

**CARAGUATATUBA RESIDENTS' PERCEPTION ABOUT THE IMPACTS OF  
OVERTOURISM IN THE CITY**

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## ABSTRACT

This research examines Caraguatatuba residents' perceptions of the impacts of excessive tourism on the city, a phenomenon known as *overtourism*. The study aims to understand how residents assess the impacts of this activity, considering the economic, social, cultural, environmental, and emotional dimensions. A quantitative, descriptive approach was adopted, employing a survey for data collection. The results reveal recognition of economic benefits, such as job creation and local commerce, and positive cultural impacts, particularly the appreciation of traditions and exchanges between residents and tourists. However, they also identify negative impacts in other dimensions, such as increased crime, overcrowding in public spaces, rising cost of living, and environmental degradation, reflecting a possible transition to the antagonistic phase of the Doxey model. Regarding emotions, positive feelings, such as satisfaction and relaxation, predominate, although feelings of irritation and discomfort are also present. It is concluded that the residents' perception is ambivalent, recognizing the economic benefits of tourism, but warning of the limits of the municipality's support capacity.

Keywords: *Overtourism*; Impacts of tourism; Residents' perception.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

For many countries, tourism is considered one of the most important economic activities. According to Goodwin (2017), we can view tourism as a consumer sector, and as people's living standards rise, they travel more and consume more. However, the disorderly growth of tourist flows in certain destinations has generated a phenomenon known as *overtourism*, which can negatively influence the quality of life of local communities, as well as environmental degradation and overloading of urban infrastructure.

In Caraguatatuba, a survey carried out by the Tourism Department indicates that more than 600 thousand visitors spent the end of the year 2023 in the city, which corresponds to almost six times the number of local residents, reaching almost one million visitors between Christmas 2023 and Carnival 2024 (City Hall of Caraguatatuba, 2024).

Although the term *overtourism* is recent, studies on the topic have existed since the 1970s, when classic tourism authors such as Young (1973), Doxey (1975), and Butler (1980) already warned of the accelerated growth of tourism activity and its potential consequences for destinations. However, studies on *overtourism* in Brazil are still in their infancy, given the significant scarcity of research focused specifically on Brazilian tourist destinations (Marodin; Mecca; Conto, 2024).

This research seeks to contribute to filling this academic gap by understanding how *overtourism* manifests itself in Caraguatatuba through the perceptions of its residents. Thus, the research question is: What is the perception of Caraguatatuba residents regarding the impacts of *overtourism* on the city, considering economic, social, cultural, and environmental aspects?

This study aims to analyze the perceptions of Caraguatatuba residents regarding the impacts of *overtourism* on their city. Its specific objectives are:

1. Understand whether residents perceive tourism as more beneficial, more harmful, or a combination of both.
2. Identify the predominant emotions of residents towards tourism;
3. Understand whether the general perception of the population is positive, negative or ambivalent in relation to tourist activities in the municipality.

The adopted methodology, in which the nature of the research is defined, is applied (HAIR JR, et al., 2014), as for the objectives it is descriptive (MALHOTRA, 2012), as for the approach it is a quantitative research, with a survey procedure, with the collection of data on the researcher's social networks, with a non-probabilistic sampling for convenience (SHAUGHNESSY; ZECHMEISTER; ZECHMEISTER, 2012). In addition to the items intended to identify segmentation, the economic classification criteria developed by the Brazilian Association of Research Companies (ABEP, 2022) are used, in addition to the scales of Economic Impacts (Yoon, Gursoy and Chen, 2001); Social Impacts (Yoon, Gursoy and Chen, 2001); Cultural Impacts (Yoon, Gursoy and Chen, 2001); Environmental Impacts (Yoon, Gursoy and Chen, 2001); Total Impacts (Yoon, Gursoy and Chen, 2001); Variables of the theory of emotion (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974.); Market Segmentation – Demographic (ABEP, 2022)

This work is structured in four parts, namely the introduction, followed by the main theories of the research, followed by the analysis and discussion of the data, in which the results of the research are presented in relation to the respondents and their social classes and the constructs and finally the final considerations, in which the main points addressed, the results obtained and the conclusive reflections of the work are summarized.

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

To carry out this work, research was carry out on the topic under analysis, with authors of information with recognized merits in the same.

### **2.1 *Overtourism***

The term *overtourism* refers to "excessive tourism" or "mass tourism." It is define as the opposite of responsible tourism, characterized by excessive visitor numbers in tourist destinations, resulting in significant negative impacts on the quality of life of local communities and the experience of tourists themselves (Goodwin, 2017).

Despite being a current topic, studies on the subject are still scarce, and existing research lacks in-depth analysis, especially in Brazilian contexts. According to a bibliographical survey conducted by Marodin, Mecca, and Conto (2024), using the search terms "overtourism" and "*overtourism*" in the journals and Annals of ANPTUR

(National Association of Research and Postgraduate Studies in Tourism), reference sources for scientific publications on tourism in Brazil, there is a small amount of scientific literature on overtourism.

The term *overtourism* originated in the early 1990s, when social movements in Europe began warning about the problems arising from mass tourism, such as environmental degradation and the loss of quality of life for local communities (Boissevain, 1996). However, it was not until 2015 that the issue gained greater global visibility, with studies showing that the effects of overtourism are not limited to European destinations but spread across various regions of the world, including Latin America, Asia, and Africa (Milano; Novelli; Cheer, 2020).

Mass tourism has proven to be a problem in several global and national destinations. Internationally, Athens and Venice are examples of cities affected by this practice, with repercussions on housing and infrastructure. According to research conducted by Deutsche Welle, reproduced by Forbes (2023), cities like Athens have eight tourists per inhabitant, and Venice, 21 tourists per inhabitant. These numbers have negatively affected the quality of life of residents and the experience of visitors, generating protests against the high flow of tourists (Goodwin, 2017). Currently, places like Mallorca and the Canary Islands, both in Spain, are also witnessing protests against overtourism (EXAME, 2024).

Venice, where the situation is arguably even more critical, has chosen to implement measures to control the flow of visitors, such as introducing a \$5 daily fee for tours, limiting tour groups to a maximum of 25 people, and banning the use of loudspeakers. Since August 2021, the Italian government has restricted cruise ships from docking in the city center. However, these vessels still anchor nearby and transport passengers in smaller boats to the historic center. Thousands of tourists invade the city for a few hours, consume their resources, and then continue on their way (Jornal Opção, 2024).

In Brazil, high visitor numbers in some cities already highlight the impacts of *overtourism*, especially in destinations such as Fernando de Noronha (PE), Porto de Galinhas (PE), Pipa (RN), and coastal cities in São Paulo. In these locations, the disorderly increase in visitors during the summer holidays has generated problems such as traffic jams, blackouts, pollution, shortages, and rising prices (Jornal da USP, 2023).

In Caraguatatuba, a tourist destination on the North Coast of São Paulo, the pressure from demand is evident. The city has 134,873 inhabitants (IBGE, 2022) and sees its population explode during the high season. Hotel occupancy reaches 100% during holidays and special events, and the expected number of visitors in the 2024/2025 summer season was 1.6 million (Caraguatatuba City Hall, 2024).

## **2.2 Perceived impacts of tourism**

This research uses the study by Yoon, Gursoy, and Chen (2001) as a reference. This study addresses the importance of understanding local residents' perceptions of tourism development, highlighting how economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts influence public support for tourism. The authors propose a theoretical model that integrates these four impact factors, using social exchange theory as a basis. According to this theory, residents tend to support tourism development when they perceive that the benefits outweigh the costs. The study is conducted in the

Norfolk/Virginia Beach/Newport News region of the United States and uses a structural equation modeling approach to analyze the relationships between tourism impacts and resident support.

In the study by Yoon, Gursoy, and Chen (2001), variables and dimensions is define in detail to assess local residents' perceptions of tourism impacts and support for tourism development. The model proposed by the authors includes four main dimensions of tourism impacts: economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts.

The results indicated that residents, contributing to greater support for tourism development, perceive economic and cultural impacts positively. Conversely, social and environmental impacts are view negatively, especially regarding issues such as congestion, pollution, and environmental deterioration (Yoon; Gursoy; Chen, 2001).

### **2.2.1 Total Impacts**

According to Yoon, Gursoy, and Chen (2001), residents' perceptions of the overall impact of tourism can be affect by the local level of tourism development and/or the destination's characteristics. However, this perception is also influence by knowledge of the costs and benefits that tourism generates for the community, including economic, environmental, cultural, and social benefits.

### **2.2.2 Economic Impacts**

Tourism in Brazil is a significant generator of jobs and income for the population. Brazilians, who consider the travel sector the second most important economic activity in the country, are already feeling this effect, according to a survey conducted by the Ministry of Tourism. Technology and Commerce rank first, both scoring 9 on a scale of 0 to 10. Tourism received an average of 8.8, the same level as the industrial and agricultural sectors (Federal Government, 2024). Tourism is part of the tertiary sector of the economy, but is consider a "smokeless industry" because it generates a large number of services, fostering consumption and development (UNWTO, 2001).

Economic impacts are often consider the most significant and tend to be the most noticeable to local residents, as they are directly relate to job creation, increased income, and investment attraction. Thus, economic advantage constitutes one of the main forces driving support for tourism development (Cooper et al., 2001).

### **2.2.3 Social Impacts**

According to the UNWTO (2001), social impact occurs when individuals from different cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds interact. When tourists travel to regions other than their usual residences, they establish relationships that produce social effects in the destinations they visit. However, this impact does not occur in mass tourism, where visitors often show no interest in interacting with the host culture and prefer to maintain contact with people of their own nationality (UNWTO, 2001).

According to the UNWTO (2001), it is possible to measure the level of sociocultural impacts in a destination through the synthesis of phases of the relationship between tourists and hosts, described by Doxey (1975). The phases are delimitate into:

- Euphoria phase: when tourism excites the resident population, generally during the first appearances of tourist activity in the area;

- Apathy Phase: contact between visitors and residents intensifies, and tourism is perceived as a thriving business;
- Irritation phase: tourism reaches a saturation level, and residents demand something in return for accepting tourism activity;
- Antagonism phase: tourism is perceived as the main cause of local problems;
- Final Phase: the tourist activity loses all its attractions throughout the process.

These phases demonstrate how the disorderly growth of tourism can negatively affect the well-being of the local population, compromising the receptiveness and support for tourist activity (Doxey, 1975).

### **2.2.4 Cultural Impacts**

Tourism can positively influence a community's culture by enhancing the local population's artisanal skills or through cultural exchange between two distinct populations. However, these impacts can be negative when local crafts, art, or ceremonies and rituals are commercialized or degraded (Cooper et al., 2001).

From the perspective of the UNWTO (2001), a positive cultural impact is the increased social tolerance of hosts, provided by cultural exchange between residents and tourists. This experience expands understanding and respect for differences by allowing contact with different ways of life.

Commodification is a critique of the effects of tourism on local art and culture. It results in the commercial exploitation of the community's cultural activities. To meet tourist demands, local traditions can be modified and overly commercialized, compromising their authenticity and distorting the original culture (Oliveira, 2005).

### **2.2.5 Environmental Impacts**

Any environment, whether natural or artificial, undergoes changes when subjected to tourism activity (Cooper et al., 2001). These impacts associated with tourism can be positive or negative, and occur directly, indirectly, or induced.

According to the UNWTO (2001), natural attractions alone are not enough to satisfy visitors. For this reason, the construction of hotels, airports, and sports and health infrastructure is common to complement tourism. Such interventions can generate aesthetic and landscape pollution, in addition to causing segregation of the local population, especially in developing countries, where residents often lack the resources to adapt to this new lifestyle.

Among other negative consequences, tourism can cause the uncontrolled growth of waste, water and air pollution, as well as increased noise levels resulting from heavy traffic (Cooper et al., 2001).

## **2.3 PAD Model**

In their work "*An Approach to Environmental Psychology*," Mehrabian and Russell (1974) propose variables known as the PAD Model (*Pleasure, Arousal, Dominance*), used to measure human emotions in relation to environments and factors. The theory understands emotions in three dimensions: Pleasure, Arousal, and Dominance.

- Pleasure: According to the authors, the feeling of pleasure can be understood as a positive affective state, which represents the degree of pleasantness experienced by a person in a given situation. This emotion is generally identified through verbal and behavioral indicators. Pleasure is considered a basic emotional dimension, distinct from other affective reactions.
- Arousal: refers to the level of activation or energy a person feels in a given situation. This response can range from drowsiness and inactivity to intense agitation and alertness (Mehrabian; Russell, 1974).
- Dominance: According to Mehrabian and Russell (1974), dominance is understood as the subjective perception of control or freedom a person feels in a situation. It refers to the degree to which the individual perceives themselves as active agents, with autonomy to act, choose, and influence the environment around them.

## **4. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

This chapter analyzes the data obtained through the application of the questionnaire, with data collection between March 14 and April 25, 2025, through an online form published on social media and in community groups in Caraguatatuba, and with 121 valid questionnaires, with an average age of 34 years and all residents of the city of Caraguatatuba.

### **4.1 Respondent Profile**

The majority of residents interviewed in this study are female. Of the 121 questionnaires collected, 82 were completed by women, representing 67.8% of the sample, and 39 were completed by men, representing 32.2% of the results. According to the ABEP (2022) economic classification criteria, 40.5% of the respondents belong to class C1, 33.1% to class B2, 10.7% to class C2, 9.1% to class B1, 5% to class A, and 1.7% to class DE, as illustrated in Graph 2.

Regarding the perception of income dependence on tourism activities in the city, 76.9% of participants stated that they do not consider their income directly linked to the local tourism sector, while 23.1% of respondents indicated that their sources of income are directly associated with tourism.

Regarding the occupation of survey participants, most respondents reported working as public servants (24.8%), followed by retail workers (21.5%), and self-employed workers (13.2%). Students represent 10.7% of the sample, while 7.4% report not currently working. Retirees and interns each account for 6.6%, with a small percentage (1.7%) working under the CLT (Consolidation of Labor Laws) or as cleaners (0.8%), as shown in graph 4.

Regarding respondents' education, the majority reported having completed high school, representing 57% of the total. Next, 26.4% reported having completed higher education, while 8.3% had incomplete high school. Furthermore, 7.4% reported having incomplete elementary school, and finally, only one person reported having incomplete elementary school, corresponding to 0.8% of the respondents.

## **4.2 Economic Impacts**

According to Cooper et al. (2001), the effects of the economic dimension are more noticeable to the population compared to the other dimensions. In this construct, it is possible to identify a general average of 78.24%, the predominant perception about the economic impacts of tourism is positive. On average, 71.07% of respondents agree with the propositions favorable to tourism, and only 11.26% disagree.

The survey found that tourism drives the economy of the city of Caraguatatuba and brings financial benefits to its residents and small businesses (82.64%). Furthermore, tourism generates more jobs for the city, a fact perceived by 81.82% of respondents, and also attracts investment to the area (74.38%). Furthermore, approximately 46.28% of participants agree that revenue generated by tourism is more important to the municipal government than revenue from other industries.

At the same time, 93.39% agree that the prices of goods and services have increased due to tourism, revealing concern about the rising local cost of living. This explains why not all respondents believe their standard of living has increased due to tourism (44.63%). Furthermore, respondents perceive that tourism has led to increased spending in the city (69.42%). These results combine perceptions of economic gains with negative impacts, as Goodwin (2017) points out regarding the overload of demand on prices in the tourist area. Although respondents agree that tourism stimulates the local economy, they perceive a high cost for developing tourism facilities (76.03%).

## **4.3 Social Impacts**

Tourism is a social phenomenon that, when abundant, causes discomfort in its hosts (Goodwin, 2017). This theory obtained an overall average of 61.93%, and Goodwin's (2017) perception is shared by some residents of Caraguatatuba, who report suffering from living in a tourist city (52.07%). This discomfort is reinforced by the fact that, for a significant portion of respondents, mass tourism is associated with the degradation of security and public order, as 60.33% of respondents believe that tourism contributes to increased crime, while 52.89% agree that it is related to the increase in vandalism in the city.

In contrast, 57.85% disagree that improving public tourism facilities is a waste of taxpayer money, indicating support for infrastructure expansion. Similarly, the majority of respondents (57.85%) also do not identify a direct loss in quality of life associated with tourism spending, suggesting that the negative impacts, while perceived, do not completely offset the benefits perceived by the population. Regarding the effects of tourism on local culture, opinions are divided (38.08%).

According to the phases that relationships between residents and visitors can go through, summarized by Doxey (1975), in this case, these perceptions indicate that the local population may be entering a phase of antagonism, in which tourism is perceived as a source of problems, rather than benefits.

## **4.4 Cultural Impacts**

According to Cooper et al. (2001), tourism can positively influence a community's culture by promoting the appreciation of local artisanal skills and cultural expressions. The construct of this theory achieved an average of 72.15%, and this understanding is

validate by the data from this survey, in which 69.42% of respondents stated that tourism encourages a variety of cultural activities promoted by residents themselves.

Furthermore, the results reveal that respondents believe that tourism has resulted in greater cultural exchange between visitors and residents (57.85%). They also consider this social exchange with tourists from other regions a valuable experience for better understanding their culture and society (68.60%). This perception is in line with Cooper et al. (2001), who emphasize that the appreciation of traditions and the exchange of knowledge are positive elements of tourism.

Survey citizen perceived tourism as having positive impacts on local cultural identity (49.59%), thus attributing a positive perception of tourism's impact on local culture (61.36%). However, it is important to consider that cultural positivity is not unanimous, as approximately 17.77% of respondents disagreed with the cultural benefits, which may indicate concern about the commodification of local traditions.

#### **4.5 Environmental Impacts**

Tourism activities use resources, generating significant impacts on their surroundings (UNWTO, 2001). The overall average for this theory is 78.64%, and the scales reached approximately 72.11% agreement. This index reflects a negative perception of mass tourism when it comes to environmental impacts. These results reinforce the arguments of Goodwin (2017) and the UNWTO (2001) that excessive visitors lead to environmental degradation and a decrease in environmental quality.

Respondents believe tourism negatively influences the city's environment, with congestion, noise, and pollution (95.04%). Furthermore, residents perceive that excessive tourists on beaches, hiking trails, parks, and other outdoor spaces creates unpleasant overcrowding (80.99%).

Furthermore, approximately 69.42% of respondents state that the construction of hotels and other tourist facilities destroys the city's natural environment. On the other hand, 42.98% agree that tourism has provided more parks and recreational areas for local residents. However, while these structural improvements are recognized, they are not enough to offset the perceived negative effects, according to respondents.

#### **4.6 Total Impacts**

Hosts' perceptions of the overall impacts of tourism can have both negative and positive aspects (Yoon; Gursoy; Chen (2001). This theory obtained an average of 73.31%; for respondents, the overall impacts of tourism development in Caraguatatuba are negative (62.81%). However, they agree that the benefits of tourism outweigh the costs to the city (71.07%). This ambivalence indicates that, although tourism is still seen as a relevant economic source, a growing feeling of weariness among residents, especially regarding the social and environmental consequences. This scenario confirms the complexity of the relationship between hosts and tourists, as proposed by Yoon, Gursoy, and Chen (2001), who emphasize that support for tourism is directly linked to the balance between perceived costs and benefits.

#### **4.7 Emotions**

The feeling of pleasure can be understood as a positive affective state that reflects the degree of pleasantness a person experiences in a given situation (Mehrabian; Russell,

1974). The overall average of the theory of emotions, based on responses to the scales, shows that 60.44% of residents expressed positive emotions (happiness, pleasure, contentment, hope, relaxation), while only 24.93% presented neutral emotions and 14.63% negative emotions (irritation, unhappiness, dissatisfaction, boredom). This positive result can be explain, in part, by the perception of economic and cultural benefits and the cultural appreciation that tourism can represent for the Caraguatatuba community.

According to the data obtained, respondents reported feeling satisfied (42.15%) and relaxed (38.02%) with the presence of tourists in the city. Furthermore, a significant portion also declared themselves content (33.06%) and happy (39.67%). This data shows that many residents feel welcoming and comfortable with the presence of tourists.

Between feelings of despair and hope, respondents remained neutral (38.02%). However, respondents also felt irritated by the presence of visitors (41.32%).

## 5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The overall objective of this study was to analyze the perceptions of Caraguatatuba residents regarding the impacts of *overtourism* on their city, considering the economic, social, cultural, environmental, and emotional impacts caused by mass tourism. The survey yielded 121 valid questionnaires, of which 67.8% were female and 32.2% were male, with an average age of 34.

It was also identified that 40.5% of the respondents belong to class C1, 33.1% belong to class B2, 10.7% to class C2, 9.1% to class B1, 5% to class A, and 1.7% belong to class DE. Furthermore, 76.9% of the participants stated that their income is not directly linked to the local tourism sector, while 23.1% of the respondents indicated that their sources of income are directly associated with tourism.

Regarding the perceived economic impacts, a predominance of positive assessments was observe. Most respondents recognize that tourism contributes to job creation (83.64%), boosts the economy (81.82%), and attracts investment to the city (78.51%). However, an increase in the cost of living was also reporter, especially regarding the prices of goods and services (91.67%), demonstrating that economic benefits are accompany by side effects on quality of life.

The analysis of social impacts revealed a more critical perception. Many residents associate tourism with increased crime (71.57%), vandalism (66.78%), and the feeling of discomfort of living in a city occupied by tourists (67.93%). These data indicate a possible progression of the local community toward the antagonistic phase of Doxey's (1975) model, in which residents begin to view tourism as a problem.

Regarding cultural impacts, perceptions were positive. The population recognizes the value of local cultural practices (73.88%), such as crafts and festivities, as well as the opportunity to exchange experiences with tourists from other regions (75.37%). Although most residents perceive tourism as enhancing local cultural activities, a minority expresses concern about the over-commercialization of these activities (17.77%), as warned by Cooper et al. (2001).

Regarding environmental impacts, negative perceptions were present. Respondents reported problems such as overcrowding on beaches and other outdoor spaces (83.80%), increased pollution, noise, and congestion (90.08%), and the destruction of natural areas (76.86%). While acknowledging the creation of some recreational areas for local residents (63.80%), the prevailing perception is that tourism overburdens natural resources and harms the city's environment.

The perception of the overall impacts of tourism on the city reveals that residents recognize more benefits than costs (75.70%). However, 62.81% consider the overall impacts of tourism development to be negative. This contradiction reveals a typical impasse in contexts marked by *overtourism*, where while tourism is desired for its economic gains, it is also a source of environmental, sociocultural, and emotional problems (Goodwin, 2017).

Finally, residents' emotions revealed mixed feelings, with approximately 60.44% expressing positive feelings about tourism, demonstrating satisfaction. However, approximately 24.93% also reported negative feelings, such as irritation with overcrowding.

The conclusion is that the Caraguatatuba community's perception of *overtourism* is ambivalent. While they recognize the economic benefits of tourism, there is also a strong negative perception regarding its social, environmental, and quality-of-life impacts. The municipality exhibits an imbalance between tourism growth and residents' quality of life, characterizing the phenomenon of *overtourism*.

This work has limitations, especially regarding the sample size, which restricts the generalization of the results, and the focus on Caraguatatuba, where the results refer to a specific context.

For future studies, we suggest expanding the number of respondents and comparing the results with other tourist destinations on the Brazilian coast to deepen our understanding of the effects of *overtourism* in the country. We also suggest developing studies on tourism phobia, seeking to understand the extent to which resident dissatisfaction with tourism evolves into rejection and resistance.

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