Article

Island Tourism: Vulnerable or Resistant to Overtourism?

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Abstract Islands have long attracted tourists and some islands rank amongst the most visited places in the world. Such popularity has created problems of overdevelopment and tourism at unsustainable levels, leading to the phenomenon of overtourism. Traditionally islands could rely on natural features to limit tourist numbers but this is increasingly not the case today, therefore, this paper reviews how changes in attitude, access and media coverage have led to problems of excessive visitation. The paper discusses the failure to create and implement appropriate policies which might mitigate against such developments and notes the inherent long-term problems many island authorities have traditionally faced when trying to improve economic conditions for their residents. The paper concludes that more specific action in terms of policy goals and implementation are needed if islands are to avoid the issues of unsustainable development and overtourism currently being experienced in many mainland tourist destinations.

Keywords islands; sustainable tourism; overtourism; vulnerability; pressures; development; controls

1. Introduction

Islands have long been considered attractive tourism destinations, yet their size and geographical isolation have also often contributed to a lack of control over many issues that afflict them. Such issues have sometimes left islands vulnerable to external forces, and this paper explores the specific issue of overtourism to islands in the light of characteristics of islands in general. It begins with a discussion of both endogenous and exogenous forces that drive the development of islands, focusing on the difficulties many island destinations face in controlling the level and type of tourism development. The paper addresses the ways in which islands might control tourism development, and in particular, the problem of overdevelopment. Contributory factors in the context of islands include a small land area and limited opportunity to engage in alternative economic activities, which can leave them often heavily dependent on tourism [1]. Islands are often also heavily subject to external controls, both economic and political, thus suggesting that islands could be considered more vulnerable than most tourist destinations to experience excessive development and tourist numbers far beyond their capacity to control and manage. Overtourism is one form of unsustainable tourism that has been recorded on islands in a variety of forms for many years including excessive numbers of tourists and resident unrest over recent years [2–4], suggesting that islands are particularly vulnerable to problems relating to unsustainable levels and forms of tourism.

2. Island Vulnerability

There are five key factors which place many islands as highly vulnerable locations, namely: limited population, limited area, limited natural resources, lack of control and geographic location.

First, many islands are small, both in area and in population, which makes them potentially vulnerable to a number of pressures, not least of which is often a significant number of visitors [5]. A limited local population on a small land area means that what might be considered moderate numbers of tourists elsewhere may be highly noticeable and therefore represent visibly increased pressure on facilities and resources on a small island. Often these facilities and associated infrastructure on islands have been developed and designed for a small number of local residents

and thus any increased pressure, for example by visitors during the tourist season, can be particularly disturbing and apparent. This may result in undesired congestion as well as competition [6]. A small resident population may also mean a limited range of goods and supplies, with replenishment occurring at intervals rather than constantly as in more central large population areas. This can potentially result in shortages if visitors, for example those in self-catering accommodation such as Airbnb, are competing with residents for such resources.

In the case of small islands or SIDS (Small Island Development States), a limited or confined area means the likelihood of contact between residents and visitors is high, and while this may be welcomed in some island situations [7], especially when visitor numbers are small, this attitude may change as visitor numbers increase [5,8]. It is not inevitable that residents will become less positive towards tourism and tourists as visitor numbers increase [9], but such a situation certainly creates the possibility of a level of contact greater than that desired by residents and which then is viewed as disturbance [10,11]. In large islands, where tourists may be spatially dispersed, such pressure is less likely, but on small islands there is often simply nowhere else for tourists to go, other than permanent residential settlements. This can result in specific locations e.g., beaches (some of the finest in the world are found on islands), cultural and heritage sites, scenic spots, retail areas, parking sites, experiencing high tourist pressure as such locations are both centres of attraction and sources of necessary purchases and use by the two populations [6,12]. Due to a limited land area, tourist penetration is likely to occur in many parts of an island and thus, contact between residents and visitors becomes unavoidable.

Limited areas and limited populations also make small islands particularly vulnerable to tourism development because of the likelihood of limited resources and thus few alternative forms of economic development [13]. Island destinations, according to the UNWTO [14], are more dependent on tourism than other destinations. For example, the Caribbean islands comprise one of the most tourist intense regions in the world, with tourism contributing 15% of GDP on average [12] while in the Balearic Islands and Canary Islands tourism provides almost 35% of GDP [15,16]. Historically, such problems as lack of employment and income sources were normally dealt with by emigration and a subsistence level of existence, but in modern times island residents are less willing to accept little or no economic development, and tourism is often seized upon as a potential source of livelihood for jobs and income, if not a panacea for economic development on a larger scale [17]. Thus, in many cases tourism has not only been welcomed but actively sought and encouraged, sometimes with economic incentives. Islands with limited natural resources are inevitably vulnerable to almost any form of development [18] and this situation tends to encourage island decision-makers to allow development. This is often accompanied by a reluctance to pose any challenge to agents of development because of a fear that such opposition may result in the loss of potential further growth, leading to economic recession [19]. The full long-term implications of such development, including the loss of traditional sites or resources used by residents and the prevention of alternative forms of development being initiated, may not be appreciated for several or even many years, by which time adjustments and limitations may be difficult to impose [20].

Another key issue is that many islands have little or no control over tourism to them and are dependent on, and in reality, under the control of, off-island forces and agencies. These include international airlines, externally owned ferry companies, international hotel chains, and higher levels of government [21]. Islands which are particularly vulnerable to the pressures of tourism include those that are easily accessible from major close markets, i.e., 1–3 hours flying time, have good reliable air service, are on major cruise ship routes, and have attractions that are unique, or iconic. The Caribbean islands, the Balearics, Canaries, Malta, Cyprus, and Capri are examples of such islands and groups. Some South Pacific Islands that have a specific appeal because of unique features (e.g., Easter Island or Pitcairn Island), are perhaps not as vulnerable to tourism numbers as they are too far from markets and thus expensive and relatively difficult to reach, although they are receiving visitors in increasing numbers in recent years [22]. However, those with a very small resident population, such as Atutaki (Cook Islands) may still be overwhelmed by the daily tourist flight of some 180 passengers. From these examples, we may conclude that island vulnerability to the negative impacts of excessive numbers of tourism, such as overtourism, reflects their geographical location, their accessibility and links to tourist markets, their local population (numbers and cohesion), their size, and their relative power or control over their own development.

Another issue of control facing many small islands is that they may face loss of land and facilities after natural disasters, not only from the actual disaster but from capitalistic opportunists that present themselves once attractive sites become vulnerable [23]. When tourism is potentially economically attractive, rebuilding for residents is not necessarily a goal of all those who control an island after a hurricane or tsunami has happened [24]. Islands reliant on tourism may see the local or national government evict residents from their land either by decree or under the guise of rehabilitation with the intent of tourism development. There have been a number of such examples in Sri Lanka [25], Barbuda [24]; and more generally in the Caribbean [26].

This last point of control is one which is a problem for many islands, often irrespective of their size. By reason of being peripheral and apart from a mainland, many islands, individually and in groups, are part of a nation state rather than being independent, and thus lack complete political control over their own destiny [13,17,27]. Even being fully independent does not necessarily mean an island has complete control over tourism development, because as mentioned above, the means of access and many sources of investment capital lie in agencies that are external to the island. However, islands and their archipelagos that are suitable for tourism development are often subject to policies dictating the rate, type and scale of development that have been established on the mainland or other parts of the specific state [27]. Such policies may continue in force even when island populations would prefer less or no further growth in tourism or related development, and steps to control and mitigate against undesirable development may not be supported by higher levels of government [28,29].

3. The Threat of Unwanted Change on Islands

Although there has been much focus on the need to make tourism more sustainable, many of the vulnerabilities of islands have led to issues of overdevelopment, unwanted change and even overtourism. While overtourism, or at least the term, is a relatively new phenomenon, the existence of over development and excessive numbers of visitors is certainly not new [30]. There is no question that stakeholder perceptions of more tourists in already busy locations have fundamentally shifted in recent years and although the scale of the problem in earlier times may have been very different to what is experienced now, the nature of the problem has remained very similar, namely, discontent from residents of destinations at the rate and scale of development and visitation and also at the behaviour of at least some of the visitors.

There has been a plethora of articles and books in the past few years on overtourism, discussing related issues globally [2–4,31,32]. The term overtourism can be defined as "the acceleration and growth of tourism supply and demand, the use of tourism destinations' natural ecological goods, the destruction of their cultural attractions, and negative impacts on their social and economic environments" [33]. While this is not the only definition, it is clear that the term includes: large, perhaps excessive, numbers of tourists, inappropriate behaviour by tourists, inconvenience/disturbance for residents, and unwanted change in the physical and social environments of destinations. Slogans, protests, acts of damage and threats to visitors have all been recorded [34]. Despite the considerable attention that has been given to overtourism by many forms of media because of the very visible expression of discontent being expressed by residents of destinations on a scale not seen previously (e.g., [35,36]), it remains controversial. It is not clear if overtourism is really anything more than over-development under a new name [37], whether it is a media-generated term experiencing a rush of media popularity [38,39], whether it is simply a management problem [40], or whether it is a common phenomenon that has been around for a long time but has only just received widespread attention [41].

In the context of islands, it is important to resolve whether overtourism should be considered in absolute terms, or whether it should be considered as a relative situation. If the latter is true, it may be much more of a destination or site-specific issue. If so, then reflecting on local conditions and characteristics should be considered. Small, thinly populated but easily accessible islands would seem to be prime candidates to experience tourism at excessive levels beyond their carrying capacity [42].

When discussing overtourism in islands, one key issue is the often-heavy dependence on offshore operators to bring tourism to an island and to promote that island, as local agencies may not have adequate funding to do so. Such a dependence can create many problems for a number of enterprises on an island, particularly small-scale accommodation operators [43], and place island tourism operators in a position of not being able or willing to change their image without a risk of losing the powerful suppliers of customers. As most agents of development are generally

in favour of continued expansion as long as there is a market, regardless of whether it suits a destination or not, [44] this can bring about changes in the characteristics of visitors and ultimately in the locations themselves [45]. The pressure on destinations to continue to develop and grow, results in changes in places that have little opportunity to slow or halt expansion and almost no chance of returning to a quiet existence, their original culture, and an unspoiled environment. This situation can be seen in a loss of cultural strength, and heritage, at least the living human heritage, as shown in adulterated handicrafts and other goods produced by indigenous peoples [46], and witnessed in island communities from the Arctic to the South Pacific [47].

One argument is that the appropriate application of sustainable development principles in the form of sustainable tourism could alleviate or prevent overtourism occurring in islands in particular [14], but the failure to implement sustainability has proven too widespread and politically unpalatable for this to be achieved [48]. The development of platforms such as Airbnb has allowed private development on a small individual scale to become massive in an overall context and result in overdevelopment in destinations, with such properties sometimes being more heavily used than conventional hotels [49]. These types of problems have been experienced in Mallorca as well as in Greek islands [50] where problems associated with second homes, Airbnb, time shares and condominium developments have suggested that plans claiming sustainable tourism principles are mostly simply only claims and have not been successful in avoiding overtourism [51].

It is important to observe, however, that overtourism is not necessarily the same as mass tourism, therefore, it cannot be assumed that all busy destinations are automatically experiencing overtourism or unsustainable tourism. Busy destinations, even on islands, are often successful tourist destinations and large numbers of people do not always mean too many people. The term overtourism should not be used automatically as a criticism of mass tourism, as mass tourism, including having large scale resorts on an island, does not necessarily mean that overtourism exists. Instead, it should be recognized that there may be some stakeholders who oppose tourism in general at any level, so opposition may be relative in extent and pronouncement, thus there needs to be care when using the term, particularly in relating it to the concept of sustainability.

4. Discussion

Unsustainable tourism in islands is therefore, often a result of a combination of political, geographical, cultural and physical characteristics that can make islands, particularly small islands, vulnerable to the pressures from excessive tourism development when they are relatively poorly equipped to prevent or limit such pressures (see Figure 1).
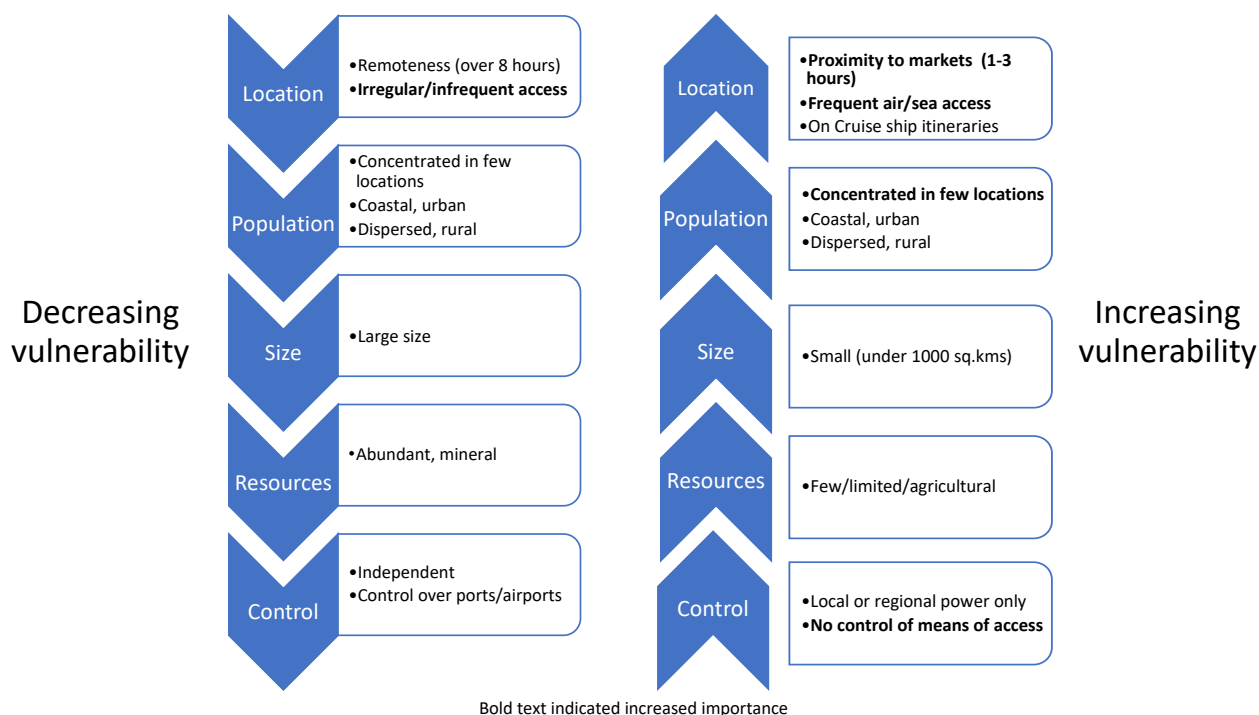

Figure 1. Factors increasing or reducing island vulnerability to overtourism.

4.1. Locational Characteristics Re markets

While location is a key importance for an island to attract tourism development in the first place, it is also important with respect to the likelihood of such development becoming unsustainable. Islands which are in close proximity to major existing or potential markets are most vulnerable as a short relatively cheap journey is likely to attract large numbers of visitors, e.g., Jeju Island, only 60 miles from mainland Korea [5] or Cozumel, only 10 miles from mainland Mexico. Being near to major markets often usually means lower costs in terms of importing materials and supplies and therefore less costly development than in isolated and remote islands. Remote locations, however, as illustrated by great distance from potential markets, and subject to harsh physical conditions, can be seen as shielding some islands from excessive tourist development and visitation. Some islands in the South Pacific, like Easter Island, while having unique and iconic attractions, receive relatively few visitors because of the cost and difficulty of reaching them, alhtoughalthough increasingly frequent air services are capable of changing this situation. St Helena, in the South Atlantic is one island that will face such a situation as a newly extended airport comes into full operation, allowing relatively easy and quick access compared to the previous limited and lengthy sea ferry access [52]. Other islands, like Pitcairn, or Tokelua with no cruise boat harbour and no commercial air service, benefit from their natural characteristics and limited access maintaining the numbers of visitors at relatively sustainable levels.

4.2. Culture, Heritage Factors, and Population Factors

Island destinations, in many respects, are the same as mainland destinations with regard to the appeal of cultural and heritage attributes. Tourism has long been drawn to unique or different cultures, to different culinary traditions, ways of dress, languages, architecture, historical remains, sites of major events, both real and imaginary, even non-existent attractions [53]. Thus, the more different, and in some cases, the more remote or less visited the island, the greater the attraction to some tourists and to some tour companies, also raising the risk of ever-increasing development and overtourism as knowledge about a place spreads. One example is the Faroe Islands which was once relatively unknown, became popular very quickly. Where local populations are small and often without significant powers of control overdevelopment, heritage in its many forms may become subject to the impacts of overtourism, with subsequent loss of authenticity and ultimately of the islands' key attractions. Where the population is concentrated into one or two urban centres, development is more likely to be attracted to these specific locations which are often cultural and historic centres, and therefore more attractive to tourists as attractions are likely to be in close proximity to each other than when population is dispersed. Venice is perhaps the most visible example of an island experiencing overtourism, with tourists attracted by its cultural-heritage attributes, and is often cited as losing or having already lost, not only much of its appeal, but also a large proportion of its traditional population [54]. Here the key issue is how to limit, mitigate or prevent overtourism and its effects while maintaining the quality and nature of life for the residents of such islands Venice has faced these problems over the years with little success [55] or indeed, with little being done successfully to prevent or mitigate the problems. Many solutions have been discussed but few if any steps actually taken, and development outside but adjoining Venice has accentuated the problem by increasing the number of day visitors without the benefits that accrue from their staying overnight in the city. Venice suffers (or benefits depending on one's viewpoint) from proximity to major markets, an unequalled iconic image, a high level of visibility in markets, while having none of the island characteristics which might deter visitation, particularly as it is connected to its mainland by a causeway, allowing unlimited constant access.

4.3. Political Power Structures and Control

The political structure in islands may greatly influence the potential for overtourism. Islands which are fully independent may have the best chance of being able to control the rate and nature of tourism development, but even those face major problems of finding alternative sources of employment and income if they reject or strictly limit tourism development. Those islands which have extensive regional controls, Shetlands, Orkneys, Greenland, Canaries, and Balearics, for example, may also have sufficient controls and powers, should they choose to use them, to manage and control tourism. The most vulnerable islands are those which are small, with limited resources, populations and powers, such as Gozo (Malta), Koh Phi Phi (Thailand) or some of the

outer Canary Islands, the Azores and some Caribbean territories, which are subject to control by authorities at several different higher levels of power and thus have little power over development of any kind on their own small island.

Pressure to allow airlines to operate services, for cruise ships to land passengers for short periods, developers to construct resorts and other facilities is always high and often next to impossible to resist. All politicians, particularly local representatives, are subject to local pressures for jobs and for income to residents and from taxes [19], and once tourism development begins, it tends to take on a life of its own and becomes increasingly difficult to manage and control. For that reason, the earlier the imposition of appropriate controls can be made, the greater the chances of success in avoiding overtourism. Equally important, is the need to make well-thought out and long-term decisions at the beginning of tourism development to ensure development follows a desired path with respect to rate of development and type of development, as well as any possible curbs on non-local ownership and also designation of areas to be protected from development. Limits on level of air services and numbers of cruise ships allowed at any one time are also better and more easily imposed at an early stage of development rather than later.

4.4. Physical and Environmental Attributes

In recent years, growing interest in the physical world, driven greatly by organisations such as National Geographic, and television programmes such Planet Earth and Blue Planet hosted by celebrities such as Sir David Attenborough, has seen many islands increase in visitation. The Galapagos Islands are a case in point. Relatively inaccessible for many years, on the "wrong" side of South America to the major markets of Europe and much of North America, accessed only via a country (Ecuador) that was not itself a major tourist destination, the islands are an unlikely tourist destination. Despite the disadvantages of a required transhipment from Ecuador, the absence of any cultural features of note, the high cost of access, limitations on group size and behaviour, the requirements for the vast majority of tourists to go on a package tour, and the minimum time involved for a visit, visitor numbers have increased rapidly over the past five decades (from 11,000 visitors in 1979 to 271,000 in 2019) and exceeded the declared tourist number limits (originally set at 25,000 in 1982) many times [56]. Growth of tourism has been matched by resident population growth as the islands offer the potential of above average income for Ecuadorian citizens living there compared to those on the mainland, in turn generating the need for further development to support such residential growth. Thus, if the attractions of an island are great enough, rare enough, or of sufficient interest to the increasingly social-media conscious public, then tourist numbers will continue to grow and be driven in part by continued mass exposure. Social media is undoubtedly a factor in stimulating increased visitation and potentially being able to reduce visitation [3], but is something which is not unique to islands and is far beyond their ability to control, leaving them as vulnerable to its affects as non-insular destinations.

Such trends are visible even in islands more remote than the Galapagos, with islands in the far north of Canada and Norway now being visited by cruise ships and aircraft, as are islands in Antarctica, with tourists attracted by sea and bird life, or in the case of Svalbard, polar bears. As well as icebreakers, reinforced hulled cruise liners are making excursion to these islands, being followed by luxury "yachts" carrying a few hundred passengers. In such thinly populated or even deserted environments, unsustainable tourism takes on a new face and operates at much lower absolute levels of visitation than in locations like Venice or Mallorca, supporting the argument that overtourism is essentially a relative concept. As with cultural heritage, the pressures of tourism on rare and endangered species and environments are often not acknowledged or even noticed until sometimes impacts have exceeded the level of self-correction and irreparable change has occurred. Many such areas are relatively unprotected because of the absence of a permanent human presence to enforce any restrictions on behaviour and operation of tourists and tourism. Self-regulation on cruise ship operations overall in particular are unlikely to be very effective, despite the praiseworthy efforts of some companies. While in previous times the long distance from markets and inhospitable climate and marine conditions deterred tourists, technological improvements in vessels have been matched with changing logistical arrangements, such that visitors now overcome the distance by flying to the southern tip of South America and then boarding ships to go further south, thus saving many weeks sailing time.

5. Controls to Mitigate and Prevent Overtourism

If destinations are to avoid the problems of overtourism, or indeed unsustainable development of any kind, the ways in which control over tourism may be exerted in the insular context must be examined and strengthened. Considerable attention has been paid to overtourism which raises the question of what actions could be taken to prevent or mitigate the effects of too many tourists in a destination or whether concerns are really related to the easing of congestion and not to excess numbers of tourists [4,31,57]. Many general mitigation and control issues become very specific in the case of islands.

A key issue for islands, as noted earlier, is that of who has power and control over key issues and where that power is located, i.e., whether it is local or external to the island(s) affected. If control is vested in a local or regional island authority, the introduction of mitigation measures has much greater potential to be implemented than when such power belongs with other, generally external, agencies. Given that the problems of overtourism are primarily and usually experienced at the local level, which may be a whole island in some cases, then it is logical to argue that solutions are most likely to be found at the local level and it is at that level that actions should be taken [58]. For example, the Gili islands in Indonesia face significant problems managing overtourism which is compounded by the larger controlling government body of Lombok having a growth-oriented stance [59].

One approach that is being tried is to gain local ownership of key sites in order to make them more resilient to tourism pressures, and thus be able to shield them from impacts and reduce more general problems in the wider area. Such steps have been taken on the Isle of Skye, (Scotland) where residents have become concerned over inappropriate behaviour of tourists [60] and excessive levels of use of locations without adequate facilities such as parking and toilets [61]. In this case residents have used existing powers to buy out specific sites with a view to providing toilets and car parking spaces to alleviate problems in these areas. Skye is an interesting case, as until 1995 it could only be reached by ferries from the Scottish mainland, which had provided some limits on tourist numbers, including no service on Sundays, when many establishments on Skye were closed in observance of the Sabbath. When a bridge was opened in 1995 allowing unlimited access (in terms of numbers and time), considerable opposition was expressed, both at the availability of access on Sundays and the likely implications for changes in the nature of life on the island. The issue of the loss of "islandness" [62] was also raised although this has not been reflected in any apparent loss of appeal to tourists and users (locals and visitors) have risen in numbers from 612,500 in 1995 to around 1,825,000 in 2019 [63]. The same issue of the loss of the image and feeling of islandness has been raised elsewhere, for example, at a far larger scale, when Prince Edward Island (Canada) was joined to the mainland by a bridge in 1997.

In a more general sense, proactive management such as the provision of facilities and services in some locations and not in others, provision of information and directions, and controlling of behaviour in specific locations can all reduce the effects, if not the numbers of tourists. However, all stakeholders must have the same goals in mind otherwise growth will trump demand as in the case of the Caribbean [44]. The increasing use of social media to identify areas to visit [64] has led to crowding at specific sites such as Maya Bay in Thailand [65] and the Mermaid pools in New Zealand [66] and also to the development and maintenance of inappropriate behaviour. When residents have to resort to direct action to counter the effects of overtourism, it is an indication that all levels of government and the private sector have failed to develop or control tourism appropriately and that alternative actions are required.

Islands can often exert control over development, even when possessing only small populations, if they have the appropriate powers. The Shetland Isles, to the north of Great Britain, gained such powers over development and the use of the shoreline when they argued for the need for local control over oil and gas development in the 1970s [67]. The acquisition of such powers has enabled the island authority to limit and control the scale, nature and rate of all kinds of development, including tourism, on the islands since, with considerable success. If such a small island group (18,000 residents) could control and prevent development pursued by multi-national companies supported by the national government, then controlling and directing tourism is also clearly possible. As well as gaining such powers, however, it is necessary to present a united front in terms of local opinions and preferences and to have strong and consistent leadership to present and push such opinions in order to withstand pressures from external forces. In the case of tourism, where many proponents may be small in scale and local in origin, gaining unanimity against

excessive development or visitor numbers is extremely difficult and rarely achieved. Even when it does occur, it can be counter-acted by higher levels of government [29].

Control over means of access can be critical and this is one area in which islands may have an advantage over mainland destinations as means of access may be limited and clearly identified. Simply stopping visitors coming to islands is not an effective or desirable way of dealing with tourism which has become unsustainable. It would send a very strong message that tourism of any kind is not welcome, and most islands do not wish to do this even though some islands in Thailand, such as Maya Bay, Koh Khai Nok, Koh Khai Nui, Koh Tachai, and Koh Khai Nai and in Iceland (Fjaðrárgljúfur Canyon) have done so. Limiting, or even reducing the frequency and capacity of access, such as to the Seychelles [59] can be highly effective and does not necessarily send a negative message to tourists. In the case of Pitcairn Island, the continued absence of a landing site for cruise ships means passengers have to use the island's open boats for transfer from ship to shore and return, reducing the numbers making such excursions and limiting their time ashore [22]. Keeping access by tourists limited and or expensive may be appropriate and is often accepted by tourists if they appreciate the importance of giving priority to maintaining access and egress for local residents. For example, the Guna communities in Panama have used their ability to control resources to enable them to refuse to accept non-desirable forms of development and to strengthen the resilience of their culture [68].

Another alternative action is to reduce or refocus promotional messages in order to change or reduce demand. When appropriately done, such messages may make a destination more attractive to desired markets and less attractive to inappropriate ones, for example, Benner [69] discussed redirecting or "nudging" tourists to certain areas, and Araya Lopez recorded the expressions of opposition to overtourism in Barcelona as an indication of concern over such issues [70]. National and regional level messages and images may be difficult to change as they are decided at non-local levels and may be intended to produce different results. Locally focused messages and images, especially those using social media, if correctly designed and packaged, can be highly effective at not only passing on useful information but also redirecting visitation and changing visitor behaviour [71]. Clearly such messages are not going to be successful in all cases and may be beyond the capability of local destinations such as small islands, to create and send, but it is becoming increasingly possible to reach large numbers of potential visitors at relatively low cost through the many forms of social media.

A number of other approaches to mitigating the growth of excessive tourism have been suggested [40], although unfortunately many are relatively ineffective in the long term, focused specifically on urban destinations, and often only succeed in creating a new problem in another area or at another time. Other suggestions such as adding or increasing fees or taxes (e.g., Galapogas, Faroe Islands, Venice) are becoming increasingly common. Another suggestion is to educate tourists (e.g., pamphlets in Aruba, in-flight videos in Kauai, the Palau pledge), however the success of such initiatives over the long term has not been proven. Alternatively, suggesting tourists visit alternative quiet areas, while possibly reducing pressure in high use locations, may serve only to make previously little-visited areas also become subject to excessive use. By virtue of being previously unused, such areas are very likely to not have adequate, if any, facilities to handle a sudden increase in visitation. Such a "solution" also ignores the fact that highly popular spots are highly popular for a reason, such as unusual attributes, and these will not be found in other locations, resulting in disappointed visitors. This is particularly true for islands with specific unique features, such as Galapagos. Attempting to shift demand from peak to off-season is extremely difficult to achieve because of seasonal climatic and also institutional limits on when people can take vacations and when it is suitable to visit specific places. Encouraging tourists to visit outside the main season may create other problems as facilities and services may not be open then [3]. It has been found [72] that attempts to attract visitors out of season may in fact simply create additional demand then and not diminish peak season visitation, which may mean locals experience a longer period of disturbance as the peak season continues into what were shoulder and rest seasons. Such extensions of the tourist season can have negative impacts on environmental recovery from visitor use also. Other suggested solutions such as building replicas of locations experiencing overtourism [73] is clearly impractical in the case of small islands.

6. Conclusion

For many years a considerable number of islands have been struggling to overcome natural problems in order to allow greater numbers of tourists to reach them. Improving access by

increasing and improving transportation links to market have been the most common solution, with gaining air transport service being a key factor in opening many islands to mass tourism.

In recent years, however, at least some islands have been seeking ways to limit tourist numbers where they have reached unsustainable levels. Relying on inaccessibility has proven ineffective in many cases as the tourism industry, often supported by national (and off-island) levels of government which favour increased levels of tourism and development overall. It is clear that islands that have control over their own destiny in terms of means of access and level of development are in a much stronger position to prevent overdevelopment. The political and power aspects of tourism and general growth has often been ignored, leaving many small communities with little or no power or even influence over developments of means of access and levels and types of development. Good intentions count for little when the power to implement such intentions is not available. Even where islands may have sustainable tourism policies and goals it has become clear that inaction and failure to implement such policies [3,48], can lead fairly directly to overdevelopment and overtourism in many situations. While in past years islands' natural attributes, such as remote locations, limited attractions, absence from social media and difficulty of access may have mitigated against overtourism occurring, now many islands are major tourist destinations and clearly susceptible to excessive levels of visitation. Some islands and their residents are content with, visitation by large numbers of tourists and the income gained from them, but in other cases concerns are being expressed over excessive numbers and inappropriate behaviour of some of these visitors. In some, perhaps many cases the problem of overtourism has been exacerbated, or actually caused, by media discourse [74]. Inauthentic messages can create tourist perceptions endorsing inappropriate behaviour which then becomes the norm, and also draws attention to specific locations [75]. Being too successful in attracting tourists is not something many destinations anticipated and few have made preparations for such an eventuality. There is no immediate nor any single solution to this problem, and it clearly is not confined to islands, although they may be the most vulnerable of destinations, and are often the least able to control their own destinies.

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Conceptualization: R.W.B. and R.D.; Writing—original first draft: R.W.B.; Writing—review and editing: R.W.B. and R.D.; Visualization: R.W.B. and R.D.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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