

Academic Weekly Digest

School of Hospitality & Tourism Management



How do events both exacerbate & help tackle overtourism in Olympic cities?

Events represent a double-edged sword: They are productive catalysts for tourism development, yet also serve as global platforms for shedding light on unsustainable aspects of such development too. As tourist numbers rose from 7m in 2011 to 38m in 2018, in this study [Dr Duignan](#) and colleagues found associated community disruption and fear that led to rising tourismophobia in the lead up to the Tokyo 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games – leading to collective local resistance tactics to tackle overtourism across Japan.

Events as Catalysts for Communal Resistance to Overtourism

Dr Mike Duignan

Overtourism is defined as “the excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas which have caused permanent changes to their lifestyles, denied access to amenities and damaged their general well-being” (Milano, Novelli & Cheer, 2019b:354), causing negative social impacts for communities. As a concept, over tourism remains relatively under-theorised as analyses fail to adequately explain the nuances and subtleties of ways that excessive tourism is associated with negative responses by local populations, including organised resistance to tourism initiatives (Koenigs, Postma & Padd 2018). We draw on Castells’ (1997) concepts of legitimising, resistance and project identities to examine conflict linked to overtourism in the context of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games to show how responses to tourism become galvanised by local communities, identified primarily through 26 interviews with key tourism and event stakeholders. We examine how resistance identities emerge out of displays of collective resistance, and ask whether these be attributed to, and conceptualised as a response to, overtourism.



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A counter-
legitimizing
identity is
emerging,
globally, against
overtourism
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Japan’s policy shift toward a greater focus on international tourism development is, we argue, an example of a new legitimising identity eager to present Japanese culture and society in specific ways. We show how local resistance can potentially give birth to a new anti-tourist, or anti-Games project identity. As community responses coalesce in more organised and systematic ways, we argue a ‘counter-legitimizing identity’ emerges.

Further Reading:

Duignan, M.B., Everett, S., McCabe, S. (2022). Events as Catalysts for Communal Resistance to Overtourism.

Annals of Tourism Research

Link: bit.ly/3yPoKTs