hungary, attracting groups who will spend more money and time in the city (e.g. from the USA and Asia). These could be cultural tourists or health tourists.

The expert interviewees suggested that Budapest cannot easily be compared to Venice or Amsterdam as the urban layout is different. In those cities, movement and carrying capacity are more constrained by the urban layout. Barcelona's seaside also helps to attract mass tourism. However, Amsterdam understands well how an image can be negatively affected by illegal activities and it can result in losing other segments who might prefer a quiet and peaceful atmosphere. Budapest may inevitably follow the trajectory that many other European cities have already experienced, but it is hoped that the data presented in this paper can go some way to highlighting many of the problems that the city is currently experiencing. It is then the role of the city authorities to decide which measures might be the most suitable for enhancing the tourist and visitor experience without further detrimental effects to the local residents' quality of life.

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