Best Practice 21: Control and Management of the numbers of visitors in Venice, Italy

Scale: Urban
Stage of tourism development: Mature
Main objective: Balanced tourism growth/ Improve urban quality of life (control number of visitors to avoid adverse effects of overcrowding).

Categories of effects:

Effects on urban governance:
- Cultural Tourism Strategy
- Sustainable Partnerships
- Stakeholder Participation
- Destination Management

Effects on quality of life:
- Environment
- Social Life
- Urban economies

Venice is located on a small island on the Venetian lagoon, off the Western coast of Northern Italy. It is world famous, among others for its preserved architecture, romantic atmosphere, the gondolas, St Mark's Plaza, its museums, Carnival and the Biennale of Arts. Too many people visit Venice these days (on peak days around 200.000 visitors), a fact that endangers its long term preservation, and because the island is so small, it leads to "competition" between visitors and residents for the use of public space. Unfortunately, the type of tourism developed (excursionists or people who stay in the suburb) means that the town loses a lot on possible or expected benefits of tourism. The definition of a carrying-capacity in a town like Venice where many tourists come to just "soak in" the atmosphere proves difficult and has to rely on social economic factors rather than on the amount of people visiting attractions. As an answer to these problems the concept of Venice card has been launched, in the aim to make people stay in Venice and book theirs visits to the city in advance. Visitors are invited to book their visit to Venice and receive in exchange a "Venice Card" that offers them a series of special advantages and possibilities not accessible to visitors who do not book. The number of cards issued equals the most restrictive carrying-capacity defined for Venice (social economic in this case). Residential tourists automatically receive a card with the reservation of hotel accommodation. In order for such a system to work, however, a high amount of cooperation is necessary between the different users of the system.

Source: UNESCO technical report 20: The Impact of Tourism and Visitors Flow Management in Aix-en-Provence, Amsterdam, Bruges, Florence, Oxford, Salzburg and Venice.

Link:
http://www.venicecard.com/index_eng.jsp