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“ Analysis and diagnosis of preventive measures against overtourism in post-COVID-19 Barcelona ”

TRABAJO FINAL DE GRADO

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List of abbreviations

ABDT	Assemblea de Barris pel Decreixement Turístic
ABTS	Assemblea de Barris per un Turisme Sostenible
ACAVe	L'Associació Catalana d'Agències de Viatges Especialitzades
APATUR	L'Associació d'Apartaments Turístics de Barcelona
E.g.	Exempli gratia (for example)
Et al.	Et alii (and others)
Etc.	Et cetera (and other similar things)
FABV	Federació d'Associacions Veïnals de Barcelona
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
n.d.	No date
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
p.	Page
PEUAT	Pla Especial Urbanístic d'Allotjaments Turístics
pp.	Pages
SET	Network of Southern European Cities against Touristification
TMB	Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona
TSJC	Tribunal Superior de Justícia de Catalunya
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization

1 Introduction

In recent years, the term “overtourism”¹ has been used increasingly by the media and in research studies to describe and recapitulate the negative impacts of mass tourism and uncontrolled tourism growth as well as its consequences, such as overcrowding and increases in housing prices (Milano, 2017; Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018). In particular, Barcelona has often been mentioned in various articles and research papers as an example of a destination affected by overtourism (Milano, 2017; Goodwin, 2019a). According to a ranking by Lock, Barcelona was also listed as the “worst city for overtourism in Europe” (2021).

Problems caused by excessive tourism have not only increased in recent years in this city, but the local population has also taken a critical stance against it. Citizens organised themselves and became more vocal in their protest against tourism in Barcelona. This protest received a lot of attention from the media and scientific community (Milano, 2017, 2018; Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019; Goodwin, 2019a). Some problems that the citizens of Barcelona perceived in relation to overtourism were (see 4.3):

- I. Overcrowding
- II. Uncivil behaviour from tourists
- III. Increased rental prices
- IV. General increase of prices
- V. Loss of the neighbourhood’s sense of life

Measures were taken against overtourism, such as the creation of strategic plans (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Turisme, 2010a; Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017a) and the establishment of a *City and Tourism Council* (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.b; Goodwin, 2019a). As from March 2020, negative effects of overtourism in the city disappeared abruptly. However, this was not so much due to the measures taken, but rather to the beginning of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic. This pandemic led to a sharp decline in tourism in the city and the problems usually due to overtourism stopped occurring (Koh; DW Español, 2020). However, in mid-2021 there was an easing of COVID-19 regulations and travel restrictions, and foreign visitors have been returning to the city in greater numbers. There is a risk that negative impacts of tourism and overtourism will return after the pandemic (see 3.8).

Therefore, this thesis aims to propose measures against the reappearance of overtourism. The first part of the thesis provides a theoretical overview on the topics of overtourism in general and in Barcelona. Additionally, the development of the city’s tourism and several

¹ There are different spellings of *overtourism*, such as *over-tourism* (Koh, 2020). The first version, however, is frequently used in the studies and articles cited in this thesis and is therefore referred to as such in this thesis.

stakeholders of the local tourism sector are examined. This is undertaken by means of a literature review and serves as a basis for conducting interviews with different stakeholders of the tourism sector in Barcelona. During the interviews, the stakeholders propose measures against overtourism after the pandemic and explain their suggestions.

In the second part, after conducting the interviews, their results are analysed. Based on the first part of the thesis and the arguments of the interviewees on possible measures, proposals will be made as to which could be implemented against overtourism in Barcelona after the pandemic.

2 Overtourism

In recent years, the term overtourism has been used frequently in an academic context. Before being adopted by academia, the term arose in the media in a less scientific context, describing: “an excessive negative impact of tourism on the host communities and/or natural environment” (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018, p. 2). Although this term is currently the subject of much research, there is still some disagreement about its meaning (Butler & Dodds, 2019). For this reason, various definitions appear in the literature, some of which emphasise different aspects. For example, in a report for the European parliament, several tourism researchers developed the following general definition: “Overtourism describes the situation in which the impact of tourism, at certain times and in certain locations, exceeds physical, ecological, social, economic, psychological, and/or political capacity thresholds” (Peeters, et al., 2018, p. 15).

However, Milano, Cheer, and Novelli also define the term “as the excessive growth of visitors leading to overcrowding in areas where residents suffer the consequences of temporary and seasonal tourism peaks, which have enforced permanent changes to their lifestyles, access to amenities and general well-being” (2018, p. 2). Apart from that, Butler and Dodds add that it causes “negative reactions by residents, undesired physical change, and damage to resources (natural and cultural)” (2019, p. 1). In explaining the term, it is also important to note that overtourism does not only occur in an urban setting, but also in “rural and coastal spaces” (Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019, p. 2).

2.1 Overtourism – a new phenomenon?

Even though the term is relatively new, negative impacts of tourism have been recorded for decades (Butler & Dodds, 2019). Since the 1960s, the negative effects of tourism in destinations were discussed in an academic context. Furthermore, early research already concluded “that excessive tourism concentrations led to harm to the local environment and negative attitudes among residents in urban and rural areas” (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018, p. 2). Subsequently, attempts were made to determine the carrying capacity of destinations to find out what number of tourists can be sustained by destinations without negatively impacting it (van der Borg, Costa, & Gotti, 1996). However, this approach, which focuses on tourist numbers, has been criticised. It has been noted that factors such as “visitor behavio[u]r, timing, concentration, location, experience with tourism, local etiquette, etcetera” can also have a negative impact on destinations (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018, p. 2).

Although scholars addressed the negative aspects of tourism and the reasons for it, the term overtourism was not used (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018). Initially, the Spanish press used the term *tourismphobia* to describe negative reactions against the emergence of mass tourism

in some Spanish destinations (Delgado, 2008; Milano, Novelli, & Cheer, 2019). However, the term overtourism appeared later in the media, for example, in an article of the *National Geographic Traveler* (Bellows, 2011) and on Twitter under the hashtag #overtourism in August 2012.

In the following years, the term has been used increasingly by both the media and academia (Goodwin, 2017; Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018), for example, in studies by the *United Nations World Tourism Organization* (2018) and the *European Parliament* (Peeters, et al., 2018). In these studies, and other academic articles, the term overtourism is mainly used rather than tourismphobia (Goodwin, 2017; Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018; Koh, 2020). This could be because the latter is mainly related to negative reactions of residents of destinations towards tourism (Milano, 2017), whereas the former addresses more aspects (economic, social, ecological, etc.) (Peeters, et al., 2018). Furthermore, in comparison to the research on general causes and negative aspects of excessive tourism during the last decades, the current research on overtourism focuses on the “relation between tourism and its wider city context and the political aspects of excessive tourism growth” (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018, p. 3).

Apart from that, it is important to note that mass tourism is not synonymous with overtourism. Mass tourism can be a reason for overtourism but even small increases in visitor numbers can lead to the occurrence of the latter. Unlike mass tourism, which focuses on visitors and tourists numbers, the term overtourism also addresses the negatively perceived problems caused by tourism. Increased visitors and tourists numbers can be perceived as a problem, but so can other developments such as “tourism encounters, environmental changes and infringements on people’s lives” (Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018, p. 9).

2.2 Causes of overtourism

Several factors and developments have contributed to the emergence of the term overtourism and increased media and academic interest in it (Butler & Dodds, 2019). Firstly, general tourism growth, which has contributed to the saturation of tourism, has played a major role in the occurrence of the term (UNWTO, 2018; Gutiérrez, 2020). Factors that have influenced this general growth are an increase of “the accessibility and affordability of travel”, and “international arrivals”, the promotion of tourism growth by policymaking, and “the proliferation of unregulated tourist accommodations”. Furthermore, this general growth and increased demand caused “urbanisation pressure”, “the gentrification and increasing prices in city centres and new neighbourhoods” and “the concentration of large groups of tourists” (Jordan, Pastras, & Psarros, 2018; Peeters, et al., 2018, p. 27).

In addition, the growth of the world’s population and new technological trends, like the “upcoming sharing economy and peer-to-peer platforms”, have led to a strongly growing

number of tourists (Peeters, et al., 2018, p. 29). However, these platforms are often owned by international companies, which sometimes only roughly follow local legislations and tax laws. This can lead to tensions with local governments or residents (Bakker & Twining-Ward, 2018).

Apart from that, the intensified usage of social media, “increasingly available via mobile technologies and greatly utilized by travel[er]s” encourages tourists to visit places and attractions that are already highly popular, for instance, through to-do lists by *TripAdvisor*. In addition to social media, movies and television are also increasing the number of visits to various places that appear in them. Examples of this are Dubrovnik, which features in the television series *Game of Thrones*, and various locations in the Scottish Highlands in which scenes of the *Harry Potter* movie franchise were filmed (Atzori, 2020, pp. 2-3).

Secondly, the intense tourism growth caused frustration within the local populations of tourism destinations because, in many cases, this growth has led to negatively perceived changes (Butler & Dodds, 2019), such as a “loss of identity and authenticity”, “increases in living costs” and “pressure on infrastructure” (Peeters, et al., 2018, p. 29). Furthermore, Milano points out that the “[c]ongestion and privatisation of public spaces” and the “[e]nvironmental impact, pollution and waste generation” are perceived as negative impacts of increased tourism growth (2018, p. 554). The consequences of the negative perception of tourism growth were public criticism or protest by residents in tourism areas (Butler & Dodds, 2019).

2.3 Overtourism and stakeholders

Plichta identifies stakeholder groups that could be important in relation to the management of overtourism in Krakow. Table 1 shows these and other stakeholder groups (Slivar, 2018; 2019).

Table 1: *Stakeholder groups related to overtourism*

Private (business) Sector	Public (government) Sector	Local community and visitors
Business entities and legal persons (Tourism companies)	The municipality and its entities	Residents
Non-tourism related businesses	Government institutions (e.g., the police)	Tourists and commuters
Professional associations	Tourism organizations	NGOs and associations

Note. The table has been adapted from the article [“The co-management and stakeholders theory as a useful approach to manage the problem of overtourism in historical cities – illustrated with an example of Krakow”], by Jaroslaw Plichta, 2019, Copyright 2019 by the International Journal of Tourism Cities and it was categorised and complemented based on [“Stakeholders in a Tourist Destination – Matrix of Possible Relationships Towards Sustainability”], by Iva Slivar, 2018, Copyright 2018 by Open Journal for Research in Economics.

Furthermore, Plichta states in his review paper that it is very likely that stakeholders will play a crucial role in solving the problems of overtourism (2019). In the following, the individual stakeholder groups identified will be briefly discussed.

Aspects of overtourism, such as “tourism congestion” and the subsequent “overuse of the resources, infrastructure” etc., can be caused not only by tourists but also by residents and commuters (UNWTO, 2018, p. 5; Koens, Postma, & Papp, 2018, p. 10). However, mainly residents and local communities voice their discontent and criticism of the effects of overtourism. Even before the term was discussed more intensively in the media and academia, residents criticised certain aspects of tourism in their community. For example, there were already protests against mass tourism by inhabitants of tourist destinations in Mediterranean countries in the 1990s. In the last two decades, local communities, in the form of social movements, associations, etc., have been increasingly concerned with the impacts of tourism, in addition to issues, such as working conditions and gender inequality. Numerous new “grassroots associations” have also been founded and voiced strong criticism of tourism growth, especially in recent years (Peeters, et al., 2018, p. 29).

The protest of residents, especially in the context of social movements, also caused that overtourism received greater attention in the media and academia and that governments, municipalities, and their organisations began to address the issue and seek solutions (Plichta, 2019). However, local governments initially “embraced tourism as a useful urban development strategy” to promote their regions’ economies (Hospers, 2019, p. 21). The business sector also became increasingly interested in promoting tourism development. As a result, there have been several collaborations between the public and private sectors to, among other aspects, improve the promotion of destinations.

However, the private and public sectors have recently increased their focus on more sustainable tourism and destination management (Butler & Dodds, 2019, p. 521). Especially, since they have increasingly become targets by anti-tourism groups. Some of the protests were even violent, and there is a threat that the residents’ sometimes aggressive stance against tourism could be more harmful to local economies than restrictions on tourism growth (Peeters et al., 2018).

2.4 Main impacts and problems associated with overtourism

A variety of impacts of overtourism have been found in a study for the European Parliament. In this, the following three main categories are described (Peeters, et al., 2018):

- I. Environmental
- II. Economic
- III. Socio-cultural

These main categories are also subdivided into various subcategories. Case studies were used to determine where and to what extent they occur (Peeters, et al., 2018). The main categories and subcategories are described in more detail below.

2.4.1 Environmental impacts

According to the study, the most occurring impact of overtourism is “[o]vercrowding of infrastructure (congestion), facilities and (commercial) activities”, which is caused by concentrations of tourists and overuse of transport routes and means. The second most frequent impact of overtourism is similar to the first one. But unlike the previous one, it is about overcrowding in and at tourist sites, caused by high numbers of tourists wanting to visit a site. The third most common impact discussed in the study is physical pollution. This negative aspect is particularly prevalent in coastal regions, islands, and rural areas (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 88-89).

Overuse of local resources leads to the pollution of water, air, etc., which can lead to entire ecosystems being threatened or destroyed by tourism. For example, up to 80% of the reefs of the Koh Khai Islands have been destroyed due to pollution (McKinsey and the World Travel & Tourism Council, 2017). In addition to that, there is also visual pollution due to overtourism. However, according to the study, this occurred less significantly than physical pollution.

Apart from this, the fourth most common environmental impact of overtourism, according to Peeters et al., is the degradation of tourist sites due to excessive numbers of visitors. The last environmental impact of overtourism, mentioned in the case study, is that “[t]ourism-generated investments in tourism-specific infrastructure impair the investments in infrastructure needed by residents and the wider destination community”. However, this occurs very rarely (2018, pp. 88-89).

2.4.2 Economic and social-cultural impacts

In general, the case study indicates that economic and socio-cultural impacts tend to occur less than environmental impacts. However, of all the consequences of overtourism, the “[i]nflation of prices and reduction of the availability of certain goods, services, and factors of

production aimed at inhabitants and for other sectors and functions” (economic impact) as well as the “[m]arginalisation of resident population[s] (excessively high number of tourists per resident)” (socio-cultural impact) are the most common impacts after overcrowding of infrastructure and tourist sites and pollution.

Apart from that, less common economic impacts were “economic dependence on tourism”, deteriorated public infrastructure and its increased maintenance costs as well as “reduced accessibility of infrastructure” and a perceived decline of the image of a destination. Furthermore, socio-cultural impacts that occurred less frequently were the “touristification of residential areas” and “modification of recreational areas” to adapt them to visitors’ needs. Other impacts were a perceived increase in crime, hostilities caused by cultural misunderstandings, and a “loss of cultural identity” (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 88-89).

2.5 Measures against overtourism

As indicated in 2.3, the residents and public sector of destinations are now more committed to sustainable tourism and are taking action against overtourism. The following describes various measures that have been pursued by them.

2.5.1 Measures taken by residents and local communities

As described earlier, the high tourism pressure in some European cities has caused social movements and local organisations to start addressing the issue of tourism. Although they used to be more concerned with other social and economic issues, they identified tourism growth as a cause of social injustice. Furthermore, social movements and other new platforms of local communities collaborated with the scientific community. This led to the publishing of scientific papers and the issue of overtourism received more public attention. Thus, it also became the subject of debate, not only in the media but also by local authorities (Milano, 2018). In addition, local communities organized campaigns and protests against tourists and tourism, thereby increasing the media attention even further and exerting pressure on other local tourism stakeholders (Kuščer & Mihalič, 2019).

2.5.2 Measures taken by the public sector

The case study by Peeters et al. identifies measures by local authorities against overtourism. The measures and the frequencies of their occurrence can be seen in Table 2 and are described below (2018).

Most frequently used measures

The measure that appeared most frequently (49%) in the case studies was *Laws and law enforcement directed at tourists*. This mainly refers to laws “related to alcohol and drug

consumption, forbidding access to certain locations/at certain times”. One example for this is Ayia Napa in Cyprus, which has been tackling excessive public alcohol and drug use for more than ten years (Peeters, et al., 2018, p. 93).

The second most frequent measure was *Distributing tourists* (34%). The aim of that is to distribute tourists through “promotion, new attractions, better transportation options, and tours” to different places in a destination (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 93-94). In Copenhagen, a new strategy called *The end of tourism as we know it* has tried to spread tourism across the city (Goodwin, 2017; Wonderful Copenhagen, 2017).

The third most often occurring measure is to increase the capacities of destinations. This measure describes that the increased number of visitors due to tourism will be counteracted by, for example, improved infrastructure and “traffic management, security measures and waste management” (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 93-94). For example, planning groups in the Dutch village of Giethoorn concluded that its street signage should be improved, and bins emptied more frequently. In consequence, the municipal council stated that this would be implemented and a budget of almost € 200,000 was allocated (Fix, 2018).

Table 2: Measures taken by local authorities against overtourism

Number	Measure and its description	Frequency*
<i>Very frequently used measures</i>		
1	Laws and law enforcement directed at tourists	49
2	Distributing tourists	34
3	Increasing capacities	34
<i>Less frequently used measures</i>		
4	Increasing prices	20
5	Reducing seasonality	17
6	Green measures	17
7	Stop certain developments; prevent uncontrollable development	17
8	Improve stakeholder involvement	15
9	Information for tourists	12
10	Promoting high-quality tourism	12
<i>Rarely used measures</i>		
11	Stimulate developments directed at residents	10
12	Caps on access	10
13	Less / No promotion	7

14	Awareness campaign to prevent / stimulate certain behaviour	7
15	Improved monitoring	2
16	Conduct research	2

Note. The table is adapted from the study [“Overtourism: impact and possible policy responses”], by Peeters, et al., 2018, Copyright 2018 by European Parliament’s Committee on Transport and Tourism. *Frequency of the occurrence of a measure in the case study in %.

Less frequently used measures

The fourth most frequently occurring measure is *Increasing prices*. In some places, prices were increased for specific groups at certain times (e.g., through a tax) to prevent overcrowding (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 93-94). Related to this, Seraphin and Ivanov argue that the “low pricing strategies” of tourism destinations and companies are also partly responsible for the emergence of overtourism. However, this could be countered by raising prices and “matching tourism supply and demand” (2020, p. 6).

Another measure that does not occur as frequently as the measures mentioned so far is *Reducing seasonality*, which is to be implemented, for instance, through “promotion and new attractions” (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 93-94). The *Agencia de Turismo Balear* (Balearic Tourism Agency) presented a new tourism strategy called *Better in winter* in 2017. This strategy should be used to promote lesser-known places on the islands, as well as tourist offers outside the tourist season in autumn, winter, and spring (Diario de Mallorca, 2017).

Measures that occur with similar frequency to the previous one are “*Green measures*, such as eco-certifications, environmental taxes (payable by tourists or accommodation providers), green fuel, and green buildings” (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 93-94). An example of this is the so-called *ecotasa* (Sustainable Tourism Tax) on the Balearic Islands, which is collected from tourism accommodations. The resulting tax revenue finances projects for the conservation of nature, the creation of tourism products for the low season and the preservation of historic sites (Economía de Mallorca, 2019; Vilarasau, 2019).

Another measure is to “[s]top certain developments; prevent uncontrollable development by measures such as zoning systems, laws, and stops on hotel and Airbnb capacity extensions” (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 93-94). Malta is an example of this measure, as it not only operates a tourism zone management system for the preservation and maintenance of different zones (Malta Tourism Authority, n.d.), but also fines unlicensed tourism businesses (Peeters, et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the measure *Improve stakeholder involvement* occurs less frequently than other previous measures. Predominantly, this involvement takes place “in tourism marketing and

development” of a destination. The last two measures in this category are *Information for tourists* and *Promoting high-quality tourism*. The former describes informing tourists about “crowdedness, transport options”, and other parts of a destination, sometimes in real-time. The latter describes the attempt to attract a different tourist type to a tourist destination by adapting the tourism offer (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 93-94). Dublin tourism officials, for example, sought to attract visitors from the US and Australia, who on average stay longer and spend more money, by introducing a new marketing plan in 2017 (Hospitality Ireland, 2016).

Rarely used measures

According to the case study, apart from the less frequently used measures, some measures hardly occurred. Those can be seen at the bottom of Table 2. The eleventh measure describes the stimulation of developments that are positive for the inhabitants of a region. For example, these can be implemented by “safeguarding availability of affordable housing, shops catering to residents and improved living working conditions in tourism”. Furthermore, measure 12 describes (dynamic) restrictions on entering a destination or visiting an attraction. The thirteenth measure states that some tourism destinations have also stopped or reduced their own marketing to combat overtourism (Peeters, et al., 2018, pp. 93-94).

Apart from this, the Yellowstone National Park is an example of measure 14, *Awareness Campaign to Prevent/Stimulate Certain Behaviour* (directed at tourists). There, it was proposed to deploy more rangers informing and monitoring tourists to combat inappropriate visitor behaviours. Visitors should also be educated in new ways about the park before entering it (Nickerson, 2017). The two measures that were least prevalent in the study were to improve the monitoring of tourism development of a destination and conducting research on it (Peeters, et al., 2018).

2.6 Best practice examples

In addition to the already mentioned “quite aggressive redistribution strategy”, other measures, were taken against overtourism in Copenhagen, according to Peeters et al. The local government also banned the opening of new restaurants in some parts of the city (*Stop certain developments; prevent uncontrollable development*)². The city also created “silent areas in residential neighbourhoods”, as well as “a bicycle-friendly transportation system” (*Increasing capacities*). Furthermore, its municipality placed an increased focus on the “eco-certification of hotel rooms and the uptake of green and sustainability initiatives” (*Green measures*).

² In this paragraph, best practice examples against overtourism are described. The categorisation of these according to 2.5.2 is shown in brackets.

In addition to Copenhagen, the cities of Riga, Stockholm, and Vilnius have also taken effective action against overtourism (2018, p. 98). In Riga, for example, stricter laws (*Laws and law enforcement directed at tourists*) against alcohol and sex tourism were introduced (Mussayeva, 2017; The Baltic Times, 2019). To combat overtourism, Stockholm strives to involve many local stakeholders in tourism planning (*Improve stakeholder involvement*). Also, the city pays attention to sustainable urban planning and management (*Improved monitoring*). Apart from that, the local administration limits traffic in the city centre and increasingly regulates private accommodations for tourism purposes (*Caps on access, Stop certain developments; prevent uncontrollable development*) (Peeters, et al., 2018). The municipality of Vilnius recruited volunteers to inform tourists in the city about transport options (Municipality of Vilnius, 2018). In addition, the city introduced an application that informs tourists about different places in the city and offers alternatives (*Information for tourists*) (Peeters, et al., 2018). A tourism tax (*Increasing prices*) was also introduced (Go Vilnius, n.d.).

Besides the already mentioned application, there is a similar one in London. However, this app uses a playful approach. The name of it is *Play London with Mr Bean*. It encourages tourists to visit less visited areas of London (*Distributing tourists*) by awarding points and discounts (La Vanguardia, 2017). Another example of a technological approach is the application *Tourism Tracer*, which records the travel behaviour of visitors to the Australian island of Tasmania in detail. It also gathers additional information through surveys (*Conduct research*) (Tourism Tracer, n.d.).

3 Barcelona's tourism development

Barcelona attracted few tourists until the 1992 Olympics. Since then, tourism in the city has increased greatly. However, this has not only been perceived as positive. The city's tourism development has also come under increasing criticism. This led to the development of strategies and measures to make the city's tourism more sustainable and acceptable for its residents. In the following chapter, these developments will be discussed in more detail.

3.1 First tourism developments before the Olympic Games

Although Barcelona is close to several tourist coastal destinations in Spain, the city attracted comparatively fewer tourists until the 1992 Olympic Games (Casellas, 2009). However, before the Olympic Games, some events laid the foundation for the later tourism development of the city. The first significant ones occurred as early as the 19th century. On the one hand, the *Cerdà Plan* changed the cityscape and improved the living conditions of many inhabitants. On the other hand, Barcelona hosted the 1888 World's Fair, which led to the growth of the hotel and service sectors (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a).

The city received further international attention by hosting a second World Fair in 1929. During this time, many visitors not only stayed in a large network of hotels but also participated in the first open-bus tours and visited newly established public information offices. Visitors were also able to use the newly published travel guides (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a). In the following decade, the *Fira de Barcelona* was built, which was later used for various fairs and events (Fira Barcelona, n.d.).

After the Second World War, and especially in the 60s, there was great tourism growth in Spain as the country opened economically and financially. However, most tourists visited the coastal regions rather than Barcelona. In the case that tourists did visit the city, they were mostly short visits (Terrones, Fresno, Codera, & Domingo, 2007; Casellas, 2009).

After the first democratic election of a municipal government in the 1980s, there were various construction projects, and the city underwent a process of "deindustrialisation". During this time, new tourist products and services were also established, such as a new tourist bus and street information services for visitors. The announcement in 1986 that Barcelona would host the Summer Olympic Games six years later reinforced the city's transformation. As a result, Barcelona's appearance changed considerably (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a, p. 22). The infrastructure for the four Olympic venues was created and the general infrastructure of the city was also improved in preparation for the games. Various new hotels were built, and neighbourhoods redeveloped (Terrones, Fresno, Codera, & Domingo, 2007).

3.2 Olympic Games in 1992 and Turisme de Barcelona

Tourism growth increased significantly in Barcelona at the beginning of the 1990s. Possible reasons for this are the declining interest in beach tourism at this time and falling travel costs due to the liberalisation of air travel. The Olympic Summer Games also boosted this growth (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a). In addition to that and the significant reduction in unemployment, Catalonia and Barcelona managed to raise their profile. As already mentioned, the city was modernised and the general changes of the urban landscape³ in preparation for the Olympiad were perceived as very positive by the international press (Reid, 2012).

Before the Olympic Games, many visitors came to Barcelona mainly for “trade fairs or for business”. Furthermore, although there were more hotels after the Olympics, occupancy rates remained low at the beginning. Partly due to that, a new tourism strategy was drawn up for the city in 1993 with the objectives of “attract[ing] new and different visitor markets and to consolidate” Barcelona’s tourism, by “focus[ing] on new market segments according to profile, motivation and origin”. In addition, it was hoped that Barcelona would become an “international destination” and that tourism revenue would increase even after the Olympic Games (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a, pp. 23-24).

These goals should be achieved with the cooperation of the public and private sectors. Therefore, the Barcelona City Council (Ajuntament de Barcelona) started to work more closely with private companies to promote tourism. To further improve this cooperation, *Turisme de Barcelona* (also known as *Barcelona Turisme*) was founded in 1993 by the city council and the Chamber of Commerce, Industry and Maritime Navigation of Barcelona (Cambra Oficial de Comerç, Indústria i Navegació de Barcelona) as a new organisation linking the private and public sectors to promote Barcelona as a tourism destination (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2014; Palomeque, 2015).

It officially started its activities on the 1st of January 1994 (Turisme de Barcelona, n.d.) and its main objective was the “growth of tourism activities in the city” (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a, p. 24). To achieve this, Barcelona Turisme should introduce technologies and innovations for the city’s tourism development and take over the press and public relations for the local tourism (Terrones, Fresno, Codera, & Domingo, 2007).

Apart from that, Turisme de Barcelona began to segment source markets and diversify the city’s promotion. Therefore, the focus was not on an international advertising campaign, but

³ Some constructions and renovations connected to the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona can be seen in Table 4 of Appendix A.

on marketing the city individually mainly through tour operators, travel agencies, the press, and others (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a).

3.3 Characteristics of the tourism development after the Olympic Games

In the following years, after the Olympic Games and the creation of Turisme de Barcelona, some peculiarities distinguish the development of Barcelona from that of other destinations. Some of these are (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a):

- I. Strong tourism growth in both demand and supply
- II. Diversified tourism offers and relatively low seasonality
- III. A high amount of international guests
- IV. Strong growth of MICE tourism
- V. Increasing infrastructure
- VI. Tourism concentration in certain parts of the city

Barcelona has experienced strong growth of the tourism industry since the 1990s. This growth is reflected on the demand and supply side (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a). On the demand side, this is illustrated, for example, by the increase of overnight stays per night by tourists in hotels from around 4 million in 1990 to around 19 million in 2016. Overnight stays in other tourism accommodations are not included in this statistic. It can therefore be assumed that the total number of tourists overnight stays in the city was higher.

On the supply side, the tourism growth is reflected, for example, in the sharp increase in hotel beds in Barcelona. From 1990 to 2016, the number of beds almost quadrupled from around 18500 to around 68000 (Milano, 2017). One statistic that combines the demand and supply side is the hotel rooms occupancy rate in Barcelona. More than 75% (annual average) of the rooms were occupied from 2000 to 2013 (except in 2009). That indicates that supply and demand grew parallelly. In addition to the increase of tourist accommodations and overnight stays in them, the number of shopping and tourism services also increased (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a).

Apart from Barcelona's tourism growth since 1990, Barcelona distinguished itself from other destinations by being able to keep seasonality relatively low by offering a variety of tourism products and services for different target markets (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014b). The variety of tourism offers for different market segments also contributed to the fact that Barcelona attracted mainly international visitors. In 2013, for example, 75% of its visitors were foreigners (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a).

The internationalisation of Barcelona's tourism was stimulated by the growth of MICE tourism. The city had already started to develop its infrastructures for trade fairs and large events

before the Olympic Games. After the games, the infrastructure for fairs and exhibitions was further developed and a new image of the city was developed through strategic marketing. As a result, the number of professional meetings more than quadrupled between 1990 and 2013 and MICE tourism became a crucial part of the city's tourism development after the Olympic Games. Furthermore, this type of tourism brought a lot of added value to the city, as MICE tourists spent on average more than other tourist profiles. It is also estimated that this form of tourism had an economic impact of 1,435 billion euros annually before the COVID-19 pandemic in Barcelona (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a).

In addition, there were general improvements to Barcelona's infrastructure that have enabled even more international tourists to visit the city. For example, a new terminal was opened at *El Prat Airport* in 2009 with a capacity of around 55 million passengers per year (Aeropuerto Barcelona, n.d.). Barcelona has also become an internationally important cruise ship port, with around 2,6 million cruise passengers passing through in 2013 (Port de Barcelona, 2019).

Apart from that, the city's international image improved, especially due to the opening to international markets and positive press coverage, and good results in rankings. Although tourism grew in general, there was a concentration of tourism activities (tourist sights and accommodations) in some specific parts of the city. Other parts were rarely visited and had few tourism accommodations (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a).

3.4 First criticism of tourism

The first criticism of Barcelona's tourism development was voiced at an international forum in 2004. The critique intensified in the media, especially from 2008 onwards (Goodwin, 2019a). For example, an article in the *Guardian* criticised the negative development of *Las Ramblas*, a well-known boulevard in the city centre, due to tourism. The article mentions that the street was filled with "drunken tourists, desperate prostitutes and petty crooks" who make it "charmless, tawdry and dangerous". Also, it indicates that the local population perceived the change of the boulevard as negative because of the sharp increase in crime and prostitution (Tremlett, 2009).

Besides, the effects of tourism in other parts of the city were also criticised. For example, residents complained that they had lost public places to tourists, some of which were overcrowded, and residents avoided these places. Many locals also disliked the fact that many new souvenir and fast-food shops had opened in connection with the tourism growth. Thus, the slogan *Tourists are not welcome* could be seen in various parts of the city (Placer, 2008).

In 2009, reports about the negative impacts of tourism in Barcelona increased (Goodwin, 2019a). At the end of the year, residents, and traders from *El Raval*, a neighbourhood in the

city centre, organised a protest action. In connection with this, Christmas cards were sent to the city officials. The cards contained photographs of negative acts related to tourism, such as prostitution, drug purchases, tourists urinating in the street, etc. In addition, residents put up banners calling for a dignified district (Rainsford, 2009).

3.5 From promotion to management

Turisme de Barcelona and the Barcelona City Council developed a *Strategic Tourism Plan for Barcelona for 2010-2015* after the criticism of tourism and its negative effects in Barcelona became stronger from residents and the press. The plan was published in 2010. It states that a new “tourism model” should be promoted that “strengthen[s] the balance between residents and tourists while preserving the identity values of the city” (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Turisme, 2010a, p. 5). The main objectives of the plan were not only to improve tourism activities in general but also to make sure “that tourism fitted better with the needs of the city”. To implement the latter, the capacity for hosting tourists should be planned and analysed “in accordance with the characteristics of the public space and with regard to the impact of tourism” (Goodwin, 2019a, p. 5).

Apart from that, the plan emphasised the importance of involving residents in tourism planning and the relationship between tourists and the local community (Goodwin, 2019a). Since, according to the plan, the quality of tourism activities in the city also depends on “the well-being of its population, which must be the cause and effect of the successful development of Barcelona as a tourist destination” (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Turisme, 2010a, pp. 3-7).

The Strategic Tourism Plan for Barcelona for 2010-2015 indicates that the city's focus switched from promoting to managing its tourism. In addition to that, the creation of the *Directorate for Tourism and Events* and the *Technical Council for Tourism and the City* in 2010 suggests that the city “clearly understood the need for a whole of city government approach to managing tourism” (Goodwin, 2019a, pp. 8-10).

Moreover, the city consulted with representatives of organisations related to tourism development to develop a *Local Agreement for the management and promotion of responsible and sustainable tourism*. In the resulting document, negative aspects of tourism in the city were recorded, such as “overcrowding”, “[l]oss of identity, trivialisation, and uniformity of the city”, “[a] rise in anti-social behaviours and coexistence conflicts”, etc. In later surveys (see 4.3), it was found that the inhabitants of Barcelona perceived similar problems. To address these problems, thirty-five actions were proposed in the agreement. One of these actions, for example, was to “[i]mprove the management of tourist flows in the most overcrowded areas”

(Meya, et al., 2015, pp. 20-21). Therefore, the agreement also indicates that the city was trying to focus more on tourism management.

3.6 New local government in 2015

When *Ada Colau* from the political party *Barcelona en Comú* was elected as the new mayor of Barcelona in 2015, international interest in a supposed new tourism policy for the city increased. However, as previously mentioned, there had already been efforts by previous administrations to improve the city's tourism management and make its tourism more sustainable (Goodwin, 2019a).

After various protests against the negative effects of tourism, especially in the *Barceloneta* district, in 2014, tourism became a key issue in the 2015 mayoral election (O'Sullivan, 2014). One reason for this was that reports of negative behaviour by tourists became more frequent (Goodwin, 2019a). For example, it was reported that three Italian tourists were passing naked through the aforementioned neighbourhood (Gillman & Brown, 2014). At the same time, complaints from residents about inappropriate tourist behaviour increased. In the protests that followed, demonstrators visited the owners of tourism accommodations and demanded their closure. In the context of these events, the media referred to this as the *Barceloneta crisis*. In the aftermath, *Ada Colau* promised "an inspection and crackdown on illegal holiday apartments in *La Barceloneta* and 24 holiday apartments were closed" (Goodwin, 2019a, p. 12).

3.7 Strategic Tourism Plan for 2020

One year after the election of *Ada Colau*, the Barcelona City Council published its *Strategic Tourism Plan for 2020*. This plan was based on previous work related to the tourism development of the city. For example, the two main objectives of the Strategic Tourism Plan for Barcelona for 2010-2015, namely "helping to improve tourist activities in Barcelona and ensuring tourism fitted in better with the city", are mentioned (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017a, p. 12). Furthermore, as in previous works, it is stated that "sustainability and responsibility" are important for the development of Barcelona as a destination. This is also reflected in the five criteria on which the plan is based. These criteria are "sustainability, responsibility, redistribution, cohesion, and innovation" (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017a, p. 19). In addition to the criteria, ten "strategic programmes" were defined, which contain various "lines of actions" and measures (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.a). The strategic programmes are listed below and briefly described (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017b, pp. 17-39):

I. Governance:

The city's tourism management should be generally improved by enhancing the internal coordination of the city administration as well as by increasing the cooperation with other public institutions and other private actors. Therefore, opportunities should be created to have a dialogue between stakeholders. Furthermore, the exchange with other national and international destinations should be strengthened to have a knowledge exchange. Also, Turisme de Barcelona should adapt to the strategies and policies of the tourism planning of the city council.

II. Knowledge:

In addition to a knowledge exchange, the city should acquire more knowledge about tourism development through collaborations with universities and research centres.

III. Destination Barcelona:

The general objective of this programme was to make Barcelona a more sustainable destination in several aspects (economic, environmental, social) and to ensure that visitors are genuinely attracted by the city's identity. To achieve this, sustainable tourism in the city should be promoted and a new marketing strategy should be developed, among other aspects. Also, the deconcentration of tourism activities in the city should be promoted using a territorial strategy. Based on this, new sustainable tourism products and attractions should be developed.

IV. Mobility:

The aim of this programme was to study the city's mobility in relation to tourism (e.g., visitor numbers, public transport, reasons for staying, etc.) to be able to better plan or change it in the future.

V. Accommodation:

Within the framework of this programme, the tourism planning of the city should be adapted based on the *PEUAT* (Special Urban Plan for Tourist Accommodation) and the regulations are also to be aligned with new types of tourism accommodations. Furthermore, new tourism accommodation policies should be promoted to improve their environmental, social, and economic effects.

VI. Managing spaces:

The core objective of this programme was to improve the management of urban spaces "to reconcile tourist activities with ongoing, everyday life in the city". That could be achieved, among other aspects, by developing new strategies and models for neighbourhoods or places

in the city that are visited by many tourists and are under demographic pressure. Furthermore, measures should be elaborated to direct visitor flows so that both tourist and local activities can be carried out simultaneously. A plan should also be drawn up to make Barcelona more accessible to people with mobility difficulties.

VII. **Economic development:**

The economic development programme was about promoting positive developments for the lives of Barcelona's citizens in general and the people who work in the tourism sector. That should be done with "the promotion of new forms of entrepreneurship and the promotion of links between strategic sectors, thus ensuring territorial balance and the social return of activities".

VIII. **Communication and reception:**

This programme aimed to diversify and expand the external representation and public image of Barcelona by adapting the internal and external communication strategy and improving the information for visitors.

IX. **Taxation and funding:**

Within the framework of this programme, fiscal measures should be developed to compensate for the negative impacts of tourism. Furthermore, the city's tourism planning bodies' finances were to be reviewed. The difference between revenues and losses due to tourism should be determined. The additional tax revenues generated by new fiscal measures should be used to create a *Tourism and City Economic Fund* and to support the strategic planning for the next years.

X. **Regulation and planning:**

The last programme describes the use of regulatory and legislative measures to reduce the negative impacts of tourism on the city and preserve the rights of its citizens. That should be implemented on the one hand by introducing new legislation and on the other hand by analysing and adapting the city's urban planning. Furthermore, tourist activities and products should be more closely monitored.

3.8 COVID-19 pandemic in Barcelona

As shown in the previous chapters, tourism in Barcelona was growing before the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, it was the 33rd most visited city in the world in the second most visited country (Spain) (Koh, 2020). The city was visited by around 38 million people in the year before

the outbreak of the pandemic and was mainly dependent on foreign visitors, who generated 86% of the tourism revenue (Hosteltur Economía, 2020).

However, tourism growth in Barcelona stopped at the beginning of 2020. Especially from the 14th of March (the beginning of the first lockdown) until May 2020, hardly any tourists came to the city (Koh, 2020). This is illustrated by the occupancy rates of hotels, which fell from around 60% in December 2019 to around 0% in April 2020 (Smart Travel News, n.d.). Despite some easing of travel regulations in June and July 2020 from the Spanish government (Deutsche Welle, 2020), the city recorded a decline of -4.9 million visitor arrivals during the year (Milano, 2021). *Manel Casals*, the general director of the *Gremi d'Hotels de Barcelona* (Barcelona Hotel Guild) described it as the worst year of his career, as, for example, revenues in the hotel sector had fallen by 95% (Hosteltur Economía, 2020).

In addition to the tourist accommodation sector, small businesses and especially shops in the touristic districts suffered from the lack of visitors. Consequently, many shops had to close because of the pandemic (DW Español, 2020). However, it also had a positive impact on the citizens' quality of life. Firstly, air pollution in the city decreased during the pandemic (Koh, 2020). Secondly, it made it easier for the city's residents to access local attractions, and problems caused by tourism before the pandemic, such as overcrowding, hardly occurred anymore (DW Español, 2020).

Currently, in mid-2021, tourists are increasingly returning to Spain (Trading Economics, n.d.). The number of tourists is likely to increase as the national emergency and curfews were lifted in May 2021 (El Periódico, 2021). In addition, local authorities permitted bars and restaurants to extend their opening hours (Coll, 2021). Even the opening of discotheques was being planned (Hidalgo, 2021). The Spanish government also facilitated entry into the country. From the 7th of June, people with proof of recovery, a negative antigen (or PCR) test or complete vaccination were allowed to enter the country (tagesschau.de, 2021). This poses the risk that negative effects of tourism or overtourism could return soon and after the pandemic. Additionally, *Xavier Marcé*, a councillor in the Barcelona City Council, said that the problems that the city had before the pandemic could return, if no action is taken (DW Español, 2020).

4 Overtourism in Barcelona

As mentioned in the first chapter, the term overtourism is relatively new, but problems and criticisms of tourism have existed for a long time, also in Barcelona, as can be seen in the paragraphs 3.4 to 3.6. Some would even argue that Barcelona has suffered under the consequences of overtourism for “more than a decade” (Milano, 2017, p. 21).

4.1 Causes of overtourism in Barcelona

As with the general causes for overtourism (see 2.2), there are mainly two reasons that have led to the emergence of this phenomenon in Barcelona. One of them is the strong growth of tourism, especially since the 1992 Olympic Games (see 3.2 & 3.3), and is reflected, among other aspects, in the strong growth in the number of overnight stays and hotel beds. However, the increased demand for tourist accommodations has caused the rental and housing prices to rise. For example, the average selling price per square metre rose from around three to four thousand Euros between 2014 and 2017 (Milano, 2017).

Another reason is that tourism growth and its impacts, like the aforementioned increase in housing prices, have been perceived increasingly negatively. This is reflected, for example, in various surveys. In a survey published by the Barcelona City Council in 2017, most respondents (19%) stated that tourism (in general) was the most important problem facing the city (Suñé, 2017). Similarly, about 16% of Barcelona’s citizens criticised the city’s overtourism, according to an academic article by Álvarez-Sousa (2020). Additionally, in another survey by the city council, almost 60% of the respondents said that the capacity limit for tourists had been reached and only about 35% said that more tourists should be attracted (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017c).

In addition to the surveys, the worsened perception of tourism by Barcelonans has also been reflected in the national and local press. Already in 2008, there were several articles in Spanish newspapers about the first disagreements that residents had with the city’s tourism development (Milano, 2017). Subsequently, the international press increasingly reported on the “sense of rejection, distrust and contempt towards the tourism industry in general” felt by inhabitants of Barcelona. In addition, international and especially British coverage on the tourism development of the city intensified after the attack on a bus at the beginning of 2017, on which the words *Tourism kills neighbourhoods* were painted (Milano, 2017, p. 29).

4.2 Stakeholders related to overtourism in Barcelona

In the following, different stakeholders that are relevant to Barcelona’s tourism and overtourism will be discussed. The classification of stakeholders used here has been defined in paragraph 2.3 (see Table 1).

4.2.1 Local community

Although the focus of residents, local associations and social movements has been predominantly on issues such as “employment instability, sexual discrimination and gender inequality, the growing elitism and privatisation of the education system”, etc., interest in the tourism development of Barcelona has increased in recent years (Milano, 2017, p. 30). In 2014 and 2015, it became clear that the residents of Barcelona were increasingly critical of this development. This was reflected, among other things, in the protests during the Barceloneta Crisis and the election of Ada Colau (see 3.6).

In addition to the election of a new mayor in 2015, who promised to strengthen the regulations of the city’s tourism sector, residents’ resistance towards Barcelona’s tourism development can be seen in the establishment of the *ABTS* (Assembly of Neighbourhoods for Sustainable Tourism) in the same year (Milano, 2017; 2018). Since its foundation, the ABTS has organised various protests and campaigns, such as *#CapMésEstiuComAquest* (No more summers like this one) in 2017 or conferences, such as the *1st Residents Forum on Tourism* in July 2016 (Milano, 2017). They also networked with local and international associations to combat overtourism. For example, at the second edition of the forum described above, the *Network of Southern European Cities against Touristification* (SET) was presented in which neighbourhood associations and other organisations from Mediterranean cities, heavily affected by tourism, formed an umbrella organisation (ABDT, 2018; Barcelona Cultura, 2019).

It is partly through these developments that the ABTS was able to increase media and political attention of the negative impacts of tourism and overtourism in Barcelona (Milano, 2017). It has also become one of the most prominent civic voices critical of tourism in recent years (Barcelona Cultura, 2019). For example, this is evident from the fact that the ABTS has been increasingly mentioned in scientific articles (Milano, 2017; Cocola-Gant & Pardo, 2017; Milano, Cheer, & Novelli, 2018; Peeters et al., 2018).

Recently, the ABTS has focused increasingly on the topic of tourism degrowth (Milano, 2017). That can also be seen in their name change at the end of 2019. In a press conference, it was announced that the organisation will be called *ABDT* (Assembly of Neighbourhoods for Tourism Degrowth) in the future. The reason given for the name change was that it had become clear for the organisation that it is not possible to create sustainable tourism in Barcelona and that, to combat the problems of tourism, it was necessary to reduce it (ABDT, 2019).

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain, especially in March 2020, which led to a lack of tourism and its negative manifestations in Barcelona (DW Español, 2020), there have been fewer contributions to events and other actions of the ABDT on its website. But

they are still active and state, for example, that they reject a rescue of the tourism sector with public funds, which has suffered because of the COVID-19 pandemic (ABDT, 2020).

Besides the ABDT, there are various other organisations, neighbourhood associations, etc., that have taken a critical stance against tourism in the city or who have a less negative attitude towards it (Mezquita, 2016). However, the ABDT can be seen as one of the most important stakeholders in relation to overtourism in the city because, on the one hand, it has become very well known in recent years (Milano, 2017; Barcelona Cultura, 2019). On the other hand, most of the organisations critical of tourism are their members or work together with them. For example, they work together with the umbrella organisation of all neighbourhood associations, the *FAVB* (Federation of Neighbourhood Associations of Barcelona) (ABDT, n.d.). They also managed to establish international connections with other tourism-critical organisations in Europe with the help of the SET and to ensure that the issue of tourism was discussed more in the media, politics, and science (Milano, 2017; 2018).

4.2.2 Public and private stakeholders

Besides residents, neighbourhood associations, and social movements, public and private stakeholders play a role in local tourism and overtourism. Probably the most important public sector stakeholder in Barcelona's tourism management is the city council (Ajuntament de Barcelona). It was not only involved in the creation of Turisme de Barcelona, but also the City and Tourism Council and shaped the city's tourism through various policies and plans (see 3; Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.b). Apart from this, it has documented the tourist development of the city for many years (Goodwin, 2019a). While the city council manages and plans the city's tourism, Turisme de Barcelona, which is a consortium that combines the private and public sectors, markets and promotes it (see 3.2).

Furthermore, the City and Tourism Council was set up in 2016, to act as "a debating forum, where public bodies, associations and political representatives can share their thoughts and put forward proposals for improving the development of Barcelona's tourist sector". However, its "resolutions ... are not binding, but serve as a basis for decisions taken at Full City Council meetings" (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.b).

Besides the public sector, there are also many stakeholders in the private sector related to tourism in the city (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014b). Individual hotels, tourist accommodations, and travel agencies are presented in Barcelona by different associations. Most hotels and other hotel establishments (e.g., hotel apartments, hostels, pensions, etc.) are represented by the *Gremi d'Hotels de Barcelona*. This organisation is concerned, among other things, with the development of the hotel sector, but also with the

general development of the city's tourism. However, its main task is the representation and protection of the interests of the hotel sector (La Agencia Catalana de Turismo, n.d.a).

There is another association for tourism accommodations, which is called *APATUR* (Association of Tourist Apartments in Barcelona). Around 260 tourist accommodation owners are its members and benefit from its services, such as “promotion, advice and representation before institutions and public bodies”. Since its foundation in 2004, its main task has been to “look after the interests of the owners of tourist flats in the province of Barcelona” (La Agencia Catalana de Turismo, n.d.b).

Apart from that, there is also an association for travel agencies, called *ACAVe* (Catalan Association of Specialised Travel Agencies). It currently has over 500 members and its head office is in Barcelona. Its main task is “to act as a sectorial interlocutor of the associated travel agencies and to provide them with useful services for the development of their activity” and to “represent its members before all kinds of national and international public and private bodies and entities” (L'Associació Catalana d'Agències de Viatges Especialitzades, n.d.)

Besides tourist accommodations and travel agencies, tourism also has an impact on other businesses in Barcelona, such as restaurants, shops and rental services (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014b). Restaurants and catering services in the city and the people who work in them are represented by the *Gremi de Restauració de Barcelona* (Barcelona Restoration Guild). It offers its members “advisory and representation services and has a prestigious school where it trains future professionals in the sector” (La Agencia Catalana de Turismo, n.d.c).

Furthermore, three main stakeholders of Barcelona's tourism can be found in the transport sector. First, there is the *TMB* “which is the management unit” of the public transport companies in Barcelona (Transports Metropolitans de Barcelona, n.d.). Second, Barcelona's port has played an important role, with between 3.4 and 4.6 million passengers passing through it each year between 2011 and 2019 (Port de Barcelona, 2019). In addition, Barcelona's airport (Barcelona El Prat Josep Tarradellas Airport) is an important stakeholder that influences the city's tourism, as it offers many tourists the possibility to travel to Barcelona. In 2018, the airport had the sixth highest number of passengers in Europe, with over 50 million passengers (Barcelona International Airport, n.d.).

4.3 Problems related to overtourism in Barcelona

As mentioned in paragraph 4.1, the emergence of overtourism may lead to negative perceptions of the impacts of tourism growth. The surveys by the Barcelona City Council and

Álvarez-Sousa determined which problems were mainly responsible for the negative perceptions (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017c; Álvarez-Sousa, 2020).

The results of the two surveys were very similar. The most frequently stated negative aspect of Barcelona's tourism in both surveys was overcrowding. It was mentioned by around 50% of the respondents. This is in line with the results of the case study for the European Parliament (see 2.4.1). In this, overcrowding also occurred most frequently in various forms. Furthermore, the increase in (housing) prices was often named as a problem of tourism. Like overcrowding, this was also often criticised in other destinations (see 2.4.2). *Uncivil behaviour from tourists* was also frequently mentioned as a problem in the surveys. However, this was less perceived in other destinations (see 2.4.2). Other problems mentioned in the surveys can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Overview of perceived problems caused by overtourism in Barcelona

Number	Problems based on the surveys	Frequency* in %
1	Overcrowding	50.7
2	Uncivil behaviour from tourists	29.45
3	Increased rental prices	22.45
4	General increase of prices	21.1
5	Loss of the neighbourhood's sense of life	20
6	Low cost and quality Tourism	18
7	Only a few people benefit	14.9
8	Expulsion of the local population	14.1
9	Noise	11.85
10	Other aspects	11.35
11	Tourists have priority over residents	7.3
12	Overabundance of tourist hotels and flats	5.3
13	Low quality of service	4.1

Note. The table is adapted from ["La percepció de los problemas del overtourismn Barcelona"], by Antonio Álvarez-Sousa 2020, Copyright 2020 by Recerca. Revista de Pensament i Anàlisi and ["Percepció del Turisme a Barcelona"], Copyright 2017 by Ajuntament de Barcelona. *The average frequency from both studies.

4.4 Measures taken against overtourism before the COVID-19 crisis

As already mentioned in paragraph 2.5.1, residents of a tourism destination usually oppose overtourism by organising themselves into groups and protesting to generate increased media interest and to put pressure on local politics. This has also occurred in Barcelona, where, for example, the tourism critical ABDT was founded (see 4.2.1). It not only connected with various organisations critical of tourism in Barcelona but also with others in Europe. Through campaigns, protests, and cooperations with academia, they ensured that negative aspects of tourism were discussed in the media and thus tried to influence local politics. In addition to

drawing attention to the problems of tourism, the ABDT also made suggestions on how to combat them and how to decrease tourism in Barcelona. Some of these can be seen in Table 5 in Appendix A.

Apart from that the city council also took measures against overtourism. In general, the city has not only started to document its tourism development more intensively but also to focus on the promotion of sustainable tourism. It has also tried to create a tourism model that is more acceptable to the local population. This could already be seen in the Strategic Tourism Plan for Barcelona for 2010-2015, which is described in 3.5.

Furthermore, the ambition to develop sustainable tourism in Barcelona is also reflected in the Strategic Tourism Plan for 2020 (see 3.7). There, various measures for sustainable tourism development are described within the action programmes. Some of these measures were (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017b):

- I. The Improvement of the City and Tourism Council
- II. Less promotion of certain neighbourhoods and a focus on event promotion
- III. Setting up the *Observatory of Tourism in Barcelona*
 - For the data collection of tourism activities
- IV. Creation of a Special Urban Development Plan for Tourist Accommodation (PEUAT)
 - Regulations for tourist accommodations in the city and legal restrictions on the opening of new ones

The last measure mentioned was planned in 2015 and approved in 2017. The PEUAT is a regulatory instrument for the city's tourist accommodation sector. However, it has been the subject of a controversial debate since its introduction. It describes four different zones in Barcelona. The classification of these zones is based on different factors, such as "the capacity of the urban fabric to accommodate new tourist accommodation establishments or not, depending on the intensity of the already existing offer, the saturation of the public space", etc. (Font, López, & Clot, n.d., p. 160).

It is forbidden in the first zone, where there is a particularly high density of tourist accommodations, to open or expand new ones. In the second zone, it is possible to open a new tourist establishment, but only if another one with the same or higher capacity was previously closed. Furthermore, it was allowed to open or expand tourist accommodations in the third zone if they do not exceed the district's capacity. The last and smallest zone consists of three districts. These are subject to specific conditions and other regulations (Font, López, & Clot, n.d.).

Since the introduction of the plan, there has been not only criticism of it but also a wave of lawsuits against it. In addition, the High Court of Justice of Catalonia (TSJC) declared the plan invalid in 2019. The reason was that there was no economic and financial evaluation for the implementation of the plan. The city council appealed, but this too was rejected by the court in 2021. However, the city council said that a ban on opening new hotels in the city centre and tourist accommodations throughout the city was still in effect. A second version of the plan has also been prepared, incorporating the changes requested in the ruling. But this second version is being heavily debated, and it remains unclear when it will be officially approved (El Periódico, 2019; Castán; Canalís, 2021).

In addition to the measures described in the plan, other actions have been taken in Barcelona to make the city's tourism more sustainable and to combat the negative effects of overtourism. Some of these were (Goodwin, 2019a):

- I. Decentralisation of tourists through promotional campaigns:
 - a. *Las 10 Barcelonas*
 - b. *Barcelona is much more*
- II. Improved parking system for coaches for the Sagrada Família
- III. Entry Fee at Park Güell
- IV. Visitor limits in Park Güell
- V. Improving the information for tourists (e.g., by adapting the Tourist Information Offices)

5 Methodology

The following section describes the methodology used in the thesis, why it was chosen, why certain interview partners were selected and how the interviews were conducted.

5.1 Description of the Methodology

In the first part of this thesis until this chapter, information was presented on overtourism in general and in Barcelona as well as, its tourism development. This information was mainly compiled from scientific papers and documents from tourism stakeholders of the city. Various stakeholders related to tourism and overtourism in the city were also identified. The collection of this information was used to prepare the second part of the thesis and the questions for the interview guide. However, it was not possible to describe in detail all aspects of overtourism and the tourism development in Barcelona. Therefore, the sources in the bibliography offer possibilities for further reading.

For the second part of the thesis, *semi-structured interviews*, which are classified as a qualitative research method (Schmidt, 2004), were conducted. This interview type is an intermediary between structured and non-structured interviews. Although there is a predefined basic structure in this format, it is also possible to deviate from it if the interviewers or interviewees consider that necessary. The basic structure for the interviews is given by a guide, which is prepared before the interviews and contains the topics and questions that the interviewer wants to discuss. However, the peculiarity of this type of interview is that the interviewees have more freedom in answering the questions than in structured interviews and do not have to strictly follow the guide. Furthermore, the interviewer can ask additional questions and, for example, ask for unclear statements to be explained in more detail. Normally, the interviewer does not ask questions that are not related to the content of the guide. However, there is the possibility to expand on content that arises during the conversation (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 1998; Corbetta, 2003).

The interviews aimed to identify possible measures against overtourism in Barcelona after the COVID-19 pandemic, proposed by different stakeholders in relation to the phenomena in the city. In addition, it should be ascertained how they justify their proposals and what their opinions are on other measures. The planning and implementation of the interviews were guided by various manuals and books (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 1998; Corbetta, 2003; Adams, 2015).

Creswell's suggestions were followed for analysing and discussing the content of the interviews (2013). The information obtained in the interviews was organised and summaries of each interview were prepared (see Appendix D). These summaries were then used to

categorise and further summarise the content of the interviews (see Appendix E). Furthermore, the measures or topics discussed in the interviews were used as the basis for the categorisation.

Based on that, the measure proposals from the interviewees were later discussed (see 6). However, the discussion was not only based on the interview results but also on the theoretical part of the thesis. Finally, based on the discussion, proposals were made on what measures could be implemented after the COVID-19 pandemic to tackle the issue of overtourism in Barcelona.

5.2 Reasons for the method choice

The first reason for choosing this method is that it can be used to determine what measures stakeholders propose against overtourism. However, this was not the main reason for choosing this method, because it would also have been possible to accomplish that with other quantitative or qualitative methods (Corbetta, 2003).

According to Corbetta, semi-structured interviews are a useful tool to understand a problem or topic and discover new aspects about it (2003). Furthermore, the nature of the interview format facilitates interviewees to share their views and explanations. Also, it allows the interviewer to ask follow-up questions if some aspects were not fully explored and obtain additional information (Mathers, Fox, & Hunn, 1998; Corbetta, 2003). The aim of this thesis was not only to identify possible measures against overtourism in Barcelona proposed by stakeholders. It also aimed to obtain arguments for or against certain measures through the interviewees' reasoning to discuss them later. Based on the discussion, proposals for measures against overtourism in Barcelona after the COVID-19 pandemic should be made. When the interviewees did not sufficiently explain or justify their choice, the interview format made it possible to ask follow-up questions.

Furthermore, while preparing the thesis, it became clear that the stakeholders would not have preferred other methods of gathering information, such as a questionnaire, as interviews were more convenient for them. It also turned out that this method did not involve high costs, for example, since there was no need to purchase software for the data collection or analysis.

In addition to the reasons mentioned for using semi-structured interviews, disadvantages of this method were also considered in the method choice. According to Adams, conducting interviews is time-consuming and labour-intensive. It is also very difficult to have a large sample size for interviews that last between 30 and 60 minutes which is why this method lacks a representative sample. Also, the lack of standardisation of qualitative interviews can complicate the comparison and analysis of the results (Corbetta, 2003; 2015).

In summary, although the method is not very well suited for a quantitative analysis, it allows for a detailed examination of the interviewees' arguments. This was important for the subsequent discussion and resulting proposal of measures.

5.3 Selection of the interview partners

In general, stakeholders in the tourism sector were interviewed because it was assumed that the following three characteristics apply to them. First, some stakeholders are affected by the negative effects of overtourism. Second, they have a direct and immediate influence on Barcelona's tourism development and can thus fight overtourism. Third, it was assumed that the stakeholders also have an in-depth knowledge of tourism and overtourism in the city.

The stakeholders for the interviews were selected based on the classification made in paragraph 2.3. Accordingly, it was attempted to interview stakeholders from the public and private sectors, as well as representatives of the local population.

Before explaining the selection of stakeholders, the following paragraph explains why some of them were not interviewed. Firstly, the Ajuntament de Barcelona (Barcelona City Council) was identified in the theoretical part as an important stakeholder of the city's tourism development (see 3 & 4.2.2). Therefore, attempts were made to contact different representatives of the city council. Unfortunately, all attempts to contact them were unsuccessful. Therefore, an interview with the city council did not take place. Secondly, similar problems occurred with the ABDT. Concerning overtourism and its criticism in Barcelona, this association was identified as an important stakeholder of the local population (see 4.2.1). However, after the initial contact with the ABDT, it was not possible to conduct an interview.

Apart from that, interviews could be conducted with the following stakeholder representatives:

- I. Rosa Bada from **Turisme de Barcelona** (Barcelona Turisme)
- II. Manel Casals, the General Manager of the **Gremi d'Hotels de Barcelona** (Barcelona Hotel Guild)
- III. Silvia Pastor Piera (Institutional relations) and Judith Gómez de la Lastra Díez (Management) of **APATUR** (L'Associació d'Apartaments Turístics de Barcelona)
- IV. Pere Mariné (Tourism department) of the **FAVB** (Federació d'Associacions Veïnals de Barcelona)
- V. Manel Martínez, Vice-President of the **Associació de Veïns de la Barceloneta** (Barceloneta Neighbourhood Association)

Turisme de Barcelona was chosen as a stakeholder for an interview because it has been instrumental in promoting the city's tourism for more than twenty-five years. It represents both the public and private sectors and is financed by funds from both sectors. Moreover, Barcelona

Turisme was co-founded by the city council and has had a close relationship with it since its foundation (Ajuntament de Barcelona & Barcelona Activa, 2014a). This makes an interview with them all the more interesting, as an interview with the city council was not possible.

The stakeholder bodies the Gremi d'Hotels de Barcelona and APATUR were selected for interviews because, unlike the city council and Barcelona Turisme, they represent exclusively the private tourism sector. Furthermore, they influence the tourism in Barcelona, as they act as representatives for a large part of the city's tourist accommodations and hotels (4.2.2).

Furthermore, an interview with the FAVB was organised. It is not only the umbrella organisation of the city's neighbourhood associations but also cooperates with the ABDT and the city council. For example, it has a leading role in the City and Tourism Council and tries to influence the city's tourism development (see 4.2.1; Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.c). Furthermore, the FAVB representative who was interviewed is also a member of the ABDT which allowed the insights from an ABDT member to be collected anyway. However, the FAVB representative also stated that he does not share all the views of the ABDT (see Appendix D, e.).

In addition to the FAVB, a specific neighbourhood association was also interviewed. This association was the Associació de Veïns de la Barceloneta (Barceloneta Neighbourhood Association). There were two main reasons for interviewing this association. Firstly, it represents the residents of a neighbourhood that was strongly affected by tourism and its negative impacts (see 3.6). Secondly, in the pre-interview conversations with the representative of the Associació de Veïns de la Barceloneta, Manel Martínez, it became clear that this association takes a less strong stance against tourism than other associations, such as the ABDT.

The objective of the selection of the interviewees was to obtain diverse perspectives on the city's tourism and the phenomenon of overtourism and to identify several possible measures against it. Therefore, stakeholders from different areas of the tourism sector with different interests were interviewed.

5.4 Conducting the interviews

Before the interviews could be conducted, the selected stakeholders had to be contacted. The contact details were obtained in two ways. They were acquired on the one hand online on the official websites of the stakeholders, and on the other hand with the assistance of contacts of the author of the thesis. Once the contact information had been collected, various stakeholders and their representatives were contacted either by email or telephone. In the exchange with stakeholder representatives, dates were set for online or face-to-face interviews. It is important

to note that the latter were conducted in compliance with hygiene regulations regarding COVID-19 in the stakeholders' offices.

In preparing the interviews, the interviewer adhered to Adams' guidelines. According to him, interviews should be "unbiased, [be] systematic and thorough and offer no personal views". He or she should also be "well informed on the purpose of the research interview" and familiar the interview guide. Also, the interviewer should have good communication skills. Therefore, before conducting interviews, one should practice how to ask questions (voice tone and pitch, stress on particular words or phrases), how to listen effectively and how to prevent the interviewee from deviating too much from the questions and the topic (2015, pp. 492-506).

Before conducting the semi-structured interviews, an interview guide was prepared. An English and Spanish version of it was elaborated (see Appendix B & C). The interview guide was developed according to Corbetta's suggestions. He states that one should start by giving the interviewee information about the research so that he or she understands the topic (2003). For this reason, an introductory text was prepared in the interview guides used for this thesis (see Appendix B & C, a.). Furthermore, both interview guides contained lists that were compiled based on the theoretical part of the thesis. The lists include measures taken in general against overtourism in different destinations (see 2.5) and examples of measures taken or planned in Barcelona before the COVID-19 pandemic (see 4.4; Appendix B & C, b.). This overview should help the interviewees to situate themselves in the topic and guide the interview. The lists and the entire guides had already been made available to the interviewees before the interview so that they could prepare.

Furthermore, Adams argues that one should not discuss too many topics and questions during the interview, as one only has a limited time for the interviews (2015). Therefore, only four main questions were elaborated for the interview guide (see Appendix B & C, c.)⁴:

- I. Which measures against overtourism from the pre-pandemic period in Barcelona should be continued?
- II. How could these be improved?
- III. Which measures should not be continued?
- IV. Which new measures should be introduced after the pandemic?

According to Corbetta, it is necessary not only to ask the main questions but also to ask explorative questions (probing). Using these, the interviewer can obtain additional information

⁴ A more detailed version of the questions can be found in the interview guides.

(2003). Therefore, the interviewees were asked to explain their answers, and additional questions were asked depending on the situation.

Furthermore, other stimuli can encourage the interviewee to address a topic or question more closely, such as the “repetition of a question”, “repetition of the answer or a synthesis of the last answers”, “expression of interest”, the “request for further information” and breaks (Corbetta, 2003, pp. 367-398). Some of that was also used in the interviews to encourage the interviewees to express their opinions in more detail.

The interviews were conducted based on the theoretical principles just outlined. The interview guide served as an orientation for the interviews from which, however, the interviewer or the interviewees sometimes deviated. Follow-up questions were often asked, and the interviewees were generally asked to explain their statements. Additional questions were also asked during interviews to clarify general or language misunderstandings. The interviewer tried to ensure that no misunderstandings arose since he was not a native speaker of English and Spanish. Concerning this, Adams also states that one should be careful when planning and conducting interviews in a non-native language (2015).

Although an interview duration of 30 minutes was planned, the average duration was about 60 minutes. One reason for this may be that the interviewees explained their opinions and proposed measures very comprehensively. After the interviews, the interviewer briefly summarised the interviewees’ statements to ensure that there were no misunderstandings.

6 Discussion

In the following section, the results of the interviews are presented and discussed. Based on this, it will be suggested which measures against overtourism discussed in the interviews could be implemented in Barcelona, which not, or in a modified form. However, it was not possible to present the entire contents of the interviews. Therefore, the interview summaries and recordings can be found in Appendix D.

6.1 PEUAT

The PEUAT was discussed in all interviews. Based on the study conducted for the European Parliament (Peeters, et al., 2018), it can be classified as a measure designed to *Stop certain developments; prevent uncontrollable development* (see 2.5.2, measure 7). The main objective of this measure has been to contain the growth of tourist accommodations and promote housing for the local population. In relation to this, the interviewees from APATUR stated that an objective of the PEUAT was also “to address the lack of housing” (see Appendix D, b.).

Most interviewees generally consider this measure to be positive. For example, Martínez qualified it as a “good tool” and Mariné as a “first step in the right direction”. Bada even called it a “useful tool” (see Appendix D). At the same time, however, most of them also agreed that the measure was not effective in combating overtourism.

The main reason they gave for this was that it did not address overcrowding or encourage the distribution of tourists in Barcelona and just reduced the number of overnight accommodations in the very touristic areas of the city, before the COVID-19 pandemic. One reason for this was, that tourists staying in other parts of the city, could still visit and reach the centre with its main tourist attractions due to a good public transport network. Another reason, mentioned by Casals, was the large number of day visitors, about 8.5 million in 2019, who were mainly responsible for overcrowding the city’s tourist hotspots. During the interview, Casals did not provide any sources. However, a market report by Cuadrada and Guardiola, estimates the same number of day visitors to Barcelona in 2019 (2020).

Apart from that, Martínez stated that the plan should have been more careful to ensure that there is a clear separation between the tourist and residential accommodations in the city because the daily routines and living requirements are very different for tourists and residents, which can cause problems. He also stated that the inspections of tourist accommodations should be improved. For example, it is necessary to carry out inspections not only during the day but also at night to detect violations of the PEUAT or other tourism regulations. In general,

he believes that regulations should be inspected more closely, and violations punished more severely to combat the problems mentioned.

Only Bada did not criticise the measure. She even suggested that similar plans and regulations could be introduced for other tourist businesses (restaurants and shops) (see Appendix D, c.). A similar measure has already been implemented in Copenhagen. There, the opening of restaurants was regulated (see 2.6). However, she believes that it would be difficult to introduce such a measure. Furthermore, the fact that there was strong opposition to the PEUAT suggests that there would likely be opposition to similar measures for other tourism sectors.

The interviews revealed that the current form of the PEUAT is not sufficient to combat overtourism, as it does not address the problem of overcrowding. According to studies, it is the problem that the citizens of Barcelona have perceived most strongly in relation to overtourism (see 4.3). Most interviewees indicated that the PEUAT does not prevent tourists and day visitors from continuing to overcrowd the highly touristic parts of the city. However, it also emerged from the interviews, especially with Martínez, that an expanded or modified PEUAT could be useful to act against other problems of overtourism. If it were changed to ensure that the number of tourist accommodations in residential areas was reduced, it could be prevented that the different daily routines of tourists and residents overlap, and conflicts arise. This could potentially counteract other perceived problems of the citizens, such as *Uncivil tourist behaviour*, *Loss of the neighbourhood's sense of life* and *noise* (see 4.3). However, it is questionable whether it would be possible to implement even stricter guidelines in the plan, as the current plan had already faced great resistance. Apart from this, the PEUAT is currently being modified to ensure that it is not further rejected by the High Court of Justice of Catalonia (see 4.4).

6.2 Tourist distribution

All interviewees agreed that the distribution of tourists is a necessary measure against overcrowding. As shown in 4.3, this effect of overtourism was perceived particularly negatively by Barcelona's residents. Additionally, the attempt to distribute tourists was the second most common in the study discussed in paragraph 2.5.2. Apart from that, it is surprising that all stakeholders interviewed agreed on the measure. However, they had different ideas on how to implement it.

Some of the interviewees, and especially Bada, argued that tourists should be distributed throughout the city by increasing the marketing of the parts of the city that are less visited by tourists and by creating new tourism products (events such as concerts, festivals, etc.) for

them. She added, that to implement this, the city had developed a new strategic plan⁵ in which measures were defined that would contribute to the distribution of tourists in the city (see Appendix D, c.).

Research after the interview revealed that the plan is, among other things, about diversifying the city's tourism offer. For example, an annual *International District Project* should be introduced to promote and highlight certain districts of the city and local projects. Also, the concentration of tourists in the city centre is to be counteracted by improving and diversifying the public transport (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020). It was noticeable that Bada in particular spoke out in favour of promoting other parts of the city to distribute tourists. This could be explained by the fact that she represents Barcelona Turisme, which is a consortium mainly responsible for the promotion of Barcelona as a tourist destination (see 3.2 & 4.2.2).

However, for the other interviewees, it was not enough to promote other parts of the city for tourism distribution. Martínez explained that to do this, it was necessary to ensure that tourist accommodations were in the less touristic parts of the city (see Appendix D, a.). Furthermore, Casals mentioned that the city should not only invest in short-term tourism products, such as events but also long-term tourism infrastructure, such as museums and other attractions. Unlike, for example, one-time or annual events, these would attract visitors over a longer period. Moreover, he added that it is necessary to provide sufficient transport infrastructure so that tourists can reach less touristic parts of the city (see Appendix D, d.).

However, the idea of building new tourism infrastructures such as hotels or museums in less touristic parts of Barcelona would probably be more expensive than promotional campaigns for specific parts of the city. For example, in the strategic plan proposed by Bada, it is assumed that a budget of around four million euros is needed to carry out measures to promote other parts of the city (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020). The construction of a new tourist attraction (e.g., a museum), as proposed by Casals, could be much more expensive. A new museum project planned in Barcelona, for example, is expected to cost around 150 million euros (Subirana, 2020). Of course, not all construction projects will be that expensive, but it can be assumed that if various new tourist attractions were built as proposed by Casals, high costs could be incurred by the city.

Mariné stood out from the other interviewees by suggesting to promote not necessarily other parts of Barcelona, but that tourists should be encouraged to visit other places in Catalonia, such as Girona or Lleida. According to him, these already have tourist attractions and

⁵ The plan is entitled *Creation of new awareness measures and content to improve mobility and tourist sustainability*.

infrastructure, unlike some parts of the city, and therefore could be more attractive to tourists and easier to market. This approach could, though, lead to a general tourism degrowth in Barcelona, as tourists should rather be encouraged to visit other destinations. However, the measure of tourism degrowth was rejected by the majority of the interviewees. His attitude towards this could be explained by the fact that he is in favour of tourism degrowth (see 6.7) and thus wants tourists to visit the city less in general. He also criticised promoting other city parts through events because, according to statistics, visitors only stay in the places where they take place for a short time (see Appendix D, e.). However, he provided no source for the mentioned statistics during the interview. According to another study, events can even increase the stay of tourists (Panfiluk, 2015).

The interviews have shown that the measure to distribute tourists could be implemented in Barcelona, as all interviewees were unanimously in favour of it. Furthermore, as already mentioned in the paragraphs 2.5.2 and 2.6, this has been undertaken in some destinations to combat overtourism. However, it has not become clear how the measure of distributing tourists should be implemented. The ideas of promoting other districts, creating new infrastructure there, or promoting other places in Catalonia all have advantages and disadvantages. No implementation approach has shown itself to be significantly better than the others. Therefore, it might be advisable not only to use one approach but to combine them.

6.3 City and Tourism Council

Three out of five interviewees discussed the City and Tourism Council, which has been in existence for about five years (see 4.2.2). The creation of this council, based on the study in 2.5.2, can be seen as a measure to *improve stakeholder involvement* (Measure 8), as it was established as a forum for exchange between stakeholders in the tourism sector and advising the local government (see 4.2.2).

Martínez, however, was critical of the council in two respects. Firstly, he said that it lacks representatives from the local population, such as neighbourhood associations. His own neighbourhood association is not represented there. It is possible that he criticised that mainly for this reason. Secondly, he criticised it for having no real influence on the city's tourism development (see Appendix D, a.).

Regarding the latter point of criticism, it can be argued that the City and Tourism Council was only founded shortly before the pandemic. It is therefore difficult to analyse and evaluate its impact on the city's tourism development, according to the representatives of APATUR (see Appendix D, b.). Bada disagreed with the first point of criticism. She said that there are about as many representatives from the tourism sector as from the local community in the council (see Appendix D, c.). However, an online search revealed that these are mainly political

associations. Neighbourhood associations are relatively less represented (Ajuntament de Barcelona, n.d.c).

Based on the interviews, it can be concluded that it remains to be seen whether the council's establishment is a useful measure against overtourism. Possibly the council could be improved by giving it a more active role in tourism planning rather than just an advisory role. Also, more local stakeholders, such as neighbourhood associations, could be involved in identifying and addressing the perceived problems of tourism. As mentioned in 2.2 and 4.1, overtourism can be caused by local people's negative perceptions of tourism impacts. From this point of view, it would make sense to involve the local population more in tourism planning to discuss perceived problems. Thus, the council should be maintained as a measure against overtourism but perhaps it should be expanded to include more local representatives and given more influence.

6.4 Observatory of Tourism in Barcelona

Based on the Strategic Tourism Plan for 2020 (see 3.7, 4.4), the Observatory of Tourism in Barcelona was launched in 2017 to collect and analyse data on the city's tourism. Some of the interviewees commented on this measure, which, based on the study in 2.5.2, can be classified as the measures *Improved monitoring* or *Conduct research*. According to the study, these measures were rarely implemented in other destinations.

In general, the interviewees saw the creation of the observatory as a useful tool against overtourism. However, there were also suggestions for improvement. For example, Martínez said that while data should be collected, the purpose for which it is collected should also be planned (see Appendix D, a.). Bada explained that it is possible to obtain data and analyse the tourism development of the past. However, the data collected is not yet suitable for making future forecasts. She also said that in addition to numerical data, it would be necessary to collect more data on tourists' and residents' perceptions of tourism in the city, as many problems of tourism cannot be directly measured numerically (see Appendix D, c.).

In summary, it is preferable to maintain the observatory, as most interviewees considered it a good measure in relation to overtourism in Barcelona. At the same time, it could be optimised by better planning what to collect the data for. Furthermore, more data should be collected on perceptions of tourism, because as already mentioned at the end of paragraph 6.3, people's perceptions can cause overtourism. Thus, a more detailed analysis of the perceptions of Barcelona's tourism could be used to counteract that.

6.5 New technologies

Most of the interviewees commented on new technologies that could be used to combat overtourism. They discussed various applications of technologies and different measures based on the study in 2.5.2⁶. The majority agreed that online reservation systems could be used to control and restrict the flow of visitors to tourist attractions such as *Park Güell* (*Caps on access*, measure 12). These are better than the introduction of prices or their increase, according to APATUR's representatives because that would exclude people, who could not afford entrance fees (see Appendix D, b.). Another reason was that the current system, which allows Barcelona's residents to visit the park for free, is inconvenient (either a registration or library card must be acquired beforehand). Therefore, online applications could facilitate this.

Martínez and Mariné advocated technology use and especially applications to inform and warn tourists about overcrowded tourist sites and attractions (*Information for tourists*, measure 9) (see Appendix D, a. & e.). At the same time, these apps should promote other, less-visited parts of the city and encourage tourists to visit them (*Distributing tourists*, measure 2). Also, Piera, Díez and Bada in particular said that the marketing of these districts should be supported with new technologies (such as apps and social media) (see Appendix D, b. & c.).

Bada also mentioned that Barcelona Turisme is working increasingly with new technologies. For example, it has developed an application called *Check Barcelona* that informs tourists in real-time about places of interest in Barcelona (see Appendix D, c.). It already implements some of what Martínez and Mariné suggested. However, it is still in its initial stages, and it is difficult to encounter it online. It is only possible to find the website and further information about the app by doing a specific search. Currently, it is also not possible to download it (Barcelona Turisme, n.d.).

Apart from that, the representatives of APATUR spoke about a new technology to reduce the noise in tourist accommodations (see Appendix D, b.). They are working together with the company *Roommonitor*⁷, which uses sound detectors to inform the owners of tourist accommodations via text messages or phone calls if a certain noise level is reached. That could be used to combat inappropriate tourist behaviour (e.g., too many people or animals in tourist accommodations, house parties, etc.).

From the interviews, it can be concluded that it would be useful to restrict access to tourist attractions through online reservation systems, as they are fair and convenient. Furthermore,

⁶ For this reason, the measures implied by the individual applications of new technologies are indicated in brackets.

⁷ Further information about the company can be found on their website (<https://roommonitor.com/es/>).

two technology approaches stood out in the interviews. One was the newly introduced *Check Barcelona* app. However, the application still requires further development, as it is not yet available for download. Also, there is no real-time information about the number of visitors to tourist attractions on the website, which is supposed to function similarly to the app. It may also be necessary to promote the app to increase its online presence. If all of this is completed, the app could be a useful tool to inform tourists and avoid overcrowding, like the tourism app in Vilnius described in 2.6. Apart from that, the company Roommonitor mentioned by APATUR stood out in the interviews, because it offers new devices to tackle inappropriate tourist behaviour and noise pollution. Already in 2017, their devices were installed in around 1000 accommodations in Barcelona (Galtés, 2017). The company also has customers in over 20 countries and 90 cities. At the end of 2020, Airbnb announced that it would partner with the company in Barcelona to install some of its devices in its accommodations. This trial by Airbnb could be used to study the effectiveness of Roommonitor's devices (Airbnb, 2020). If they prove to be effective, they could be introduced as a general measure for overtourism in Barcelona and installed in other tourist accommodations.

6.6 Promotion and image of Barcelona

Except for the interview with Mariné, all interviewees commented on the promotion and image of Barcelona. That may be because he does not place much emphasis on marketing the city, but rather aims for tourism degrowth (see Appendix D, e.).

Although Martínez represents a neighbourhood association of a city district, heavily affected by tourism and its negative consequences, he is not in favour of tourism degrowth. Instead, he calls for a change of the tourism model. For this, Barcelona as a city should carry out an analysis of how to market itself and which tourists to attract. For example, the city could specialise in tourists with a high purchasing power. If these were successfully attracted, the city could possibly generate higher tourism revenues. He also said that Barcelona should change its image and present itself more as a city of research, trade fairs, and culture. As soon as the city council knows what kind of tourists it wants to attract and how to market the city, it must communicate this clearly to the tourists and inform them to prevent them from having false expectations and possibly behaving differently in the city than desired (see Appendix D, a.).

Casals suggested a similar approach in the interview. In his opinion, the city should design a general new tourism strategy to improve the tourism management of the city (see 6.8). The strategy should also determine what kind of tourists to attract. Casals would prefer the city to attract tourists who bring added value to Barcelona (economically, culturally, etc.). He also proposed that an information campaign should inform the population about the different types

of residents. Since Barcelonans often confuse residents of their city with tourists, which can lead to tension and frustration, according to him (see Appendix D, d.).

Bada, on the other hand, wants the city not to focus on a certain type of tourist, but to have a broad offer for everyone. The only point she thinks is important in this context is that Barcelona should attract people with similar values to the city (cosmopolitan, LGBTQ-friendly, etc.) (see Appendix D, c.).

The representatives of APATUR said that the city was already in the process of creating a new image through a marketing strategy developed before the COVID-19 pandemic. They also stated that the company *Advanced Leisure Services* was involved in that (see Appendix D, b.). It emerged from an online search that this company and other stakeholders of the tourism sector in Barcelona wanted to develop a new marketing strategy in 2018. The strategy should determine how the city's tourism will develop over the next few years (La Vanguardia, 2018; 2019). Although there is information about the announcement of the development of this new strategy, it was not possible to determine whether it has actually been implemented as no version of the plan or information on its implementation could be found online.

In the interviews, there was disagreement about whether Barcelona should change its image and whether it should focus more on attracting only certain types of tourists. However, it might make sense to try to change the city's image to attract certain tourist profiles that bring added value to Barcelona. After all, many residents complained about the low-cost and quality tourism in the city (see 4.3). Thus, it might be useful to promote high-cost and quality tourism (see 2.5.2, measure 10). Furthermore, tourist types with higher purchasing power could help the city and local businesses to benefit economically more from tourism. Besides, it remains to be seen whether the new marketing strategy mentioned by APATUR will be implemented. It may result in the city trying to create a new image and attract other specific tourist profiles, as suggested by some interviewees.

6.7 Tourism degrowth

Mariné was the only one of all those interviewed who spoke in favour of measures for tourism degrowth. This may be because he is also a member of the ADBT, which promotes tourism degrowth and even has this in its name (see 4.2.1). He said it was important that although tourism had declined sharply during the pandemic, it should not return too quickly and strongly after the crisis, otherwise the city could become overwhelmed. To limit or reduce tourism growth, he advocated the following measures. He argued that the airport growth (for tourism purposes) and the number of visitors to the city should be normatively limited (see Appendix D, e.). But Casals finds it difficult to imagine the latter, as it would be difficult to regulate the influx of day visitors by law (see Appendix D, d.).

Apart from that, the APATUR representatives were rather in favour of tourism growth at present, as the sector is in a crisis due to the pandemic and urgently needs revenue for businesses and jobs to survive (see Appendix D, b.).

In summary, the interviews revealed that most stakeholders are against tourism degrowth because it is difficult to implement and because they would prefer tourism to recover from the economic crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, no great focus should be placed on measures for tourism degrowth at the moment. However, as soon as the sector recovers, other stakeholders may consider degrowth measures. For example, the representatives of APATUR stated that if Barcelona's local economy were diversified in the future, tourism degrowth could be considered, but that the city is currently too dependent on tourism revenues.

6.8 Tourism Management

Most interviewees agreed that before the pandemic, Barcelona's tourism was promoted too extensively and managed inadequately. This is surprising because, as shown in 3.5, the city has tried to focus more on tourism management in recent years. Even Bada, who works for a consortium which is mainly responsible for the promotion of the city (see 3.2, 4.2.2), agreed with the majority. She also said that it was no longer necessary to market the city in general, as not only tourism companies and organisations market the city, but also individuals on the internet, for example, on social media channels. Therefore, in her opinion, it is only necessary to promote certain aspects of the city (see Appendix D, c.).

Mariné added that Barcelona's tourism management has been taken over too much by the private sector in recent years and that the public sector should be more active. He also criticised that many measures that were developed in the Strategic Tourism Plan for 2020 (see 3.7) have not been implemented (see Appendix D, e.).

Furthermore, as mentioned in 6.6, Casals would suggest that the city develops a new strategy for its tourism. Based on this, it should be managed and promoted. The reason why a new strategy should be developed, according to Casals, is that the tourism in Barcelona has not been well managed by the public sector but has focused too much on its promotion (see Appendix D, d.).

Although, as described in 3.5, there had been initial efforts by the public sector to focus more on the management of the city's tourism and less on its promotion, the interviewees agreed that it is still promoted too much and managed insufficiently. Even the representative of Barcelona Turisme, which is responsible for the promotion of the city, agreed. This could be

because it has tried to become more integrated into the city's tourism management, as proposed in the Strategic Tourism Plan for 2020 (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017a).

Based on the results of the interviews, it would make sense for Barcelona to focus more on its tourism management, especially for the public sector, for example, the city council and Barcelona Turisme. It could also be a measure to advertise the city less in general (see 2.5.2, measure 13) because according to Bada, it is already advertised indirectly by individuals and companies. In this way, the resources no longer used for promoting the city could be used for its tourism management.

6.9 Other measures

In addition to the topics and measures discussed above, the interviewees also commented on the following measures. The representatives of APATUR spoke in favour of an extension of the parking systems to combat the congestion of the city. According to the study in 2.5.2, this can be classified as the measure *Increasing capacities*. They stated that there were already plans to expand the parking facilities outside the city centre (see Appendix D, b.). According to an article for the Barcelona City Council, almost 10,000 new parking spaces were created in a project last year (Bella, 2021). The city is currently planning to establish new parking facilities in the *Horta-Guinardó* district. However, these parking extensions are not parking services for tourists or day visitors. If they are used by non-residents, penalties may be imposed (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2021). Since these projects are primarily intended for residents of peripheral areas of the city, it is questionable whether they will prevent congestions in the city centre.

The representatives of APATUR proposed another measure, which refers to the problem of *Uncivil behaviour from tourists* in Table 3 (see 4.3). They suggested that tourist accommodations designed for large groups should be divided. For example, accommodations designed for eight people should be split up into two, to prevent inappropriate tourist behaviour such as illegal house parties. However, it remained unclear how exactly this measure should be implemented and how useful it would be. Therefore, before proposing this measure, it should first be investigated how it could be implemented, for example, through legislation, and tested to see if it decreases inappropriate tourist behaviour.

About tourism degrowth in the city, Mariné added that to implement this measure, short-haul flights within Spain could be banned. This would also be good for the environment, he said. Although he did not comment much about marketing Barcelona as a destination, he argued that the city should target neighbouring countries in particular when promoting itself, to reduce the number of long-haul flights by tourists, which would be more environmentally friendly. Apart from that, he said that hotels that are no longer needed after the pandemic could be

converted into housing or working spaces for the residents of Barcelona (see Appendix D, e.). That could be done to improve their quality of life (see 2.5.2, measure 11). However, it is questionable whether this can be implemented by the city, as hotels are private property.

In summary, the additional ideas mentioned by APATUR seem less helpful in the fight against overtourism. It is still unclear whether splitting tourist accommodation serves to prevent inappropriate behaviour by tourists, especially when the flats are next to each other, and how this is to be implemented. The representatives of APATUR also said that the city is planning new parking systems. After an online search, however, it became clear that the city mainly wants to create new parking spaces for residents and less for tourism purposes. To combat overtourism more effectively, it could be considered to expand the parking systems for tourists. The plan mentioned by Bada in 6.2, however, indicates that the city does not want to expand the parking systems for tourists, but to increasingly promote already existing ones (Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2020). Mariné's additional proposals seem to be difficult to implement, because, for example, a short-haul flight ban would probably have to be implemented by the Spanish government, so the measure would have to be taken within the whole of Spain and not just the city. It also remains questionable whether the local government would be able to convert unused private hotels into living or working spaces.

6.10 Proposed measures

Based on what has been discussed in this chapter, possible measures against overtourism post-COVID-19 pandemic are proposed below.

Overcrowding has been perceived as a problem of overtourism in many destinations (see 2.4.1). In Barcelona, studies show that it is perceived as the main problem of overtourism by the population (see 4.3). To address this, the measure based on 2.5.2, *Distributing tourists*, could be implemented. The main argument for that is that all interviewed stakeholders saw it as a useful tool to encourage tourists to leave the very touristic parts of the city and visit other places. The fact that all interviewed stakeholders with different interests could agree on this measure may be an indication that it could also be accepted by other stakeholders of the city. Furthermore, it is a measure that has already been implemented in other destinations. However, it has not become clear how exactly it should be achieved, because none of the different suggested implementation approaches was completely convincing (see 6.2). For example, it was criticised that only the promotion of districts less visited by tourists was not enough. Therefore, a mixture of different implementation approaches may be appropriate to satisfy as many stakeholders as possible on the one hand and to achieve as much success with the measure as possible on the other. In addition, it should be monitored which implementation approach (e.g., promotion of other parts of the city, creation of new attractions

there, or promotion of other parts of Catalonia) will produce the best results. Also, it should be observed how the strategic plan mentioned by Bada in 6.2 is executed and how efficient it is in implementing the measure.

Apart from that, the *Check Barcelona* app, mentioned by Bada (see 6.5), could be used as a tool in the fight against overtourism. The reasons for this are that, firstly, most of the interviewees thought that new technologies could be helpful to fight overtourism and especially overcrowding. Secondly, similar applications were also used in other destinations to implement measure 9 (see 2.5.2 & 2.6). However, the app is still in its early stages and needs to be further developed. For example, the application is not yet available for download.

Roommonitor's devices for measuring noise levels in tourist accommodations could be a useful tool to address the second most perceived problem of overtourism in Barcelona *Uncivil behaviour from tourists* and noise pollution (see 4.3). The company has been growing since its foundation. Furthermore, its devices are already used in many accommodations in Barcelona. Airbnb also partnered with Roomonitor at the end of 2020. Depending on the success of this partnership, and if the devices prove to be effective in combating inappropriate tourist behaviour and noise, they could be used more extensively in other accommodations in the city.

To combat overcrowding in tourist attractions and sites in Barcelona, the *Caps on access* measure (see 2.5.2) could be implemented where it is not yet in place. This should be undertaken as many the interviewees have spoken in favour of it and as it would probably be feasible to implement it using *online reservation systems* to restrict access to certain places. The use of these systems would also have two advantages. Firstly, there would be no need to implement other measures to prevent overcrowding in attractions, such as raising admission prices (see 2.5.2, measure 4), which might exclude people with limited financial resources. Secondly, this could replace current inconvenient procedures (acquiring a registration card) that allow residents to get into attractions, such as Park Güell, for free and register online instead.

As mentioned above one advantage of online reservation systems is that they do not exclude people with less financial means. However, it could be considered for the city, in general, to implement the measure of *Promoting high-quality tourism* to attract high spending tourists (see 2.5.2). One reason for this would be that it could potentially generate higher tourism revenues. The other reason is that, as seen in 4.3, many residents feel that low-quality tourism is a problem, so it might benefit the city to focus on the opposite form. The already existing MICE tourism infrastructure could also be helpful in implementing the measure once contact

restrictions are lifted after the pandemic. After all, before the pandemic, MICE tourism attracted visitors who, on average, spent significantly more than other tourists (see 3.3).

However, the city should generally be promoted less, which is why measure 13 (*Less/No promotion*) could also be implemented in Barcelona. One reason for this was that the city has been promoted too much in recent years, which almost all the interviewees stated. Another reason for the city to promote itself less is that the resources saved, which are not used for its promotion, could rather be used for its tourism management, which has been inadequate in recent years, according to most interviewees. Moreover, in today's world it is not necessary to promote the city as intensively as in the past, as new technologies allow individuals to do so, according to Bada. Only *high-quality tourism* should be promoted and encouraged, for the reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph.

In addition, the *City and Tourism Council* and the *Observatory of Tourism in Barcelona* could both be maintained, as most respondents see the introduction of them as generally positive. Moreover, both have only been in existence for a few years. Therefore, a final assessment of the two cannot yet be made and it must be examined in the future how effective these measures are against overtourism. The council provides a platform for the exchange of ideas between Barcelona's tourism stakeholders (Measure 8). However, consideration should be given to expanding this platform to give a voice to more representatives of the local population. The observatory offers the possibility to collect data on the city's tourism development (Measures 14 and 15). However, it should also be noted that it could be improved, for example by collecting more data on perceptions of tourism. After all, many negative aspects of overtourism are perceived problems. Therefore, an intensive analysis of these could be helpful.

Finally, some measure should not be implemented right now. Firstly, the city should not develop a *new tourism strategy*, as proposed by Casals, as the city and private companies are presumably in the process of developing and implementing a new one (see 6.6). This and its impacts on overtourism in Barcelona should first be evaluated. Then it could be decided whether another new strategy is necessary. Furthermore, it appeared that most stakeholders were against *tourism degrowth*, which is why it is inadvisable to implement measures for it at the present time. However, it might be useful to revisit this issue once the tourism sector and many companies have recovered economically from the pandemic. Furthermore, the current version of the *PEUAT* is not an effective tool against overtourism because it has not reduced overcrowding in the highly touristic areas of the city. It could be changed or extended to separate tourist accommodations and residential spaces more strongly, so that tensions between tourists and residents could be reduced. However, it is unlikely that the *PEUAT* regulations will be increased, as there is already a lot of resistance to the current version.

7 Conclusion

This thesis aimed to identify possible measures against overtourism in Barcelona. These should be identified through semi-structured interviews with stakeholders of the tourism sector in Barcelona. The results from these should then be utilised to propose measures that could be implemented after the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the preparatory work for the interviews, it becomes clear in the theoretical part of the thesis that the word overtourism has only been used increasingly in the media and science in recent years, but that problems in relation to tourism had already existed before that. Possible main reasons for the emergence of the term are, on the one hand, the strong general growth of tourism and, on the other hand, that its consequences are increasingly perceived negatively, especially by residents of tourist destinations. Also, the phenomenon of overtourism in Barcelona has occurred for similar reasons. These were strong tourism growth in a relatively short period of time, greater awareness, and rejection of the negative impacts of tourism by the local population, and increased media coverage of the issue. Moreover, many of the negative effects of overtourism that have occurred in various destinations, especially overcrowding and the increase in prices and loss of local identity, have been observed by the residents of Barcelona. However, unlike other destinations, they also strongly perceived the inappropriate behaviour of tourists.

Apart from this, the first part of the thesis also shows that there has been strong tourism growth in Barcelona, especially since the Olympic Games in 1992. As a result, the city's inhabitants have increasingly criticised this strong growth and several protests have taken place. The tourism development of Barcelona became one of the most important issues for the local population, who increasingly organised themselves to protest the negative developments that they perceived. That contributed to tourism being the main issue in the 2015 mayoral elections and it was also a reason why the ABDT (at the time ABTS), a local organisation highly critical of tourism, was founded in the same year. However, it also becomes clear that the city, especially the city council, tried to respond to the criticism and protests by trying to create sustainable tourism through plans and new strategies and by putting more focus on tourism management.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many aspects of overtourism in Barcelona disappeared temporarily in 2020, but it is likely that these will return after the pandemic. To prevent or minimise the problems caused by overtourism in the future, the following measures are proposed, based on the discussion of the interviews with tourism stakeholders in Barcelona (see 6) and the theoretical part of the thesis (see 2 to 4).

The first one is to distribute tourists through a mix of the promotion of less touristic areas, the creation of new tourist attractions in these areas, and the promotion of other tourist locations in Catalonia. Apart from that, the recently launched Check Barcelona app can also help to inform tourists and prevent overcrowding. However, the app needs to be further developed and made available for download. Another technical measure could be Roomonitor's noise level devices to prevent inappropriate behaviour by tourists. However, the effectiveness of the devices in implementing this should be studied before they are installed on a large scale in other accommodations.

Furthermore, the City and Tourism Council (as a measure to better involve stakeholders) and the Observatory of Tourism in Barcelona (as a measure to monitor and research tourism development) should be maintained. However, they could be improved. For example, the former should involve more local stakeholders and the latter should collect more data on perceptions of tourism in Barcelona. Another measure that can be proposed is to restrict entry to tourist attractions (*Caps on access*) to combat overcrowding in them. It could be implemented through the usage of online reservation systems. Concerning the promotion of tourism in Barcelona, two measures can be proposed. Firstly, it should be reduced in general. Secondly, the city should promote only high-quality tourism to attract high spending tourists and focus more on tourism management.

The measures proposed in this thesis could be used as a stimulus for local stakeholders who influence on the city's tourism development, for example, the city council. Possibly, these measures could also provide an input for other destinations. If the measures are implemented in Barcelona, it will be necessary to monitor and evaluate them in the future. A particular focus should be placed on whether these measures will combat the negative impacts of overtourism or, despite the current assessment in this thesis, prove to be inadequate. The measures proposed in this thesis only offer a selection of possible actions that can be taken against overtourism. Therefore, further research is needed on measures that have not been addressed in this thesis. For example, proposed measures from other stakeholders that were not interviewed could be discussed. In addition, certain spontaneous political, economic, etc. developments might cause the necessity to reevaluate some of the measures proposed or to implement others that have not been proposed.

8 Reflections

Within the framework of this thesis, an overview of the topics of overtourism in general and in Barcelona as well as the tourism development of the city could be given. Different sources were used for the elaboration of this. For example, sources from the Barcelona City Council were often consulted to describe the development of the city's tourism. These were used because they contained a lot of comprehensive information and data on the topic. However, it could be criticised that they may present this development in a one-sided way. Therefore, it could have been better to include further additional sources in the research.

Apart from that, despite the abundance of possible measures against overtourism in different destinations, it was possible to compile an overview of categories of measures (see 2.5.2). For this purpose, the study by Peeters et al. was mainly used. In general, this source was consulted extensively in the thesis. Possibly, it could also be criticised that too much emphasis was put on this source. However, it contains a wide range of information on overtourism and was prepared jointly by many experts on the subject.

The overview of measure categories was adapted for the interviews and supplemented with examples from Barcelona (see Appendix B & C). This served as an orientation for the interviewees, who were very responsive to it. However, it should be noted that although the overview contains specific examples, the measure categories were kept general. This meant that at times the interviewees spoke in general terms about the measures. For example, many interviewees spoke in favour of access restrictions for tourist attractions (*Caps of access*) but did not elaborate directly on how this could be implemented. Therefore, it was necessary to ask follow-up questions (possible due to the semi-structured interview format) and encourage the interviewees to explain the measures in more detail and provide ideas for their implementation. Due to this and the time constraints within the interviews, it might have been better to focus on fewer categories of measures and examples to discuss them in more detail.

Apart from that, the number of interview partners was limited due to the scope of this thesis. However, it was possible to organise various interviews with stakeholders from different areas of the city's tourism sector. The communication with them worked well. Also, the organisation of the interviews was very convenient. Unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct interviews with two important stakeholders (Barcelona City Council and ADBT). However, interviews could be conducted with a representative of Barcelona Turisme, which cooperates with the city council, and with the representative of the FAVB, who is also a member of the ADBT, but does not agree with all of its views.

Despite the limited number of stakeholders and interview duration, this thesis has been able to propose measures that could be used to prevent the recurrence of overtourism after the COVID-19 pandemic. It should be noted, however, that this thesis mainly proposes measures that were already in place in Barcelona or elsewhere before the pandemic. Therefore, the interviewees could have been encouraged to elaborate more on measures that have not yet been taken in other destinations or Barcelona.

However, the interviews also revealed new measures that had not already been identified in the theoretical part. These were the newly introduced Check Barcelona app and the noise level devices from Roommonitor.

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