

STUDYING TOURIST CONGESTION AS A FORM OF OVERTOURISM THROUGH TRIPADVISOR REVIEWS. CASE STUDY: CHARLES BRIDGE, PRAGUE

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Received: May 11, 2022 | Accepted: July 9, 2022

DOI: 10.5937/ZbDght2201039D

ABSTRACT

Overtourism is a current phenomenon which also includes crowds of people in a tourist destination. This research analyzes overtourism to a much visited tourist objective through Tripadvisor reviews, by highlighting the key concepts which are suggesting the existence of the overtourism phenomenon. The method consisted to examine the reviews posted on Tripadvisor by the tourists who visited one of the most important tourist attractions in Prague, namely Charles Bridge. The tool used for this purpose was Leximancer program. Using an analysis from multiple perspectives (during the 2019 low and peak tourist season, and during the Covid-19 pandemic), the results of the concept maps captured the intensity of the phenomenon of overtourism in all three contexts. Thus, specific themes and concepts generated by the program suggest that Charles Bridge suffers from overtourism regardless of the tourist season.

Keywords: *Tripadvisor reviews, tourist congestion, overtourism, crowded destination, Charles Bridge, Prague*

INTRODUCTION

Having the greatest global contribution from an economic point of view, tourism is an industry with continuous development, a situation observed mainly by the increase in tourism income from one year to the next: over the period 2009-2019, the increase in tourism income (54%) exceeded even the increases in global GDP (UNWTO, 2021a).

Tourism is not evenly distributed around the globe, which makes some destinations more visited than others; tourists continue to choose the destinations that are the most attractive and competitive, which leads eventually to overtourism phenomenon; this is the case at a country level, but also within the country or even within a city: “Tourism in urban areas is a spatially selective activity with tourist nodes or precincts clustered unevenly throughout a city” (Shoval, 2018).

Being visible as economic activity and spatially concentrated, tourism was presented as one the main responsible for all the negative consequences on environment, cultural and social heritage, and the quality of

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life, through the reactions of dissatisfaction of the inhabitants: generally, “mass tourism is most frequently held responsible for tourism-related damages” (Budeanu, 2005, p. 89). In the city there is also a relationship between tourism activity and perceptions of the urban quality of life (UQoL) of resident populations: “Findings indicate that both presence and accessibility of services/amenities matter for UQoL and that a negative effect from tourism prevails” (Biagi, et al., 2019).

Thus, both tourism stakeholders and local city authorities have tried under pressure to establish the causes and consequences of the phenomenon, in order to identify the fastest possible solutions to manage chaotic tourism (UNWTO, 2004).

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) already in 2004 identified the issues provoked by congestion to “the wonders of the world”, which negatively influence the life of locals but also the tourism experience:

- “For the tourism industry, congestion results in operational inefficiencies, unhelpful competition for scarce resources, increased business costs and loss of profits;
- For the responsible authorities in the host destination, congestion results in disruption to the local community, excessive pressure on infrastructure, reducing the welcome extended to visitors and adversely affecting local political support for tourism;
- For the managers of natural and cultural sites, congestion can adversely impact the long-term conservation of a site, negatively altering the biodiversity of a natural site or physical fabric and significance of a cultural site” (UNWTO, 2004, p. 7).

This is currently a hot topic, because in many European cities residents have started to voice concerns about mass tourism.

Terms like *overtourism* (Goodwin, 2021), (Szuster, et al., 2021), (Jover & Díaz-Parra, 2020), (Khomsi, et al., 2020), (Kim & Kang, 2020), (Mihalic, 2020), (Cheer, et al., 2019), (Cheung & Li, 2019), (Eckert, et al., 2019), (Jacobsen, et al., 2019), (Milano, et al., 2019a), (Dodds & Butler, 2019), (Kay Smith, et al., 2019), (Perkumienė & Pranskūnienė, 2019), (Koens, et al., 2018), (Peeters, et al., 2018), (Goodwin, 2017), *surtourisme* (France, 2019), *anti-tourist sentiment* (Kim & Kang, 2020), (Nunkoo, et al., 2020), (Hughes, 2018), (Papathanassis, 2017), *tourismphobia* (Matteucci, et al., 2021), (Milano, et al., 2019b), *touristification* (Pettas, et al., 2021), (Butler, 1980), *degrowing tourism* (Fletcher, et al., 2019), (Higgins-Desbiolles, et al., 2019) appeared in everyday use due to research, but the phenomenon in its full extent was not understood in time due to the lack of multidimensional interpretations.

Thus, the great attractions of the world began to focus on increased touristification, where urban, rural and natural spaces must meet the needs of tourists in particular. Far from economic profit and a popular image, touristification has created a world in which these destinations now receive tourists in a problematic way. Driven by the profits and economic benefits that flow from the tourism industry, touristification is a disturbing trend that is largely contributing to the destruction of some of the world’s most coveted sites.

Travel is a time of escape, knowledge and recreation for each person, but due to various abuses, major tourist destinations risk losing both their authenticity and their advantages in the choices of tourists. The degree of resistance of tourists in crowded spaces differs from one person to another, but with the crowd in the destination and the discontent of the local population, the desire of tourists to visit these “tourism stars” will gradually decrease.

To the same extent, the satisfaction felt by visitors can represent a harmful effect on the destination area. From a tourist point of view, this threshold is exceeded when a tourist space, the area of an attraction, is crowded by more tourists than its capacity. In addition, mass tourism is considered human pollution: on the one hand it is an aggression for the local population, which becomes forced to adapt to the agglomeration and to the much higher costs; and, on the other hand, it is a threat to the cultural heritage, to the ecosystem or overconsumption of resources and production of waste.

The manifestation of overtourism is commonly framed in the form of agglomeration and endless queues (Thi Phi, 2020). Whether this phenomenon manifests itself in urban, rural or natural areas, in any case, the

surrounding space suffers from its load with a number of tourists exceeding the limit. Once the limit is exceeded, the question arises of the level of education and / or knowledge of visitors in relation to the space visited and the need to protect and respect the destination also supported by the residents who live and work there. The loss due to overuse (financial loss, a reduction in personal satisfaction level, or a reduction in access) is shared among all users (Sæþórsdóttir, et al., 2020).

At the same time, another important threat is brought by the change in the value of the property, but also the costs related to the quality of life (Bugalski, 2020), (Martín Martín, et al., 2018), (Sun, et al., 2016). Small businesses that were supposed to provide goods and services to the local population would change their prices according to the touristification of the destination, and thus essential purchases would no longer be adapted to the purchasing power of the employees of the destination. Without serious measures to increase the quality of life of the inhabitants or at least to bring it back to normal, we cannot speak of a decrease in tourismphobia, the feeling of opposition to tourists and the attempt to refuse their entry in the destination (Szromek, et al., 2020), (Singh, 2018).

The novel coronavirus has not only succeeded in stopping this overtourism globally, but has also given the environment a chance to regenerate itself. Thus, the pandemic was analyzed as an opportunity for an effective recovery of the tourism sector based more on sustainability (Everingham & Chassagne, 2020), (Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020). However, many return strategies of the tourism sector are already developed, and tend to be guided by the same plan of attracting a large flow of tourists for high income, even if the return of tourism should be different from that before the pandemic (Navarro Jurado, et al., 2020).

The pandemic, which has stopped tourist activity even in destinations that are too easily accessible, can be considered as an opportunity for this service sector to relaunch itself with a new vision (Romagosa, 2020), which targets more the destination than the popularity. However, such balanced tourism cannot be implemented without an awareness of the harmfulness of mass tourism in major tourist destinations. The contribution of both educated tourists in this regard and intelligent management of tourism becomes vital, and thus, emphasis is placed on the complexity and existence of this phenomenon of overtourism at several levels, in order to awareness of the harmful effects brought about by tourist popularity. However, the coronavirus has undermined actions to combat overtourism by implementing sustainable tourism and adopting measures to limit both the number of tourists in a given destination and the level of taxes. Considering that most tourist destinations have suffered substantial economic losses, the revival of tourism becomes vital in any form of event.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The aim of the study is to illustrate the phenomenon of overtourism by analyzing the tourist experience (Liang, et al., 2021) to an overvisited tourist attraction, namely Charles Bridge, Prague, through the reviews published by tourists on Tripadvisor website (TripAdvisor, 2021), from three different perspectives: during the low tourist season (2019-2020), during the peak tourist season (summer 2019) and during Covid-19 pandemic (2020). Reviews were collected depending on their relevance (i.e., only those that referred to this tourist objective).

The analysis of the comments is centered on two hypotheses:

- The presence of the overtourism phenomenon can be identified in the reviews posted by tourists.
- Too many tourists at the same time and in the same place influence the tourist experience.

As more and more people share their own experiences on social media (Sangkaew & Zhu, 2020), the image that a certain place has in the online environment becomes vital (Pokryshevskaya & Antipov, 2020), (Xie, et al., 2016), (Lee, et al., 2011), and is a good starting point for the research of overtourism. Advice from real users who share their opinion (Bigne, et al., 2021), (Filieri, et al., 2015) unfiltered on their experience in a cer-

tain destination are sought when referring to documentation for a future trip (Kladou & Mavragani, 2015), (Xiang & Gretzel, 2010). At the same time, considering that visitors express themselves freely on online platforms, unlike promotional articles and images which only show a dream vacation, the image of a tourist attraction can be captured as close as possible to the truth, even if we cannot completely trust opinions that are sometimes subjective (Ayeh, et al., 2013).

The review via the Tripadvisor travel site is one of the most consulted for planning and choosing the destination or tourist attraction, accommodation or different places to eat. The majority of customers say Tripadvisor bubble ratings are important when choosing an accommodation, restaurant or attraction. In fact, 83% believe it is significant when choosing an accommodation, 70% when choosing a restaurant and 58% when deciding what attractions to do (TripAdvisor, 2015).

Hence, in this analysis, the research data consist in:

- 1237 reviews published exclusively by foreign tourists who visited Charles Bridge during the low tourist season, the reference period being 2019-2020 until the start of the Covid-19 pandemic).
- 320 reviews of foreign tourists who visited the tourist attraction during the 2019 summer season.
- 125 reviews of tourists who visited the tourist attraction during Covid-19 restrictions.

However, considering that most of the information relating to the sampling of tourists who posted tourist attraction reviews is not frequently specified, we can still sketch profiles with the information displayed. Therefore, summing up all the comments, we can observe a predominance of the number of men (30,75%), compared to women (25,58%); the remaining 43,66% does not specify the gender in their Tripadvisor personal profile. In terms of origin, British tourists accounted for 45,74% of posted reviews, followed by Americans (19,68%), Australians (3,72%), Dutch (2,12%) and Irish (1,86%). The evaluation scores with a scale of 1 to 5 were awarded as follows: 5 stars awarded by 57,70% of tourists, 4 stars for 28,43%, 3 stars for 11,42%, 2 stars for 1,72% and one star for the remaining 48 reviews.

Tripadvisor comments were then fed into the Leximancer program, usefull for this type of analysis (Sotiriadou, et al., 2014), a tool which enables software-assisted qualitative data analysis, Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software - CAQDAS (Dalkin, et al., 2021), (Crofts & Bisman, 2010). Basically, this software processes text documents (in this case reviews on Tripadvisor) by transposing the most common words, followed by concepts and finally themes: it analyzes words' occurrences in texts to isolate key concepts (i.e., collections of frequently associated words) and group them into themes (Stoleriu, et al., 2019).

The procedure for incorporating texts into a concept map goes through three stages (Crofts & Bisman, 2010), (Stoleriu, et al., 2019):

- Identification of the most used terms (in reviews on Tripadvisor).
- Formation of concepts according to the maximum degree of connection of the basic terms.
- Grouping of concepts into themes (thematic circles) according to their connectivity in the same context.

The novelty and the strength of Leximancer is that the final concept map is not only a series of the most used terms, but rather their classification as well as the degree of connectivity between the concepts. Perhaps the most interesting is the way in which the themes and concepts are positioned next to each other (Chiu & Tseng, 2018), (Crofts & Bisman, 2010).

Therefore, through the practical analysis of the data obtained from the reviews published for the the Prague's most famous tourist attraction, concepts related to overtourism could be sketched out. At the same time, the image of a positive or negative experience, as well as the recommendations related to the time of the visit, could ultimately be correlated with the degree of influence on which the tourist overuse of a space decides on its popularity or decline.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Tourist destinations have always been divided in terms of attractiveness into two periods, the low tourist season and the peak tourist season (usually the summer). In the case of attractions that do not depend on the natural environment or particular climatic conditions, a much greater presence of tourists can be observed throughout the whole year, especially in urban and cultural destinations. The tourist attraction analyzed as a case study in this work is located in Prague, recognized worldwide as a historical and cultural destination, in particular due to its historic center included on the list of places of the world cultural heritage of UNESCO.

However, the sun becomes a generator of outdoor recreational activities and, with the high temperatures, the motivation to travel at a certain time of the year. Therefore, the volume of tourists during the summer season can be difficult to manage compared to the colder months, due to the much higher number of tourist arrivals (UNWTO, 2021b), although each method of measuring flows have both advantages and disadvantages (Fernández & Lazovski, 2020). In the images below, the entrance to the Charles Bridge (Figure 1) can be easily confused with the summer period given the abundant tourist flow, impossible to ignore. In fact, the footage was captured in 2018, at the beginning of April, a period that does not generally attract a considerable number of international tourists, as it does not overlap with periods of annual leave, taken mainly during the summer.

Thus, in the case of destinations where overtourism is felt, a seasonality can be distinguished, when the city, region or attraction belongs to tourists and not to locals. However, an immediate hypothesis in this case would be linked to the situation recorded at the same place during the hot months, in order to be able to establish the degree of seasonality of the Charles Bridge, as well as the presence of the overtourism phenomenon.

In order to determine the degree of overtourism for Charles Bridge, famous for its tourist attractiveness and the number of visitors, reviews from the Tripadvisor platform from 2019 and 2020 will be analyzed (during different tourist seasons). Finally, for an even more concrete distinction on what represents a large number of tourists in the same place compared to the tourist attraction without tourists, the opinions posted during the lockdown (April-May 2020) will be analyzed.



Figure 1. Charles Bridge, Prague, low tourist season

Source: Authors' own archive, April 2018

The tourist experience on Charles Bridge during the low tourist season

Leximancer's analysis of the 1237 reviews posted on Tripadvisor for the Charles Bridge tourist attraction, during low tourist season, produced 66 concepts, visible as small gray knots on the map, grouped into 13 themes, indicated by large circles colored according to their predominance (Figure 2). The degree of importance of each concept is evidenced by the size of its own node relative to the others, as well as the distance to other nodes which indicate the semantic relationship between them.

In this way, among the central themes which group together the concepts classified in the previous table, can be listed, with the number of mentions in brackets: Bridge (1208), Prague (971), Visit (774), Busy (756), Views (738), Walk (737), Old (519), Crowded (337), Early (301), Selling (154), Beggars (53), Area (36), Art (27).

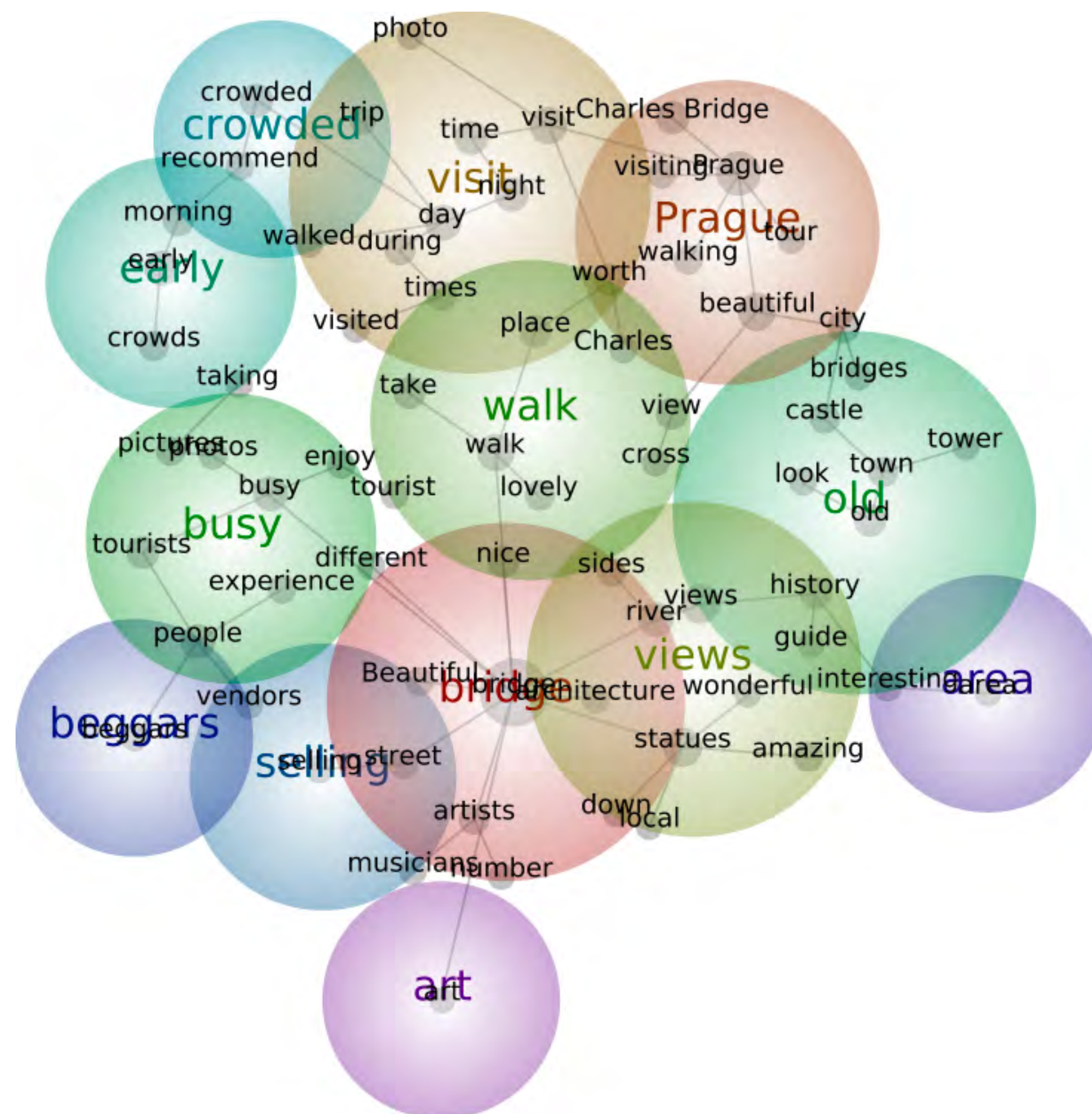


Figure 2. Concept map of the tourist experience during low tourist season (2019-2020)

Bridge is the most important theme among the reviews published on Tripadvisor with its defining concepts: *bridge, beautiful, artists, street, architecture, low, number*. Its presence is obvious given the nature of the tourist attraction and its connectivity with the concepts mentioned, closely related to the atmosphere of the place, as well as to the artistic act manifested in that space.

The second theme, **Prague**, strictly represents the image of the city which has the tourist attraction in question. Mentioned 971 times in reviews of Charles Bridge, the theme City is actually defined by its concepts such as: *Prague, beauty, Charles Bridge, city, merit, walk, visit, tour*. In addition to the other concepts on display, it is interesting to note that the Charles Bridge actually represents the image of the city.

The third theme is **Visit**, being closely linked to the previous theme **Prague** mainly through the concepts of: *visit, day, hour, night, during, time, visited, photo*. The concept of maximum connection of the two themes is represented by merit, in effect emphasizing that the city of Prague is worthwhile and that a visit to Charles Bridge is absolutely necessary. At the same time, the theme **Visit** captures concepts that truly express the times of the day. So, reviewers highly recommend the day and night visit, as the relevant example below: "Worth it, a great view for the photo album and phones. If you are in Prague, you must visit this famous bridge. If you

are there at sunset or in the evening you will find it so beautiful. As we were fortunate enough to stay in the Old Town area, we were able to visit the iconic Charles Bridge by day and night” (Female, Germany, 5 stars, November 2019).

Immediately after the presentation of the city and the main attraction (Charles Bridge) the **Busy** theme is outlined. Depending on the name of the theme, it is not at all surprising that intense connections are presented by concepts such as: *busy, people, tourists, images, photos, enjoy, experience, different*. The connections between the concepts actually mark the crowd of people, tourists trying to do the same thing simultaneously, namely photos.

The **Views** theme consists of the concepts: *views, statues, river, amazing, sides, wonderful, local, guide*. In essence, the concepts actually explain the basic components that provide a remarkable view both through the statues on either side of the bridge and because of the river the main attraction crosses. This explains the connection of this theme with the most remarkable theme of the **Bridge**, practically the reason which makes the existence of a view possible.

Located in conjunction with the **Views** theme, theme number six is represented by **Walk**. Concepts such as *walk, place, take, view, beauty, Charles, tourist, crossing*, emphasize the action of crossing the bridge among tourists in an attempt to notice the view and the specifics of the place.

The **Old** theme refers to the importance of the bridge in the past, taking into account its concepts: *old, history, castle, town, interesting, looking, bridges, tower*. The close connection between the concepts old-city-castle-tower is not accidental, given that the Charles Bridge was once the only way to connect Prague Castle and the Old Town.

The connection between the themes **Crowded** (with the concepts: *crowded, recommend, market, travel*) and **Early** (with the concepts: *early, morning, crowd, take*), is one of the most surprising of the present analysis. The concepts morning and recommend are at the crossroads of the two themes, these being followed by the concepts *crowded* and *early*. Thus, both themes actually suggest a key recommendation that potential visitors should take into account, namely: To avoid overtourism, it is recommended to visit the bridge early in the morning.

The **Selling** and **Beggars** themes are also strangely associated. In relation to the theme of **Beggars**, the theme of sales includes several concepts such as: *sale, salesmen, musicians*. However, the association between the two goes back to the touristification of the place, given that everyone is trying to sell something, in the case of vendors, or to receive some mercy in the case of beggars.

Finally, the last two themes which have only their own concepts, namely **Area**, respectively **Art**, are the least mentioned among the opinions analyzed. If in the case of the **Area** other points of interest near the bridge are marked, **Art** is seen as another sales opportunity, for example: “There are very nice views from the bridge. There are many people. There are artists and a lot of art for sale” (5 stars, United States, November 2019).

By trying to summarize the concept map of the reviews posted by foreign tourists who have lived the Charles Bridge experience during the low tourist season, we can divide the image of the tourist attraction into two central parts. On the one hand the historical image of the city and the indicators that generate the tourist landscape, and on the other hand the agglomeration generated by a considerable number of tourists present at the same time on the bridge to try to photograph and admire the specifics of the attraction.

Taking into account the importance of the concepts closely related to the overtourism, the emerging problem is brought by the situation which would appear during the peak tourist season, more precisely during the summer months. Can we consider in this case that the overtourism phenomenon on the Charles Bridge is felt at a certain time of the year?

The tourist experience on Charles Bridge during the peak tourist season

In the case of the summer period, 320 reviews posted by tourists who visited Charles Bridge in the summer of 2019 were analyzed via the Leximancer program. According to the lower number of comments, the program generated the concept map of the summer tourism experience by highlighting 11 themes (Figure 3).

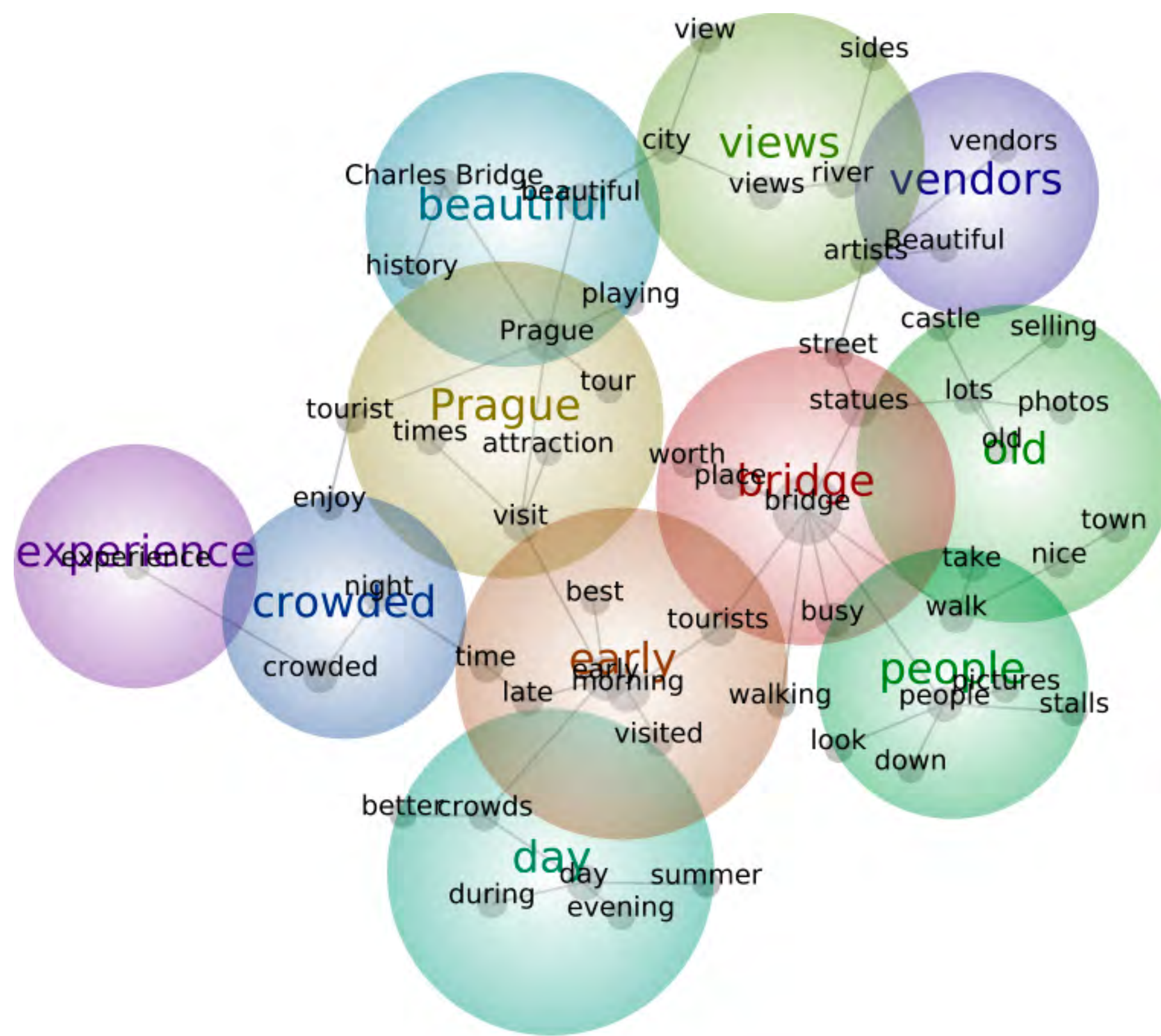


Figure 3. Concept map of the tourist experience during the summer season (2019)

Themes such as: **Bridge**, **Prague**, **Views**, **Old**, can also be highlighted in the case of the tourist experience of the period considered to be the busiest of the year. This time, however, the concepts that shape overtourism can be observed for themes that only represented the historical image of the city in the case of the experience outside of the tourist season (for example: **Bridge** theme - *busy* concept, **Prague** theme - *tourist* concept, **old** theme - *photos* concept).

In the same idea of comparison, the second theme classified in the case of summer reviews is the **Early** theme, in this case going beyond the **Prague** theme. This theme encompasses the concepts: *early*, *morning*, *tourists*, *weather*, *late*, *walking*, *best*, *visited*. Similar to the previous analysis, the connection between the theme **Early** and the concept *morning*, leads to the ideal time to visit the tourist attraction.

The next theme, **People**, is linked to that of the **Bridge** through the concept of the **Busy**. As a result, the image of the bridge is automatically associated with too many people generating congestion. Interesting at the same time is the association between the concepts of *people-look-down*, this being another suggestion offered by tourists through the reviews, namely the attention to valuables which can be easily stolen if the gaze is not lowered.

Closely linked to the summer season, this time the **Day** theme appears. Obviously, the concepts *day*, *crowd*, *during*, represent reaching the maximum number of tourists, during the day, especially during the summer. The concept of *better*, however, in no way refers to the fact that a visit would be indicated during the day, in effect forming a connection with the theme **Early** or with the idea of better not during the summer. "I recommend you take a walk very early or very late to avoid the massive July crowds. Or better yet, visit during a season other than summer! (Female, 50-64 years old, 4 stars, United States, July 2019).

What ultimately denotes the shaping of an experimental tourist image dominated by congestion is the link between the themes **Crowded** and **Experience**. The *night* and *enjoy* concepts represent the same desire to cross the bridge at night to enjoy the tranquility and understand the specificity of the attraction, otherwise the experience being crowded.

Taking into account the two conceptual maps of the tourist experience, on during the low tourist season, respectively during the summer tourist season, the differences are noticed exclusively by a much more severe mention of terms related to tourist congestion in the second situation. However, the difference is accentuated by the fact that most tourists who have visited Charles Bridge during the summer believe that the tourist season should be avoided.

Therefore, it becomes difficult to interpret that the main attraction of the city of Prague is marked by overtourism exclusively during the summer, considering that the basic recommendation (to visit very early or very late) is present in both situations. This can create an ambiguity between what tourists think, who visited Charles Bridge only in summer, and what the situation really is throughout the year.

The tourist experience on Charles Bridge during Covid-19 pandemic

Although it is a difficult time for the tourism industry, periods of easing in terms of restrictions, especially during the summer, have also made travel possible. This privilege was not held on a large scale, given the restrictions applied at country level and even region or locality, with the collapse of air transport. Moreover, the degree of fear of leaving home was another obstacle, so that most travel for tourist purposes was done exclusively within the perimeter of the locality, or the country in a fortunate case.

Suddenly, the number of reviews published by tourists who visited Charles Bridge during the pandemic from June 2020 to June 2021 is automatically reduced, namely 125. The difficulty of interpretation has been given in this situation in particular by:

- Data with lower values. Reviews on Tripadvisor were tracked and updated until June 2021 inclusive, but their number has not grown exponentially.
- Possibility of reviews published after the time of the visit. It is possible that some tourists may have posted their travel experiences during the pandemic period, but their trip may have taken place before the pandemic.

Thus, the Leximancer program generated 11 themes (Figure 4) which tend to include concepts more related to the specificities of the tourist attraction, and less to the tourist crowd.

The **Bridge** theme, present in all three conceptual analyzes of the tourist experience on Charles Bridge, is again the most pronounced among reviews. The bridge, through *nice, beautiful, photos* concepts, actually illustrates the place where the most successful photos can be taken. If in reviews before the pandemic, the concept of *photo* was automatically associated with themes such as busy or people, highlighting the difficulty of taking photos, this time the **Bridge** theme and the photos concept actually illustrate the possibility of capturing this tourism attraction in its entirety.

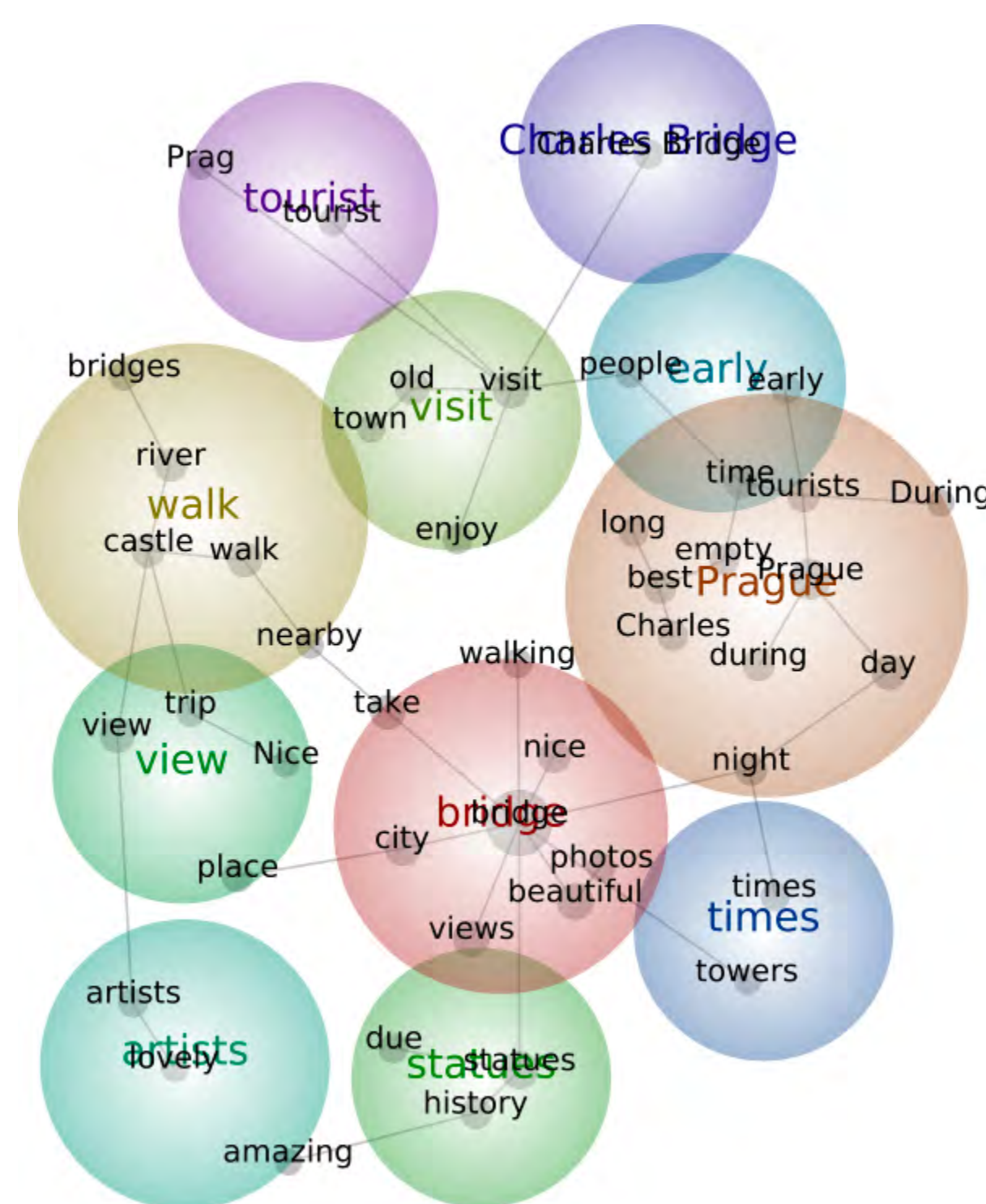


Figure 4. Concept map of the tourist experience during Covid-19 pandemic (2020-2021)

But the one that more deeply captures a unique tourist experience due to the visit during the pandemic is actually the **Prague** theme. The concepts *Prague-time-during-Charles -empty*, in fact capture the image of an empty city and a central attraction devoid of tourist flow, due to these epidemiologically affected periods.

At the same time, the concept of *tourists* is actually highlighted by a negation of “no tourists”, thus suggesting the considerable impact felt by visitors, surprised by the fact that the bridge is not really crossed by tourists. In this sense, does Charles Bridge represent a high tourist experience due to the lack of its tourists?

The following themes, **Walk, Visit, View, Statues, Artists**, only reinforce the existence of a different experience, by the fact that with the lack of tourists, the concepts that make Charles Bridge a tourist attraction are observed in detail, as in the following examples: “One of the many highlights of Prague. I had the magical experience of seeing it without the hordes of tourists that normally pass by. An astonishing piece of history and each of the statues is a work of art in itself”(Male, 25-34 years old, 5 stars, United Kingdom, August 2020). “Nice place, nice view, good for a walk, there were no crowds because of Corona so it was easy to take pictures” (female, 5 stars, Poland, July 2020).

Oddly, however, the **Early** and **Tourist** themes don't shy away from being sketched along the concept map, even though the number of mentions is less. Normally this could have been interpreted as an error due to comments posted during the pandemic but with a visit before the pandemic.

Even if the situations are incomparable in terms of the number of reviews and frequency of tourist trips given the epidemiological situations, the experience of an attraction full of tourists and the same attraction less frequented, warns about the importance to manage the number of tourists present in the same place at a certain time. Otherwise, the image of the tourist attraction may change at any time from a unique experience to an experience to be avoided.

CONCLUSION

In essence, the present work has been carried out on the basis of the existing tourism literature, through which several directions of analysis at a general level have been highlighted. Researchers in the field generally define overtourism from a specific perspective (perceived as a threat to the natural or cultural environment).

Also, the most affected parties are represented in research by the inhabitants, through the power they have in the media due to the scandals and protests they demonstrate. The opinions of tourists, which in fact can represent the image of the tourist experience, are not always considered, even if their degree of satisfaction does influence the fate of the destination; there are exceptions, such as the research which data obtained from an onsite survey of 452 visitors and with an unmanned aerial vehicle (to collect actual use levels at the site) in another crowded destination, Kailua Beach Park in Hawai'i (Szuster, et al., 2021).

As a result, the reviews on Tripadvisor served exactly that purpose, and enabled the semantic analysis of concepts using the Leximancer program, precisely to determine to what extent the tourist experience can be influenced by the degree of overtourism. The many reviews that have been published for Charles Bridge have highlighted the history, cultural significance, as well as the atmosphere of the place and the spectacular view. However, in most cases there was a “but” (related to the uncontrollable tourist flow). Other destinations in Eastern Europe are also subject of overtourism research, by analyzing the tourism carrying capacity (TCC), in order to design effective responses to the complex phenomenon of overtourism (Camatti, et al., 2020).

Thus, the basic research hypothesis can be successfully validated, taking into account that the themes and concepts associated with the tourist crowds have been more or less captured in the three cases. However, one can appreciate the existence of a partial validation if one takes into account the frequency of the key themes which define the overtourism phenomenon, but the connectivity between the themes which define the specificities of the attraction with the concepts linked to the degree of tourist crowds increases the importance of the results.

In the same way, the opinions were analyzed according to the different moments of tourist experience. Although with a much higher frequency of mentions related to congestion in the case of the summer season, it can be said that Charles Bridge suffers from overtourism regardless of the tourist season or at least that this situation is felt by tourists even outside the tourist season.

What becomes worrisome throughout the results, however, is the fact that the concepts that express the tourist crowds were also captured in the case of tourists who visited Charles Bridge during the pandemic. Although with a much higher degree of mention of the unique experience of a deserted Charles Bridge, the mentions regarding the tourist crowds also mark that a tourist attraction which suffers from overtourism cannot be omitted even during the pandemic. An example of a city of art (but which could be applied also to other cities with cultural tourist objectives, such Prague and its Charles Bridge) is Florence, which “need[s] to protect [its] cultural heritage and balance the needs of residents and tourists” (Liberatore, et al., 2022).

Vital for future studies that attempt to define the overtourism phenomenon, as well as ways to improve the tourist experience would be to focus more on smart and genuine ways of boosting tourism. Also, the way in which the inhabitants of the destination are affected by the overtourism must be analyzed in relation to the tourist experience, because both actors are also responsible for the image of the destination. The question is whether the interaction between locals and tourists can be the key to success in designing the tourism experience: the local hospitality “is at the heart of the tourism system, because, without it, tourists do not come or do not return” (Duhamel, 2018, p. 172).

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CONFLICTS OF INTEREST The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article. © 2022 by the authors. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

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