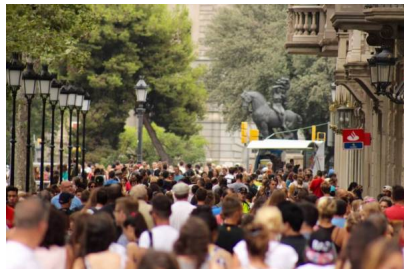# OVERTOURISM INDEX – NEW TOOL TO FIGHT DESTINATION OVERLOAD

Overtourism, the excessive growth of visitor numbers in a given area, has undeniably profound effects. These effects include damaged natural spaces, poorer quality of life for local populations, endless waiting times to visit popular attractions, and a deteriorated travel experience for tourists.

However, the phenomenon is difficult to measure. The first Overtourism Index, developed by Evaneos and the management consultancy Roland Berger, aims to eliminate subjective impressions and enable an objective approach to this modern tourism issue.

The index categorizes overtourism and is based on an analysis of 70 destinations among the 100 most popular travel destinations worldwide in terms of visitors.

To evaluate the risk of overtourism, each destination is rated on a scale from 1 (low risk) to 5 (extreme risk) by considering four objective criteria:

- International travelers per capita
- International travelers per km2
- Seasonal concentration
- Sustainability maturity level (the social impacts of tourism, the state of the host infrastructure, the development of the transport system, etc.)

The concept of overtourism cannot be generalized, so it's important to categorize it into different types to understand its complexity fully. The Overtourism Index identifies high-risk and low-risk destinations and creates new categories based on the various types of overload. This classification aims to help identify the most effective solutions for each situation.

Each category of overtourism raises unique questions that need to be addressed. Dealing with a surge of tourists in a significant European capital requires a different approach than managing overcrowding in a summer seaside resort. Instead of singling out the most affected destinations, this index encourages us to think about and implement the most suitable solutions.

The Overtourism Categories and Initial Solutions

The analysis of the destinations identified three types of hazards caused by overtourism:

- Beach Destinations
- Popular European travel destinations
- Urban Destinations

In addition, there are also "destinations under observation," which require preventive measures. The fifth category, "protected destinations," includes those spared from mass tourism.

1. **Overtourism at beach destinations**

Seaside resorts are one of the most vulnerable tourism categories, with an average vulnerability

index of 4 out of 5. This is primarily due to the high concentration of tourists (ranging from 3.2 to 9.9 tourists per resident) in relatively small and ecologically fragile areas (1,600 to 8,000 tourists per square kilometer). Countries that are particularly affected include Cyprus (4.4), Mauritius (4.2), Greece (4), and Croatia (3.8). These destinations are especially vulnerable because, on average, 25 percent of their GDP depends on tourism.

To address these vulnerabilities, these highly affected destinations must implement mandatory measures. One approach is to regulate the capacity of these areas by introducing quotas to preserve the most frequented places. Additionally, efforts should be made to spread tourist flows throughout the year by promoting these destinations more intensively during the off-peak season. The goal is not to reduce the overall number of tourists but rather to ensure a better distribution of visitor numbers throughout the year, thus minimizing the risk to the GDP.

2. **Overtourism in popular European destinations**

Many famous European destinations experience a significant increase in tourist numbers during the summer season. Approximately 43 percent of arrivals occur in the third quarter of the year. Spain, Italy, and Portugal have the highest influx during June, July, and August, with an average index of 3.6, closely followed by France at 3.3.

Despite being less economically reliant on tourism than seaside resorts (averaging 9 percent of GDP), these destinations would benefit from measures to manage tourist flows throughout the year, including encouraging travel in the spring or autumn. Travelers can explore Italy or France in April or September to enjoy pleasant weather and a more peaceful trip with fewer tourists.

3. **Overtourism in urban destinations**

City tourism, especially in major European capitals, needs measures to reduce city congestion and spread tourism's economic benefits to surrounding areas. While these destinations have a good level of sustainability and low economic reliance on tourism (averaging 5% of GDP), up to 37% of visitors in the third quarter were focused on these metropolises. They achieved an average index of 3.2. The top 3 most at-risk metropolises are Copenhagen, Denmark (score of 3.8), Amsterdam, Netherlands (score of 3.7), and Dublin, Ireland (score of 3.4).

These destinations are eager to redirect tourist traffic to other regions. In the Netherlands, for example, Rotterdam is being promoted more to ease the pressure on Amsterdam. Another option is encouraging travelers to stay longer, allowing them to visit other, sometimes lesser-known regions alongside the most popular cities.

4. **Travel destinations under observation**

Destinations categorized as "under observation" face the challenge of being proactive and taking preventive measures. On average, these destinations have a balanced flow of tourists throughout the year, ranging from 24 to 28 percent. However, as they become more popular, they require proactive management of tourist density, both per square kilometer (ranging between 54 and 240 tourists per km²) and in terms of population (0.8 tourists per inhabitant). These destinations contribute an average of 9 percent to GDP and are at a critical juncture. For instance, Morocco (3.1), Vietnam (3), Egypt (2.7), and Iceland (2.9) are ranked at the top, with Iceland having an exceptionally high risk due to a tourist density of 5.2 per inhabitant.

The tourism managers' key responsibility is to monitor the capacity of tourist sites and implement

measures to preserve them. This involves anticipating and supporting infrastructure development in these destinations to maintain authenticity while providing targeted and limited offerings to educate travelers.

5. **Protected travel destinations**

These destinations cover a large area and have a **balanced distribution of tourist traffic, with 16 to 80 tourists per square kilometer or 0.3 tourists per inhabitant.** They have a 24 to 28 percent seasonality throughout the year and an average overtourism index of 2.5, protecting them from overtourism. Countries in this category include Canada (2.3), the USA (1.7), Australia (1.5), and Tanzania (1.8).

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