**Visitor Management Solutions**

**Introduce codes of conduct – encouraging behavioural change**

Venice has a new #EnjoyRespectVenezia campaign, encouraging them to behave appropriately and with respect, with fines if they don’t. Rome and Milan have similar measures, including bans on eating in fountains and drinking on streets at night. As well as telling visitors what they can’t do, the Venice campaign also encourages better behaviour by promoting sustainable tips and alternative itineraries to experience a more authentic Venice. Similarly the ‘We hate tourism’ tour company in Lisbon encourages visitors to meet local people and not engage in mass tourism, encouraging responsible tourism. However some argue codes of conduct are futile and that work has to be done before they arrive at a destination.

**Introduce taxes on tourism – for overnight visits**

In some places such as Amsterdam, Frankfurt, Iceland and the Balearic islands, this takes the form of a tax on overnight stays. While there has been a call for the authorities in Venice to charge for entry to the city, this has been ruled out as against the EU freedom of movement laws and the Italian constitution. Citizen groups are campaigning for a Venice Pass – a single ticket for entry to Venice. Some politicians in Norway and Wales have called for a tourist tax with others saying it would have more negative impacts. If taxes are imposed these should be used to improve local communities and infrastructure.

Examples include:

* Amsterdam: tax on tourists’ rooms in the city centre to increase from 5% to 6% in 2018
* Frankfurt: tourists tax for overnight visitors, 2 euros/night when staying in an accommodation such as hotels, hostels and even private apartments with providers such as Airbnb. However, any tourists staying in the city for work reasons will be exempt from the tax.
* Civita, a tiny settlement about 74 miles north of Rome, founded by the Etruscans more than 2,500 years ago, is the only town in Italy to charge an entrance fee. A €1.50 toll was introduced in 2013 and increased at the beginning of August. Visitors are now required to pay €3 on weekdays and €5 on Sundays or public holidays
* Norway: some politicians calling for a tourist tax, opposed by others
* Iceland: The coalition government is considering a number of options. They include forcing bus companies and tour operators into buying a special license or hiking the existing levy on hotel rooms. The ministry says proceeds of any new levy would be used to improve infrastructure and facilities.
* Venice: EU freedom of movement rules, she says, mean they can’t charge people to enter the city. The Italian constitution won’t allow that either. “We can’t close the city,” she says. They can’t increase the “tassa di soggiorno” – overnight tax – either, because those rates are set nationally. Citizens’ groups campaign for the Venice Pass”, which would be a ticket for the entire city, paid on entry. This would both increase the city’s income and deter the least enthusiastic.

**Regulate tourism businesses – particularly for accommodation and retail**

This generally includes regulations for second or holiday home ownership, regulating the use of sites like AirBnB, and regulating the number of tourist beds in a destination. However if we have an affordable housing shortage, and yet companies are converting much-needed homes into short-term lets for tourists, then that is a failure of governance – not the fault of the tourists for finding a room online and booking it. There’s little heard about the consequences of encouraging hotel development in Dublin on land that might have gone to the construction of new housing instead.

Examples include:

* Barcelona has stopped issuing licences for new hotels, has banned change-of-use permits required for holiday lets and has started cracking down on unlicensed Airbnb rentals, doubling the numbers of inspectors checking properties.
* Amsterdam has banned new hotels from large parts of the city and has placed limits on the number of tourism enterprises (such as ticket shops, bike rental companies, cheese shops and other retailers catering mainly for tourists). Fast food shops, including ice-cream and doughnuts are limited to certain streets in the city centre.
* Venice has introduced a ban on new tourist accommodation in the city centre and new fast food restaurants. They also want legal tourism and are working with AirBnB to discuss how to regulate unlicensed lets and are launching a hotline for locals to call if they suspect a property is being sublet illegally.
* Berlin, people are only allowed to rent out one room in their home since last year, and the whole flat or house if it is a secondary or occasional use pied-a-terre.
* Baeleric Islands, new rules will ban flat owners from renting their apartments via websites such as Airbnb and Homeaway unless they obtain a special licence to do so. Owners face fines of up to €400,000 if they break the law, and the websites face the same fine for letting people advertise without a valid licence number. The new law introduces a cap of 623,624 beds that can be used for tourists, and there are plans to cut that by 120,000 over the next few years. Almost 70% of the beds assigned will be in Mallorca and more than half will be in hotels.
* Paris, London and Amsterdam want to regulate the duration of rentals and register all flats and houses being used for short-term lets in order to better control them.
* Copenhagen, the establishment of new bars and restaurants has been prohibited, bicycle routes introduced for tourists and “silent areas” within residential areas in which it is prohibited to speak loudly while walking in the streets. In addition, Denmark forbids foreigners from buying houses in coastal areas or along its beaches.

**Capping visitor numbers vs monitoring numbers**

Some destinations such as Santorini and Dubrovnik have introduced caps on the number of visitors allowed to enter at any one time. The mayor of Dubrovnik argues that while they will lose revenue in the short term, they will gain in the long term by being perceived as a high quality destination and with a better quality of life. However this only works with a defined place with entry and exit points. This method could not be introduced on a city-wide basis due to EU freedom of movement laws. Technology is being used to control visitors with CCTV cameras introduced to monitor - and, if necessary, stop - crowds passing through the city’s three gates. Venice is installing people-counters to monitor the number of visitors to its most popular sites, with access limited when numbers reach a maximum level. Technology can be used to limit visitor number through the use of online ticketing for tours also, with Hook head Lighthouse introducing such a system this year.

**Reduce seasonality impacts – encourage better visitor distribution in terms of season & place**

Destination pressure can be caused by too many visitors at one place at one time. Measures to minimise negative impacts include emphasising activities that can be done in shoulder/winter seasons or at less crowded times, and geographically spreading tourism by improving less popular areas and communicating things to see and do there. Others argue that if the less visited areas become more visited then the hidden gems will no longer be hidden, with businesses increasingly catering to visitors not locals. Before visitors leave home they can be given guidance on things to do in the off-season, or outside pressured areas, diverting them well known attractions. Overseas marketing of destinations plays a key role – encouraging visitors to stay an extra day or two, to visit sites outside of the main tourist areas, and to visit outside of the main tourist season when there is more capacity.

Internet and social media can also give DMOs the ability to instantly influence visitors’ experience by appealing to their attitudes, behaviour and motivations. Giving visitors feedback, raising awareness about the consequences of their actions and also showing how they can contribute have a cumulative effect and help to break the social traps of unsustainable tourist behaviour.

Examples include:

* Barcelona, one of best examples of visitor redistribution where part of the solution to overcrowding and the negative influences of tourism have been a policy of directing travellers out of hubs and city centres to suburbs and lesser-known neighbourhoods.
* New York, which has introduced a five-borough strategy that incentivises tourists to get out of Manhattan and into Queens and Brooklyn.
* Burren, Co. Clare, with Fáilte Ireland encouraging people to consider alternative destinations and to plan their trips in advance and spend longer in one specific region.
* Amsterdam, which has started advising visitors to seek accommodation outside of the city centre on its official website.
* Dingle, with a strategy to spread tourists around the county and throughout the calendar year.
* New Zealand, where Air New Zealand has worked with regional tourism bodies, councils and mayors to help build a unique proposition for each which the airline then spent hundreds of millions of dollars promoting overseas. There are unique bids to all the sub-regions of New Zealand, that don't need to compete with each other, they are very differentiated and distilled about what they are and what they're not. It's about pushing people up the value chain and trying to create incentives for people that are wanting to come to maybe come outside of those peak times when there's not as much pressure put on resources and when there is more capacity.

**Encourage repeat visitors – who are more likely to explore further**

Marketing should be targeted towards attracting repeat visitors who are more likely to spend time exploring alternative attractions, who have better sense of a culture of a destination and whose behaviour is more likely to integrate with the host community. For example Japanese first-time visitors to Barcelona will crowd the Sagrada Familia cathedral whereas French tourists are more likely to be repeat visitors that come at off-peak times, buy local produce, and spread out to less crowded parts of the city – all productive steps towards more sustainable tourism, and more peaceful relations with residents.

**Diversify visitor activities - both in type and location**

Developing innovative itineraries and quality visitor experiences means more can be charged for them – visitors will stay for longer and spend more. The DMO’s role is moving more towards spot-lighting the right kind of visitor experiences that will engage the right kind of visitor, based on a shared strategic branding framework. Fáilte Ireland are currently pursuing this with visitor experience development plans for key destinations.

**Involve local communities – in tourism planning and development**

Ensuring tourism-affected communities have a say in tourism planning and development and can benefit from tourism income contributes to community wellbeing and reduces conflict. The local community will be more aware of an in control of the benefits of tourism. If there are conflicts the focus should be on specific issues rather than tourism in general - on local business owners and government, who will not be leaving tomorrow, rather than on tourists who will be. DMO’s and government have a role to play in undertaking resident surveys and in providing local communities with information on the benefits of tourism.

**Invest in local communities – encouraging a positive view of tourism**

A net positive step would be to get OTAs and Airbnb to contribute to local taxes/ projects, investing in the destinations and assets upon which their businesses depend. The private tourism sector should also be encouraged to invest in new areas and new products. DMO’s have a role to play too, in working with small businesses that offer creative and original things to do and places to stay, adding depth to the offer.

**Demand responsible governance – local and national**

DMO’s are integral parts of destination governance and have the power to facilitate and communicate the destination strategy and tilt the balance towards responsible tourist behaviour. Barcelona and Amsterdam are the great examples of how to implement this in practice. Local and national governments have a key role to play. It is unreasonable to lay the blame for local imbalances in tourism if national agencies and government carry on marketing pressured destinations, and failing to manage growth in unregulated accommodation and access. There need to be dialogue and partnership. Tourism authorities need to understand that they are accountable to the city, not to the tourism industry.

Destinations must also be accountable for the transport impact of their visitors. The marketing department might prefer a Japanese tourist to Barcelona because on average they will spend €40 more than a French tourist – according to unpublished data from the Barcelona Tourist Board – but the carbon footprint we collectively pay for is not taken into account. Short breaks pollute more per night and so destinations ought to be fighting tooth and nail to get you to stay longer.

The role of government extends to ensuring responsible resource management - which addresses the negative impacts of over-tourism and respects environmental and cultural carrying capacities. Measures can include incentives and policies to reduce energy and water consumption. Governments could/should also abolish subsidies to air travel which leads to market distortions at the expense of more sustainable travel options.

**Redefine success - from quantity (volume of visitors) to quality (net positive benefit)**

Destinations should be focussing on premium high value visitors who stay for longer and spend more rather than high volume low spending ones. Increasing the length of time tourist’s stay, ensuring local communities benefit and minimising the impact of tourists should be prioritised over numbers.

**Visitors must take responsibility too**

We all have to take greater responsibility. There is an onus on visitors to choose carefully where – and when – they visit. We have to rethink the impulse that says that a holiday from work – or retirement from work – is an open ticket to exploring the world.

**Effective and integrated mechanisms and policies to manage visitors at sites**

Tourism management plans outline sustainable tourism development goals such as monitoring the number of visitor arrivals and identifying specific areas zoned for tourists. Good examples track visitor trends (determining visitor numbers, visitation patterns, visitor demographics over multiple years), monitoring positive and negative impacts of tourism (entry fees and permits, gathering data on visitor days and nights and using tour company data), and discussing zoning with various levels of visitor use and access.