

Amsterdam's Tourism Transformation: Brand Washing or Genuine Degrowth?

Student Name: Matilde Brambilla

Student Number: 667252

Supervisor: Emily Mannheimer

Tourism, Culture & Society

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the alignment of Amsterdam's tourism management strategies with degrowth principles, focusing on the dichotomy between pro-growth and degrowth. Over the past decade, the rapid increase in tourist numbers in European urban destinations has negatively impacted host communities and the natural environment, sparking discussions about the suitability of a tourism system centered on growth. This has led destinations to embrace degrowth principles, including Amsterdam, expressing commitment to curbing growth for a more sustainable and socially responsible visitor economy. The city emphasizes residents' well-being, aiming to attract fewer, higher-quality tourists while shedding its transgressive reputation associated with drugs and sex-related activities in favor of a cultural focus. However, previous studies suggest that shifting towards 'quality tourism' can mask a pro-growth agenda, raising concerns about 'fake' degrowth or 'greenwashing.' This thesis has researched how Amsterdam's tourism management strategies commit to genuine alignment with degrowth principles. The study finds its theoretical framework on the conceptualization of overtourism, understanding of critical contributors, causes, social and ecological impacts, and potential strategies for managing and mitigating its adverse effects, focusing on the ongoing debate on 'fair' vs fake degrowth. Data was gathered from operational and promotional texts produced by the municipality, tourism authorities, and stakeholders, supplemented by expert interviews, yielding a sample size of 40 exemplary texts and 3 expert interviews. The analysis utilized the 6Ds & 6D-Ds framework (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019) and Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to categorize tourism policy maneuvers and marketing strategy and examine the textual, discursive, and social dimensions. Results indicate that Amsterdam's tourism strategy promotes a diverse and sustainable visitor economy through a mix of degrowth and pro-growth principles. This dual approach reveals a complex interplay between degrowth and pro-growth discourses, underscoring urban tourism management's complexities and potential contradictions. While the city aims to reclaim public spaces and reduce the negative impacts of tourism, efforts to attract 'quality tourists' and enrich the cultural offering suggest an underlying objective of maintaining economic growth. While Amsterdam's policies are framed around reducing overtourism's negative impacts, the parallel push toward quality tourism suggests a shift rather than a reduction of carrying capacity, indicative of 'fake degrowth'. The study highlights the importance of genuinely sustainable practices over superficial marketing tactics to ensure equitable and sustainable development, using terms such as 'brand washing' - an alternative to 'greenwashing' - indicating how they may enhance the city's appeal to a selective demographic but does not necessarily equate to change. The findings contribute to the broader debate on sustainable tourism, informing policymakers and city marketers about the complexities and potential misalignments in current practices and

emphasizing the need for a more nuanced understanding that transcends the binary classification of tourism policies as either degrowth or pro-growth.

KEYWORDS: Urban overtourism, Amsterdam, Degrowth, Progrowth, 6Ds & 6D-Ds framework, Urban tourism management, Tourism policies, Tourism marketing strategies, Discouragement campaign, Cannabis & Sex tourism

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1. Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic, which caused Amsterdam to drop its visitors overnight, was perceived by its residents as a “blessing in disguise” (Snijders, 2020). It offered an invaluable opportunity for locals to reclaim their neighborhoods and explore areas typically dominated by tourists, which they had previously avoided due to persistent issues with crowding, nuisances, and litter stemming from overtourism. Over the past decade, the rapid and consistent increase in tourist numbers in European urban destinations has negatively impacted the host communities and the natural environment (Amrhein et al., 2022). This has sparked extensive public discussions about the suitability of a tourism system centered on a growth model (Oklevik et al., 2019), leading destinations to embrace principles of degrowth (Dwyer, 2023; Hall et al., 2020).

As one of Europe's most affected urban destinations by overtourism (Statista, 2020), this critical shift is also prevalent in Amsterdam's new strategic vision on tourism. In recent years, the Dutch capital has implemented a multifaceted approach to mitigate its effects, explicitly expressing commitment to curbing growth in favor of a more sustainable and socially responsible visitor economy (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021). Specifically, the city greatly emphasizes residents' wellbeing, aspiring to attract fewer tourists but of higher quality while shaking off its transgressive reputation associated with drug and sex-related activities in favor of a cultural focus (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021).

However, previous studies evaluating the efficacy of destinations' demarketing strategies and their commitment to degrowth suggest that the shift towards 'quality tourism' underscores a controversial phenomenon. Industry actors in mass tourism destinations that claim to embrace sustainable practices often masks a pro-growth agenda (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). This practice, distinguished also as ‘fair’ and ‘fake’ tourism degrowth (Blanco-Romero et al., 2023), is frequently referred as ‘greenwashing,’ suggesting that so-called degrowth strategies may, in fact, be a facade for continued economic growth (Valdivielso & Moranta, 2019). Wheeler (1993) noted that within the context of neoliberal capitalism, claims of sustainable strategies are unlikely to advocate for degrowth and sustainability sincerely. Instead, the focus tends to be on addressing criticism of mass tourism and upholding a positive reputation through deceptive campaigns to divert attention from the most significant challenges (Wheeler, 1993).

In light of these concerns, the present study investigates possible discrepancies throughout the various facets of Amsterdam's tourism management strategies, answering the following research question: *To what extent do Amsterdam's tourism management strategies genuinely reflect the principles of degrowth?*

By analyzing tourism policy documents, marketing strategies, and expert interviews through critical discourse analysis, the study critically observes Amsterdam's approaches to tackling issues of overtourism and their broader implications for the city and its residents. This research assesses

whether Amsterdam's strategy truly aligns with the degrowth paradigm—prioritizing sustainability, equitable resource distribution, and reduced consumption (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Dwyer, 2023)—or if they primarily support continued economic growth under the guise of sustainability and community well-being. For this purpose, the study applies the 6Ds & 6D-Ds framework by Blanco-Romero et al. (2019), with the scope of analyzing the alignment, or lack thereof, between Amsterdam's stated objectives and its actual tourism management practices. This framework outlines six key elements of pro-growth discourse (Deseasonalisation, Decongestion, Deluxe tourism, Decentralization, Diversification, Discredit contestation) and six of degrowth (Decommodification, Disparity reduction & Collectivisation, Dignifying working conditions, Detailed spatial planning, Detouristification & Retouristification, and Deconsumerism) (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019).

By analyzing Amsterdam's strategy through the lens of the 6Ds & 6D-Ds framework, the present study aims to contribute to the broader societal and academic debate on sustainable tourism development. This research extends its relevance beyond the city's borders by examining the practical implications of Amsterdam's tourism strategies. The findings can serve as a reference for policymakers and city marketers seeking to balance tourism impact with residents' well-being, thereby promoting a more controlled visitor influx and enhancing their destinations' overall social and environmental sustainability. Additionally, the study informs academics and policymakers about the complexities and potential misalignments in sustainable tourism practices, highlighting the theoretical challenges inherent in balancing the binary classification of tourism policies as either degrowth or pro-growth. Ultimately, this research challenges the dichotomy by demonstrating that policies labeled as degrowth may, in reality, result in pro-growth, revealing a more nuanced interplay between the two paradigms and underscoring the importance of critically evaluating the true intentions and impact of tourism policies through multiple perspectives.

The following chapter presents the theoretical framework underpinning this analysis. It delves into the concept of overtourism, reviewing recent literature on its definitions, key contributors, and causes. It also examines the perceived impacts of overtourism on the environment, local communities, and tourist experiences. It discusses potential strategies for managing and mitigating its adverse effects, including the ongoing debate between pro-growth and degrowth models. Next, Chapter 3 outlines the methodology, detailing the data collection and analysis methods and the operationalization of key concepts. Chapter 4 presents the analysis results using the 4Ps marketing framework (Product, Price, Place, Promotion), critically examining the most relevant maneuvers within the context of the degrowth-progrowth discourse. Finally, Chapter 5 provides a conclusive summary and evaluation of the study.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. *Understanding Overtourism*

The concept of overtourism generally describes the evident excess of visitors to tourist destinations. In the past decades the term has gained significant traction both within and outside academia associated with the negative impacts on the environment, the local community, and the tourist experience on destinations grappling with the challenges of managing large volumes of tourists (Capocchi et al., 2019). While the issue of overcrowding in specific locations, ranging from historical sites to natural parks, has been long acknowledged, overtourism in urban areas is considered a more recent phenomenon (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Milano et al., 2019).

Benner (2020), observing the effects of overtourism to the destinations tourism industry, ties the phenomena to the final stages of Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle (1980), defining overtourism as a symptom of destinations reaching the stagnation stage, where infrastructure reach their peak and the quality of the tourist experience deteriorates. There is a debate about whether overtourism naturally limits itself or keeps growing, as even in the case of tourist numbers, the quality of the experience might decline, impacting residents' quality of life (Benner, 2020). In the context of Amsterdam, Pinkster and Boterman (2017) describe the current situation as a 'breaking of the spell', highlighting how the negative impacts of tourism became undeniable and started significantly affecting both residents and visitors. Once this critical juncture is reached, the destination thus faces a pivotal trajectory: they can either decline or rejuvenate (Butler, 1980).

In case of decline, negative impacts continue to outweigh the benefits, with the reduction of tourist numbers associated with economic downturns (Benner, 2020). It often results from internal lock-in or external shocks (Ma & Hassink, 2013) when a destination demonstrates inflexibility as highly dependent on a specific type of tourism. It does not manage to diversify or upgrade its offerings in case of sudden external events that disrupt the tourism sector, such as natural disasters, political instability, economic crises, or, as happened in most recent years, global pandemics. According to Blazek et al. (2019), Butler's decline scenario does not imply the complete disappearance of tourism. Still, it breaks down into four paths: path contraction (reduction in tourism activity), path downgrading (lowering the quality of tourism), path delocalization (moving away from a certain area), and path disappearance (complete loss of tourism).

On the other hand, by implementing strategic policy interventions, destinations can manage and mitigate the adverse effects of overtourism and underlying rejuvenation. This considered 'positive path development' from stagnation includes measures: path extension (continue along the current trajectory by enhancing existing resources and offerings), path branching (create new complementing activities or services appealing to the same type of visitors), path diversification (expand into new types of tourism or markets, broadening range of offers and visitors), path creation (develop innovative entirely new offers within tourism market), path importation (bringing in practices and

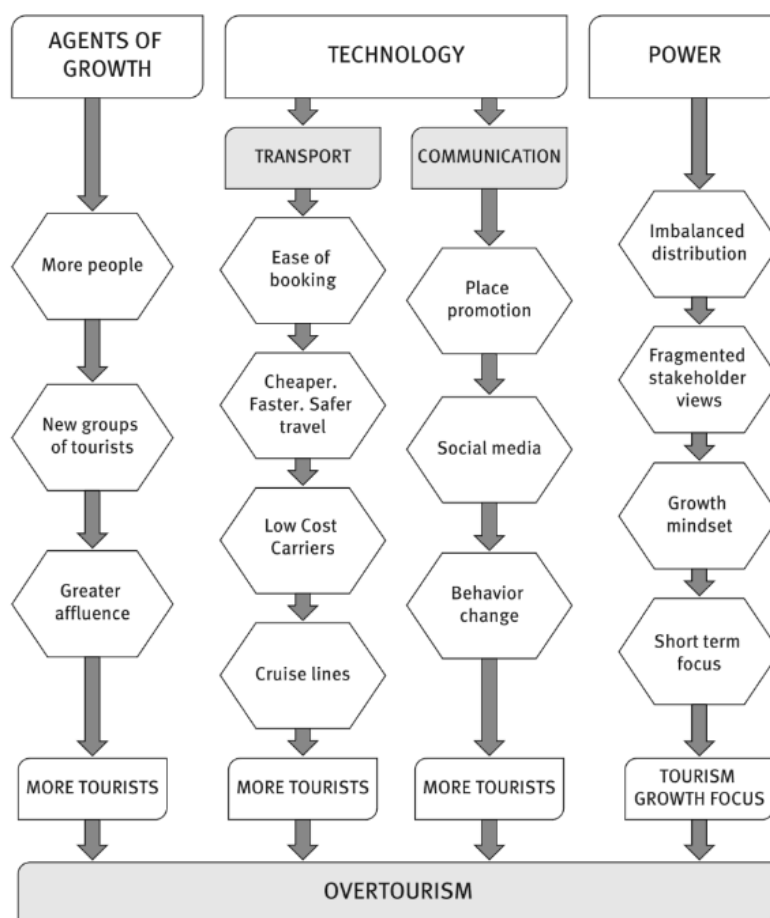
ideas from other regions or sectors), and upgrading (moving to higher value-added or more sustainable forms of tourism) (Benner, 2020; Isaksen et al. 2018a, 2018b). These strategies support destinations' resilience, reorienting the growth model towards more sustainable forms that are balanced with societal and economic interests (Benner, 2020).

1.2. *The Making of Overtourism: Key Contributors and Causes*

To understand the causes of overtourism, Dodds and Butler (2019a) provide a list of ten enablers of this phenomenon.

Figure 1

Enablers of Overtourism



Note: Retrieved from "The enablers of overtourism," by R. Dodds and R. W. Butler, 2019, in R. Dodds and R. Butler (Eds.), *Overtourism: Issues, realities and solutions* (1st ed., p. 16).

(1) *Greater Number of Tourists:* In the past decades, there has been significant global tourism growth, especially driven by increasing economic power, leisure time, and higher disposable incomes worldwide (Koens et al., 2018). Statistics demonstrate a continuous rise in international tourist

arrivals; according to the UNWTO report (2019), this number has increased from 674 million in 2000 to 1.5 billion in 2019, with forecasts predicting further growth.

(2) *Affordability of Travel*: With the decline of travel costs, mainly thanks to the proliferation of low-cost carriers and the development of booking technologies, travel has become more affordable and accessible to broader segments of the population (Capocchi et al., 2019; Dodds & Butler, 2019a). A phenomenon associated to the fourth wave of travel democratization, indicates the breaking down of barriers that traditionally prevented many individuals from engaging in leisure activities, such as costs, visa procedures, or lack of information.

(3) *Emergence of New Tourist Groups*: The rise of the global middle class associated with easing visa restrictions resulted in the emergence of new tourist segments (Dodds & Butler, 2019a). Studies indicate that long-haul middle-class travelers, particularly from emerging economies like China and India, have grown exponentially in the past years, further fueling tourism growth (Dai et al., 2017; Thomas, 2022).

(4) *Dominance of Growth-Focused Mindset*: Scholars indicate how a capitalist growth mindset drove destinations to pursue tourism as an opportunity for economic development, including employment, but often at the expense of sustainable practices (Dodds & Butler, 2019a). Accordingly, Milano, Novelli, and Cheer (2019) attribute the emergence of urban overtourism in popular destinations to unregulated capital accumulation and growth strategies that heavily promote cities as tourism commodities. Post the 2008 financial crisis, numerous European cities, including Amsterdam (Gerritsma, 2019), embraced neoliberal ideals and pursued competitive positions in the global market by investing extensively in urban regeneration and tourism promotion strategies (Amore & All, 2017; Fletcher et al., 2019). The dominance of the growth-focused mindset (Dodds & Butler, 2019a) has led to rapid growth as tourist destinations, generating significant revenue and playing a pivotal role in these cities' socio-economic and cultural development and their surrounding regions. However, urban destinations, especially in Europe, have often failed to balance sustainable development and mitigate the adverse effects associated with tourism growth (Amore, 2019), producing significant management challenges and increased pressure on their carrying capacity (UNWTO, 2018). In response to the dominance of a growth-focused mindset (Dodds & Butler, 2019a), some experts advocate for more assertive measures, proposing the implementation of degrowth strategies (Blanco-Romero & Blázquez-Salom, 2020) (See 1.4).

(5) *Short-term Focus*: strongly related to the growth mindset, destinations now suffering from overtourism have failed to consider the long-term impact of their marketing, opting instead to focus on short-term profits and growth, ultimately leading to market failures and a mismatch between demand and supply. As highlighted by the authors (Dodds & Butler, 2019a), destinations often find it difficult to reverse the negative impacts and restore earlier conditions once this situation is reached. This often pushes destinations towards phases of stagnation or decline, as described in Butler's Tourism Area Life Cycle Model (1980).

(6) *Competition for Space, Amenities, and Services*: Major urban centers, despite their apparent infrastructure capacity to handle large numbers of visitors, face issues related to the disparity between accommodations for tourists and locals (Dodds & Butler, 2019a). The rise of platforms like Airbnb has led to housing issues, with locals being displaced or forced to economically compete with tourists for space, often resulting in gentrification. While these platforms enable locals to profit directly from tourism, they also disrupt local lifestyles and neighborhoods, affecting the authenticity of the destination (Rickly, 2019). The paradox is that tourists who opt for Airbnb are often motivated by the desire to experience authentic local life, which is precisely what gets compromised by the increased tourist presence (Lalicic & Waismayer, 2017), underlining the detrimental effects of overtourism also on the tourists' experience.

(7) *Wider Access to Media and Information*: Media and information technology play a crucial role in shaping the attractiveness of locations and influencing travel decisions. Today, the widespread promotion of destinations through social media or travel blogs at the hands of consumers plays a crucial role, leading to destination popularity and a sudden surges in tourist numbers, often beyond the control of destination management organizations (Solanky & Gupta, 2021). Through this force, destination image can be rapidly altered or destroyed, making places highly vulnerable to trends and consumer demands (Butler & Dodds, 2022).

(8) *Lack of Control Over Tourist Numbers*: Controlling influx numbers is impossible for most destinations. Destinations have limited control over transportation, and often need to be made aware of when, how and how many people arrives through the different entry points (Butler & Dodds, 2019a). Additionally, tracking the number of overnight visitors staying in private accommodations, such as Airbnb, is difficult without proper licensing (Dodds & Butler, 2019a).

(9) *Imbalance of Power Among Stakeholders*: Despite destinations' calls for equity and inclusion, residents and community voices are often excluded from planning and marketing decision-making processes or only when things go wrong, causing tensions and conflicts (Dodds & Butler, 2019a).

(10) *Fragmented Tourism Stakeholders*: The tourism industry is fragmented, with a lack of unity, coordination, and shared goals among stakeholders, particularly within governance and policy-making, where some levels undermine others, leading to imbalanced power dynamics and distribution of benefits (Dodds & Butler, 2019a). Furthermore, Dodds and Butler (2019a) highlight the inconsistency in government actions, when “government official may say one thing, yet do another” (p.17), for instance, advocating for sustainability while promoting tourism initiatives, resulting in unplanned tourism increases.

In the context of Amsterdam, this fragmentation emerges particularly interesting when examining current drug policies and the possible decriminalization of hard drugs, which may exemplify the complexities and potential contradictions within tourism developments. While aimed at reducing criminal activity and social damage, such ‘higher level policies’ could potentially impact the

city's tourism dynamics, challenging the tourism council's repositioning efforts to move away from drug-related tourism.

1.3. Quality vs. Quantity: Perceived Impact of Overtourism

Ultimately, all the aforementioned enablers have converged in many destinations, resulting in a shift in attitude towards tourism, particularly among residents. Once seen as a positive force, the tourism industry's broader recognition of its negative impacts has led to increased scrutiny and criticism. Global awareness of social and environmental issues, including residents' quality of life, has grown, fueling nationalist sentiments and general mistrust (Dodds & Butler, 2019a).

Before the term 'overtourism', coined to reflect the increasing influx of visitors into urban destinations and the consequences on cities and their inhabitants, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) spoke in terms of tourism's carrying capacity as "the maximum number of people that may visit a tourist destination at the same time, without causing destruction of the physical, economic and sociocultural environment and an unacceptable decrease in the quality of visitors' satisfaction" (UNWTO, 2019, p.V). The concept of carrying capacity implies that destinations marketed for tourism have limits to their growth and must set boundaries concerning physical and psychological attributes of both the environment and the resident population (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

Recent conceptualizations of overtourism highlight that concerns about overtourism lie not just in the absolute number of tourists but, more significantly, in their relative impact on the destination (Koens et al., 2018). When focusing on urban tourism, UNWTO's current definition of overtourism is "the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences the perceived quality of life of citizens and/or visitors in a negative way" (UNWTO, 2018, p.4). This approach is more qualitative, focusing on the social capacity and social exchange theory (SET), thus addressing perceived satisfaction with the quality of life in tourism-affected communities (Mihalic, 2020). As emphasized by Mihalic (2020), the notion of 'quality of life' in the context of overtourism, defined as a concept of human welfare measured by social indicators, prompts a discussion about how tourism stakeholders perceive social impacts, such as whether they are satisfied or irritated with the tourism situations.

For example, as highlighted by the UNWTO (2018) and Dodds and Butler (2019), the three main perceived overtourism issues are overcrowding, nuisance from negative tourist behavior, and broader negative impacts on the local environment and communities. Firstly, the sheer number of visitors leads to overcrowding in streets and public services, creates a sense of congestion, and causes the diminishing of residents' quality of life. Secondly, negative tourist behavior, such as excessive drunkenness, loud noise, and disrespect for local customs and environments, resulting in nuisance and disturbance, exacerbating tensions between tourists and locals (UNWTO, 2018), spreading feelings of 'anti-tourism' and 'tourismphobia' (Amore, 2019, Milano, 2018). Thirdly, recent literature focuses on the relationship between excessive tourism growth and the wider city context, highlighting the broader

negative impact of the tourism industry. This includes pollution, environmental degradation due to overuse of environmental resources, erosion of the sense of community, housing inflation, and gentrification, thus when the influx of tourists drives up property prices and living costs and displaces residents (Hristov et al., 2021; Koen et al., 2018). These are issues widely acknowledged within Amsterdam, where public resistance to touristification has grown dramatically in recent years, with residents demanding action (Oskam & Wiegerink, 2020).

1.4. *Paradigm Shift: Degrowth in Tourism*

By addressing overtourism issues, destinations strive to limit numbers by implementing mitigation and control measures, such as imposing physical capacity constraints, pricing differentiation, modifying destination image, and policy implementations (Butler & Dodds, 2022). Scholars have widely analyzed these strategies and their alignment towards more sustainable tourism management, which shall ultimately ensure a balance between the benefits of tourism and the quality of life of the community and their environment (Bertocchi et al., 2020; Butler & Dodds, 2022; Hospers, 2019; Nepal & Nepal, 2019; Smyrnov, 2016). Balancing economic benefits with sustainability goals remains a complex challenge, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution (Hall, 2009). Yet, in response to the dominance of the growth-focused mindset and its role in causing overtourism (Dodds & Butler, 2019), discussions among scholars and government officials have emerged about reversing this paradigm by embracing degrowth strategies.

Degrowth is regarded as a democratically guided, fair ‘downscaling’ or ‘rightsizing’ of global production and consumption, leading to a sustainable and stable state (Alexander, 2012). It calls for a “radical transformation of the political economy within which sustainability is pursued” (Fletcher et al., 2019, p. 1746)—moving away from the current form of capitalism and ideals of growth towards a post-capitalist system of production and consumption that is more equitable and sustainable.

Applied to the field of tourism, the degrowth paradigm questions the inherent imperative for growth and commodification within urban environments and advocates for imposing limits to growth as a means to reverse the trend of overtourism (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). Dwyer (2023) defines tourism degrowth as ‘painful but necessary,’ highlighting the need for a radical transformation of society. Degrowth encompasses several policy approaches to establish a more balanced relationship between resource and supply to reduce environmental impact and improve social wellbeing (Dwyer, 2023; Hall, 2009).

The first approach is *GDP degrowth*, which focuses on reducing material and energy throughputs, not just GDP. While criticized by pro-growth advocates for possibly impacting societal prosperity, degrowth proponents emphasize the intangible quality-of-life components rather than material wealth, such as community involvement, social relationships, and overall life satisfaction and wellbeing (Dwyer, 2023). This type of degrowth advocates for alternative indicators to GDP, which better assess progress in social and environmental terms beyond economic output, prioritizing

environmental health and social equity. Ultimately, it needs a shift in values within society and economic structures and cooperation across various sectors and levels of government (Dwyer, 2023). At a more pragmatic level, the degrowth paradigm asserts that managing tourism is fundamentally a social struggle, emphasizing the prioritization of the rights and needs of residents over those of tourists and the tourism industry (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Valdivielso & Moranta, 2019). To achieve this, central governments must facilitate a shift in values, regulate corporate power, promote sustainable and socially responsible entrepreneurship, and transition away from tourism-dependent economies that contribute to unsustainability and inequality (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

Secondly, *physical degrowth* focuses on selectively reducing production and consumption activities that are ecologically and socially destructive (Dwyer, 2023). This approach involves making democratic policy decisions about which economic sectors need to shrink and which should grow, thus targeting a decrease in specific areas considered detrimental. For example, on a broader political agenda, this would translate into scaling down industries reliant on fossil fuels and instead prioritizing sectors like renewable energy, education, and healthcare, while more specific to the tourism industry, the identification of ‘unnecessary’ or harmful sectors is more contentious (Dwyer, 2023). Nonetheless, products like jet skis, private vehicles, cruises and the aviation industry are often examples of unbalance between necessity and impact (Hickel, 2019; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

When managing carrying capacity, physical capacity constraints can seem the most effective for regulating tourist numbers, as much concretely imposing limits on the tourists’ influx as it happens already with theatres or stadiums (Dodds & Butler, 2019). However, applying the same approach to destinations is rarely feasible. While stadiums and theatres can easily control ticket sales to manage crowds, tourist destinations face unique challenges, such as limited control over transportation and entry points (Dodds & Butler, 2019). In this respect, a notable example is Venice, which, thanks to its geographical conformation, has implemented measures to manage overcrowding by controlling its entry points, banning cruise ships, and imposing an entry fee (Visit Venezia, 2024). Similarly, Amsterdam has enacted policies to limit the number of coaches and cruises and scrutinize low-budget flights, developing integrated strategies that include redesigning local infrastructure and services to handle tourism numbers effectively (Koens et al., 2018). Implementing such measures requires comprehensive monitoring and coordination across multiple sectors, from accommodation, transportation, and public infrastructure, all aligned with the influx of tourists (UWNTO, 2018).

Thirdly, *consumption degrowth* aims to reduce overall consumption levels and patterns of non-essential goods and services (Dwyer, 2023; Jackson, 2019). It goes beyond the simple attempt of making consumption more ‘sustainable’ or ‘green’, more strictly advocating for a significant decrease in consumption to address ethical and environmental concerns (Wiedmann et al., 2020). To support consumption degrowth, destinations often modify their image through marketing and de-marketing strategies campaigns to discourage the consumption of certain products and promote sustainable behaviors (Butler & Dodds, 2022)- where demarketing involves intentionally diminishing the

destination's overall attractiveness, either broadly or to specific target groups, to promote a more sustainable situation (Tiwari et al., 2020). According to observers, this approach attracts tourists genuinely interested in the city's culture, not those who just visit because of the media hype (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019; Milano et al., 2019).

To achieve demarketing, destinations apply diverse tactics to balance demand, generally guided by the 4Ps of marketing (Product, Price, Place, Promotion) (Hall & Wood, 2021). This includes adjusting their offerings (Product) to focus on sustainable experiences, setting pricing strategies (Price) to dissuade mass tourism while attracting high-spending quality tourists (Butler & Dodds, 2022), redirecting tourism flows (Place) through tourist decentralization and geographical redistribution (Smyrnov, 2016; Sibijns & Vanneste, 2021), and limit or shift promotional efforts (Promotion), to align with the desired positioning and branding (Smyrnov, 2016). According to experts, however, these must be complemented by large-scale education and awareness-raising efforts to be truly effective, and demarketing alone is unlikely to bring about significant long-term changes in consumption without fundamental shifts in consumer values (Hall & Wood, 2021).

Lastly, supporters of degrowth advocate for *deglobalization*, thus reducing the reliance on the international market and focusing on local economies, shifting from inbound models to sustainable domestic tourism (Cheer et al., 2021). They argue that promoting localization of production and consumption will support sustainable livelihoods, income distribution, community engagement, and well-being, allowing communities to thrive on their own resources and reducing the environmental impact of long-distance travel (Cheer et al., 2021). However, as Dwyer (2023) highlights, this approach poses challenges for small destinations reliant on tourism and the attractiveness of community-based initiatives for tourists. Not all tourists may be interested in being educated about local culture and engaging with locals, but instead, they may prioritize relaxation and entertainment. While this scenario, on one side, would ultimately attract fewer visitors and achieve degrowth results, on the other, it raises questions on the efficiency of small-scale community-based tourism generating enough economic benefits to replace those from mass tourism and remain sustainable for the communities without them having to deal with major economic loss. Dwyer (2023), therefore, highlights that to develop sustainable tourism strategies, destinations must first understand the tourists' preferences and motivations and the economic implications of shifting models.

1.5. *Debates and Contestations on Degrowth and Sustainable Tourism's True Commitment*

Wheeller (1993) noted that within neoliberal capitalism, claims of sustainable strategies (Dwyer, 2023) are unlikely to advocate sincerely for degrowth and sustainability. Instead, the emphasis tends to be on addressing criticism of mass tourism and upholding a positive reputation through deceptive campaigns to divert attention from the most significant challenges (Wheeller, 1993).

When observing consumption degrowth and demarketing strategies adopted by different destinations, these often hide intents or lead to foreseeable consequences that ultimately favor tourism growth. The major challenge of consumption degrowth is the rebound effect, namely when reduced consumption in one area leads to redirection, thus increasing consumption in another (Dwyer, 2023). Some maneuvers ultimately risk compromising the environmental benefits of reducing consumption in the initial area, leading to further spending and investing in other products or services (Dwyer, 2023; Wiedmann et al., 2020). As reducing visitor numbers poses economic challenges for destinations reliant on tourism, destinations often adopt demarketing strategies, shifting toward differential marketing, thus targeting more desirable tourist segments to sustain income levels and limiting numbers by pricing (Butler & Dodds, 2022).

For example, demarketing strategies guided by the principles of Product and Promotion are evident in the illustration of Copenhagen's localhood strategy. Scholars observe that while the initial vision appeared to embrace degrowth principles, especially by focusing on the local population and meaningful interactions, ultimately, the mission was geared toward growth (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019). A closer analysis reveals product differentiation and promotional endeavors to boost destination competitiveness, involving catering to lucrative traveler groups, extending visitor stays, promoting repeat visits, and significantly venturing into new markets, including the controversial cruise ship industry—a source of frustration expressed by the local population (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

Regarding Price tactics, New Zealand's transition from low-spending backpackers to high-spending overseas visitors exemplifies this approach (Insh, 2020). While this strategy may be efficient in removing mass tourism from the equation, it is criticized for preserving exclusivity and social equity and undermining true sustainability goals (Butler & Dodds, 2022).

As for Place strategies, the Balearic Islands present a case where the term degrowth has been used ambiguously. While asserting a commitment to detouristification (degrowth) for the destination's social and environmental well-being, maneuvers limit themselves to decongestion and deseasonalization (progrowth), thus addressing short-term congestion issues by spreading tourist visits throughout the year, promoting overall tourism growth, leading to accusation of 'greenwashing' (Valdivieslo & Moranta, 2019).

Elucidating on the social justice implication of embracing degrowth strategies in tourism, Blanco-Romero, Blázquez-Salomb, and Fletcher (2023) address the misrepresentation of degrowth pursuit in mass tourism destinations and provide a distinction between 'fair' and 'fake' tourism degrowth. They explore the controversial phenomenon where industry actors assert their commitment to tourism degrowth by emphasizing the term 'quality tourism'. This involves strategically aiming to attract a smaller number of tourists but with a higher spending capacity and increasing the cost of the touristic product, thereby presenting an aspiration for a sustainable model that places the economic value of tourism at its core. This perspective, labeled as 'fake' degrowth, underlines an exclusive and

elitist approach, aiming to diminish tourist volume based on wealth and social class, in fact distorting from the true essence of the degrowth ideals (Blanco-Romero et al., 2023). Whereas in line with the overarching degrowth discussion, 'fair' degrowth strategies involve a purposeful and democratic decrease in the per capita consumption of energy and materials, aiming for a fair redistribution of resource utilization and access (Blanco-Romero et al., 2023).

As highlighted by Higgins-Desbiolles and colleagues (2019), while governments assert their commitment to sustainable tourism, it urges a critical reading of the rhetoric surrounding responsible tourism and the sustainability initiatives proposed by the tourism industry, often revealing misalignments with goals and tools that predominantly prioritize growth. From what emerges in the literature, the discourse on degrowth and sustainable rejuvenation is complex and often contradictory. While destinations suffering from overtourism often claim to embrace sustainable practices, the actual implementation tends to remain anchored to strategies that ultimately support tourism growth.

1.6. *Pro-growth vs. Degrowth Models*

Given the contradictions between claimed sustainability efforts and actual degrowth policies, the present study will focus on critically analyzing whether Amsterdam's tourism management strategy reflects genuine degrowth principles, thus emphasizing equitable resource distribution and reduced consumption, or if it merely represents a form of greenwashing serving as a facade for continued economic growth and market expansion.

For this purpose, the study applies Blanco-Romero, Blázquez-Salom, Morell, and Fletcher's (2019) 6Ds and 6D-Ds framework. This framework builds upon Milano's (2018) five "Ds" model of pro-growth discourse and introduces six alternative "D-Ds" of degrowth. These additions illustrate how such an approach could be implemented to foster a tourism industry that prioritizes sustainability over perpetual growth.

Table 1

The 6 Ds & D-Ds of Progrowth and Degrowth Discourses (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019)

<i>6Ds - Pro-growth discourse</i>	<i>6 D-Ds - Degrowth discourse</i>
Desesonalisation	Decommodification
Decongestion	Disparity reduction & collectivisation
Deluxe tourism	Dignifying working conditions
Decentralization	Detailed spatial planning
Diversification	Detouristification & retouristification
Discredit contestation*	Deconsumerism

Note: Retrieved from *From overtourism to undertourism. . . and back? The struggle to manage tourism regrowth in post-pandemic Amsterdam.* by L. Kuenen, R. Fletcher, T. Jakobs, M. Duineveld, & K. Koens, 2023.

Milano (2018) outlined five key policy strategies, referred to as the "5Ds," which destinations implement to tackle the challenges of tourism saturation and the adverse effects of overcrowding. *Deseasonalization* aims to mitigate seasonal fluctuations in tourist flows by promoting tourism during off-peak periods through events, festivals, and marketing campaigns. While significantly impacting the tourism production and consumption chain of a destination, its long-term effectiveness is not always guaranteed. *Decongestion*, often paired with *Decentralization*, aims to alleviate hotspot congestion by directing visitors towards less frequented locations, typically achieved through the development of new attractions and the enhancement of infrastructure in suburban zones. Designed to reduce the pressure on central areas and move tourists beyond the 'tourist bubble', their success ultimately depends on the attractiveness and accessibility of new attractions, carrying also the risk of simply relocating the issue rather than resolving it (Milano, 2018). These strategies are frequently tied with *Diversification* strategies aimed at broadening the range of tourism offerings to appeal to different tourist segmentations (Milano, 2018). These encompass various activities, services, and experiences, catering to the diverse needs and demands of various tourist groups, for example in forms of cultural, gastronomic, and adventure tourism. While they manage to enhance the overall appeal of a destination, they do not necessarily address the root causes of overtourism, reflecting the operational norms of the tourism industry in a neoliberal economic context (Dodds & Butler, 2019; Smyrnov, 2016). Finally, also adhering to economic principles, destinations implement strategies for *Deluxe tourism*, also known as 'quality tourism', which involves increasing the prices of attractions and accommodations to manage demand and attract more affluent visitors (Milano, 2018). While this strategy aims to lower the volume of demand, it often leads to socio-economic issues such as increased cost of living and gentrification. Yet, despite these foreseeable drawbacks, it remains a popular strategy for destinations seeking to maximize economic benefits from tourism. The sixth D, *Discredit contestation*, was later integrated by Blanco-Romero et al. (2019), referring to the political act of attempting to undermine opposing views against a pro-growth tourism approach, indicating it as "tourism-phobia". Ultimately, as observed by Milano (2018), while these strategies can provide temporary relief from area congestion, seasonal pressure, and help in maximizing benefits, they often fall short of offering long-term structural solutions.

Beyond the measures aimed at sustaining tourism growth, Blanco-Romero et al. (2019) propose an alternative approach consisting of six D-Ds to combat overtourism, aligned with the degrowth paradigm and endorsing post-capitalist and post-neoliberal ideals. The first strategies, *Decommodification* and *Deconsumerism* of tourism activity, involve shifting away from viewing tourism solely as an industry for profit and instead prioritizing the interests of consumers and the

broader social, cultural and ecological environment. Additionally, they advocate for *Detouristification* and, when possible, re-touristification, striving to reconstruct the tourism sector in accordance with fairer social and environmental practices. *Disparity reduction and Collectivization* strategies aim to address inequalities in the distribution of benefits from tourism, ensuring equitable access for all stakeholders. *Detailed Spatial Planning* involves regulating and potentially reducing land use and coverage, with constraints in accommodation capacity and mobility infrastructures. Lastly, *Dignifying Working Conditions* encompasses fair wages, a safe workplace, and respectful treatment for tourism workers. (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019; Kuenen et al., 2023).

2. Methodology

This chapter presents the study's methodology and limitations. First, it explains the choice of the qualitative method and ontological perspective. Next, it presents the research design and data collection process, with an overview of the different kinds of 'texts' examined. Then, it presents the method of analysis, operationalization, and limitations.

2.1. Choice of Method

Addressing the research question, "*To what extent do Amsterdam's tourism management strategies genuinely reflect the principles of degrowth?*", the study employs a qualitative research methodology. It focuses on analyzing a wide range of data sources to explore and interpret the discourses surrounding Amsterdam's overtourism management and conducts an in-depth analysis of how these discourses shape tourism policies and marketing strategies.

From an ontological perspective, the study uses interpretivism as a research paradigm (Sullivan, 2016), recognizing social phenomena as complex and multifaceted, influenced by the interpretations and subjective experiences of different stakeholders involved in Amsterdam's tourism policy. This aligns with the qualitative approach employed in this study, aiming to delve deeply into how overtourism is conceptualized and addressed in Amsterdam's tourism strategy. Rather than universal truth or objective realities, this approach acknowledges the socially constructed nature of reality, thus created and understood through social interactions, language, and culture (Van Dijk, 2015). While the objective of this study is not concerned with a statistical computation of the effectiveness of Amsterdam's anti-overtourism strategies, it aims to enrich the understanding of the underlying factors influencing policy formation and tourism management, including societal values, political agendas, and stakeholder perspectives.

The qualitative methods applied in this study allow a thorough exploration of Amsterdam's overtourism management discourses, enabling informed conclusions about aligning existing tourism policies and marketing strategies with degrowth or pro-growth principles (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019). Specifically, the study involved an in-depth analysis of secondary and primary data, identified

by Feighery (2011) as three categories of ‘texts’, including *operational*, *promotional*, and *interview* texts (See Data Collection). While secondary data constitute the main source of information for the study, the inclusion of primary data served to cross-validate the findings, patterns, and conclusions.

In line with the interpretative research approach, this study's texts are subjected to critical discourse analysis (CDA) to uncover latent meanings, power dynamics, and social constructs that shape tourism policies and strategies in Amsterdam.

2.2. *Research Design and Data Collection*

As previously mentioned, the data collected for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources consisted in texts published by Amsterdam’s tourism authorities, forming the main dataset for the study. At the same time, the inclusion of primary data from semi-structured expert interviews with policymakers and tourism expert served to discuss contradictions in the strategic goals and outcomes.

These sources, referred to as 'texts' within the framework of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), encompass a wide range of communicative materials. In CDA, the term 'texts' is not limited to written documents but includes various forms of communication, such as visual and auditory materials like videos and images which convey messages and ideologies pertinent to the study (Lemke, 2013). Therefore, the incorporation of diverse formats not only enriches the analysis, but also acknowledges the impact of multimedia content in constructing discourses regarding tourism management (Lemke, 2013)

Consequently, the length of the texts analysed varies, reflecting the heterogeneity of information available. Longer documents, such as policies and reports, provide detailed insights into overarching strategies, while shorter written content like marketing slogans, mission statements, but also images and videos, offer more nuanced perspectives on the city’s tourism narrative. Regardless of their length or form, each text is considered as uniquely contributing to the research objectives and enriching the depth of the analysis. The process of data collection persisted until saturation was reached, indicating the absence of any further relevant information available up to the period of the study.

The texts from secondary sources included various tourism policies, marketing strategies, campaign communication material, speech transcripts, and press releases, all purposively sampled for the analysis. Their selection was grounded in their reliability and direct relevance to the research objectives, specifically focusing on how overtourism is conceptualized and addressed within Amsterdam’s tourism discourse. In total, the study includes an analysis of 40 exemplary texts produced by the municipality of Amsterdam, the city’s destination marketing organization, Amsterdam & partners, and other relevant stakeholders, including media and stakeholders’ associations. The majority of these texts are accessible through the municipality’s official website or social media channels, while certain components, such as images from previous campaigns, like ‘Stay

Away', are sourced from external news articles (See Table Appendix A). The accessibility of data played a central role for the reliability and validity of the research findings, as well as allowing transparency and facilitating reproducibility of the study.

The rationale behind the inclusion of both *operational* and *promotional* texts was driven by the goal of gaining a holistic understanding of Amsterdam's tourism discourse. This approach allows for exploring various perspectives and strategies tourism authorities employ to tackle overtourism and mitigate tourist behaviors. Additionally, *interview* texts, served as a means of triangulation, corroborating the findings from the analysis of secondary sources with experts.

Operational texts are those generated as part of the organizational operations, such as tourism policies and marketing strategies documents, and offer valuable insights into the underlying strategic discourses and practices in managing tourism. On the other hand, *promotional* texts, including marketing material of different formats, including text, videos, images, and social media content, are designed for external communication and target potential tourists, shedding light into the strategies and messaging used to promote Amsterdam as a tourist destination, providing context for understanding the city's positioning and re-branding efforts. The paragraphs below provide a detailed list of all texts from secondary sources that were analyzed, along with an explanation of their selection for the purpose of the study.

Operational texts

Tourism Policies are the formal guidelines, regulations, and directives established directly by governmental or tourism authorities. Among the texts analyzed, the City Centre Implementation Program (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023) presenting an overview of overarching objectives, principles, and more than 80 measures in the plan to regulate and manage tourism activities, from visitor management, and urban planning to heritage conservation. Understanding their content and implementation enables the assessment of their effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes, such as balancing tourism growth with community well-being.

Marketing Strategies: As part of the measures and strategies anticipated in the policy documents and mission statements, this study analyses the marketing strategies devised by Amsterdam's tourism authorities to promote and market the destination. These texts include the plans, tactics, and activities that shape the destination image, elucidating the city's market positioning endeavours through branding initiatives and communication campaigns. These allow the analysis of how Amsterdam aims to differentiate its offerings, target specific segments, and, in the context of managing overtourism, how they dissuade or deter certain groups from engaging in particular types of tourism through demarketing strategies. Their analysis aims to reveal the city's extent of commitment to responsible tourism practices and degrowth.

Speech Transcripts and Press Releases: Written records of the mayor's public speeches are included in the analysis as direct access to key stakeholders and leaders' official perspectives. The

analysis focuses on uncovering the underlying motivations, agendas, and ideological frameworks that influence decision-making processes and shape public discourse on overtourism management. This study further reports the evaluation of the perception and efficacy of specific mitigation campaigns (see Promotional texts), drawing insights from diverse secondary sources such as new articles and press releases reporting direct quotes from the same authoritative figures. Ultimately, these texts are particularly insightful for identifying the discourses within the broader sociocultural and political context, thus specifically part of the analysis of the third dimension of Fairclough's analytical framework, sociocultural practices, explained further in the analysis section of this methodology.

Promotional texts

From the implementation of the marketing strategies, the study analyses published material of the communication campaigns, including videos, photos, and social media content. This analysis of these texts aims to gather insights into how Amsterdam portrays itself as a destination and communicates its unique selling points to visitors and potential visitors. The study focuses on the alignment between destination branding efforts and overtourism management strategies, observing the potential impact of these communication strategies on visitor behaviour and perceptions of the destination.

To begin, the study examines the video and images of the '*Enjoy and Respect*' (Amsterdam&partners, 2018), '*Desired Behavior*' (Gedeemte Amsterdam, 2021), '*Stay Away*' campaign (Gedeemte Amsterdam, 2023), '*Amsterdam Rules*' (2024), targeting male visitors between 18 and 34, coming to Amsterdam to party and engage in drugs and sex tourism activities. These campaigns are of particular interest for this study as they showcase the city's proactive approach in addressing specific challenges posed by overtourism, and targeted de-marketing efforts towards a specific demographic.

Subsequently, the study analyzes the recent change in strategic direction with the '*Renew your view*' (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024a) campaign, which aims to attract different types of visitors. This campaign encourages visitors to explore Amsterdam from a local perspective, promoting an alternative view of the city, away from transgressive behaviour, highlighting through different initiatives the experimental and creative nature of the city and its community (Symons, 2024). The analysis includes content from the official DMO's website 'I Amsterdam' regarding the campaign, as well as blog posts sharing visitors' tips, information about activities and recommendations (Amsterdam&partners, 2024).

Interview texts

Following the analysis of secondary sources, the study proceeded to incorporate interview texts derived from discussions with tourism experts. Three semi-structured interviews were carried out to cross-validate the findings, patterns, and conclusions drawn from the initial analysis. These expert interviews aimed to gather insights from individuals with expertise in Amsterdam's tourism contexts and overtourism regarding their perspectives on the primary challenges posed by overtourism in Amsterdam and the socio-economic implications of the city's mitigation strategies on the city and its residents.

Tailored their expertise, the semi-structured interviews solicited responses regarding the evaluation of policies and marketing strategies aimed at countering unwanted tourism, as well as sharing their thoughts on the implications of Amsterdam's shift towards a more cultural-oriented positioning and its alignment with principles of degrowth or pro-growth. Guided by interview guides (Appendix C), the discussions also delved into the most recent developments, including ongoing policy discussions surrounding decriminalizing and regulating hard drugs and their potential impact on tourism dynamics. Due to the lack of available secondary sources addressing this topic, which raises contradictions considering the measures against cannabis tourism and the associated reputation that Amsterdam wants to overcome, the interviews aimed to bridge this knowledge gap by gathering insights from field experts. Finally, the interviews gathered reflections on the future trajectory of Amsterdam's tourism sector, considering the challenges and opportunities associated with adopting degrowth or pro-growth principles and potential avenues for improvement.

To ensure the expertise of interviewees, the study employed purposive sampling, leveraging a network intermediary to reach candidates with the requisite knowledge and experience (Appendix B). As a result, the sample included a program manager for the city center, an academic expert in urban sociology who is also responsible for a community lab, and an expert in network sustainable tourism development.

Each interview lasted approximately one hour and, complying with the participants' preferences, was conducted remotely using Microsoft Teams, a videoconferencing platform that facilitates recording and subsequent transcription. Before the interviews, participants were provided with a consent form outlining the purpose of the study and their rights, including anonymity and assurances that interview texts would be treated with strict confidentiality and utilized solely for academic purposes.

2.3. Method of Analysis

The present study applies critical discourse analysis (CDA) to the tourism policy documents and official tourism promotional material. CDA is a widely recognized approach in qualitative social research, and particularly renewed in critical policy analysis for its ability to analyze the role of discourse in shaping social practices and power relations. Distinct to Thematic Analysis, which

systematically explores patterns and meaning within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006), CDA stimulates researchers to critically scrutinize the production, dissemination, and reception of discourse, thereby uncovering how discourse operates within broader social, political, and cultural dimensions (Van Dijk, 2015). For such reason, the method was considered most suitable to the research objective of exploring the underlying discursive strategies and influences shaping Amsterdam's tourism policies and practices.

Specifically to the analysis process, this study follows Fairclough's three dimensional framework, an analytical approach that view language as a form of social practice (2003). Developed by Norman Fairclough (2003), this framework guides the analysis across three interrelated dimensions of discourse, namely text and language, describing the actual content and structure of the texts, processing practices, interpreting the implications of how the text is reproduced, distributed and consumed, and sociocultural context, providing a broader consideration of the social, political, and cultural context in which the discourse is embedded. By applying these methodological strategies, the study aims to offer a comprehensive analysis of the discourse surrounding Amsterdam's tourism, highlighting the complex interplay between language, social practices, and power relations.

Additionally, the study employs deductive coding as an additional analytical strategy by integrating pre-existing concepts and frameworks derived by the theoretical framework, particularly the 6Ds & D-Ds framework (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019). This provides a more robust methodological approach to uncovering the alignment to degrowth or progrowth within the discourses that shape Amsterdam's tourism policies and practices, ultimately contributing in reaching the research objectives.

2.4. *Operationalization: Ds and 6D-Ds Framework Application*

Since the primary objective of this study is to evaluate how well Amsterdam's tourism management strategies align with degrowth principles, the 6Ds & 6D-Ds framework by Blanco-Romero et al. (2019), developed from Milano's (2018) prior 5Ds of pro-growth, is used as the conceptual framework to interpret and organize the data. Below are the definitions of each principle and their operationalization within this study, including an overview of the analytical focus, contextual information, and keywords applied throughout the coding process to assess the implementation, or lack thereof, of these strategies within Amsterdam's policies and initiatives.

Pro-growth Discourse (6Ds):

Deseasonalisation:

- *Definition:* Aims to spread tourist activity throughout the year to avoid peak season overcrowding (Milano, 2018)

- *Analytical focus*: Looking for specific initiatives aimed at attracting tourists during traditionally low seasons, such as winter festivals, off-season discounts, and promotional campaigns for non-peak periods.
- *Contextual clues*: mentions of extended operating hours for attractions, special events or festivals scheduled during the off-season, and targeted marketing campaigns aimed at promoting off-season travel.
- *Keywords*: “off-season,” “year-round,” and “seasonal events”

Decongestion

- *Definition*: Seeks to alleviate overcrowding in tourist hotspots by directing visitors to less frequented areas (Milano, 2018)
- *Analytical focus*: Examining strategies to alleviate overcrowding in central areas by promoting less popular sites, creating new attractions in suburban areas, and improving transportation links to these areas.
- *Contextual clues*: Policies and initiatives that encourage visitors to explore alternative locations outside the city center
- *Keywords*: “redistribute tourists,” “alternative destinations,” “less frequented areas,” “beat the crowd”, “explore surroundings”, “explore the region” “tourist spread.”

Decentralization

- *Definition*: Shifts control and responsibility of the tourism sector from government entities to private forms (Milano, 2018)
- *Analytical focus*: Evaluating the shift of control from government entities to private enterprises, and the involvement of local communities in tourism management. Analyze initiative’s audience reception and stakeholders engagement in decision-making and power relations.
- *Contextual clues*: Instances of public-private partnerships, community-led tourism initiatives, and policies that delegate authority to local stakeholders.
- *Keywords*: “Private sector involvement,” “public-private partnerships,” “community-based tourism,” “stakeholders engagement” and “local governance.”

Diversification

- *Definition*: Expands the range of tourism activities, services, and experiences to attract a broader audience (Milano, 2018)

- *Analytical focus*: Investigating the creation of diverse tourism products and experiences to appeal to different market segments and are distinct from the city's traditional tourist attractions.
- *Contextual clues*: Range of tourism activities targeting niche markets, and the introduction of new attractions catering to diverse interests.
- *Keywords*: "Varied tourism offerings," "niche markets," "cultural events," "unique experience," "cultural and artistic diversity," "educational and professional tourism," "shop diversity," and "diverse night-time activities"

Deluxe Tourism

- *Definition*: Involves enhancing the quality of tourism offerings and increasing prices to manage demand (Milano, 2018)
- *Analytical focus*: Assessing initiatives aimed at attracting affluent tourists, such as upscale accommodations, luxury tours, and high-end cultural events. Analyze the meaning of 'quality tourism' in the context of Amsterdam's policies and question experts about high-brow events (Biennale) and the contestations about upscale-gentrified atmosphere.
- *Contextual clues*: Pricing strategies that target high-quality and high-spending visitors, Increase tourist taxes, and marketing campaigns focused on luxury tourism.
- *Keywords*: "quality tourists", "high-spending tourists," "luxury tourism," "premium experiences," "boutique", "cheap entertainment" and "exclusive events."

Discredit Contestation

- *Definition*: Involves undermining opposing views against a pro-growth tourism approach, often labeled as "tourism-phobia." (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019)
- *Analytical focus*: Identifying efforts to undermine opposition to pro-growth tourism policies and managing public perception.
- *Contextual clues*: Public statements, media campaigns, and policy documents that address and counter criticism of tourism growth strategies.
- *Keywords*: "Counter arguments," "addressing criticism," "opposition to growth," and "tourismphobia."

Degrowth Discourse (6D-Ds):

Decommodification

- *Definition*: Shifts away from viewing tourism solely as an industry for profit, prioritizing broader social, cultural, and ecological interests (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019)

- *Analytical focus*: Evaluate policies and initiatives that prioritize cultural preservation, social benefits, and environmental sustainability over economic gain.
- *Contextual clues*: policies that limit commercial activities, promote local businesses, and enhance local identity, community-based tourism experiences.
- *Keywords*: “Reduce commercialization,” “local community interests,” and “non-commercial tourism.”

Deconsumerism

- *Definition*: Focuses on reducing the consumerist aspects of tourism and promoting responsible and mindful travel (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019)
- *Analytical focus*: Efforts to discourage excessive consumption and promote sustainable behaviors among tourists, specifically related to drug and sex tourism. Interview experts for opinion on future of tourism in the potential of hard-drugs decriminalization.
- *Contextual clues*: Analyzing marketing campaigns, educational programs, and policies that encourage responsible and sustainable tourist behavior.
- *Keywords*: “Reduce consumption,” “bans and restrictions”, “detrimental areas”, “sustainable behaviors,” and “ethical consumption.”

Detouristification & Retouristification

- *Definition*: Strives to reconstruct the tourism sector according to fairer social and environmental practices, while also reimagining tourism destinations (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019).
- *Analytical focus*: Efforts to redesign tourism spaces and practices based on fairer social and ecological practices and reduce
- *Contextual clues*: Reviewing policies to scale down tourism, promote sustainable practices, and restructure tourism activities.
- *Keywords*: “Reduce tourism scale,” “reconstruct tourism,” “fair social practices,” “greenery” and “scale-down tourism.”

Disparity Reduction & Collectivisation

- *Definition*: Aims to address inequalities in the distribution of benefits from tourism and ensure equitable access for all stakeholders (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019).
- *Analytical focus*: Measures such as community-based tourism initiatives and equitable access to resources.
- *Contextual clues*: Reviewing policies supporting community-based projects, equitable access to resources, affordable housing, cultural collaboration, and participatory governance.

- *Keywords*: “Equitable distribution,” “community benefits,” “local business stimulation,” “inclusivity” and “participatory governance”

Detailed Spatial Planning:

- *Definition*: Involves regulating and potentially reducing land use and coverage, with constraints on accommodation capacity and mobility infrastructures (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019).
- *Analytical focus*: Review spatial planning regulations and their impact on tourism infrastructure. Reflect on the effectiveness of these measures in controlling tourism growth and preserving urban spaces in relation to broader social issues, such as gentrification and housing shortage.
- *Contextual clues*: Regulatory frameworks for land use and policies that control the distribution of commercial activities to maintain social and cultural balance
- *Keywords*: “Land use regulation,” “zoning regulations,” “urban planning,” “affordable housing,” “livability enhancements” and “commercial control.”

Dignifying Working Conditions:

- *Definition*: Focuses on improving working conditions for tourism workers, including fair wages, a safe workplace, and respectful treatment (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019)..
- *Analytical focus*: Analyzing policies that foster social corporate responsibility and improve the working conditions of those employed in the tourism sector or adjacent industries.
- *Contextual clues*: Labor policies, employee welfare programs, and initiatives that ensure fair wages and safe working environments.
- *Keywords*: “Fair wages,” “safe working conditions,” “worker rights,” and “employee welfare.”

2.5. Research Limitations

Ensuring transparency and academic rigor, the present study acknowledges several methodological limitations in both the data collection and analysis methods.

Data Sources: The study predominantly relies on secondary data sources, with primary data limited to three expert interviews. This limited number of interviews may not fully capture the diverse perspectives of all stakeholders involved in Amsterdam’s tourism management, risking the omission of important information. Similarly, the purposive selection of the documents and other texts may overlook critical perspectives or additional nuances in the discourse.

Language Barriers: Some of the texts were collected in original language, Dutch, and submitted to a translation using ChatGPT, which, while given the absence of research funding results the most convenient and precise, may introduce translation inaccuracies or loss of context.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): this method of analysis is acknowledged by academics for being complex and requiring a deep understanding of context, language, and power dynamics for avoiding risks of oversimplification or misinterpretation of discourses (Van Dijk, 2015). Given the broad landscape of policy making in Amsterdam and the focus on text analysis, the analysis might overlook non-textual factors that shape the broader context of policy decisions, from institutional dynamics, economic constraints, politics, and cultural norms (Fairclough, 2003). To address these implications, the study also relies on multiple data sources to analyze the audience's reception and broader social context, including grassroots perspectives from local residents and small business owners through fragments of interviews in news articles and union letters (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland. 2024)

Subjectivity and Interpretivism: The interpretivist paradigm inherently involves subjective interpretations, which can introduce researcher bias. Therefore, both the operationalization and the analysis and of this study heavily rely on the researcher's perspective, which may lead to discrepancies in how the theoretical concepts are practically interpreted and measured, potentially leading to different conclusions.

3. Analysis and Discussion

3.1. Issues of Carrying Capacity and Livability

Within the context of carrying capacity, the Amsterdam model maps the correlation between tourism and livability in urban residential areas by focusing on specific parameters and indicators. Quantitative parameters include tourism pressure on residential areas, measured by the number of attractions, tourist accommodations, Airbnb listings, coffee shops, sidewalks with limited walking space, and foreign card transactions. Meanwhile, qualitative indicators analyze tourism-related livability, such as perceived safety, social cohesion, nuisances caused by tourists and short-term rentals, pollution, public drunkenness, overcrowding, and grocery offerings (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2021). Results from the carrying capacity report 2021 commissioned by the City Center Approach indicate how the livability scores in traditionally high-pressure neighborhoods considerably improved during the COVID-19 pandemic when tourist flows were drastically reduced due to travel limitations (Federova et al., 2022). This period served as a wake-up call for the city, highlighting the issues provoked by tourism and the potential for improvement when tourism pressure is managed.

Issues of overtourism in Amsterdam are often associated with nuisance behavior provoked by party tourists that chose this destination for its party, drugs and sex tourism offers. Next to its rich cultural heritage, Amsterdam is internationally known for its liberal reputation and tolerance, with its

iconic Red Light District and its window prostitution, thriving gay scene, and relaxed attitude toward recreational drug use becoming a magnet for tourists from around the world seeking for unconventional experiences (Gerritsma, 2019). While these unique characteristics of Amsterdam have made it one of the most visited city in the world, its surge of popularity exacerbated by the raise of global tourism (Dodds & Butler, 2019a) have provoked great pressure on its infrastructure and residents' wellbeing, also perceived as a "tourist-tsunami" (Gerritsma, 2019). While some residents take pride in their free spirit and neighborhoods' attractiveness to tourists, others feel irritation due to overcrowding, excessive noise, littering, and safety concerns, particularly in the city center, urging need for improved urban governance (Gerritsma & Vork, 2017).

Today, as grappling with these issues, the city has announced intentions to redesign the visitor economy by creating a balanced and sustainable tourism industry through urban development, community engagement, and rebranding through cultural enhancement. Highlighting the urgent need to decrease the number of tourists (Vision 2035), and recognizing the limits of the current growth-oriented model, Amsterdam demonstrates supports to the degrowth paradigm. Specifically, referring to Dwyer's (2023) categorization, the analysis of Amsterdam's tourism strategy reveals alignment with both physical and consumption degrowth, aiming to reduce consumption levels and eliminate non-essential areas that are often considered as detrimental and harmful for the city, particularly those associated alcohol, drugs and sex tourism.

Based on the 4Ps framework, Amsterdam adjusts its tourism offerings (product) by reducing ecologically and socially destructive activities (Dwyer, 2023) and enhancing local identity. The city plans to remove and redistribute certain attractions from the city center, redirecting tourism flows (place). It increases tourist taxes and shifts its focus to attracting 'quality tourists' (price). Additionally, Amsterdam shifts its tourism promotion away from the transgressive reputation of 'where everything is possible' (promotion). These categories - product, place, price, and promotion- form the basis of the analysis. These themes were identified as the most relevant to the research goals and were the most dominant discourses in the documents analyzed.

Drawing from the critical discourse analysis of the municipality of Amsterdam's policy documents, marketing strategies, relevant secondary sources, and insights from expert interviews, this chapter comprehensively examines the complex issues related to overtourism in Amsterdam and the measures taken to address them. It explores whether Amsterdam's tourism strategy genuinely embraces the degrowth principles while balancing social and economic sustainability by critically exploring potential contradictions between the theoretical policy objectives and practical consequences that often lean toward pro-growth (Butler & Dodds, 2022; Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019).

3.2. Product and Price: Restrictions & Revitalization ('quality boost')

As emerges from the the texts Amsterdam tourism strategy today is focused on redesigning its tourism offerings, aiming to eliminate unwanted commercial activities that adversely affect residents' well-being, while revitalizing the city with a diverse range of activities.

3.2.1. *Restricting Specific Activities*

Multiple manouvers of the City Center Approach (Gedeempte Amsterdam, 2023), indicate Amsterdam's tourism strategy focuses on restricting specific activities to manage tourist flows and mitigate disturbance, monoculture and overcrowding. The plan specifically targets 'undermining activities,' referring to illegal practices that exploit the community's economic and social structure, highlighting a commitment to physical degrowth and eliminating detrimental areas (Dwyer, 2023). For instance, Mayor Halsema (2022) noted that many souvenir shops are connected to illegal businesses and money laundering, underscoring the need for stricter controls and improved real estate quality to ensure neighborhood safety and integrity.

One of the city's primary goals is to reclaim public spaces for local community use and reduce the monoculture of low-value tourist-centric activities (Gedeempte Amsterdam, 2022; 2023). To achieve this, the city enforces zoning regulations to maintain control over the spatial organization of commercial activities and social function, preventing the concentration of mass-tourism-oriented businesses through stricter verifications of the alignment of each business to their designated purpose (Detailed Spatial Planning). On a social level, plans involve construction of a new image built according to fairer social practices, attentive to residents' wellbeing and demands, as for example initiatives for mixed-used development by improving living spaces above shops, and enforcement of regulation and reduction of housing tourist rental and short-term accommodations, addressing issues of housing shortage. Culturally, fighting the overshadowing of excessive touristification and the so called 'nutella shops', perceived as inauthentic and turning the city into a theme park, pioritizing instead the preservation of historical and cultural assets, including actions of adaptive reuse of heritage buildings (Stadsgoed NV, n.d.; Stadsherstel Amsterdam, n.d.; NV Zeedijk, n.d.). And ecologically, efforts to green public spaces and improve waste management practices demonstrate commitment to enhancing aesthetic appeal and promoting environmental sustainability (Gedeempte Amsterdam, 2023). Ultimately, this approach prioritises social and cultural interests over profit, benefiting both residents and visitors who wish to experience the 'real Amsterdam' rather than being confined to a tourist-bubble (Amsterdam&partners, 2024b; Gedeempte Amsterdam, 2023), thus aligning with degrowth principles of Decommodification and Detouristification (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019).

From the analysis it emerged that the municipality wields strong power in determining the spatial distribution of business activities and influencing the character of the neighbourhood. By

setting specific regulatory framework for each building, entrepreneurs and property owners are called to cooperate and expected to prioritise the broader goals of the urban plan of a diverse commercial landscape, over their individual interests. Property owners, for instance, are demanded to pay strong attention to their decisions regarding tenant selections (Gedeempte Amsterdam, 2023), thereby diminishing their individual market influence and decision-making authority.

Other measures targeting the reduction of tourism-oriented activities include limiting large group tours and disembarkation facilities in the city center to reduce congestion and nuisance; the expanded ban on guided tours, prohibits groups of more than fifteen participants and requires exception permit for groups larger than four, costing €212,30 (Gedeempte Amsterdam, 2023; 2024). This regulation, along with the prohibition of tours along sex workers' windows, aims to decommodify cultural heritage sites and limit commercial activities that contribute to overtourism and overcrowding. These measures also restrict the use of speakers, megaphones, and shouting, and ban pub crawls often organized for bachelor parties (Gedeempte Amsterdam, 2023; 2023a; Namens et al., 2020). This approach reveal an exclusionary strategy, targeting both party tourists, such as those attending bachelor parties and pub crawls, as well as long-haul tourists from countries like China, Japan, and India, who typically visit European cities through organized bus tours (Dodds & Butler, 2019). The focus is on quality over quantity, appealing to experienced travelers who wish to explore the city and its diverse offerings independently, rather than in large, organized groups. Additionally, the city is implementing a pilot project to limit boarding and disembarkation facilities for canal cruises aiming to regulate and reduce the impact of mass tourism on the waterways and surrounding areas, aiming to manage the spatial impacts of tourism activities and infrastructures more effectively.

A critical analysis suggests how these product strategies connect directly to pricing strategies. The financial implications of these restrictions mean that guided tours may become more exclusive. For instance, assuming the tax charged to the consumer, this would imply a fairly high cost for a guided tour, already around 100 euros per person for 2-hours private tours (Get Your Guide,2024), deterring less-affluent visitors. Similarly, the reduction in the supply of the canal cruises may lead to increased prices, again making the experience more exclusive for those willing to pay the higher prices, shifting towards forms of Deluxe tourism (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019). According to Blanco-Romero et al. (2023), these Deluxe tourism strategies often involve increasing the costs of tourism products and services, limiting access to those who can afford them and ultimately prioritizing economic value and profitability over inclusivity. Therefore, while these manouvers may serve as a deterrent for some tourists and favor degrowth, simultaneously they highlight tensions in managing tourism's impact and ensuring equitable access to tourist experience.

3.2.2. *Revitalization*

Today, the city is committed to rebuilding a more appealing destination image to align more closely to its core identity and cultural assets, and that would attract respectful visitors interested in Amsterdam's unique history and culture. To do so, strategic policies and marketing maneuvers intend to reshape the supply side of the visitor economy by endorsing entrepreneurs whose business activities contribute significantly to the city's heritage, quality of life, diversity of establishments, and local identity (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021).

Amsterdam's strategy for addressing overtourism focuses on revitalizing neighborhoods by strengthening area profiles and giving them a 'quality boost'. Initiatives like the in areas like the Utrechsestraat, Haarlemmerbuurt, Nieuwendijk and Red Light District focus on restoring the unique cultural identity by enhancing shop diversity, encouraging local artisans, creative spaces and reprofiling public spaces (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023). A key aspect of this strategy is to promote establishment diversity to improve livability and preserving the cultural identity of shopping areas, particularly targeting monoculture and fostering a vision that reflects the unique characteristics of each street. By incorporating inputs of property owners, entrepreneurs and residents, Amsterdam aims for a sustainable urban development, underlining the importance of tailored interventions (bot a one-fits-all approach) and collaborative partnerships to improve space image and functionality (Amsterdam&partners, 2021; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021; 2022).

This approach demonstrates an overarching alignment with degrowth principles of Decommodification and Detouristification (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019), emphasizing the broader social benefits over economic gains and rebuilding the sector according to fairer and sustainable models. Nonetheless, the analysis of the revitalization approach also uncovered pro-growth oriented maneuvers, indicating a blend of both degrowth and expansionistic strategies in the city's overall tourism management plan.

In line with the partners' recommendations in the Vision 2025 (Gemeente Amsterdam (2022) Amsterdam is rebranding itself with a focus on cultural and artistic diversity, aiming to construct a new image that attracts niche markets. For example, initiative highlighted in the City Centre Approach (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023) highlights the research on 'sense of home' in collaboration with organizations and universities striving to enrich the city center's cultural and intellectual landscape, providing alternatives beyond traditional tourist attractions. These focus on passing along a new image of Amsterdam, sharing and being testimonials of new narratives, including migration, decolonization, and slavery (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). Plans also include for diverse night-time activities and cultural events spread across the city to appeal to various tourist demographics. By creating more spaces for cultural expressions in nightlife and providing affordable workspaces for artists, such as rehearsal spaces and studio for culturally underrepresented artists, Amsterdam aims to

contribute to a vibrant and creative scene, thus enhancing its image as a cultural and artistic hub and a boost to the night economy (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022).

Additionally, the city is committed to expanding educational and professional tourism, promoting Amsterdam as a destination for educational trips and developing the city's conferences landscape (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023). The latter highlights a focus on working visitors, seen in the long run as contributing to the overall entrepreneurial ecosystem, positioning Amsterdam as the European hub for innovation and knowledge sharing (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022).

Analyzed under the 6Ds-6Dds framework (Blanco-Romero, et al., 2019), Amsterdam's revitalization initiatives align with the pro-growth principle of Diversification. In fact, through these initiatives Amsterdam not only diversifies the city's cultural offerings to match its desired positioning, but also contributes to the expanding the pool of attractions. From a marketing standpoint, this can be seen as product differentiation, where neighborhoods develop distinct touristic offers based on their unique qualities and identities, including museums, attractions, shops, and hospitality. For example, redevelopment projects in the Artis Zoo area may attract families, while the Noord district appeals to younger demographics with its urban spirit and street arts. This approach strengthen area profiles by offering unique experiences, enhancing attractiveness and binding specific segmentations to these areas, supporting also place strategies and Decongestion (pro-growth), spreading attractions in lesser-known areas to alleviate pressure on the city center (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019).

Additionally, a critical observation on the meaning of 'Quality boost' may reveal contrasting developments. While the term suggests current dissatisfaction with the streets' image, the texts lack clarity on what types of substitute shops or housing the city aims to offer. This ambiguity raises questions about the definitions of 'quality' and 'diversity' intended by the city council, and whether these plans indicate a shift toward pro-growth Deluxe tourism. For example, plans for area revitalization include the proposal to organize a Red Light District Biennale 2025, an international art exhibition referencing to the Venice Biennale (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023). Such explicit reference may underscore the ambition to attract a similar high-end audience, and diversify tourism offerings with a highbrow cultural event, thus raising concerns about potential upscale transformations. However, responding to these concerns, Expert B, the program manager for the city center, clarified that the event would contrast with the perceptions of elitism often associated with similar international events, rather aiming to reflect the area's character and spotlight local artists who are deeply rooted in the community, supporting a more grounded and participatory cultural scene.

Despite these assurances, concerns remain about the potential upscale urban transformation in the Red Light District, where boutique shops, galleries, and hipster cafes might replace sex workers. As one activist stated, "If we let the mayor have her way, the Red Light District will soon look just like the Nine Streets: a swept clean shopping centre for people with money" (AT5, 2024). This comparison underscores the fear that such revitalization may favor wealthier residents and businesses, which, given the already high real estate prices, may further exacerbate gentrification and social

equity. Without overarching measures to control the real estate market, this situation could further widen existing disparities, increasing the gap between different socioeconomic groups.

3.3. Place: Redistribution and Decongestion

As previously mentioned, for alleviating the pressure on the city center and reduce congestion Amsterdam strives include the redistribution of tourist activities and benefits more evenly across the city. Initiatives include the development of new attractions in suburban areas, the promotion of alternative destinations in the region, as well as relocation of specific tourist-magnet activities, specifically sex work venues in the Red Light district, to manage tourist flows and localize the impact of sex tourism.

3.3.1. Alternative Destinations

As highlighted in the Vision of Tourism 2035 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022), by revitalizing neighborhoods and developing lesser-known areas, Amsterdam plans for the development of cultural attractions in the suburban areas, including a modern art museum, theatres, art and culture center, and nightlife clusters, with the commitment to spread visitors across these new culture hubs and becoming a polycentric metropolis, working in collaboration with other municipalities (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021). This approach aligns with Diversification and Decongestion (Blanco-Romero, et al., 2019) efforts by spreading tourist activities beyond central areas and into the outskirts, thereby alleviating pressure on the city center and promoting more balanced regional development.

This strategy is part of a broader effort to expand Amsterdam's touristic borders, inviting visitors to explore nearby locations. For instance, initiatives such as promoting Amstelveen as 'Amsterdam Forest', Zandvoort as 'Amsterdam Beach' (Hospers, 2019), and The Hague through the 2018 campaign 'From Capital City to Court City' (Sibijns & Vanneste, 2021) promote tourist distribution across the region. Additionally, the clear branding of the destinations underscores the aim to cater to different tourist demands, such as nature, beaches, and cultural experiences. As previously discussed, this aligns with the strategic differentiation of tourist offerings, fostering segmentation and nichification of the visitor economy.

Previous research highlights how that these collaborations involve destinations that do not suffer from overtourism and actively seek tourism growth (Isherwood, 2020). Therefore, this approach addresses the capital's overcrowding issue by facilitating a fairer distribution of benefits, aligning with the degrowth principle of Disparity Reduction & Collectivization. This principle aims to address inequalities in the distribution of tourism benefits and ensure equitable access for all stakeholders (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019), which in this case, would ensure multiple communities benefits from tourism rather than concentrating advantages in the capital. However, scholars emphasize that merely redirecting and promoting new attractions may not be a long-term solution for overtourism if overall

inbound tourism remains unchanged; instead, it could contribute to shifting the issue to another destination, provoking a negative spill-over effect (Bo et al., 2017; Capocchi et al., 2019). Therefore, a more extended and cooperative strategy involving the surrounding stakeholders is necessary (Sibijns & Vanneste, 2021; Yuval, 2021), along with considerations of the dynamic interactions between megaprojects, tourism, and gentrification (Hubscher, 2021).

3.3.2. *Relocation of Specific Attractions: The Erotic Centre*

To manage the impact of sex tourism, Amsterdam has proposed the relocation of sex work venues outside of the historical Red Light District to a new dedicated facility in Amsterdam Zuid, known as the Erotic Center (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023). This initiative is particularly interesting for this study as its analysis presents a strong duality between degrowth and pro-growth principles, depending on the perspective—from the Wallen area's alleviation from tourism pressures to the development of the Erotic Center itself.

While on one hand, from the perspective of the Wallen area, the proposal aligns with Decommodification and Detouristification efforts (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019). While window prostitution attracts many tourists and brings high economic returns to local hospitality establishments, the shift aims to prioritize community well-being over profit-driven motives. Establishing a dedicated space for sex tourism outside the traditional tourist area aims to reduce the area's appeal to specific tourist demographics known for causing disturbances, as well as casual visitors drawn out of curiosity. This strategic move fosters a more livable environment for local residents while enhancing the tourist experience by decongesting some areas and redirecting traffic to alternative destinations.

On the other hand, the development of a new, peripheral, upscaled facility, highlights elements of Diversification, Decongestion, and Deluxe tourism. Sex establishments in the Wallen area have a strong magnet function and are part of the economic tourist-oriented system. Their relocation to the Erotic Center could direct visitors to less crowded areas, enhancing the overall tourism experience through decongestion. The new, regulated Erotic Center aims to attract a more controlled and upscale sex tourism market that goes beyond prostitution, including boutiques, hospitality, and cinemas (Moke Architecten, 2022). It thus aligns with the aim to enhance the quality of tourism offerings, offering an expanded, higher-quality, and probably higher-price visitor experience - underlying not only elements of Deluxe tourism, but also a stronger reiteration of the city's reputation as a sex-tourism destination, yet with a more luxury-exclusive oriented positioning.

Still under project, the Erotic Center proposal has sparked many controversy among stakeholders, including sex workers and their advocates. While the Erotic Center proposal includes improved working conditions and safety measures for sex workers, Expert C, notes that the current arrangement in the Red Light District is considered safe by sex workers due to the mutual aid system in place, expressing skepticism about its relocation, which may disrupt this system and potentially

drive sex workers into the unregulated market, increasing their vulnerability to violence and exploitation. Suppose prostitutes will not feel safe in a more isolated location. In that case, this may have a consequence on the broader social scale, as they might decide to work in the unregulated market, and leading to increased vulnerability to violence and incidents reporting (Expert C, 2024).

While the city council is deciding the location for the Erotic Center, local initiatives spokespersons argue that the Red Light District remains the most suitable place for sex workers, protesting the proposed relocation, defined as a 'erotic prison' (AT5, 2024). Here it developed organically and finds its historical roots. The presence of brothels in the Wallen district dates back to the 13th century, thus representing an integral part of Amsterdam's historical and cultural identity (Deinema & Aalbers, 2012). Rather than pushing it away, they protest its safeguarding and protection, with the implementation of better strategies on distribution and crowd management. Night mayor Freek Wallagh (in AT5, 2024) states, "*The area where sex workers can be found has been reduced to a single street, so that the masses that used to be spread over an area are now pushed into a single street,*" highlighting that tourism, not the sex industry, is to blame for unlivable conditions for residents. Phoebe of the Prostitution Information Center adds 'They have the wrong focus and the wrong scapegoat', highlighting that other cities without a Red Light District also suffer from overcrowding, suggesting the focus is misplaced.

3.4. Promotion: Curbing Misbehaviour through De-marketing Campaigns

Setting limits by manipulating the image of the location through demarketing and de-promotion is key to Amsterdam's strategy. In response to the challenges of overtourism and its associated nuisances, in recent years Amsterdam municipality, alongside tourism stakeholders, has implemented a suite of measures and campaigns aimed at discouraging excessive partying and misbehavior in favor of a more respectful and sustainable tourism environment.

Measures listed in the City Centre Approach (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023) include banning of specific activities like pub crawls and beer bikes, regulating alcohol and drug consumption in certain areas and enforcing stricter penalties for violations to directly impact consumer behavior. Specifically in the Wallen area, which include the Red Light District, measures to address late-night tourism related nuisance include early closing times for bars at 2 a.m, with limitations in admitting new guests by 1 a.m., and closing window brothels at 3 a.m. This area is the most sensitive area of the city center, due to its high concentration of these specific commercial activities, making it a magnet for certain types of tourists, which negatively impacts residents' perceived levels of livability (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022, 2023, 2023a).

Additional measures to reduce the 'monoculture' in central areas by regulating commercial activities and reducing the drug-related image in retail, such as continuing the souvenir shop task force with a focus on eliminating the sale of illegal drug paraphernalia (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023).

These efforts align with the degrowth principles of deconsumerism and detouristification, striving to reconstruct the touristic offer according to fairer social and legal practices. By addressing aspects of tourism that contribute to negative social perceptions and behaviors, such as illegal drug sales and consumption, helps reimagine the destination in a way that aligns with fairer social practices and improves the city's reputation. These regulations also target the connection between street dealers and party tourists, as the latter often make up a significant portion of the former's clientele. Therefore, reducing the influx of party tourists is expected to positively impact mitigating street dealer issues, leading to their structural reduction.

Efforts also include promoting mindful travel and educational programs by implementing behavioral and dissuasion campaigns (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023). These campaigns aim to encourage visitors to engage in sustainable and respectful behavior by informing and educating them about local norms and regulations, thus contributing to a more livable and positive tourism environment in Amsterdam.

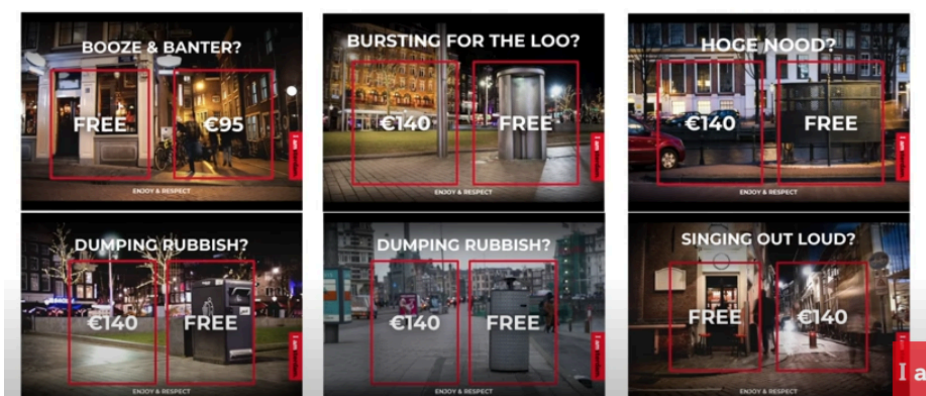
Ultimately, these regulations and campaigns aim to deter unwanted visitor behavior, change Amsterdam's party-town reputation, and prioritize social and sustainable interests. As a result of applying Fairclough's three-dimensional model (2003), the following paragraphs delve deeper into the behavioral campaigns, focusing on the language and meanings of the texts, the production, distribution and reception of the campaign, as well as their sociocultural context and impact. To follow, the analysis presents a greater focus on the measures aimed at contrasting drug and sex tourism, highlighting further incongruences and contradictions.

3.5. Behavioral Campaigns

3.5.1. 'Enjoy & Respect' Campaign

Figure 2

Enjoy & Respect Campaign



Note: From Amsterdam&partners, 2018, I amsterdam [Video].

The ‘Enjoy & Respect’ campaign, launched in May 2018, aimed to “increase awareness about what is or is not allowed in the city, presenting good behavior as freedom of choice” (Amsterdam&partners. 2018). Visitors are presented with choices through contrasting visuals that depict acceptable behavior (e.g. drinking in a bar or using a public toilet) with the word ‘Free’, and unacceptable behavior (e.g. street drinking, urinating on the street) associated with specific monetary fines. This side-by-side comparison reinforces the message of unacceptable behavior, clearly illustrating the consequences of actions, raising awareness of social norms, legal regulations, and penalties for disrespecting public space, and encouraging responsible tourism and mutual respect.

Although acknowledging the heterogeneity of the ‘nuisance visitors’, the Municipality identifies a certain demographic that creates the most disturbance: male visitors 18-34 years old from the Netherlands and the UK (Amsterdam&partners, 2018). Produced by Amsterdam Marketing in collaboration with industry stakeholders, the campaign was distributed through multiple channels to reach the target audience at various points of their journey, both online (during booking) and offline (on location), with tactical placemaking ensuring that the message is seen and reinforced at critical moments. Additionally, the municipality encouraged residents' engagement and active participation, allowing them to display posters and contribute to the narrative of respect and mutual enjoyment (Amsterdam&partners. 2018).

Overall, the campaign highlights a clear dichotomy between respectful visitors who enjoy Amsterdam culture respectfully and problematic ones drawn to the city for excessive partying and negatively impacting the city’s liveability. Positive values like freedom, respect, enjoyment, and livability are thus contrasted with negative issues such as public disturbance and misconduct. The dichotomy is further emphasized through the use of inclusive pronouns “we” and “everyone”, as opposed to “they” and “this type of behavior” referring to problematic visitors. Further linguistic analysis highlights the use of direct language to convey authority: “we are taking action” and softer approaches like “we want visitors to behave,” fostering a sense of responsibility and community.

As emphasized in the video explanation of the campaign, the core message centers on the notion of freedom, highlighting that while in Amsterdam, freedom is synonymous with free expression - being who you want and saying what you think - freedom is fundamentally contingent on mutual respect (Amsterdam&partners. 2018). This approach connects with idea of regulated ‘freedom’ envisioned in Vision 2035 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022), welcoming visitors to enjoy the city within a framework that respects local norms and laws.

3.5.2. *‘Desired Behavior’ Campaign*

A similar approach to educating and raising awareness among visitors about acceptable behavior emerges in the subsequent rollout of the ‘Enjoy & Respect’ campaign, with further initiatives

like the ‘Desired Behavior’ campaign implemented during the first relaxation of the corona measures in 2021 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021).

Designed to reach the target group, specifically male Dutch and foreign visitors aged 18-34, through both online and offline components, the ‘Desired Behavior’ campaign aims to influence visitor conduct by showing messages and images featuring residents of the city center who express their expectations for visitor behavior (Gedeemte Amsterdam, 2021). For instance, visitors could see a photo of a resident named Mark, asking him to be considerate of his sleeping daughter, with the message ending in a friendly "Cheers, Mate." Photos featuring presumed local residents (Figure 3) personalize the message, making it more relatable and impactful.

Moreover, residents are encouraged to display these images, emphasizing the municipality’s efforts to foster community participation. This initiative serves as a form of grassroots involvement, legitimizing the municipality’s actions through collective effort and community engagement.

Figure 3

‘Desired Behavior’ Campaign - Poster



Image poster English campaign. Please Be Quiet.

Note: From Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021

Additional material is distributed throughout the central neighborhoods with physical signs and stickers to point out desired behavior, such as indicating alcohol ban regulations and fines for urinating in public (Figure 4). Phrases like ‘Please use a urinal’ and ‘Be quiet’ emphasize basic, civil behavior, which visitors often lack to observe. Ultimately, the term ‘Desired behavior’ suggests

specific, accepted ways to behave in the city center, thus, the campaign aims to re-socialize visitors by educating them on expected conduct.

Figure 4

'Desired Behavior' Campaign - sign



Note: From Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021

As with the 'Enjoy & Respect' campaign, this campaign also emphasizes the distinction between desirable and undesirable visitors, distinguishing those who respect local norms from those who engage in inappropriate behaviors. This dichotomy establishes social norms and reinforces the municipality's efforts to attract a certain type of tourist while deterring those who do not.

The campaign is situated in the context of the relaxation of Covid-19 measures, a transitional period for the municipality where the return of visitors was perceived both as an opportunity and a challenge (Snijders, 2020) reflecting the need to balance economic recovery with maintaining public order and quality of life.

By attracting 'respectful visitors' while making it harder for those who 'only come to party,' the campaign highlights an exclusionary aspect, which can be associated with the intentional degrowth of detrimental sectors and tourist groups (Dwyer, 2023). Conversely, the city openly welcomes 'respectful visitors' who contribute positively to the local economy and cultural sector (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021). This selective inclusion highlights the city's acknowledgment of the economic benefits of visitor return yet shapes the city's visitor profile according to specific criteria of respectability.

3.5.3. Reception Behavioral Campaigns

Despite the municipality's efforts to manage tourism demand and enhance the quality of the tourism experience by addressing nuisance behaviour through demarketing strategies, their execution raises critical issues and controversies. When analyzed within the 6Ds-6Dds framework (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019), the approach ostensibly aligns with the degrowth principle of

Detouristification-Retouristification, striving to reconstruct the tourism sector based on fairer social practices. This approach not only seeks to reduce the negative impacts of tourism but encourages a shift towards more mindful and less consumptive forms of tourism, reinforcing the city's commitment to sustainable practices and ultimately attracting more respectful and culturally engaged visitors.

Targeted measures and campaigns address longstanding issues in busy urban areas, particularly the Red Light District and entertainment areas, known for attracting large crowds and associated nuisances, with the final objective to manage these spaces to create a more livable environment for residents. By dissuading specific tourist demographics from visiting the city, and educating them on appropriate behavior, they underscore Amsterdam's commitment to enhancing livability, mitigating nuisance, as well as a concerted effort to rehabilitate Amsterdam's reputation.

However, although these campaigns have partly succeeded in increasing awareness among the target group, experts and locals remain skeptical about the branding approach and the aim of attracting the 'right type' of tourists. As Koens (in Gerretsen, 2021) highlighted, the underlying messaging of the 'Enjoy & Respect' and 'Behavioral Campaign' invite visitors to 'grow up', clashing with Amsterdam's historical image of tolerance and openness. By repeating emphasis on the respect of basic, civil behavior, these campaigns reinforce the portrayal of tourists and inherently immature and irresponsible - needing to be educated- highlighting a patronizing tone that not only may offend and alienate visitors, but also undermines the city's reputation for openness and tolerance.

Moreover, the focus on promoting tourism to those who are more likely to engage in cultural, economic, and socially beneficial activities may inadvertently continue to support pro-growth models. Residents and academics have raised concerns that this approach fosters a more elitist image of Amsterdam (Gerretsen, 2021). Marketing strategies focusing on deterring 'nuisance, low-budget tourists' drawn by the city's liberal reputation, aim at replacing them with affluent 'quality' tourists attracted by the city's diverse cultural heritage (Pinkster & Boterman, 2017). When paired with increased tourism taxes that affect lower-priced accommodations (Buckley, 2019), this strategy risks transforming the city into a 'deluxe' tourism destination, making it more exclusive.

While the campaigns align with the degrowth principles of Detouristification and Deconsumerism (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019)- steering away from purely commercial tourism that prioritizes profit over community well-being and educate tourists on more thoughtful and less consumption-driven approach to tourism - the stigmatization and potential alienation of tourists, the perpetuation of elitist tourism models, and the clash with Amsterdam's historical values of tolerance and openness suggest a reevaluation of these strategies.

3.6. Discouragement Campaigns

3.6.1. Stay Away Campaign

Figure 5

Stay Away Campaign



Note: From Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023n in The Independent

The ‘Stay Away’ campaign is a targeted initiative by Amsterdam’s municipal authorities launched in March 2023 to dissuade negative visitor behavior by highlighting the severe consequences of not respecting the city’s rules (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023b)

The campaign is distributed through trigger-responsive online advertisements targeting the demographic of British males aged 18-34 before they arrive in Amsterdam. These ads appear when potential visitors search for terms like “pub crawls Amsterdam,” “stag party in Amsterdam,” and “getting drunk in Amsterdam” on Google, employing a short, directive, and straightforward message: “Stay Away”.

The communication leaves no room for ambiguity, structured by first addressing potential behaviors or expectations, such as “coming for a messy night” and “getting trashed”, and then presenting the consequences of such actions, like a “€140 fine”, “criminal record” “fewer prospects”, all visually reinforced with images of a young man being arrested by the police, culminating in the directive to ‘Stay Away’.

The change of tone from the previous communication is evident. Unlike the “Cheers Mate” from the “Desired Behavior” campaign, which attempted to communicate rules in a familiar and friendly manner, the ‘Stay Away’ campaign adopts a much stricter and direct approach to enforce the city’s regulations. This shift must be considered within the social and historical context of the pandemic. After experiencing a dramatic reduction in tourist numbers, residents realized the extent of the negative impact certain tourist behaviors had on the city, feeling a renewed sense of livability and wellbeing, intensifying the desire for more stringent measures against disruptive tourism (Gemeente

Amsterdam, 2023). A strategy that City official Alderman Sofyan Mbarki defines as a proactive stance against excessive nuisance and efforts to regulate tourist behavior (Juinen, 2023).

Critiques and Observations on 'Stay Away' campaign

Since its launch, the 'Stay Away' campaign videos have garnered significant local and international attention (Boztsas, 2023; Burbano, 2023; Juinen, 2023; Moses, 2023). The audience reception of the campaign suggests mixed engagement and has been scrutinized by different stakeholders for their approach and effectiveness in reaching and altering perceptions and behaviors among the target group. While some stakeholders acknowledge the problematic behavior associated with the demographic, including British tourists themselves who recognize the issues of disruption associated to some of their con-nationals portrayed in the campaign, others question its ability to effect change and consider the approach as overly harsh, alarmist and shortsighted (Boztsas, 2023; Moses, 2023).

Hospitality stakeholders like Marco Lemmers of Conscious Hotels raise business concerns on the campaign, thinking this could potentially harm the city's broader image and tourism industry. Lemmers suggest instead the need of a more positive and lighter approach, as "shouldn't act like everyone who comes here for a wedding is a criminal" (as quoted in Boztsas, 2023), also pointing out the hypocrisy in targeting British tourists while ignoring similar negative behaviors exhibited by Dutch tourists in other popular destinations, such as Costa Brava in Spain. Observed more broadly, this raises important issues about stigmatization and a sense of superiority, as it suggests a double standard where local behaviors abroad are overlooked while foreign behaviors at home are heavily scrutinized. Ultimately this approach may risk alienating potential visitors and perpetuating negative stereotypes of specific nationalities as well as contributing in raising feeling of tourism-phobia among the local population exacerbated by media sensationalism. As observed by Papathanassis (2017), media sensationalism tend to amplify negative incidents involving tourists, creating distorted perception of the scale and nature of the issue. This type of reporting or targeted messaging can lead to heightened sense of threat and resentment towards tourists, therefore further complicating efforts to manage tourism inclusively and sustainably (Papathanassis, 2017).

Additionally, both tourists and industry stakeholders exhibit significant skepticism regarding the campaign's effectiveness in altering Amsterdam's party city image, particularly among the targeted demographic. Interviews with De Telegraaf (2023) revealed that targeted visitors remain unaware of the campaign, ignoring the message and plan to continue to visit Amsterdam for fun, questioning whether the city truly intends to drive away all visitors. Another commented: "Amsterdam is a party city, ongoing, where you can enjoy yourself... as long as the spirit of the city remains, the partying will never stop" (De Telegraaf, 2023), thus emphasizing that as long as the city's vibrant spirit and unique entertainment offers persists, the partying will continue. These responses highlight the challenges in shifting Amsterdam's perception among those who visit for 'uncultural'

activities, results evidenced also by the first official evaluation of the campaign, which suggests that while it has raised both national and international awareness, it has not yet achieved substantial behavioral change, nor reduced its appeal to UK's party tourists (NL Times, 2024).

3.6.2. *Amsterdam Rules Quiz*

As the effects of the 'Stay Away' campaign remain under ongoing examination, authorities recognize the need for more specific messaging and broader reach. Subsequently, the second phase of this discouragement campaign began in early 2024 with the 'Amsterdam Rules' quiz, discarding the previously perceived alarmist videos in favor of a different communication approach (NL Times, 2023). As emerges from the analysis, the quiz is designed to deter party-focused tourists informing them on the city's regulation and norms in a more nuanced tone. This shift offers valuable insights into Amsterdam's evolving strategy, highlighting not only the types of tourists the city seeks to dissuade, but also shedding lights on whose it aims to attract.

The quiz serves both educational and regulatory function, aiming to raise awareness about acceptable behaviour in the city to avoid potential conflicts or legal issues and manage expectations. It reaches the target audience at the first stages of the customer journey during trip planning, and as the 'Stay Away' campaign, it specifically targets men aged 18-35, but expands geographically beyond UK also in Germany, France, Spain, Italy, and the Netherlands (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024b)

As observed throughout the analysis, the language in the 'Amsterdam rules' quiz (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024) is directive and informative, presenting a dichotomy between regulatory and inviting tones. Consisting of eight multiple-choice questions, it interactively reveals to potential visitors their expectations aligned with Amsterdam's tourism policies. Depending on the answers, the tone and messaging change, clearly defining the desired versus undesired and prohibited activities in the city. For instance, if answers indicate reasons such as 'stagparty', 'cocaine' or 'molly' as products to try or buy, the quiz triggers responses including words like 'prohibited', 'forbidden' and 'expensive fines', signaling clear boundaries and rules. Conversely, for responses indicating responsible behaviors such as 'sightseeing', 'shopping', or buy 'tulips and stroopewafels' the quiz ends with a more welcoming and encouraging tone. Similarly to the previous campaigns like the Behavioral Campaign and Enjoy & Respect, the cause-effect structure in the 'Amsterdam Rules' serve to emphasize the relationship in visitor behavior and city regulation. This fosters a sense of responsibility and increasing awareness on the desired behavior in respect of the city's rules and its inhabitants. Arguably, however, the gamification and interactive nature of the quiz has the potential to engage visitors more effectively by creating a more tailored experience and directly showing responses leading to clear consequences, making visitors active in the campaign, encouraging them to consider the impact of their action, rather than passive recipients (Kawanaka et al., 2020; Klock et al., 2020; Seiffert-Brockmann et al., 2018).

When responses trigger multiple negative indicators, the quiz responds “TOO BAD. Amsterdam may not offer the experience you’re looking for”, which is a softer approach than the imperative ‘stay away’ of the previous phase, yet still promotes a sustainable tourism model that emphasizes quality over quantity.

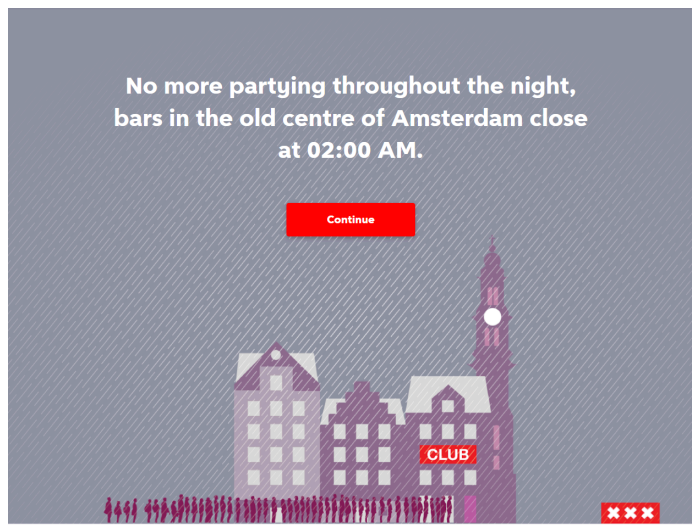
The quiz is part of the integrated marketing strategy to promote sustainable tourism, tailored to welcome tourists attracted by Amsterdam’s cultural offer and intend to behave respectfully, while demarketing toward unwanted groups.

3.6.3. Critiques and Observations on ‘Amsterdam Rules’ quiz

Members of the Koninklijke Horeca Nederland (KHN), the largest trade association of hospitality businesses in the Netherlands, have criticized the second phase of the campaign for disseminating incorrect information and stigmatizing visitors (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024). While previously supporting the ‘Enjoy and Respect’ campaign, which shares the same objective and ideals of respectful visitors, the association openly opposes the approach taken in the ‘Stay Away’ and ‘Amsterdam Rules’ campaigns. They argue the campaigns unfairly attack party tourists, homogenizing and associating them to negative behavior, and by misrepresenting bar closing times they harm businesses and visitor satisfaction (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024).

Figure 6

Amsterdam rules quiz



Note: From Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024

For instance, as stressed by the KHN, the quiz suggests that all bars in Amsterdam close at 2:00 AM (Figure 6), objecting that this only applies to the Wallen district, where some are still allowed to close later, as well as it also does not mention clubs (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024).

For the KHN, the impact of such misinformation can be detrimental to their businesses, urging the authorities to correct the campaign and readiness to collaborate for its improvements (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024). KHN's insistence on correcting misleading information reveals the industry's willingness to negotiate, reclaiming some of the power in the discussion on tourism policies and management. Their call for a more collaborative approach strongly highlights their frontline role in shaping the visitors' experience, emphasizing the need for balanced communication and mutual respect (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024).

Additionally, the analysis reveals that although the Amsterdam Rules interactive quiz is designed to address behavioral regulations and local laws, it notably excludes explicit mention of coffee shops and the consumption of cannabis products, except for the prohibition of smoking joints in public spaces. Coffee shops in Amsterdam are internationally known for legally selling cannabis products and are knowingly a strong magnet for specific segments of tourists. However, their omission in the quiz may be explained from different perspectives.

The strategic focus of the 'Amsterdam rules' quiz is mainly directed towards eliminating certain kinds of illegal and undesirable behaviors, such as street drug buying and organized pub crawls. Being coffee shops regulated entities operating within well-established legal frameworks comparable to the selling of alcohol, the city may not have seen the necessity of putting additional emphasis on this specific campaign, prioritizing instead the illegal activities. However, precisely the normalization and regulation of coffee shops in Amsterdam, which have been an important Unique Selling Point for certain groups of tourists for almost two decades, can also be interpreted as a marketing maneuver aligned with the willingness to shift Amsterdam's public image away from cannabis culture to a more culturally oriented appeal. In fact, in a way, until selling cannabis products to visitors is allowed, its mention in the quiz may have unintentionally promoted this activity, with chances of becoming counterproductive.

3.6.4. Responses from Municipality Officials on Discouragement Campaigns

As previously discussed, the campaigns 'Stay Away' and 'Amsterdam Rules' are part of the broader municipality goal of shaping public perception and visitor behavior, specifically designed to curb inappropriate behavior and frame the narration around maintaining decorum and respect for the city and its inhabitants.

As reported by the NL Times (2023), responding to criticism of the 'Stay Away' campaign, Mayor Femke Halsema and Alderman Sofyan Mbarki, responsible for economic affairs and the inner city, emphasize the complexity of rebranding Amsterdam, noting the misalignment between the city's desired image and how it is currently perceived abroad. They acknowledge that aligning these images would take time, highlighting the necessity for actual changes within the city itself and its branding approach, which shall be more focused on developing and promoting an image that reflects the city's culture and diversity (NL Times, 2023).

Similarly, Amélie Strens, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Centrum district, responded to the letter from KHN by emphasizing the crucial role visitors play in Amsterdam's economy (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024b). She highlighted the city's efforts to attract respectful visitors through the new campaign 'Renew Your View.' This campaign, which will be discussed later in the analysis (3.7.1.), also responds to previous critiques calling for a more nuanced approach to sustainable tourism. It addresses the problem of overtourism by promoting local culture, engaging in community-based experiences, and highlighting the city's diverse and sustainable offerings.

Responses to Stigmatization and Stereotyping

While critics to the campaign focus on the perceived unfair association of negative behaviors to party tourists, specifically British, constructing a clear image of undesirable visitors that the KHN, as international media, blame as 'stigmatizing', when questioned about the accusation of discrimination for such a targeted de-marketing strategy against this group of tourists, Expert B, Program Manager for the City Center, responds that the municipality had no intention of discriminating, adding: *"We just wanted to start in general. We started in the UK because we had to start somewhere...A lot of Dutch people come to Amsterdam to have a stag party, too. Now, we are also developing it for the rest of the countries."* (Personal Communication, 2024)

Ongoing developments and rollouts of the campaign are focusing on tailoring messages to 'nuisance tourists' from other nationalities. According to the Chairman, French or Spanish tourists might have different associations with 'anything goes' compared to the UK's ones (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024b). This implies that the authorities have gathered detailed insights into the behavioral characteristics of the diverse nationalities, recognizing heterogeneity among 'nuisance tourists' overall. Nonetheless, it remains the tendency to homogenize profiles within nationalities, and as British are stereotypically targeted for their tendency to drunkenness and disorderly behavior, other groups might be targeted for different issues, (presumably) like excessive weed consumption, littering, or misbehavior with sex workers.

Unfortunately, there is a lack of accessible data on the specific market segmentation of Amsterdam's 'nuisance tourists' upon which the development of this campaign will be based. Yet, this tailored approach does not change the potential broader societal impacts it may cause, including reinforcing negative stereotypes about certain nationalities and fomented racism and targeted-tourism-phobia, and causing potential backlash and alienation from the same groups who may feel unfairly targeted and discriminated against.

Responses to Miscommunication

As the 'Amsterdam Rules' quiz have raised concerns about misinformation regarding bar closing times among hospitality stakeholders (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024), Chairman

Amélie Strens responds that these concerns will be taken into account in the evaluation process (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024b). From the statement does not transpire a concrete commitment to resolving the misunderstanding, with no guarantee of immediate or specific action in response to their concerns, such as wording on opening hours of bars and the omission of the word 'club' in the illustration. As well as concrete information concerning the measuring instruments is not yet explicit, but the KHN demands their involvement in the evaluation (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024).

As reiterated by the Chairman (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024b) the campaign and its quiz are intended to debunk the image of Amsterdam as the place where everything is allowed, serving as a deterrent to this specific group, not as an information page. These initiatives focus on a specific, small group, targeting demographics perceived as problematic, targeting individuals searching Google for keywords like 'Stag Party' or 'getting drunk in Amsterdam,' therefore not landing on those seeking other general information about the city (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024b).

Contrary to dissuasion campaigns that specifically target 'nuisance tourists' who choose Amsterdam as a party destination, the analysis of the official information page reveals a more inclusive approach, emphasizing that Amsterdam is for everyone regardless of their background and promotes respect and safety for all individuals (Amsterdam&partners, 2023). The page provides detailed and practical information on rules and regulations to ensure all visitors are informed about the city's legal framework, including information about unacceptable behaviors, clearly informing about the risk of fines for public urination, littering, noise pollution (€150) and drunkenness (€100), alcohol and cannabis consumption in public spaces, coffee shops regulations, hard drug prohibition, sex work, and road safety (Amsterdam&partners, 2023). Additionally, it also offers additional information and emergency contacts, as well as a link to gather more information about Dutch drug policy, precautions, and treatments on the official site of the Expert Center for Addiction and Substance Use (Jellinek, 2022), inviting to 'be smart and be safe' (Amsterdam&partners, 2023a). However, a notable observation from the analysis of the information page is the absence of details about bar closing times, a rather critical aspect of the 'Amsterdam Rules' campaign. This omission can be seen as a significant oversight by the DMO, as such information is crucial for visitors planning their nightlife activities and may lead to a decrease in visitors' satisfaction and economic losses for businesses.

Nonetheless, this discrepancy between the two communications highlights inconsistencies in the city's overall communication strategy, which may suggest potential misalignments between the municipality, the creator of the 'Stay Away' and 'Amsterdam Rules' campaigns, and the DMO 'I Amsterdam. As explained by Expert B, within Amsterdam's tourism management, there are growing tensions and discrepancies between the municipality's objectives and the partners' perspectives, highlighting increasingly apparent conflicts of interest. While the city aims to reduce nuisance tourists and manage carrying capacity more strictly, reflecting on a shift towards quality over quantity, the partners, including industry's stakeholders, still strive for a growing number of tourists driven by

economic motives. Such divergent strategies showcase a complex scenario where collaborative efforts are strained as each party pursues distinct, often conflicting goals.

Ultimately, the lack of consistency in the communication may lead to confusion among visitors, potentially diminishing the effectiveness of both efforts. In both cases, addressing miscommunication and information omission is essential not only for enhancing visitors' experience and informing them about local regulations but also for interpreting the discussions of the KHM, supporting hospitality stakeholders, and maintaining trust and coherence in the city's central communications.

3.6.5. *Hierarchical Dynamics in Amsterdam's Tourism Management*

From this dispute, it becomes clear that, despite frequently mentioned stakeholder engagement and collaboration in decision-making processes (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022; 2023), the municipality ultimately exerts greater control over the narrative around tourism management and its impact, reflecting a top-down approach to policy implementation. While the Quality of Life Panel of the Red Light District (Gemeente Amsterdam & Public Mediation, 2023) showcases the municipality's efforts to engage the local community in the tourism development process—emphasizing the importance of listening to participants, taking their input seriously, and acting promptly on suggestions—the dispute between the municipality and hospitality entrepreneurs reveals a hierarchical relationship. This hierarchy is evident in the municipality's response to the industry's request to promptly correct miscommunication. Instead of immediate action, the municipality chose to delay changes until after evaluating the impact in May 2024 (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024b), prioritizing empirical data and systematic evaluation processes over the concerns raised by stakeholders.

If, on the one hand, the municipality's decision to wait for impact measurement before addressing any changes to the campaign reflects a prioritization of data-driven decision-making and the tendency of the municipality to look at the bigger picture, positioning itself as the protector of local quality of life. On the other hand, it underscores hierarchical dynamics within Amsterdam's tourism management, which partly contradicts other policy documents about fostering stakeholder collaboration. The negative reactions of the hospitality industry to both phases of the Stay Away campaign, coupled with the perceived lack of responsiveness to their concerns, highlight a growing dissatisfaction among stakeholders. This emotion may lead to strained relationships between the hospitality industry and public authorities, potentially resulting in broader implications for stakeholder engagement and cooperation.

Reflecting on the complexity of policy making and multi-stakeholder perspectives, Expert C notes how different stakeholders (policy makers, hospitality owners, sex workers, residents, placemakers) often have contrasting vision of the tourism landscape in Amsterdam, highlighting how each stakeholder group has different priorities and experiences with tourism's impacts, thus the challenges in developing coherent and effective tourism policies. Previous research (Gerritsma, 2019)

describes Amsterdam's fragmented approach to tourism management with the concept of "policy assemblage", emphasizing the scattered nature of policy-making influenced by diverse communities and interests. To this concern, Expert C raises a critical point regarding the definition of 'communities' in plural form, citing the quintuple helix model, which considers multiple dimensions of interaction in urban planning, including users (residents and visitors), policymakers, entrepreneurs, knowledge centers, and a fifth perspective emphasizing environmental considerations. This model reflects a holistic approach to tourism management that not only recognizes the heterogeneity of human actors, but also incorporates the broader ecological impacts, upon which Amsterdam's municipality is claiming to be resonating with by focusing on discussions on sustainable urban development.

3.7. Rebranding Strategy

3.7.1. 'Renew your View' Campaign

As previously anticipated with the diversification offerings and the words of the municipality's officials regarding the newest focus of the city's marketing tourism strategy (Koninklijke Horeca Nederland, 2024b), the latest campaign, "Renew Your View," aims to reshape the city's image by emphasizing cultural heritage, local identity, and sustainable practices (Amsterdam&partners, 2024). Developed by Amsterdam's DMO (Amsterdam&partners, 2024), the campaign seeks to share a vision of a city where all individuals can find their place and thrive, embodying a more progressive and welcoming identity. Its narrative brings forth a collection of several compelling stories, providing a platform for underrepresented voices and strengthen Amsterdam's desired positioning. For example, Ellen's Inclusive Doll Store and Mitchell's Black Archives are highlighted, showing Amsterdam's support inclusion and education while fostering continuous dialogue on social justice. Lisan's Biodynamic Farm exemplifies urban sustainability and community cohesion, inviting a diverse audience to engage with nature and each other. Jordi's SEXYLAND World highlights Amsterdam's efforts to create spaces where boundaries blur, allowing everyone to express themselves freely and creatively. While Naut's Audio Obscura, by organizing unique techno parties in unconventional venues, represents the progressive spirit of Amsterdam's nightlife (Amsterdam&partners, 2024).

These narratives enhance the city's appeal to a broader audience by redefining 'openness and tolerance' and positioning Amsterdam as a forward-thinking and inclusive metropolis. This new image moves away from the party-oriented reputation, emphasizing instead the city's commitment to diversity, sustainability, and community engagement. Compared to previous campaigns, the shift in approach is evident from the name alone. While "Stay Away" and "Amsterdam Rules" imply negative emotions, deterring certain tourist groups and behaviors, "Renew Your View" is more inviting and inspires people to discover new parts of Amsterdam and experience the city from different perspectives.

The campaign is part of Amsterdam's rebranding efforts to focus on attracting cultural and sustainable tourism, supporting the principles of regenerative tourism (Dredge, 2022). This approach advocates for tourism to be a transformative force contributing positively to urban resilience and community empowerment, shifting away from approaches that foster 'tourismphobia' and minimizing harm. Each story contributes to a broader narrative of a dynamic and evolving Amsterdam, placing emphasis on local identity and encouraging visitors to connect with different communities and explore various community-based activities beyond traditional mainstream offers.

Reflecting on the efficacy of this approach within the context of tourism degrowth, however, there are significant considerations to address. Firstly, the strategy aligns with progrowth principles of Diversification and Decongestion (Blanco-Romero, et al., 2019), pushing towards product differentiation and expanding the range of tourism experiences to attract a broader audience and spreading visitor flows. Similar to Copenhagen's 'Localhood' strategy (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019), Amsterdam's 'Renew Your View', focuses on the local population and meaningful interactions, aiming to attract a diverse range of tourists by offering unique and localized experiences. This approach, while reducing congestion and promoting 'quality tourism', ultimately also seeks to enhance the city's appeal and competitiveness, inadvertently prioritizing economic growth over true sustainability.

Secondly, reflecting on Dwyer's (2023) observations regarding the attractiveness of community-based initiatives for tourists—where local culture and engagement often do not significantly attract many visitor segments who prioritize relaxation and entertainment—Amsterdam's diversification efforts may not necessarily yield strong results in replacing mass-tourism offers, particularly if tourists' preferences and motivations are not adequately considered in the decision-making process. The analysis of the policy documents in fact, reveals a notable exclusion of tourists in planning, which reflects the prioritization of local needs over those of visitors. This contrasts with the concept of regenerative tourism, which next to community empowerment, views tourists as temporary residents whose needs should be included in urban planning in order to balance sustainable goals (Dredge, 2022).

Nonetheless, the interview with the founder of a community lab (Expert C), provides valuable reflections on measuring impact, further illuminating the challenges of assessing tourism policies and community projects within the context of Amsterdam tourism management, highlighting gaps within the interpretation and application. As discussed previously in section 3.1., while the current municipality's model to measure carrying capacity demonstrates an awareness of qualitative impacts, it predominantly focuses on quantifiable aspects, seeking more immediate and observable impacts rather than deeper intangible aspects like community involvement, social relationships, and overall satisfaction, which Expert C emphasizes. Expert C critiques the traditional quantitative metrics of impact assessment in community projects, suggesting instead for a more profound consideration of

qualitative indicators, such as narratives and stories, to truly understand and mitigate the multifaceted impacts of tourism and the effects of tourism policies and initiatives.

This perspective aligns with Dwyer's (2023) GDP degrowth paradigm, sharing emphasis on qualitative measure of impact, community involvement and the prioritization of social and environmental wellbeing over economic growth. Both advocate for a shift in values and approaches to tourism and economic development that prioritize the quality of life, environmental health, and social equity. They criticize the sole reliance of GDP and other quantitative and economic indicator of progress, advocating for alternative metrics that better assess social and environmental outcomes.

4. Marketing vs. Policy Reforms: Debate on Drug Tourism

Striking the balance between attracting respectful tourists and maintaining Amsterdam's tolerant image remains a challenge. Critics acknowledge the necessity of addressing the root causes of mass tourism with more hard-hitting measures, rather than relying solely on marketing campaigns. As policy economist Martijn Badir argues, such campaigns are merely a distraction from the fundamental policy changes needed to combat detrimental areas (Gerretsen, 2021), thus implying an approach that can be seen as a form of *brand-washing*, focusing on superficial changes rather than addressing the deeper, systemic issues at play. After all, echoing the sentiments of the target audience towards the discouragement campaigns (3.6) party tourists will continue to come as long as the unique entertainment offerings persist (De Telegraaf, 2023).

Through these campaigns, efforts seem inadvertently prioritizing the city's reputation over the substantive enhancement of residents' quality of life and fair degrowth of the visitor economy. According to Amsterdam's city council (2021), forms of 'destructive tourism' and 'cheap tourist entertainment' ruin Amsterdam's overall wellbeing and attractiveness as a destination and exploit its notion of freedom, misconstruing it as a lack of morality. As emerges from the analysis, the city identifies consumption activities related to drugs and sex, as harmful sectors (Dwyer, 2023), that want to reduce. While as previously discussed (3.3.2) in this concern, the municipality has chosen to target sex tourism establishments, proposing to relocate the windows of the Red Light District to a new location outside the city center. Some experts, suggest that to genuinely reduce the disturbances highlighted in the campaigns, the focus should instead targeting drug tourism, banning foreign tourists from coffee shops (Gerresten, 2021).

The following paragraphs present a more detailed analysis of Amsterdam's current discussions about drug tourism, critically examining the degrowth measures applied.

4.1. Cannabis Tourism in Amsterdam: Growth, Challenges, and Regulatory Shifts

Amsterdam's reputation for its liberal drug policies, particularly the legal sale of cannabis in coffee shops, is undoubtedly a significant draw for tourists. Since 1976, the sale of cannabis products in coffee shops has been regulated and operated in well-established legal frameworks comparable to

the sale of alcohol. Such normalization and regulation have made Amsterdam a forerunner in cannabis tourism worldwide for decades, attracting diverse visitors interested in experiencing its unique cannabis offerings (De Quadros Rigoni, 2019).

From an economic standpoint, cannabis tourism represents a substantial share of Amsterdam's visitor economy, with surveys indicating that a significant portion of tourists (35%) place coffee shops in the top three of visiting motives (Conradie et al., 2021). Nonetheless, due to the excessively growing number of visitors, this unique sector is now in the crosshairs of public discourses. Municipality authorities raise concerns about the nuisance caused by tourists consuming cannabis, showing a willingness to change the reputation of the Dutch capital away from the 'drugs paradise' (De Quadros Rigoni, 2019), where everything is allowed.

While Amsterdam is the city where nearly 30% of all coffee shops in the country are found, recent developments show Amsterdam taking steps back from the industry, implementing new rules in the central tourist area to combat nuisance and reshape its reputation. As emerges from analysis, demarketing strategies aimed at the Deconsumerism and Decommmercialization (degrowth) of drug tourism focus on restricting substance use by implementing stricter rules on alcohol consumption in coffee shops, prohibiting smoking in public, reducing drug-associated imagery in souvenir shops, and enforcing bans on illegal drug paraphernalia (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023). These strategies align with the principle of Deconsumerism (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019), thus striving for consumption degrowth (Dwyer, 2023) by diminishing the appeal of drug tourism while promoting a more respectful and sustainable tourism environment (Butler & Dodds, 2022).

However, a more critical analysis reveals skepticism about the efficiency of current maneuvers. These strategies focus on limiting promotion and imposing minor regulatory adjustments and may be classified as 'mild' management solutions. While they aim to reduce the consumerist aspects of drug tourism, they do not significantly limit access to drugs or restrict related activities. As a result, they might not be sufficient to address the root causes of nuisance-caused overtourism and its impacts.

4.2. *The i-Criterion Proposal*

Facing the negative impacts on the city's well-being and overtourism, Amsterdam's mayor, Femke Halsema, in a letter to the city council, has expressed concerns about cannabis tourism, proposing banning sales for tourists and applying the i-Criterion, consisting of making coffee shops only accessible to residents of the Netherlands, thus excluding tourists (Halsema, 2022a). As outlined in the letter, Amsterdam's authority governance triangle, consisting of the mayor, the police, and the public prosecutor's office, is committed to renewing the cannabis policy and combating street dealing in the city center (Halsema, 2022a). They consider the introduction of the I-Criterium as a necessary short-term measure to reduce and control the cannabis market, which has significantly increased due to tourism flows. As indicated by the mayor, 100 out of 166 coffee shops in Amsterdam respond to

tourists' demands, attracting, together with prostitution windows, nuisance-causing tourists that hinder the residents' quality of life (Halsema, 2022). The new policy would clearly reduce the market, establish quality marks for cannabis establishments, enhance street dealing enforcement, and increase trade stocks to reduce the frequency of delivery and minimize illegal trades (Halsema, 2022).

According to the survey, residents' opinions on who should be allowed in coffee shops are still divided and an intense topic of discussion. For residents, especially the ones in the city center who demonstrate more considerable support for this measure, the primary concern is maintaining a livable and enjoyable environment, too often compromised by the nuisance behaviors of tourists attracted by cannabis establishments (Conradie et al., 2021). Others instead look more broadly at the issues of overtourism, expressing how they are firstly bothered by reckless cycling tourists, second, the overcrowding in the city center, including trolleys that obstruct the walking path, and third, the commercialization of the city center with tourists shops and public disturbance (Conradie et al., 2021).

These concerns highlight quantifiable problems related to the city's carrying capacity, underscoring a tangible strain on the city's livability and the residents' call for decreased tourism in numbers. Furthermore, while many residents express their bother about tourists' consumption of cannabis, major concerns derive from alcohol abuse, which provokes more nuisance and antisocial behavior with respect to the first (Conradie et al., 2021). A vision is also certainly endorsed by the municipality, given its alignment with the measures to discourage alcohol tourism implemented in the city in the past years, from bans on beer bikes and pub crawls to early closing times of bars (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023).

Analyzing the i-Criterion from the tourist's perspective, the survey indicates how while coffee shops draw a significant amount of tourists, they are not the sole reason they visit, with more than three-quarters indicating they would still visit Amsterdam if they couldn't access coffee shops, valuing other's attraction of the city, from its cultural heritage and museum. Nonetheless, 7% of tourists stated that they would 'definitely' avoid Amsterdam if coffee shops were inaccessible, with an additional 15% that might stay away. As indicated by the researchers, the 'definitely' proportion is traditionally a reliable predictor of actual behavior, which may result in the overall decrease of tourist numbers by 10% (Conradie et al., 2021). From a degrowth perspective, this measure strongly aligns with the principle of decommmodification (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019), supporting the municipality's objective to decrease the number of tourists, particularly the ones defined as 'low tourists' (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022) whose interests do not align with the desired positioning and create disturbance and nuisance.

Moreover, observing the potential impact of the i-Criterion from a quantitative perspective, considering the estimations of the visitor forecast, a 10% decrease would significantly impact the overall tourist numbers and the associated socio-economic benefits. According to the visitor forecast scenarios for 2023-2025, Amsterdam is expected to welcome 20.1 and 23 million overnight stays and between 22.9 and 27.5 million day visits (Federova & Klingen, 2023). A 10% reduction would mean a

decrease of approximately 2 to 2.3 million overnight stays and 2.3 to 2.75 million day visits, respectively. With the cap on overstay carrying capacity set at 20 million, this reduction would align with the municipality's strategy to sustainably curb tourism growth and mitigate the negative impacts of over-tourism on local society.

4.3. *Economic Reliance vs. Social Concerns: Understanding the i-Criterion Rejection*

Despite the possible degrowth outcomes, the motion for the implementation of the residency criteria for coffee shops has been rejected by the City Council. Discussions on its concern do not appear explicitly in any policy document of the municipality of Amsterdam as an investigative level in the City Centre Approach nor as a suggestion by the partners in Vision 2025. Surprisingly, despite the figures on the high number of tourist-oriented coffee shops compared to those serving residents (Halsema, 2022), which contribute to the touristification and retail monoculture of the city center—a concern frequently highlighted in the documents—coffee shops are not explicitly mentioned. As they are omitted in the various behavioral and discouragement campaigns (Enjoy & Respect, Desired Behaviour, Stay Away, and Amsterdam Rules). Such rejection highlight contradictions in the city's approach, revealing tensions between its economic reliance on cannabis tourism and efforts to manage its social impacts, raising questions about the underlying reasons for this policy gap.

According to the experts interviewed, the underlying reasons for not closing coffee shops to tourists in Amsterdam largely hinge on political choices that are complex and multifaceted, underscoring the intricate balance between economic interests, political will, and social impact in tourism governance (Expert C). One of the experts interviewed (Expert B), directly involved in the implementation program of the city center, has explicitly expressed support for the reform, advocating for the residency criterium as a good next step for degrowth outcomes, positively impacting the city center and residents' well-being. Still, despite substantial resident support, the city council has rejected the stance. When critically observing this phenomenon, several arguments might explain this reluctance, including economic considerations, public safety, and the city's international image.

First and foremost, the significant economic impact of cannabis tourism cannot be overlooked. As much as the municipality is striving to change its image and reputation, the accessibility to legit cannabis establishments and the wide tolerance within Dutch society have made Amsterdam the epicenter of global cannabis culture (Warf, 2014). Coffee shops are a major draw for tourists, not only for those who plan a weekend of indulgence in the Dutch capital but also for those who, while exploring the city's cultural offerings, are curious to experience its unique cannabis culture.

When observing the phenomenon from a broader marketing perspective, coffee shops in Amsterdam can be aligned with the product diversification strategy (Haq et al., 2008), creating a competitive advantage over other destinations. By developing a solid value proposition that appeals to a specific market, cannabis tourism contributes to the city's economic development and growth. Aside from attracting tourists interested in the cannabis culture, which has awarded a value of authenticity in

tourists' imagination, it enhanced Amsterdam's overall appeal, encouraging the exploration of the city's cultural heritage alongside this specific recreative offer (Van Loon & Rouwendal, 2017). Additionally, it strengthened the vision of Amsterdam as a liberal and progressive city, an image that the city and its residents both value (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). Therefore, decisions to ban tourists from cannabis establishments could be perceived as overly restrictive and impact the individual freedoms of entrepreneurs and visitors alike, impacting small adjacent hospitality businesses that "are going to sell a lot less fish to people who are stoned", says Ryan, Amsterdam fishmonger for an article in the BBC (Holligan, 2021).

Lastly, another essential political reason behind withholding the I-criterium is the threat of the increase of illicit activities. Local authorities and industry stakeholders raise public safety concerns and potential strain on law enforcement resources, arguing this maneuver would drive the cannabis trade back on the streets, increasing illegal sales and criminal activity, while now, coffee shops are well regulated and are considered a harm reduction to the problem (Halsema, 2022a). Street dealers, who find fertile ground around the central canals, are, in fact, among the most vivid manifestations of the more significant problem of drug use and trade in the Dutch capital as in the rest of the country (Halsema, 2022a).

4.4. *Amsterdam's Bold Move: Tourism Perspective on Hard Drug Regulation*

The focus on counteracting drug-related crime opens another side note within the overall discourse of drug tourism in Amsterdam, which may raise further contradictions. Decades after the legalization of cannabis consumption, on January 26th, 2024, Amsterdam's mayor Femke Halsema signed a new manifesto for decriminalizing and regulating also hard drugs, such as cocaine, to take away the drug market from criminals and reduce social damage (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024). Although this manifesto has yet to be enacted, its potentially counterproductive implications, particularly from a tourism perspective, merit close observation.

The Mayor's speech during the European Ministerial Meeting on Undermining (Halsema, 2022a) and Amsterdam Manifesto on Dealing with Drugs (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024), signed by a coalition of international governance administrators, policymakers, scientists, and representatives of the civilian population committed to creating a "more humane drug policy", highlighted the regulation of cocaine as a means to reduce the power of organized crime and mitigate their impact, including violence, corruption, and social harm.

According to the Mayor, a prohibitive 'war on drugs' has proven completely ineffective, leading to more money laundering and weapons on the streets, calling for the need for an alternative and "courageous" strategy. Acknowledging the complexity and political resistance to regulating such a market, she further emphasizes the importance of international cooperation to combat organised crime, enhance law enforcement capabilities, and disrupt illegal money flows globally (Halsema, 2022a).

The potential implementation of regulatory measures for hard drugs in Amsterdam presents complex challenges and ethical discussions that, as acknowledged in the manifesto (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024), require robust fundamentals and infrastructure. Accordingly, implementation shall be cautious and based on scientific evidence and constant monitoring, accompanied by education activities aimed at safer consumption practices and stigma reduction, promoting public health, and addressing socio-economic inequalities (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2024).

Nonetheless, when exploring the potential consequences of the regulation of hard drugs from the tourism perspective, especially in light of the discourse on the challenges related to cannabis tourism, Amsterdam could face some important drawbacks. Due to the lack of explicit discussions on how the potential regularization of hard drugs might affect Amsterdam's visitor economy, the analysis primarily relied on insights provided by the experts during the interviews.

First and foremost, the experts acknowledge the complexities and potential risks associated with the decriminalization of hard drugs in Amsterdam, with the impact on the city's reputation and image. Experts A and B reflect on the broader implications of the decriminalization of hard drugs, considering how the current policies and marketing strategies are so strongly focused on reshaping the city's international image from its association with drugs and partying that such a policy change could jeopardize such maneuvers. Expert A is skeptical about the decriminalization's alignment with the city's efforts to reposition itself culturally and reduce overtourism, suggesting that such maneuver might reinforce, if not amplify, Amsterdam's reputation as a permissive destination. Expert A assumes that if cocaine were to be decriminalized, this might result in a magnet for specific segments of tourists, specifically the young male demographic from Britain associated with negative behaviors that the city has been actively trying to dissuade. Expert B is more cautious about making definitive statements on demographics but yet expresses a general concern about the potential increase in drug-related tourism, not hiding support for the measure from a crime-fighting perspective.

Moreover, commenting on the absence of such discourse related to tourism impact, Expert A justifies it due to its early debate stage. Drawing parallelism with the city's longstanding regulatory framework for cannabis, the interview, however, reveals critical historical differences between today and the times when cannabis was first legalized. Expert A points out that "back then, there was no tourism issue at all yet," underscoring that initial cannabis policies were driven by crime control and public order motives rather than tourism management, not foreseeing implications of drug tourism as we know it today. Such historical context highlights the need for a more prudent, informed policy approach that may not exacerbate existing issues. Nonetheless, Expert A expresses confidence that the lesson learned from managing cannabis tourism will not be overlooked in possible forthcoming policies on hard drugs, particularly mentioning access differentiation between tourists and residents (i-Criterion), which will inform future policies on hard drugs.

Finally, given their potential to influence tourism, both experts highlight the complexity of such policy implementation, questioning its practicality and management. They show a high degree of

skepticism about the city's ability to manage the outcomes of such maneuver, whether unilateral by Amsterdam, highlighting the city's intent of a broader international and coordinated approach.

An additional reflection not covered in the interviews concerns the potential social impact and health risks of regulating hard drugs. While regulation of hard drugs could create a safer environment for users, reducing the risks of contaminated substances sold by illegal street dealers, as stated in the Amsterdam Rules quiz: "Street dealers sell fake drugs which are dangerous for your health" (City of Amsterdam, 2024a), there are also other concerns to consider. The easier accessibility, or in any case, not being persecuted, could attract visitors who seek a safer drug experience, lowering the threshold for those who might not otherwise engage in illegal activities. From a more conservative perspective, the decriminalization and regulation of hard drugs might potentially lead to higher rates of substance abuse and related social costs that could negatively impact the local community. Hard drugs are, in fact, more addictive than cannabis (soft drugs), posing more significant risks of overdose and long-term health complications.

All these issues are currently speculative, and the true outcomes remain to be seen. Nonetheless, given the significant implications for public health, urban policy, and tourism, monitoring these developments closely as they unfold is essential.

5. Conclusion

Amsterdam's tourism strategy: Brand Washing or Genuine Change?

In conclusion, the study investigated Amsterdam's tourism management strategies to determine how they genuinely align with the degrowth principles. The focus on 'genuinely' is based on the theoretical debate on 'fair' vs 'fake' degrowth (Blanco-Romero et al., 2023). Which, as discussed in the literature review, critically observes how mass tourism destinations often assert their commitment to tourism degrowth by emphasizing 'quality tourism' and sustainability while hiding their actual goal of maintaining economic growth and competitiveness (Blanco-Romero et al., 2023; Valdivielso & Moranta, 2019; Wheller, 1993).

To assess Amsterdam's true commitment to sustainable tourism, the analysis employed the 6Ds & 6D-Ds framework (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019) to categorize maneuvers as pro-growth - as 'fake' - or degrowth - as 'fair' - complemented by the use of Fairclough's three-dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). This approach examined the textual, discursive, and social dimensions of Amsterdam's tourism strategies, analyzing operational and promotional 'texts' produced by the municipality, tourism authorities, and other relevant stakeholders, along with expert interviews. This analysis presents Amsterdam's multifaceted approach to managing the negative impacts of overtourism, structured around the 4Ps framework: Product, together with Price, Place, and Promotion. The evaluation of these four dimensions, allowed a comprehensive understanding of the

city's strategies to create a sustainable visitor economy, revealing a complex interplay between degrowth and progrowth discourses.

The first dimension, combining *Product* and *Price*, reveals a blend of the two approaches, that highlights both adherence to degrowth principles, such as Detailed Spatial Planning, Decommodification, and Detouristification, and alignment with progrowth measures like Deluxe tourism. Through Detailed spatial planning and Decommmercialization efforts (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019), Amsterdam enforces zoning regulations to control the spatial organization of commercial activities and social functions. This strategy aims to reclaim public spaces for local use and reduce monoculture, thereby enhancing the city's livability. Initiatives like strengthening area profiles and encouraging local artisans reflect a commitment to preserving cultural identity and supporting community well-being. The city implements stricter verification of business purposes and reduces short-term tourist rentals, addressing housing shortages and eliminating activities that undermine community well-being. Aligned with Detouristification, Amsterdam limits large group tours, requires permits for groups larger than fifteen participants, and enforces bans on pub crawls to reduce congestion and nuisance in central areas. According to the authorities, these measures aim to decommodify cultural heritage sites and limit commercial activities contributing to overtourism and overcrowding. The city seeks to create a more balanced and sustainable tourism environment by implementing these restrictions. Conversely, some aspects of this dimension reflect pro-growth strategies, particularly in the form of Deluxe tourism (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019). Amsterdam's emphasis on 'Quality Boost' initiatives, such as high permit fees for guided tours and developing highbrow cultural events like the proposed Red Light District Biennale, aims to attract affluent and culturally interested tourists. According to Milano (2018), this strategy increases the costs of tourism products and services, limiting access to those who can afford them and ultimately prioritizing economic value and profitability over inclusivity. Ultimately, while these measures help manage the balance between supply and demand, they also raise concerns about potential upscale urban transformations that may favor wealthier residents and businesses, exacerbating gentrification and social inequity.

The second dimension, *Place*, focuses on redistribution and decongestion strategies to alleviate the pressure of overtourism on the city center. Amsterdam's approach includes developing new attractions in suburban areas and promoting alternative destinations within the region (Amsterdam&partners, 2022; Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022; 2023). By revitalizing neighborhoods and creating cultural hubs outside the central areas, the city aims to distribute tourist activities more evenly and promote a more balanced regional development (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). The relocation of specific tourist-magnet activities, such as sex work venues, to new dedicated facilities like the proposed Erotic Center in Amsterdam Zuid further exemplifies efforts to manage tourist flows and localize the impact of sex tourism (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2023).

The third dimension, *Promotion*, presents the analysis of the de-marketing campaigns implemented by the Amsterdam's tourism authorities to deter party tourism and reduce the associated nuisance and misbehavior, thereby promoting a more respectful and sustainable tourism environment, specifically reminding visitors to observe decorum, refrain from littering, and avoid consuming alcoholic beverages or marijuana on the streets (DeMorgen, 2019; Holligan, 2023; Kwai, 2023), align with principles of Deconsumerism (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019). The analysis of the discouragement campaigns also highlights issues and discussions that emerged from the audience reception of these campaigns, labeled by critics as stigmatizing and fostering alienation as well as an observation on the power dynamics at play, with the municipality exerting the narrative control, sometimes at the expense of local stakeholders like hospitality businesses. In addition, the analysis include rebranding efforts through which Amsterdam is aiming to attract culturally engaged and respectful visitors while reducing the city's association with party tourism. By shifting its promotional focus away from the transgressive reputation of 'where everything is possible,' Amsterdam seeks to construct a new image emphasizing cultural heritage, local identity, and sustainable practices. Based on the analysis, this approach aligns with degrowth by emphasizing cultural preservation and community well-being while also supporting progrowth by expanding the range of tourism experience (Diversification), encourage tourists to explore new parts of the city (Decongestion), and developing niche cultural offers targeting high-quality tourists (Deluxe).

Considering the broader societal and academic implication of this study, taken together, these approaches reveal overlapping between degrowth and progrowth principles. On one hand, addressing urban space regulation reducing the dominance of profit-driven activities and prioritising social, cultural, and ecological interests align with degrowth principles of Detailed spatial planning and Decommmercialization. On the other hand, the push for a 'Quality boost' and the potential for upscale transformations, and spreading tourist flows to less-crowded areas through new attractions hint at a pro-growth agenda aligned with principles of Diversification, Decongestion, and Deluxe tourism. Additionally, controversies emerge when observing the promotional strategies. While Amsterdam is actively pursuing degrowth through de-marketing initiatives to reduce its attractiveness to specific tourist segments, it concurrently endeavors to reshape its image to appeal to higher-quality visitors (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021). The ambiguity in the city's plans underscores the need for clearer definitions of 'quality' and 'diversity' to ensure inclusive and equitable development, as well as the need for integration of overarching measures to control the real estate market and manage tourism's impact effectively to avoid further social disparities and uphold the city's commitment to community well-being.

Amsterdam's tourism strategy aims to balance social, cultural, and economic interests through a mix of degrowth and pro-growth principles, promoting a diverse and sustainable visitor economy that benefits residents and visitors. However, this dual approach underscores urban tourism management's complexities and potential contradictions. While the city aims to reclaim public spaces

and reduce the negative impacts of tourism, efforts to attract 'quality tourists' and enrich the cultural offering suggest an underlying objective of maintaining economic growth. While Amsterdam's policies are framed around reducing overtourism's negative impacts, the parallel push toward quality tourism suggests a shift rather than a reduction of carrying capacity that in conclusion, can be attributed as 'fake degrowth' (Blanco-Romero et al., 2023). In the context of Amsterdam, this tendency is evident in the ongoing debates about the efficacy of behavioral and discouragement campaigns aimed at addressing nuisance-related overtourism issues. Critics argue that these strategies, against the backdrop of drug policies, fall short of addressing the root causes of mass tourism and instead rely too heavily on marketing (Gerretsen, 2021). The emphasis on reshaping Amsterdam's image and localhood, similar to other destinations (Higgins-Desbiolles et al., 2019), may thus be seen as an effort to mitigate criticism without addressing the fundamental issues of overtourism. For such, the 'brand washing' - an alternative to 'greenwashing' - may enhance the city's appeal to a selective demographic but does not necessarily equate to genuine sustainable change.

For instance, the rejection of the i-criterion, which would restrict coffee shop access to residents and quantifiably reduce the number of unwanted tourists, underscores a reluctance to fully embrace degrowth and address the deeper issues associated with overtourism. This decision stemming from political and economic considerations, reflects the challenges of aligning economic and safety interests with sustainability and equity, and balancing long-term planning with the need for immediate and visible actions to satisfy residents. This move, while controversial, would demonstrate a real commitment to addressing the root causes of overtourism and could help in achieving a more sustainable tourism model. Furthermore, recent discussions regarding hard drug decriminalization exacerbate this complexity. As Amsterdam seeks to position itself as a culturally oriented and sustainable destination, this maneuver could attract a different kind of tourism, complicating efforts to shift its image away from drug-related activities.

The interpretation and operationalization of the conceptual framework present limitations. The application of the 6Ds & 6D-Ds framework (Blanco-Romero et al., 2019) to categorize policies and strategies' manouvers as pro-growth or degrowth resulted ambiguous and subjective. The boundaries between these categories are not always clear-cut, with policies exhibiting characteristics of both paradigms. From a theoretical standpoint, this study challenges the binary classification of tourism policies in either pro-growth or degrowth, highlighting the need of a more nuanced understanding and consideration of the complexity of reality that transcend these two distinct paradigms. Policies manouvers or marketing strategies labeled as degrowth may actually hide progrowth outcomes, and viceversa, strategies perceived as progrowth may contain elements fostering sustainability. While the duality complicates the straightforward application of degrowth principles in urban tourism management, policymakers and city marketers should strive to acknowledge the intricate interplay between various policy elements. For example, although according to Blanco-Romero et al.'s (2019) framework, Diversification is a pro-growth strategy, in as much introducing new products or services

to meet visitors' evolving demands and expanding into new markets, Amsterdam's approach presents a unique twist. In this context, it is evident how degrowth motives significantly influence the city's diversification maneuvers. This could be defined as 'degrowth-compatible diversification,' where new initiatives prioritize sustainability and community well-being over sheer economic growth. This concept reimagines the tourism industry to be more equitable and sustainable, focusing on strategies that alleviate social and environmental pressures. Future research may investigate the practical implementation of 'degrowth-compatible diversification' and its effects on urban tourism dynamics.

In conclusion, while Amsterdam has made valuable steps in implementing sustainable tourism practices, there are still significant challenges and contradictions that need to be addressed. By embracing genuine degrowth strategies, revising key policies like the i-criterium, enhancing stakeholder communication, and focusing on sustainable diversification, Amsterdam can work towards a more balanced and equitable tourism model that benefits residents and visitors. Given the evolution of tourism management strategies and uncontrolled variables like economic fluctuations, political changes, or global pandemics can influence tourism strategies and their outcomes, which rend some aspects of the analysis less relevant over time. The study's findings are context-specific, using Amsterdam as a case study, and may not be generalizable to different urban tourism settings or socio-political contexts. Future research should continue to explore the practical implementation of these strategies and their long-term impacts on urban tourism dynamics, while considering diverse stakeholder perspectives such as local residents, entrepreneurs, and visitors to validate these findings.

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Appendix A: Data sets Secondary Sources

Operational Texts			
1	<i>Policies</i>	Vision on Tourism in Amsterdam 2035	Gemeente Amsterdam (2022)
2		Policy: Tourism	Gemeente Amsterdam (2023)
3		Vision 2025: Redesigning the Visitor Economy of Amsterdam	Amsterdam&partners
4		Concept Handhavingsstrategie voor Horeca (APV) en de Alcoholwet 2024. <i>Amsterdam</i> . https://www.amsterdam.nl/ondernemen/horeca/toezicht-handhaving/	Gemeente Amsterdam. (2023)
5		Aanpak Pinnenstad, Uitvoeringsprogramma 2024 (City Centre Approach Implementation Program 2024)	Gemeente Amsterdam (2023)
6		Ordinance of the City Council of the Municipality of Amsterdam containing rules regarding tourism (Regulation on Tourism in Balance Amsterdam)	Gemeente Amsterdam. (2021, July 23)
7		Amsterdam Manifesto Dealing with Drugs	Gemeente Amsterdam. (2024, January 26)
8	Online Communication (Website Content)	Rules and regulations in Amsterdam	Amsterdam&partners. (2023, May 31)
9		Visitor information. Health & safety in Amsterdam.	Amsterdam&partners (2023a, December 19)
10		<i>Information for tourists.</i>	Jellinek. (2022, December 5)

11		Lesson Learnt - Leefbaarheidspanel Wallen	Gemeente Amsterdam & Public Mediation (2023)
12	Reports	Toerisme in de stad Onderzoek naar bezoekredenen toeristen, ervaringen Amsterdammers en de rol van coffeeshopbezoek hierbij. [Report]	Conradie, M., Schuring, C., Kanne, P., & I&O Research. (2021). I&O Research.
13		Amsterdam tourism carrying capacity in 2021.	Federova, T., Sleutjes, B., de Grip., F. (2022). <i>Onderzoek en Statistiek</i> .
14		Bezoekersprognose 2023-2025. In <i>Openresearch.Amsterdam</i> (No. 230431).	Federova, T., & Klingen, J. (2023). <i>Onderzoek en Statistiek</i> .
15		Actieplan Stad in Balans van meer dan 20 bewonersorganisaties	Namens Wij-Amsterdam, Stop de Gekte, d'Oude Stadt, Mokum Reclaimed en Vereniging Vrienden van de Amsterdamse Binnenstad (2020, May 20)
16		Amsterdams Akkoord - Amsterdam Coalition Agreement 2022-2026.	Moorman, Groot-Wassink, van Dantzig. (2022)
17	<i>Speech Transcripts and Press Releases:</i>	<i>Letter to the city council: Status of plans for a manageable cannabis market and approach to street dealing.</i>	Halsema, F. (2022, April 11)
18		Speech by Mayor Halsema during the European Ministerial Meeting on undermining.	Halsema, F. (2022, October 7)
19		Amsterdam's "Stay Away" campaign for British party tourists lacks impact, says mayor.	NL Times. (2023, November 28)
20		<i>New public campaign by the municipality: 'Amsterdam Rules' provides incorrect information about opening hours of bars.</i>	Koninklijke Horeca Nederland. (2024, April 3)
21		<i>Reactie van gemeente op kritiek van KHN op campagne 'Amsterdam Rules.'</i>	Koninklijke Horeca Nederland. (2024b, April 9).

Promotional Texts			
22	Behavioral Campaigns	‘Enjoy & Respect’	Amsterdam&partners. (2018, May 29).
23		‘Desired Behavior’	Gedeemte Amsterdam (2021).
24	Discouragement Campaigns	‘Stay Away’ <i>Amsterdam urges rowdy Britons to “stay away” in tourist campaign</i> [Video]. YouTube.	The Independent. (2023, March 29).
25		‘Amsterdam Rules’	Gemeente Amsterdam. (2024a)
26	Rebranding Campaign	‘Renew your View’ Video + Find your community, Revise your opinion, Stretch your imagination + Stories Collection	Amsterdam&partners. (2024).
27	Blog Posts	<i>Top 20 things to do in Amsterdam</i>	Amsterdam&partners (2024a)
28		<i>Best ways to experience Amsterdam like a local</i>	Amsterdam&partners (2024b)
29		<i>Top tips to beat the crowds at Amsterdam’s attractions</i>	Amsterdam&partners (2024c)
Supplementary Secondary Sources (news articles)			
30		<i>Prostitution windows squatted in Red Light District: “We will sabotage every step towards erotic center</i>	AT5. (2024, January 19) NH Nieuws.
31		Amsterdam tells young British men who want a ‘messy’ weekend to stay away. <i>The Guardian</i> .	Boztas, S. (2023, March 28) <i>The Guardian</i> .
32		Amsterdam raises tourist tax to the ‘highest in Europe.’	Buckley, J. (2019) September 30) <i>CNN Travel</i>
33		‘We never stop drinking’: British men react to Amsterdam’s Stay Away campaign.	Burbano, F. (2023, March 31) <i>DutchReview</i>

34		<i>Action against “bastard behaviour” tourists catches on in Amsterdam.</i>	DeMorgen. (2019, April 19)
35		<i>Brits after 'stay away' campaign: 'We'll never stop drinking!' [Video]</i>	De Telegraaf. (2023, March 29)
36		'Don't come to Amsterdam.' Dutch capital tells rowdy tourists to stay away.	Gerretsen, I. (2021, June 30) <i>CNN</i>
37		<i>Stay Away-campagne in Amsterdam moet overlast toeristen tegengaan.</i>	Juinen, J. (2023, March 28) <i>RTL.nl.</i>
38		<i>Erotisch centrum</i>	Moke Architecten. (2022, June 14)
39		Amsterdam has a message for male tourists from the U.K.: 'Stay away.'	Moses, C. (2023, March 23) <i>Nytimes</i>
40		“Sekswerkers zijn de verkeerde zondebok voor massatoerisme op de Wallen.”	Rigter, L. (2023, September 4). <i>AT5.</i>

Appendix B: Overview of interview respondents

Expert A teacher of Tourism Management in Amsterdam and involved in research with SMARTDETS project looking at how social in- and exclusion is identified as a major challenge, with the city struggling to balance the interests of residents and visitors. His expertise reside on sustainable tourism development, involving an understanding of how policy changes over the past two decades have shifted focus from economic growth to managing tourism for the benefit of residents' quality of life.

Expert B is as working as a program manager for the city center of Amsterdam since 2018. Her expertise is deeply rooted in the management of tourism-related issues within the city, particularly focusing on strategies to mitigate overtourism and improve the living conditions within the city center. Has a background in urban planning or management, particularly in formulating and implementing policies aimed at balancing the needs of residents with the pressures of tourism.

Expert C expertise is in urban sociology, with a specific focus on leisure and tourism. She is an assistant professor and co-founder of the Urban Leisure and Tourism Lab. Community-centric development and Living Lap experience: Enhanced role of communities and organizations in neighborhood development plans: goals, developments, decision-making, involvement, challenges, targets, attractiveness, and overall contribution to the broader issues.

Appendix B: Measuring instrument(s)

Expert A interview guide

Introductory questions

Interviewee's background and expertise

- Could you please provide a brief overview of your background and expertise in the field of Amsterdam's tourism and overtourism?

Understanding Overtourism and Tourism Strategy:

- How would you characterize Amsterdam's current tourism situation, particularly in terms of overtourism?
- In your opinion, what are the primary challenges posed by overtourism in Amsterdam?
- Could you evaluate the effectiveness of existing policies and marketing strategies addressing overtourism in the city?

Degrowth or Progrowth Discourse: - Smartdest: “goal to help cities for sustainable development and contribute to their advancement toward a more just and inclusive social and economic model” - observed in the context of Amsterdam. - Urban tourism and social exclusion: top-down vs. bottom-up initiatives - challenges and effectiveness.

- Do you believe Amsterdam's current tourism strategy is aligned with principles of degrowth or pro-growth? Why or why not?
- How do you think Amsterdam's tourism strategy could better incorporate degrowth principles while remaining economically viable?
- (in case: Disparity reduction & collectivisation: Interviews reveal confusion regarding stakeholders involved in tourism policymaking, leading to fragmented policymaking landscape and limited sense of ownership and accountability among stakeholders. Is it enough?
- Urban tourism and social exclusion: top-down vs. bottom-up initiatives - challenges and effectiveness.
- What are the main challenges and opportunities associated with adopting degrowth or pro-growth principles in Amsterdam's tourism strategy? (e.g. precariousness, elitism...)

Vision on re-branding and cultural orientation

- Amsterdam has been exploring a shift towards a more cultural-oriented tourism strategy. How do you perceive this shift in relation to degrowth principles?
- Demarketing towards specific target group (discouragement campaign toward UK travelers) – discrimination?

Emerging policy discussions and incongruences:

- There are ongoing policy discussions regarding the decriminalization and regulation of hard drugs in Amsterdam. How do you anticipate these discussions may impact tourism dynamics in the city?
- Considering Amsterdam's measures against cannabis tourism and its desired reputation shift, what are your thoughts on potential contradictions in the city's approach?

Envision of Future Trajectory:

- Challenges and opportunities of degrowth and progrowth
- Looking ahead, what do you envision for the future trajectory of Amsterdam's tourism sector?

Avenues for improvement

- In your opinion, what are some potential avenues for improvement in Amsterdam's tourism management to address the challenges posed by overtourism while embracing sustainable principles?

EXPERT B Interview guide

Expertise Overview: could you please give us a brief overview of your background and expertise in Amsterdam's tourism and overtourism issues?

Vision and Rebranding

- Cultural-Oriented Strategy: Amsterdam is shifting towards a cultural-oriented tourism strategy. But what would you say it's the desired positioning of the destination? And who is the main target audience?
- Storytelling: – What's the narrative focus? Past (historical heritage, maybe going deeper on certain themes), present (local stories) or future (progress, innovation, sustainability)?

Red Light District Transformation

- Relocation of Sex Entertainment Venues: What are your thoughts about the relocation of sex entertainment venues outside of the city centre? What impact would it have on the community, the workers, and tourists?
- Future of the Red Light District: Will the plan for an Erotic Centre go ahead, how will the Red Light District look like? Do you think its' historical heritage related to the sex windows,

dating back to the 13th century will be preserved? For instance, when looking at Rotterdam, that side of heritage has been almost forgotten. Or is the city aiming to a sort of cleansing - giving a new, transformed look to the area?

- Broader Implications and Sociocultural Change: What would you respond to the critics of transforming the Red Light District into a new upscale and gentrified neighborhood - for instance, the introduction of traditionally highbrow cultural events like the Biennale, demonstrates the strategic shift from areas' image as 'party town' to a more culturally refined destination. How does it integrate with the existing cultural fabric of the area? What socioeconomic impacts do you foresee from this shift? Is there a risk of 'hipsterization' - or as in Dutch terms, another 'yuppie' - of the area?
- Reconnecting to Quality Tourism - Broader Implications and Sociocultural Change: In the efforts to diversify and upscale the tourism offerings, striving for a quality over quantity result, how is the city balancing the need to maintain affordable and inclusive cultural options for all visitors?

Enforcement and Compliance

- Nightlife: To what extent the implementation of stricter regulations in the Hospitality industry through the Alcohol Act 2024, and demarketing operations are impacting the city's nightlife quality and reputation? - what have been the reaction of locals, specifically young locals?
- Discouragement Campaign: What consequences do you think the Stay Away campaign may have overall on the destination positioning? The discouragement campaign was criticised for discrimination against UK travellers, yet I personally believe that would have been another group it would have backlashed much more, what do you think of that? Would you agree it was more culturally and socially accepted to 'attack' the brits?

Collaboration Municipalities:

- While Amsterdam is trying to clean up its reputations, other cities are welcoming pub crawls, seemingly aiming to redistribute party tourists to other cities. This would yes alleviate Amsterdam's burden but wouldn't it cause the issue in other cities in the long run? Are municipalities in the NL collaborating to contrast the issue? Is there a shared vision on a national scale in terms of reputation?

Future policy / drugs:

- Given Amsterdam's efforts to reduce cannabis tourism and change its reputation, what do you think about the potential effects of decriminalising and regulating hard drugs on tourism in the city?

Ensuring Inclusivity:

- Considering the role of tourists as 'temporary residents,' how does the city plan to include them in policy-making processes? How does Amsterdam ensure it remains welcoming and responsive to the needs of all stakeholders, including tourists? reach of a breaking point for

Amsterdam? Prioritising instead local needs? How are their needs, preferences and feedback considered in the development and implementation of urban policies and initiatives? Visitor surveys, feedback channels, ...?

Future Trajectory of Amsterdam's Tourism Sector:

- Future Trajectory: Looking ahead, what challenges and opportunities do you foresee for Amsterdam's tourism sector in adopting either degrowth or pro-growth principles?
- Improvement Avenues: What potential improvements could be made in Amsterdam's tourism management to better address the challenges posed by overtourism?

EXPERT C - Interview guide

Expertise Overview: Before we delve into the specifics, could you please give us a brief overview of your background and expertise in Amsterdam's tourism and overtourism issues?

Understanding Overtourism and Tourism Strategy:

- How would you characterize Amsterdam's current tourism situation, particularly in terms of overtourism? - what are the primary challenges?

As often emerged in the policy and strategies documents, community engagement and co-design are central to redesigning Amsterdam's tourism, as demonstrated by bottom-up initiatives and labs across the city.

- Do you have any particular example of community-driven tourism that you would like to share? (Urban Leisure and Tourism lab in Noord)
- What are the main challenges in this approach?
- What are the ultimate goals of the lab in Noord?
- Effectiveness: What are the biggest or most impactful contributions that have emerged?
- Who are the targets for these initiatives?
- Involvement and decision making: In the context of 'cultural repositioning,' what steps are being taken to engage diverse community voices in the redevelopment plans? How is the community engaged besides students?

Contribution to broader issue: When discussing the city center's carrying capacity, the city partners suggest empowering lesser-visited neighborhoods to develop new and diverse tourism activities that would respect the neighborhood's unique characteristics and decentralize the tourist flow.

- In your opinion, would this redistribute more pains or gains for the receiving communities?

- How do they contribute to the broader issue of overtourism?
- How is the community responding to this strategy? Are they willing to welcome tourism?
 - What about the plan to build the **Erotic Centre** in Noord? What do the residents think about it? Is the lab also involved in this project? What's the communication with the municipality and the lab - co-design?
 - What do you think will be the consequences of the Erotic Centre in the area in terms of attracting 'unwanted tourists'?
- A central theme that emerge in the documents is 'quality tourism' - how would you define 'quality'? Are there an overarching vision of 'quality' or is open to interpretation?

Envision of Future Trajectory:

Challenges and opportunities of degrowth and progrowth

- Avenues for improvement: When evaluating the effectiveness of existing policies and marketing strategies addressing overtourism in Amsterdam, what are some potential avenues for improvement?
- Ultimately, considering Amsterdam's overall strategic direction, do you believe in sustainable growth and re-design or more clear-cut degrowth?
- How do you think Amsterdam's tourism strategy could better incorporate degrowth principles while remaining economically viable?

Future:

- Looking ahead, what do you envision for the future trajectory of Amsterdam's tourism sector?

Appendix C: Code Table

Category	Description	Actions/Examples	Overlapping Measures & Enriched Context
6Dds - Degrowth Discourse			
Decommodification	Cultural Preservation and Community Wellbeing	Stimulate the local economy, especially crafts and businesses focused on the circular economy; Enforce an outright ban on vacation rentals and illegal hotels; Reduce the number of music festivals in public spaces and adjust noise regulations sustainably	- Focus on maintaining livability through bans on disruptive activities. - Supports carrying capacity and livability improvements noted during COVID-19 pandemic.
	Regulations to Curb Overtourism and Enhance Local Identity	Increase tourist taxes and use the revenue for enforcement (Limit by pricing)	- Aligns with the principle of increasing costs to manage demand and limit overtourism.
	Prioritizing Cultural and Social Values over Purely Economic Ones	Transformation of the flower market: focus on real function - residents buying flowers - not primarily offering souvenirs for tourists (detouristification)	- Detouristification by shifting focus from tourist-centric to resident-centric activities.
	Areas Revitalization	Make city centre livable - redistribute space and resources to prioritize residents and local businesses	- Controversy: Decongestion & Diversification. - Supports the reduction of tourism pressures in central areas by prioritizing residents.
	Specific Urban Development Initiatives	Removing window prostitution in the city center now a 'must see' = Erotic Center development for community wellbeing	- Controversial as it involves moving an established industry, impacting local heritage and economy. - Overlaps with

Category	Description	Actions/Examples	Overlapping Measures & Enriched Context
			Decongestion by relocating high-traffic activities.
Deconsumerism	Physical degrowth = identification of 'unnecessary' or harmful sectors	Perceived issues related to nuisance created by sex and drug tourism; Counter 'destructive tourism' and 'cheap tourist entertainment'; Ban amusement park activities in public spaces such as beer bikes, pedal boats, Segways, splash tours; Discussion on I-Criterion for coffee shops	- Aligns with Decommodification by reducing low-value, disruptive tourism. - Emphasizes behavior modification through restrictive policies and targeted campaigns. - Controversy around drug tourism and coffee shops shows complexity in policy decisions.
	Restricting Substance Use	Stricter rules on alcohol consumption; Restrict consumption of alcohol and drugs in certain areas; Reduce drug image in retail; Enforcement on illegal drug paraphernalia; Discussion on I-Criterion "Make coffee shops accessible only to Dutch residents, not tourists"	- Controversy: Mixed reception on restricting coffee shops and potential increase in illegal trade. - Shows tension between economic benefits and social impacts of drug tourism.
	Behavioral Guidance	Instruct visitors on respectful behavior; Behavioral discouragement campaigns (Stay Away, Amsterdam Rules, How to Amsterdam...)	- Campaigns aim to change tourist behavior, reflecting efforts to improve livability and reduce nuisances. - Controversy around effectiveness and perception of these campaigns.
Detouristification & Retouristification	Regulating and Reducing Tourist Activities	Halt the development of new attractions and tourist magnets throughout the city; Reduce opening hours of terraces, bars, and clubs, and sex theaters during the week and on weekends;	- Overlaps with Detailed Spatial Planning by regulating commercial activities and reducing mass tourism infrastructure. - Aligns with Decommodification by

Category	Description	Actions/Examples	Overlapping Measures & Enriched Context
		Concerns of overabundance of tourism activities; Target ‘undermining activities’; Limit number of tourist shops and promote local artisan businesses	reducing commercial exploitation and preserving local culture.
	Restoring Cultural Identity and Space for Residents	Regulate and reduce space for tourist accommodations; Focus on cultural and historical preservation; Adaptive reuse of heritage structures; Reducing tourist dominance; Returning spaces to residents - promote mixed-use development (living above shops); Fight ‘waffle/nutella shops’ and commercial homogenization; Restore areas to their unique cultural identity based on stakeholders' inputs; Rebrand the Red Light District by eliminating window prostitution toward a cultural hub – reduce the area’s appeal to curious or unwanted demographics	- Supports decongestion by redistributing tourist activities. - Aligns with Decommodification by focusing on local culture over tourist exploitation.
	Retouristification: Rebranding and Promotion	Reshape of visitor economy (rejuvenation); Rebranding & Repositioning - rebuild destination appeal to align to core identity and cultural assets; Attract ‘quality visitors’ - respectful and interested in Amsterdam cultural assets; Stop classic city marketing, develop sustainable tourism	- Shows potential shift towards Deluxe Tourism by targeting ‘quality tourists’. - Reflects efforts to change the city's image and reduce overtourism impacts.
	Repositioning	Change reputation as party town;	- Overlaps with Diversification

Category	Description	Actions/Examples	Overlapping Measures & Enriched Context
		Promote mindful travel and educational programs; Promote community-based initiatives (Renew your View)	by expanding cultural and educational tourism offerings. - Reflects a shift from party tourism to sustainable and community-focused tourism.
Disparity Reduction & Collectivization	Economic and Local Business Stimulation	Stimulate the local economy, especially crafts and businesses focused on the circular economy; Support local community and cultural initiatives	- Supports local economic development and reduces reliance on mass tourism. - Aligns with Decommodification and Detouristification principles.
	Affordable Housing and Livability Enhancements	Freeze the housing withdrawal quota, invest in (family) homes in the center; Limit second home ownership; Enhance childcare infrastructure; Improve Community Services	- Addresses social equity and livability concerns, aligning with broader urban development goals.
	Community and Cultural Support	Support Collaboration of cultural institutions in the Red Light District; Collective and Collaborative Approach; Inclusivity and Participatory Governance (e.g. Livability Panel RLD); Shared Equity values	- Highlights the need for inclusive and participatory approaches in tourism management. - Reflects tensions between top-down governance and stakeholder engagement.
Detailed Spatial Planning	Urban Space Management	Regulating and Reducing Tourist and Short Stay Accommodations; Prevent commercial touristification; Strengthening the three social real estate enterprises; Improve crowd management (inc. taxi)	- Aligns with Decongestion and Detouristification by managing spatial distribution and reducing tourism impacts.

Category	Description	Actions/Examples	Overlapping Measures & Enriched Context
	Infrastructure and Urban Planning	Build zoning regulation - Strictly enforce the hotel stop through zoning plan adjustments and mass-tourism commercial activities; As a co-shareholder of Schiphol, push for limiting facilities for holiday flights to Amsterdam or restrict inflow through taxes; Limit boarding and disembarkation facilities (physical degrowth); Repurposing existing buildings for housing or cultural purposes rather than high-end commercial or mass-tourism	- Emphasizes sustainable urban development and regulatory control to manage tourism impacts. - Reflects efforts to balance tourism growth with social and environmental sustainability.
	Environmental and Cultural Preservation	More 'greenery' - placemaking; Waste management interventions; Preservation of historical and cultural assets	- Supports Decommodification by prioritizing environmental and cultural preservation over commercial tourism.
Dignifying Working Conditions	Promotion of sustainable and responsible business practices	Foster corporate social responsibility and sustainability; Reward good business practices; Focus on inclusivity and safety in business environments	- Highlights the need for fair and safe working conditions in the tourism sector.
	Support for vulnerable worker group	Erotic Center proposal includes improved working conditions and safety measures for sex workers	- Controversial: Risk of pushing sex work into unregulated areas. - Reflects tensions between improving conditions and potential negative consequences.
6Dds - Pro-Growth Discourse			
Desesonalisation	n/a		

Category	Description	Actions/Examples	Overlapping Measures & Enriched Context
Decongestion	Redistributing tourists (marketing/nudging)	Encouraging tourists to visit areas outside the traditional city center; Crowd management: real-time crowd monitoring systems to direct visitors to less crowded areas; Alternative attraction per segmentation	- Overlaps with Detouristification and Detailed Spatial Planning by spreading tourist activities to manage congestion. - Supports livability improvements by reducing pressures on central areas.
	Spreading attractions (physical maneuvers)	Spreading Attractions in lesser-known areas (link diversification); Redirect visitors 'elsewhere'; Erotic Center: Relocating window prostitution in South (Resident organizations 2020: "Move the sex industry from the Red Light District to a designated hotel"); Expand borders: redirect toward other destinations within the region; Relocation renting facilities; Polycentric city: development of cultural attraction in suburban areas	- Long-term considerations: Potential to create new areas of congestion. - Reflects the complexity of balancing tourism distribution and community impacts.
Deluxe Tourism	Urban transformation and 'quality boost'	Quality boost: Commercial quality boost; Strengthen area attractiveness; Limited and higher quality experiences = higher price – possible upscale and gentrified atmosphere in the RLD	- Overlaps with Retouristification by targeting 'quality tourists'. - Reflects potential gentrification and social equity concerns.
	Erotic Center	Enhanced experience beyond prostitution, broad and diversified experience for this specific niche (boutique, hospitality, cinema)	- Controversial: Risk of gentrification and displacing sex workers

Category	Description	Actions/Examples	Overlapping Measures & Enriched Context
	Tourists bans and high costs	Significantly increase tourist taxes and use the revenue as a targeted tax for intensifying enforcement → limit by pricing; Ban on tourist groups and high cost for small tours	- Aligns with restricting the number of tourists by economic means. - Supports the shift towards attracting fewer but higher-spending tourists.
	High-End Experiences	High-end cultural experiences to attract wealthier tourists - e.g. Rebranding RLD with Biennale (high-brow event)	- Supports a shift towards 'quality tourism'. - Reflects potential for creating upscale, exclusive tourist experiences.
Decentralization	Mandate and participation	Enhanced role and responsibility of local residents and businesses	- Reflects stakeholder engagement and participatory governance. - Shows potential for power imbalances between municipality and local stakeholders.
Diversification	Cultural events and arts initiatives	Biennale in the Red Light District: aim to diversify the area's tourism offerings with a cultural event and potentially attract a broader audience interest in art and culture, giving a new image to the area and contributing to new economic streams and cultural enrichment – 'quality tourists'	- Aligns with efforts to change the city's image and reduce overtourism impacts. - Supports economic and cultural development through diverse tourism offerings.
	Dutch Sustainable Fashion Week	Diversity cultural offering - attract new audiences and contribute to city's reputation as a sustainable and cultural hub	- Overlaps with efforts to promote sustainable tourism and cultural enrichment. - Supports diversification of the tourist market.
	Expansion of cultural and	Promote Amsterdam as a destination for conferences,	- Supports a shift towards educational and professional

Category	Description	Actions/Examples	Overlapping Measures & Enriched Context
	educational tourism	educational trips, and cultural tourism; Develop conferences landscape (working visitors also contributing to overall entrepreneurial ecosystem) → Positioning: Amsterdam as European hub for innovation and knowledge sharing	tourism. - Reflects the city's effort to diversify its tourism offerings and reduce reliance on mass tourism.
	Promotion of lesser-known areas and attraction	Diversification of Attractions: Promoting lesser-known areas and cultural events to distribute tourist traffic and reduce congestion; Area developing and profiling - promote diversity to improve livability	- Aligns with Decongestion by spreading tourist activities and promoting regional development. - Reflects efforts to manage tourism impact and enhance livability.
	Enhancing nightlife and creative spaces	Plan for diverse and spread nighttime activities and cultural events; Creation of more spaces for cultural expression in nightlife; Affordable workspaces for artists in the city center → positioning: cultural, artistic hub, enhancing cultural diversification	- Overlaps with efforts to promote cultural and artistic tourism. - Supports the city's image as a vibrant and creative destination.
	Rebranding and marketing strategies	Construct new image (rebrand, cultural focus, usp on artistic and cultural diversity (niche markets); Product differentiation	- Aligns with efforts to change the city's image and reduce overtourism impacts. - Reflects a shift towards sustainable and quality tourism.
Discredit Contestation	Economic Emphasis	Highlight on the economic value of tourism, importance for the maintenance and development of the city	- Reflects the tension between promoting tourism for economic benefits and managing its social and environmental impacts.

Category	Description	Actions/Examples	Overlapping Measures & Enriched Context
	Community Engagement and Local Experience	Foster connection between locals and visitors: deploy local businesses and parties to guide visitors within their neighborhood - trend ‘visit like a local’ and ‘discover your neighborhood’ - trying to alleviate ‘tourismophobia’ and empathize with each other	- Overlaps with efforts to promote sustainable and community-based tourism. - Reflects efforts to improve social cohesion and reduce negative impacts of tourism.