MANAGING THE IMPACTS OF CRUISE SHIP TOURISM

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Introduction

Tourism accounts for nearly 10 percent of the global domestic product (United Nations World Tourism Organization 2013). The tourism and travel industries represent some of the fastest growing sectors in the world and have significant global economic impacts. Both developing and developed countries understand the power of attracting tourists to their communities. Planners and policy makers focus on tourism development as a critical component in building and sustaining economies. However, as record numbers of tourists travel to old and new destinations, a tourism paradox has developed. Communities that depend on tourism revenues are now facing overcrowded streets, insufficient infrastructure capacity, and destruction of the very natural and cultural resources people come to visit. Ironically, the success of attracting tourists and consequences of overtourism could now threaten the economic, cultural, and natural environment, thereby threatening the wellbeing of the tourism industry and the conservation of fragile resources.

Tourism is the business and art of attracting and transporting people, and an estimated 2 billion travelers will reach international destinations by 2030 (UNWTO 2013). Moreover, the cultural tourism sector is becoming one of the fastest growing tourism markets as more tourists are traveling to destinations to experience places that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present (Richards 2011). As tourists continue to seek new destinations, how will tourism industries and communities respond to the looming threat of overtourism? As heritage, tourism, and planning professionals, we must find comprehensive and collaborative planning solutions to complex problems. Heritage management professionals cannot solve the problem in isolation from the tourism industry. Ultimately, we will rise and fall together depending on how we manage both the tourists and our natural and cultural resources.

This paper will explore the interdependence between tourism industries, destination communities, and the importance of protecting and preserving natural and cultural sites. Specifically, the authors will focus on

trends within the cruise ship industry—as it is one of the fastest growing—and unique, tourism sectors. The intersection of these relationships will be demonstrated by identifying impacts caused by tourists to destination communities and the communities' reliance on tourists for maintaining and growing their economy. This paper will provide recommendations and strategies highlighting the importance of collaborative planning with an emphasis on cultural tourism planning. Finally, these recommendations will be applied to three case studies and measured against sustainable tourism principles.

Cruise Ship Tourism

Cruise ship tourism is one of the fastest growing tourism sectors in the world and has doubled land-based tourism growth (Brida and Zapata 2010). The concept of cruise tourism emerged in the 1960s and boomed in the 1990s. In the last 35 years, the average annual growth of cruise passengers worldwide was nearly 8.5 percent (Brida and Zapata 2010). Cruise tourism has contributed significantly to the global economy and is expected to be a $50 billion industry by 2020. Estimates predict that more than 27 million tourists will book a cruise in 2019 (CLIA 2018). This is an astonishing number of cruises tourists given only 500,000 people booked a cruise in 1970 (Klein 2006).

The cruise industry appeals and caters to a diverse and wide-ranging tourism audience. This is evident in the types of cruises offered, from megaships to private yachts, and by destination; from Venice to Alaska to Antarctica, cruise passengers can find their desired experience. While the industry remains largely a destination-based industry, it is also a unique sector in that tourists can receive all essential accommodations onboard while experiencing multiple destinations in one self-contained trip. Cruise tourists are also able to choose the type of ship and experience from boutique ships carrying fewer than 200 passengers to megaships carrying between 2,400-5,000 passengers (Foroozanfar 2014). New megaships have been coined as floating resorts and are equipped with endless onboard amenities and entertainment attractions, including zip lines, rollercoasters, water parks, and golf simulators. They have become their own destinations.

This paper will focus on smaller cruise ships where the primary purpose is visiting natural and cultural attractions, and off-the-beaten-track destinations. The following will identify different types of cruise ship tourism impacts to local communities, both positive and negative.

Cruise Tourism Impacts

Tourism is a complex industry that impacts nearly every aspect of society and the environment through economic, environmental, and sociocultural means.

Economic Impacts

The cruise industry has considerable direct and indirect economic impacts, both worldwide and to local communities. Local communities benefit from cruise tourists through jobs and new business development. Local governments generate tax revenues from cruise tourism and docking fees paid by cruise lines and passengers (Dowling 2006). Cruise passengers spend money on goods and services at destination communities and at ports of embarkation. In a 2009 study, cruise passengers surveyed in Europe indicated shopping (39%) was where they spent the most money followed by food and beverage

(31%), hotels (13%), ground transportation (9%), and entertainment (8%) (Diakomihalis and Syriopoulos 2009). Many factors affect economic impacts including the size of the destination and whether the port is a home port or port of call. Home ports have direct effects on hotels, restaurants, and many service-oriented industries as cruise tourists arrive and stay overnight before their trip. There is little doubt that the cruise industry generates a significant economic global impact, however, every community is different. More research is needed to determine how tourists impact jobs, tax revenues, and income in individual communities (Lekakou et. al 2011); anecdotally, there is a vast range in economic impacts.

Environmental Impact

The cruise industry receives a lot of attention for its impact to the natural environment. While major advances are being made, many cruise ships, though not all, continue to generate large amounts of waste in the form of air pollution, oily bilgewater, garbage, and sewage which can negatively affect sensitive coastal ecosystems (Sunlu 2003). In a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) report, a cruise ship can generate 21,000 gallons of sewage, 170,000 gallons of wastewater, and one ton of garbage in a single day (EPA 2008). While the industry has taken steps to be more environmentally responsible through recycling and zero waste programs, they still have negative environmental impacts to wildlife and coastal reefs (Moscovici 2017).

Sociocultural Impact

The sociocultural impacts of tourists can change the character, family value systems, relationships, behavior, safety, moral conduct, and traditional ceremonies of communities (Brida & Zapata 2010). While cruise tourists can have similar impacts as land-based tourists, they can also impact communities differently. It has been argued that, "…the cruise tourism product leaves tourists with an impoverished experience and leaves local communities disempowered and underpaid" (Dowling 2006 pg. 14). While every community is different in terms of size and location, cruise tourists also have different interactions with communities from traditional land-based tourists. This is because cruise tourists typically only spend a few hours at a destination and return to the ship for their meals and lodging (Sorensen 2006). Of course, an argument could be made that this results in fewer adverse sociocultural impacts to communities than other types of land-based visitors; they leave a small footprint.

The Rise and Impacts of Overtourism

Overtourism refers to the overcrowding of streets, over-burdened infrastructure, alienated and priced-out residents, destruction to the environment, and threats to culture and heritage (Jovanovic and Ilic 2016). As more people continue to travel, what actions are going to be taken to address impacts of overtourism? Will local governments limit the number of tourists? Policies that continue to support or combat overtourism will be met with resistance from governments, local communities, and the tourism industry. Key aspects for effectively managing overtourism are strategies focused on tourism infrastructure and cultural resource planning.

Impacts to Cultural and Heritage Resources

Cultural and heritage resources cannot be replaced if they are destroyed. There is growing concern that these resources are being overcrowded with tourists, which can and has resulted in vandalism, graffitied

walls, trash, and physical destruction. From Machu Picchu to Venice, overtourism is threatening World Heritage Sites and placing burdens on communities and governments. Of the 1,092 UNESCO World Heritage Sites, 845 are considered Cultural and 209 are listed as Natural. Of the 54 sites listed in danger, 38 are Cultural and 16 are Natural (UNESCO 2019), but it is likely the number is much greater. While overtourism can be attributed to all tourism sectors, the cruise industry receives notable attention from local officials and community residents as a substantial contributor to overcrowding. This is evident as communities have tried to ban cruise ships of certain sizes from docking at ports, increase taxes, and place limits on the number of passengers allowed to dock. In Dubrovnik, Croatia, residents complain that cruise ship passengers are "ruining" the Old Town of the City. In response, the Mayor passed tourism policies limiting the number of people allowed to enter Old Town (Foster 2017). From Venice to Amsterdam and Alaska, local officials are also placing restrictions on the cruise industry. The industry responded by canceling and changing port destinations (Montevago 2019).

The concerns of crowding from tourism is not new. Tourism literature dating back to the 1960s has addressed the impacts of tourism. However, as more tourists reach new destinations, the impacts of overcrowded streets, congested traffic, noise, loss of culture and identity will perplex residents and force governments to react (Koens et al. 2018).

From Overtourism to Responsible Tourism

In response to the growing issues surrounding overtourism, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) published a white paper titled, *Coping with Success: Managing overcrowding in tourism destinations*. The paper identified four symptoms of overtourism including alienated residents, degraded tourism experiences, overloaded infrastructure, and damage to natural and cultural heritage (WTTC 2017). A response to this paper was discussed at the WTTC Global Summit Conference where a panel of eight travel industry executives convened to discuss impacts of overtourism. There were several discussions from the roundtable session that resulted in calls for reframing the issue and the importance for dialogue. Participants argued that instead of focusing on overtourism, the industry and community officials need to focus on responsible tourism. Moreover, the only way to reframe the issue is for dialogue to occur between industry executives, community officials, and destination managers for historic sites. As one cruise line executive stated, "What is the opportunity that we have if there is proper dialogue" (Weissmann 2017)? The focus needs to shift from identifying the problem, which is here to stay, to seeking solutions.

Moving forward, it is critical to first acknowledge that tourism is a complex industry, and sustainable tourism can be achieved through planning and dialogue. Second, responsible tourism should incorporate the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) International Cultural Tourism Charter, and the Life Beyond Tourism Manifesto as a baseline framework for sustainable tourism development. With such a complex industry that involves tourism industries, tourists, and communities, the need for dialogue between all the stakeholders is paramount. There is an opportunity for dialogue and planning that can result in a sustainable tourism future. The following recommendations are strategies for cultural planning.

Cultural Tourism Planning Recommendations

The following recommendations provide a quick-start guide for communities to start cultural tourism strategic planning.

Strategic Planning – Where Do You Begin?

Establishing a shared vision sets the foundation for success. The key components include:

- Assessment: assess the mission, vision, and goals for developing and managing a tourism program
- Marketing Analysis: analyze the market potential and needs of actual and potential visitors
- Governance & Leadership: ensure strong, visionary leadership for meaningful planning
- Funding Strategies: nurture public/private partnerships to provide a strong financial base to your programs
- Stakeholder Engagement: engage key stakeholders such as businesses, artisans, site managers, and thought leaders

Asset Development – What Do You Have?

Identifying resources establishes feasibility and credibility for your plan. The key components include:

- Cultural Resources Inventory: know your resources, both tangible and intangible
- Fundraising & Grant Writing: know how and where to find financial support
- Market/Business Development: small businesses need support to develop within a tourism program
- Policy Development: do policies need to be introduced or changed to effectively manager tourism?

Program Management – How Do You Ensure Success?

Planning for implementation and gathering support connects vision to reality. The key components include:

- Audience Evaluation: constant evaluation ensures growing success
- Compliance: laws and regulations need to be understood and applied
- Public Partnerships: engage your community; they are the first to be affected by tourist behavior
- Implementation Support: identify what resources you need to provide sustainable support for a tourism program

Deliverables – How Will You Share Outcomes?

Building shared understanding of your heritage supports cohesive storytelling and brand. The key components to building an effective tourism program include:

- Tourism Strategic Plan
- Interpretation Plan
- Exhibits Plan
- Visitor Experience Plan

- Historic Site Master Plan
- Tourism Infrastructure Plan
- Marketing Plan
- Training and Education

Case Studies

The following case studies illustrate how the Cultural Tourism Planning recommendations can be used in different scenarios and in relation to ongoing planning efforts. It is important to remember that planning should not occur in a vacuum.

St. Paul, Minnesota and the Mississippi River

Viking Cruises announced it is entering the U.S. market and plans to launch its Long Boats on the Mississippi River. Viking's home port will be in New Orleans, Louisiana, and the Long Boats will travel up the Mississippi River to St. Paul, Minnesota. This presents an opportunity for the City of St. Paul to plan for cultural tourism and the impacts of cruise tourists who will begin arriving by 2021. City officials are paving the way and have acknowledged cruise tourism in their *Great River Passage Master Plan* (2013), which identifies port locations along the river. However, more planning for cultural tourism is needed in preparation for the arrival of cruise tourists. As noted earlier, it is in the best interest for the cruise industry and City to have an open dialogue and plan for opportunities and impacts.

As an example, research has indicated that the Mississippi River is an underutilized cruise market. As river cruises increase in popularity, and as more industries start cruising on the Mississippi, how will the City of St. Paul respond? How will other cities along the Mississippi respond? There is a need for strategic planning, program management, and specific planning outcomes such as interpretive plans, cultural tourism plans, historic site master plans, and tourism infrastructure plans. This can all be developed around identified cultural assets and natural resources. This ensures place-based planning that enriches lives, builds economies, and preserves a city's history, character, and resources.

Akwesasne Mohawks on the St. Lawrence River

The cruise ship industry has recently expanded into new markets in the upper Atlantic/Canadian region and Gulf of St. Lawrence. As the St. Lawrence River meanders past Quebec and Montreal, it passes through the Akwesasne Mohawk Nation before reaching the northeastern shore of Lake Ontario. The Mohawks of Akwesasne are a sovereign Nation straddling the St. Lawrence River, between Upstate New York and the Canadian Provinces of Ontario and Quebec. This multi-jurisdictional boundary presents unique planning challenges and opportunities.

The Akwesasne are in the process of developing their cultural tourism program. From the beginning of the planning process, the Akwesasne have made it clear that cultural tourism should serve the community, promote the revitalization of their culture, and build a stronger economy. The cultural tourism program began with a vision and strategic action plan. Akwesasne hired the 106 Group to complete a Tourism Interpretive Plan and Tourism Infrastructure Plan. The interpretive plan identified the target audience to include cultural tourists and visitors. It is important to identify the audience as it frames interpretive

messaging. Next, a tourism infrastructure plan was completed and developed around cultural tourism attractions and priorities.

The Mohawks of Akwesasne have lived along the banks of the St. Lawrence River for centuries. Increasingly, cruise ships are sailing through Akwesasne territory. There is an opportunity for the Akwesasne to increase their tourism base by partnering with the cruise industry. It is also an opportunity to tell their own story and showcase their culture while bolstering economic development. There are many potential benefits for both the tribe and the cruise ship industry with such a partnership.

Visitor Experience in South East Asia

Recently, the primary author and his partner set sail from the Port of Hong Kong on a two-week cruise around southeast Asia on board a 382-person ship. As heritage professionals and travelers, we enjoy experiencing new cultures, trying new food, meeting new people, and have visited over 100 World Heritage Sites in the last 30 years. This cruise gave us a new appreciation and understanding for the importance of providing a positive visitor experience – both from the cruise line and while visiting destination communities. We were surprised by many things, having been a little skeptical about a cruise ship vacation. First, we were impressed by how well-managed the many World Heritage Sites were that we visited. However, the quality of interpretation was completely dependent on the language and interpretive skills of the guides; self-guided interpretation was almost nonexistent. Without exception, the tour guides and local people we met were excited and pleased about the influx of tourists and the money they brought to bolster local economies.

While there is a lot of negative attention on the cruise industry, there was a comfort in knowing where we were staying each night. This makes the cruise industry unique from other forms of tourism. Cruise tourists can retire to their own room on a ship without the challenges and lack of knowledge of the local language and infrastructure requirements. It provides a sense of safety and security. Our lasting impression was that: 1) the cruise ship enabled us to get to inaccessible places that we would not likely have visited on land; 2) many World Heritage Sites are badly in need of higher quality interpretive planning; 3) local communities are excited to receive foreigners to share pride in their homes and heritage, so long as it's managed well; 4) ports are controlling the impact of tourism volume, but it's not clear if port expansion decisions are being managed in consultation with communities; and 5) while much of the literature in heritage management tends to demonize the cruise ship industry, it has many positive impacts on communities. However, there needs to be a dialogue among the cruise ship industry, communities, and heritage sites to ensure that planning and sustainable development practices are well balanced and will benefit all parties. Small socially responsible cruise ships have an opportunity to lead by example by advocating values, conduct, and investment in communities' destinations sites. This can provide significant public relations opportunities for all.

Conclusion

The tourism industry is growing at a record pace and there is little indication that this trend will subside. This paper addresses some of the impacts caused by the cruise ship tourism industry and the effects of

overtourism on destination communities. There exists an interdependence between tourism industries, destination communities, and historic sites. Tourism is a business and competitive market for tourism industries and local communities rely on tourism revenue to generate taxes and economic development. A fundamental question must be answered in the era of overtourism - how do you balance preserving culture and authenticity while promoting a tourist economy?

The literature points to the lack of planning and policies for tourism development. This paper highlights the need for more dialogue between industry executives and community officials. As heritage tourism and planning professionals, we have a responsibility to be "Builders of Peace" and preserve and protect natural and cultural resources. To achieve sustainable tourism, a balance must be reached between economic development, social and cultural justice, and the natural environment. This will require holistic proactive planning solutions, facilitation, and dialogue among stakeholders.

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