

Deconcentration strategies as tools for preventing gentrification as perceived by residents of tourism destinations

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Abstract

Purpose. The issue of residents' attitudes is essential in the context of phenomena such as overtourism, tourismphobia, gentrification, and touristification at destinations. An important operation is the management of tourism flows (deconcentration strategies) to counteract negative phenomena. The purpose of this article is to assess the attitudes of residents of destinations of different sizes toward the activities of local government in regulating tourist traffic, which are understood as deconcentration strategies.

Design/methodology/approach. A qualitative research method using the focus group interview method (focus study) was applied. The survey was conducted with six groups of respondents from cities experiencing the effects of overtourism and small towns and villages where these effects are not apparent.

Findings. The survey showed that not all residents of large and well-known cities (Krakow and Tricity) and smaller towns are optimistic about the deconcentration strategy. In particular, residents of areas outside the centers of large cities do not want the dispersion of tourists.

Practical implications. There is a fundamental conclusion to be drawn about the need for sustainable management, in which citizens are active players at the planning level.

Social implications. This study has shown the need for public consultation before introducing deconcentration strategies, as residents of large well-known cities and smaller towns are not always favorably disposed toward the tourism management solutions implemented by local authorities.

Originality/value. Despite managing tourism and teasing out deconcentration strategies, the effectiveness of these measures is an emerging fundamental problem, particularly regarding the perceptions of residents.

Keywords management of tourism flows, deconcentration strategy, residents' attitudes, overtourism, sustainable tourism, gentrification

INTRODUCTION

The process of gentrification to which the article is devoted is closely related to the processes of overtourism. Overtourism is among contemporary tourism's most recent and heavily studied phenomena. It is defined as a situation in which the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, excessively influences the perceived quality of life of citizens and/or visitors in a negative way (UNWTO, 2018, p. 4). However, acknowledgment of the negative impacts of tourism on tourism destinations is not a new topic. Conflicts between tourism development and the protection of the natural environment have been studied since the fifties (Machura, 1954) and have remained a popular topic of scientific research until now (Sørensen & Grindsted, 2021; Niezgoda, 2024). Additionally, problems in the relationship between tourism and local culture and societies have been studied since the late sixties, at first mainly focusing on the issue of authenticity in tourism (MacCannell, 1973; Pittock, 1967). Among the most seminal works developing research attitudes to tourism was Doxey's concept of the evolution of four residents' attitudes toward tourism, starting from support and finishing with irritation (Doxey, 1975). This means overtourism is sometimes perceived as an old wine in a new bottle (Perkumienė & Pranskūnienė, 2019) and as an extreme version of the well-known issues of overcrowding and exceeding capacities (Żemła, 2020). However, in many publications (Koens et al., 2018; Namberger et al., 2019; Żemła, 2020), it is strongly emphasized that in the context of numerous destinations, especially urban ones, overtourism is much more than the increasing volume of tourism traffic accompanied by the typical problems it leads to as it also results in the appearance of new issues, such as tourismphobia (Milano et al., 2019; Ramos, Mundet, 2021) accompanied by resident protests and the emergence of grassroots anti-tourism organizations (Milano et al., 2020; Ruiz, 2022), malfunctions of the real estate market (Bertocchi & Visentin, 2019; del Romero Renau, 2018), and tourism gentrification/touristification (Cocola-Gant, 2023; Jover & Diaz-Parra, 2020).

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Gentrification might be described as “a process involving a change in the population of land-users such that the new users are of a higher socio-economic status than the previous users, together with an associated change in the built environment through a reinvestment” (Clark, 2005; Diaz-Parra & Jover, 2021). In this view, touristification is a special type of gentrification (Salerno, 2022; Żemła, 2024). However, although gentrification driven by factors other than tourism usually results in the replacement of current citizens with a group of new ones, touristification leads to the vanishing of residents and to tourism use of contemporary apartments and houses and infrastructure or even replacement of them by new ones purposely designed to deal with the needs of tourists (Gravari-Barbas & Jacquot, 2019). Consequently, the number of permanent residents in touristified areas continuously decreases (Diaz-Parra & Jover, 2021; Kruczek, 2019). Such a situation stems from the necessity of an administration's involvement in urban renewal in recent decades, making it possible to create a connected and sustainable city. The starting point of such an approach is a new concept of shared public space, with the right balance between business and guaranteeing quality of life for residents green spaces, parks, and convenient service infrastructure (Foronda-Robles et al., 2022).

However, it should be emphasized that the activities should start with a survey of residents, their attitudes toward tourists, and their expectations of possible changes. The purpose of the research presented in this article is to find out the attitudes and opinions of tourist destinations residents toward tourists and changes related to the actions of resort managers to regulate tourist flows. One of the actions that destination managers can take is to implement a deconcentration strategy. The specific problem addressed in this article is the question of how the inhabitants of the destination assess the possibility of managing tourism by reducing the number of tourists in the most attractive places and redirecting tourist traffic to less well-known places. Thus, the purpose of the article is to assess the attitudes of residents of resorts of different sizes toward the activities of local government regulating tourist traffic, which are understood as deconcentration strategies. To date, the determinants of the feasibility and effectiveness of deconcentration have not been studied in detail. In this article, the novelty is to demonstrate the variation in residents' attitudes (or lack thereof) according to the type of place of residence. The authors want to test the difference between residents' attitudes toward destination management activities between respondents from cities experiencing the effects of overtourism and small towns and villages where these effects are not apparent.

BACKGROUND

Tourism destination management and the role of deconcentration strategies

Overtourism problems are commonly perceived as management challenges (Pechlaner et al., 2019; Seraphin & Korstanje, 2021). Buhalis (2022) states that there is no such thing as overtourism; there are only destinations that are poorly managed. However, properly understanding these challenges requires acknowledgment of the nature of destination management. Usually, destination management is linked with the prerogatives of public authorities (central, regional, and local levels) (Elliot, 2020). This view is, however, an oversimplification. Even though tourism destinations offer on the market their products labeled with destination brands (Morgan et al., 2007) and compete for customers (visitors) in a way that resembles competition among corporate products (Um & Crompton, 1990; Woodside & Lysonski, 1989), tourism destinations cannot be perceived as formal market entities in a classical view. Tourism destination products consist of numerous elements provided independently by many companies and other public and private entities (Benur & Bramwell, 2015). There is no formal hierarchy among them, and coordination between all engaged entities is necessary. That is why the literature states participatory management (Burgos & Mertens, 2017; Ciro et al., 2019) or governance (Beritelli et al., 2007; Zhang & Zhu, 2014) when describing destination management. Destination governance must acknowledge numerous, often at least partially, conflicting interests shown by the particular actors involved (Nieżgoda, 2024; Volgger et al., 2017). The final result of any decision is less defined than in the case of corporate management. Additionally, most decisions raise controversies, and dissatisfaction among several actors might be expected. Considering this context of destination governance, it is easier to understand how challenging it is not only to find a proper tool to deal with the complicated nature of overtourism but also to balance the needs of particular residents, tourism businesses, tourists, and others. Given such a concern, the destination management authorities should monitor the usefulness of the measures applied by using appropriate indicators and studying the reactions of audience groups, including residents, which is the subject of this article.

Examples of measures and tools implemented to manage the impacts of overtourism and gentrification

The nature of overtourism is generally similar in most places; however, specific local conditions and problems not necessarily linked with tourism make the most exercised impacts in particular destinations diverse (Żemła, 2024). This justifies that numerous destinations focus on different issues when solving the problem.

Based on the case study of Hamburg, Postma and Schmuecker (2017) pointed out two key factors that may lead to the appearance of conflicts:

- (1) the volume of tourism flows compared with the number of residents and distribution of tourists over time and space and
- (2) the behavior of tourists against the norms the residents set for themselves and guests (indecent behavior of visitors).

Postma and Schmuecker (2017) also note that previous research conducted in numerous cities in Europe adopted the following categories of indicators of residents' experiences with tourism: three categories of so-called "critical encounters", four levels of annoyance, four levels of tolerance, and three levels of loyalty toward tourism development.

The authors point to two groups of forces causing conflicts: (1) spatial and temporal distribution and (2) "Cultural Distance" as a collective term for the cultural difference between tourists and locals. As research in Poland has shown (Nieżgoda, 2011; Niezgoda, 2024), the attitudes of locals toward tourists depend on how long they have lived in the city and their attachment to the place. Implemented measures might be of two kinds: legal measures and regulations and planning measures (Hospers, 2019). The first ones limit some activities of visitors and/or tourism businesses (Bertocchi et al., 2020; Russo et al., 2022). The second ones incentivize them to behave in an expected manner (Hidalgo-Giralt et al., 2022). The issues being regulated the most often are the offer of short-term real estate rentals (Celata & Romano, 2020; Cerreta et al., 2020) and the number of visitors (Bertocchi et al., 2020). Malfunctions of the local real estate market caused by the transfer of real estate from long-term residential use into short-term tourist use are among the most commonly mentioned and most severe negative impacts of contemporary tourism, especially in cities (Jaremen et al., 2020). Bei and Celata (2023) analyzed solutions implemented in several European cities, including Amsterdam, Barcelona, and Berlin. Regulations of short-term rentals implemented in different cities embrace the measures. For example, the prohibition of transferring apartments from residential to tourist markets was initially set in Berlin (Dredge et al., 2016). In Paris, conditions for rental agreements, including the period of leases, were set by the ALUR law as early as 2014 (Żemła et al., 2021). There were also attempts to administratively regulate the number of visitors in particular places of special interest to tourists; however, usually, this was only possible in nature-based destinations, such as the famous Maya Beach in Thailand (Koh & Fakfare, 2020). The island city of Venice remains the only example of a city with implemented regulations for the number of visitors and entrance fees (Bertocchi et al., 2020; Żemła, 2024).

An example of the second kind is a deconcentration/decongestion/redistribution strategy. This strategy used in overtouristified destinations refers to efforts and measures to manage and redirect tourism flows to alleviate the negative impacts of overtourism on local communities, infrastructure, and the environment (Camatti et al., 2020). This tool attempts to establish enhancements for tourists to visit less crowded areas and lower tourism pressure in the main hot spots (Sibrijns & Vanneste, 2021).

In historic cities, integrating political, urban, cultural, and tourist policies is a key pillar for sustainable development. To achieve this aim, synergies between stakeholders, including the local community, are crucial (Nieżgoda, 2024). Another important issue is to study the attitudes of residents toward the actions taken by the destination managers.

METHOD

Studying the attitude of residents toward tourists and the strategic measures local governments take to change tourist flows and counteract gentrification processes is complex and challenging. The reason for this is the diversity of residents and the need to study elements of a psychological and sociological nature, which are difficult to measure. At the same time, the problems of gentrification are very new in Poland (Kruczek, 2019); therefore, it was decided that the issue of the behavior of residents of a tourist destination requires a qualitative method due to the exploratory nature of the study, resulting from a novel proposal to address the problem. The results will allow for a more detailed explanation of the issue, which will involve obtaining background information, initiating ideas, detecting the need for further research directions, and possibly formulating further hypotheses. As the authors point out, the purpose of qualitative research is most often to explain the reasons for the behavior of the subjects under study and to understand and interpret this behavior in depth (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2004; Silverman, 2004).

A qualitative research method using the focus group interview (FGI) method (focus study) was used. The survey was conducted between March 27 and June 3, 2024, in Krakow and Tricity (Gdansk, Sopot, and Gdynia). The two urban areas are among the most often studied as overtouristified in Poland (Fedyk et al., 2020; Kizielewicz & Luković, 2015; Kowalczyk-Anioł et al., 2021; Kruczek et al., 2023; Walas et al., 2023). Both cities attract tourists with well-preserved monumental zones in Old Cities and are often stated as historic cities, which determines the way they exercise overtourism problems (Żemła, 2024). In accordance with the focus research methodology, a purposeful sampling (snowball method) was used (Lewis, 1992; Guest et al., 2013). All respondents were met in a city (Krakow or Tricity) but some of them lived outside the city, only studying

and/or working there. To collect and divide respondents into groups, in the first step, they were asked about their place of residence (Krakow, Tricity, or a smaller town or village). The respondents were divided into six groups consisting of between 6 and 12 people: three represented the residents of Krakow and Tricity, and three represented the residents of smaller centers (small towns and villages), which allowed a comparison of the opinions of these diverse groups of respondents. The FGI allows the researcher to take advantage of what is known as group dynamics (Lewis, 1992) by allowing each respondent to speak freely to form opinions during the discussion. In the present study, the discussion in each of the six groups was conducted by two experienced moderators (the same people) who embraced the crucial importance of interaction between the respondents. In both cases, it is evident that the cities themselves are extremely popular and crowded destinations where a significant number of tourists can be observed, leading to gentrification and overtourism, whereas the surrounding areas are visited less frequently. This is the reason why the responses from the residents of large cities represent the point of view of inhabitants of heavily crowded destinations, whereas the others present the perception of people living in destinations where negative consequences and conflict typical of overtourism are not present. During the discussion, the moderators analyzed the emotional attitude (attachment) toward tourists as well as attitudes toward the actions of the local government managing the tourist destination, particularly the deconcentration strategy.

RESULTS

The first block of questions dealt with residents' attitudes and experiences of contact with tourists and whether the influx of tourists interferes with the respondents' daily lives. Statements during the discussion showed that residents from smaller towns have a more positive attitude toward tourists than residents of large cities. However, it is clearly noticeable that the expectations of an improvement in the economic situation of the inhabitants of tourist destinations influence the positive assessment of tourists.

An example of such an opinion is:

"to me, a tourist is a person who leaves money and supports the development of the place".

"for me, a tourist is a person who contributes to improving my region. I was not badly inclined towards their arrivals, and I am not, but it could be different in the future".

This study confirmed the results obtained by Niezgoda and Markiewicz (2024), which found that for residents of smaller towns and cities, the influx of tourists is mainly associated with expectations of economic improvement.

The inhabitants of larger cities presented a different attitude toward tourists. In particular, residents of Krakow stressed that "tourists are a nuisance and nothing has changed over the years". Such an opinion points to overtourism and the need for area management to use a deconcentration strategy.

In one group, residents of large cities emphasized that "tourists from Poland are great, but foreign tourists are worse. Especially the British". The discussion also included statements indicating the complete assimilation of visitors to the visited region in the same country: "tourists from Poland are unobtrusive", "tourists are the same people who are treated as citizens of the city".

A negative assessment of foreign visitors resounded in the statement: "Tourists cause unpleasant situations in the evening. It could be worse if the same type of tourist arrives". Such an opinion indicates a willingness to change and the need to manage the offer for foreign tourists to select the desired market segments. Evidence of the proper behavior of tourists and positive relations with residents that can foster development is the statement of a resident of the Tricity: "I wouldn't want to live in a place where there would be fewer tourists. People from abroad are very nice". An understanding of the situation is shown by a resident who stated: "Tourists are an indispensable part of society. I am also a tourist".

During the discussion, respondents noted that the COVID-19 pandemic had triggered changes in tourist behavior. The group of respondents from large cities stated that after the pandemic, "tourists are more visible". By contrast, the group of residents from smaller towns stated that "after the pandemic, tourists behave worse". This is an interesting finding indicating that residents notice a change in the behavior of visitors, which would need to be covered in a more in-depth study.

In the discussion across all respondent groups, it was noted that residents perceive positive and negative effects of the influx of tourists (Table 1).

Table 1. Negative and positive effects of the influx of tourists in the opinion of residents of large cities (Krakow and Tricity) and smaller towns and villages

Negative effects of the influx of tourists	Location	Positive effects of the influx of tourists	Location
Drunk and aggressive tourists	Large/small	Better living conditions	Small
Insecurity	Large	Increased opportunities in the labor market	Large/small
Traffic jams and disruptions	Large/small	Higher earnings	Large/small
Difficulty finding parking spaces	Large	Better cultural offers in the town, organizing more events	Large/small
Congestion on public transport	Large	Learning about cultures through contact with people from other countries and regions	Large/small
General crowding in the city making everyday life and recreation difficult	Large	Better communication in the city (which develops due to the need to meet increased transport needs)	Large
Environmental pollution, e.g., littering the beach, lack of waste segregation by tourists	Large/small	Improvement in infrastructure and the gastronomic offer	Large/small
Increase in product prices	Large/small		
A tiring frequent question for directions	Large		

Source: own research.

Negative opinions indicate that respondents perceive the effects of tourism development leading to the described phenomena resulting from overtourism. This was confirmed by the opinion of a resident of Gdansk: “Some places are so crowded because of the tourists that we do not want to live there”. One puzzling statement from a resident was “tourists are very tiresome because they constantly ask for directions”. This could be a signal to the local authorities to improve the tourist information system. It may also signal that, in contrast to the former political and economic system, when contact with tourists was considered a window into the world in Poland, nowadays, residents are not enthusiastic about such contact.

Despite the negative assessment of tourist behavior (by some respondents), positive effects of tourism development were noted in the group of residents of large cities and smaller towns, with opinions on positive economic effects prevailing among them.

As a result of the discussion, one group of respondents from large cities stated that “thanks to tourists, the inhabitants live better”. It can, therefore, be concluded that the influx of tourists to the large cities where the respondents live is not explicitly assessed as unfavorable. Residents see the positive effects of the arrival of tourists.

The respondents were also asked about their perception of measures that are or might be implemented in their localities to limit the negative impact of overtourism discussed previously. The second block of questions concerned an assessment of the needs and opportunities for implementing deconcentration strategies. The question that included the problem of overtourism and related gentrification concerned whether the influx of tourists interferes with ordinary life and triggers a desire to move. Residents from small towns, as expected, do not present negative attitudes. Even in a village on the route to a shrine that has experienced increased tourism, a resident stated, “in our place pilgrimages pass by, but they do not disturb our life”. Another resident from this group of villages noted that “a reduction in the number of tourists would have a negative effect, because there would be fewer jobs”.

In one group of respondents from small towns, the statement was made “if tourists disrupted my life, I would move out” was made. A group of respondents from large cities made a similar statement: “I prefer to live in the center despite a large number of tourists”. A resident of the Tricity also stated: “I really like to go to the pier during the holidays. Thanks to the tourists, of which there are many, there is an unusual atmosphere there”.

Considering urban management strategies to counteract the negative effects of gentrification, the survey asked for opinions on the possibility of deconcentrating tourist traffic, i.e., reducing the number of tourists in the most attractive places and increasing it in less well-known places.

In small towns, the majority of respondents do not perceive such a problem and a necessity, although one statement was noteworthy:

“If we regulate the influx of tourists, it will discourage them from visiting our city”.

Thus, in destinations with an underdeveloped tourism function, residents may find it useful to promote important visitor attractions concentrated in one place to manage the destination. Such a strategy is essential in destinations at the initial tourism development stage.

Although the problem of congestion was noted by a resident of a small town who is disturbed by tourist traffic heading to Gdansk on her commute to work: “a deconcentration strategy could reduce the nuisance of long commutes”. One respondent pointed out that “in small towns, the large number of tourists is more noticeable”, therefore, a deconcentration strategy should also be considered in smaller towns.

Negative attitudes toward introducing a deconcentration strategy were also presented by residents of large cities who, at an earlier stage of the discussion, showed some discouragement toward too large an influx of tourists. Examples of this opinion were: “I am used to crowds in the center and silence outside. I wouldn't want any change. I know where the tourists are, and I can avoid them”. “It's nice to go somewhere where there are no tourists. And when I want to go to the market square (in Krakow), I am used to it and I know what to expect”.

Another justification for the negative attitude toward deconcentration strategies is safety issues. Residents of large cities may think that the concentration of tourists in well-known places in their city is convenient and ensures safety, as exemplified by the opinion: “tourists should be in known places—then you know where to send patrols”.

These views are important evidence of the need for research into the introduction of a possible deconcentration strategy. Such an action would need to be supported in terms of local governance and the introduction of public consultations, which, according to the idea of sustainability, are essential for implementing solutions at the local governance level (Niegoda, 2024). Promotional activities in terms of internal marketing are also important (Niegoda, 2011).

A summary of respondents' opinions assessing the benefits of implementing the deconcentration strategy is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. The appropriateness of the deconcentration strategy in the opinion of residents.

Size of town	Most common answers	Sample reviews
Large cities	1. Reluctance to disperse tourist traffic: to be able to predict where crowding is present 2. Positive attitude toward the deconcentration of tourist traffic	“I would prefer tourists to stay concentrated where they are because I will have peace in places known only to me”. “Such distraction is unnecessary; residents know where to meet tourists and where they can have peace”. “When tourists are concentrated, I have more freedom to move around and enjoy ‘my’ attractions”. “The number of tourists concentrated in one place disturbs the residents less than the same number of tourists scattered”. “If the tourists dispersed, more residents would come to the Market Square”. “It would be good for us if there was tourist traffic in many places, and more of us would benefit from it”. “It is very positive to develop and create new attractions in new places, which allows young people to find work”.
Small towns	Deconcentration is unimportant; what matters is the promotion of existing tourist attractions to attract visitors to small towns.	“It would be good if tourists also came to us, it would provide our town with new jobs”.

Source: own research.

As the opinions quoted in Table 2 indicate, residents of large cities need to be able to predict where the most extensive congestion caused by tourists will be. This raises the need for research and the implementation of a well-thought-out promotional strategy, which should support activities related to the decongestion strategy. Tricity residents also noted the need to improve management in terms of not only the organization of tourist traffic but also mass events that increase congestion. One respondent provided the example of the Open'er Festival, which causes noise, crowding, and problems in maintaining order (lack of rubbish bins

and toilets). As a result of this festival, the respondent moved to another neighborhood. Thus, a broader problem is introducing management solutions that take the comprehensive tourist and cultural offerings of a city into account.

It is also worth noting that the issue of tourism deconcentration also applies to smaller towns. These localities may lie on the routes to large cities experiencing increased tourist traffic, and managing tourist flows from large cities may affect small towns. At the same time, cooperation should be established between small and large destinations, as the dispersion of tourist traffic from large cities may influence the attraction of tourists to other locations with an underdeveloped tourist function, for which the inflow of tourists becomes an opportunity for development.

DISCUSSION

This study confirmed the results obtained by Niezgoda and Markiewicz (2024) that, for residents of smaller towns and cities, the influx of tourists is mainly associated with expectations of economic improvement. The inhabitants of larger cities presented a different attitude toward tourists, in which overtourism was noted. Krakow residents, in particular, emphasized the need to manage the area in terms of using a deconcentration strategy, noting the 'Cultural Distance' indicated by Postma and Schmuecker (2017). The bad behavior of foreign tourists is due to the differences in economic levels, which very often result in customers coming to Poland, especially to Krakow, to take advantage of the cheap gastronomic (alcoholic) offer indicated by many authors (Walas et al., 2023). Such phenomena are related to the increasingly popular night-time tourism (Kowalczyk-Anioł et al., 2021), which causes tourismphobia and requires solutions of a strategic nature.

However, it should be emphasized that the inconvenience of people coming to Krakow to enjoy the gastronomic offer is not only related to negative effects. Research has shown (Nowacki et al., 2023) that the city's restaurants offer unforgettable experiences and can create a competitive advantage. It, therefore, becomes essential to properly manage a comprehensive product offer in terms of tourism services as well as to manage tourism flows.

Postma and Schmuecker (2017) also point to spatial and temporal distribution as a force for conflict. This study confirmed such conclusions, as residents in areas outside the inner city did not show any desire to disperse tourism. They prefer to be sure where the congestion is greatest, allowing them to plan where to stay and which attractions to use to avoid being exposed to too many tourists. An example is the opinion: "I live outside the tourist areas and I don't mind".

As research in Poland has shown (Niezgoda, 2011; Niezgoda & Markiewicz, 2024), residents' attitudes toward tourists depend on how long they have lived in the town and how attached they are to the place. This study noted that residents of small towns are proud of their place and would like tourists to visit.

The study also confirmed the existence of touristification processes and tourist gentrification. An example is: "I moved out of the center, where you don't see tourists. However, the holiday period is when I keep going out to dinner or to the beach to a minimum". This voice is the evidence of tourism gentrification, understood as the transformation of city environments by tourists and tourism (Parralejo & Díaz-Parra, 2021), a change for occasional visitors, including tourists, and not for new households with a higher social class than pre-existing ones (Cócola Gant, 2023).

CONCLUSIONS

This study confirmed the inconvenience of the influx of tourists for residents of well-known destinations. Residents' annoyance and discouragement (in line with the concept of overtourism) are related to the "Cultural Distance", as well as to the search for nightlife, cheap alcohol, and food offerings by foreign tourists. The survey showed, however, that not all residents are positive about the deconcentration strategy. In particular, residents of non-central areas of large cities do not want tourists to be dispersed and directed to other areas. This points to the need for sustainable management, in which residents are active players at the planning level and participate in public consultations organized by local authorities. Negative attitudes toward implementing a deconcentration strategy were also presented by residents of large cities, who, at an earlier stage in the discussion, showed some discouragement toward an influx of tourists that was too large.

The research in this article has also shown that the effects of the influx of tourists are felt not only in large well-known cities (Krakow and Tricity) but also in smaller locations (villages and towns), where the influx of tourists more quickly distorts the ratio between visitors and hosts. A deconcentration strategy should, therefore, also be considered in small towns. A deconcentration strategy in large cities can be a solution for neighboring small towns, where tourists will be encouraged to come, thus enriching the offer for residents. In small towns, the role of local government was highlighted in terms of managing tourist flows and promotional activities, boosting tourist traffic, and developing the attractiveness of the place.

The study showed that to manage the destination, it is helpful to promote important tourist attractions concentrated in one place at that destination. The opinions of residents obtained in this study confirm the necessity of implementing a deconcentration strategy, which, however, should be preceded by a public consultation phase. As previous research (Niezgoda, 2024) has shown, such consultation is essential in implementing sustainable tourism solutions at the local level.

The topic requires further studies. The context of the presented study—large cities with a high volume of tourism versus smaller locations with a low level of tourism—needs to be extended, and other locations should be included. It is also worth remembering that the deconcentration strategy has yet to be implemented in either of the locations under research, and the interviewees presented their views regarding the expected consequences it may bring. The results should be compared with similar findings for places that have had some experience of tourism traffic deconcentration.

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