



Tourism and Zombiism: An evil mirror?

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Tourism and Zombiism: An evil mirror?

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Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, Yeoman and McMahon-Beattie [1], amongst others, identified 'overtourism' as being the key issue for the tourism industry. The impacts of Covid-19 created an opportunity for the tourism industry to consider its trajectory, and to tackle issues, including overtourism, under the auspices of the great reset [2].

The great tourism reset did not last, with destinations failing to 'build back better'[3]. Statistics indicate that tourism rapidly recovered from Covid-19 with the UNWTO projecting international tourist arrivals to rise to 80 to 95% of pre-pandemic levels by 2023, if not exceeding pre-pandemic arrival numbers [4].

In their book chapter, *Destination of the Dead*, [5] suggested that overtourism presented the same challenges and impacts as that of a plague of zombies. Utilising specific examples, they demonstrated how tourism development reflects the horror present in the zombie genre. For example, the impact of zombiism is often presented as a pandemic affecting the entire globe, spreading quickly as a result of human selfishness fuelled by air travel, etc., (considering the ending of *Army of the Dead* [6], or how the virus spreads in *28 Weeks Later* [7]. So, too, does tourism spread its impacts through air-travel (e.g., the increase in tourism arrivals following the rise of low-cost airlines). Or, consider the example of the digital nomad tourists who avoided lockdowns and borders during the pandemic [8], thereby potentially carrying the virus to other destinations.

As overtourism is now proving to be as 'unkillable' as any zombie plague, can this be addressed by the similarities between tourists and zombies? For example, the use of tourism checkpoints by the Venetian authorities is similar to the use of zombie checkpoints by the Israeli government in *World War Z* [9]. Albeit, only providing a temporary solution that does not hold. For many of the stories within the genre, the solution involves living with the threat—zombies remain ever present, but the protagonists are still able to live some sort of life. Is this, therefore, the answer to overtourism, with an integration of the threat into the destination? Or should there be a return to the attitude that tourism is a privilege, not a right, which reflects the quasi-industrial society adopted by many in the zombie genre.

This approach is not merely speculation; it is accepted that popular culture can be exploited to identify creative responses to challenges and situations [10]. Given that tourism continues to develop uncontrollably, it is clear that new approaches to tourism thinking are now required. Using popular culture and one specific genre, zombiism, may prove to be an unusual, but powerful ally in the development of sustainable tourism.

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