

# Book review

**S. Gössling, C.M. Hall and D. Scott**

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The aim of the series "Tourism Essentials" by Channel Book Publications is to publish books based on state of the art research that offer a succinct but comprehensive introduction to a relevant issue in the field of tourism. *Tourism and Water* by Stefan Gössling, C. Michael Hall and Daniel Scott perfectly fits with this aim. *Tourism and Water* is grounded in the authors' intimate knowledge of sustainable tourism in general and water management in tourism in particular. By bringing together information that till now was rather dispersed *Tourism and Water* offers a true contribution to these fields.

Water is one of the most fundamental, if not the most fundamental resource needed to sustain life on Earth. What we tend to forget is that fresh water is a scarce resource and that tourism is highly dependent on water. Fresh water constitutes only a fraction (2.5 per cent) of the total water on our planet, and less of 1 per cent of fresh water is available for human use. The growing demand on water by an increasing population has to be accommodated by this very limited amount of available fresh water. Water scarcity and water pollution are the consequences of these trends in an increasing number of countries, including countries highly dependent on tourism for their economic development (Gössling *et al.*, 2012; UNEP, 2003). On this background *Tourism and Water* reminds us that tourism depends on this scarce resource not only because major tourism destinations are located in coastal areas or along rivers and lakes, but also because water is needed to sustain all processes that make a tourism experience possible. From here the need to address the interrelationships between tourism and water in a comprehensive and systematic way as *Tourism and Water* proposes.

Five compact chapters compose *Tourism and Water*. The first chapter is dedicated to a

global overview of water issues and focusses on human appropriation of fresh water resources. This chapter also briefly explains the complexities around water measurement. The second chapter is dedicated to the linkages between water and tourism. It shows that water use in tourism destinations is spatially and seasonally concentrated. It is seasonally concentrated because tourism tends to happen in specific seasons, such as the summer for coastal destinations and the winter for sky resorts. Spatial concentration reflects tourists' flows from, for example, North European to South European countries and from North America to the Caribbean. Tourists' flows cause a shift in water use, leading to an increase in water usage at the destination and a decrease in water use in the country of origin of the tourists. Spatial and seasonal concentration in water demand often intensifies water stress and competition for water at the destination. With the projected growth of tourism, and even considering efficiency gains, water consumption – the authors conclude – will increase. This trend renders the need for proper water management for tourism destinations and the organisations involved in it paramount.

Proper water management needs measurement, and therefore the third chapter is dedicated to measuring water use in tourism. In this chapter the exhaustiveness of *Tourism and Water* may be the best appreciated. The chapter opens with a figure distinguishing three levels of water consumption: direct water use, such as the water needed for irrigation or laundry; indirect water use, such as the water embodied in energy and food; and systemic water use including all other processes in the tourism chain, such as employee transportation and marketing activities, that also incur a water cost. The notion of embodied water is rather new, and *Tourism and Water* dedicates ample space to a much-needed summary of the research results so far.

Managing water consumption is the focus of the fourth chapter. Here the authors maintain the promise given in the introduction to

## Tourism and Water

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approach water conservation from a managerial and technological perspective. Consequently, *Tourism and Water* summarises both the processes needed to design and implement a proper water management system, and the technical options available. Fortunately, though, *Tourism and Water* also considers the attitudinal and behavioural causes of water over-usage and offers a short but clear summary of interventions aimed at nudging both staff and guests towards a water conscious attitude and behaviour.

From a future studies perspective, the most interesting chapter is the last one. On the basis of a trend analysis of population growth, economic developments and environmental challenges (such as climate change) this chapter discusses water security and water developments in the future. The conclusion is rather pessimistic because the three analysed developments concur in decreasing water security and increasing the risk of water related conflicts. Due to the interrelatedness of water and tourism on one side and the projected increase in tourism and tourism-related water demands in the next decades, tourism is the economic activity facing the major risks in the future. Therefore *Tourism and Water* closes with a call for action both by global and local organisations to secure the future of tourism through a true engagement with water management and conservation. Possibly, by connecting a scenario planning approach to trend forecasting, *Tourism and Water* could have offered more substantial solutions for securing tourism future than a call for action.

As it is clear from the above review, *Tourism and Water* offers a timely and welcome contribution to the field of water and tourism studies. It presents, however, some weaknesses. The completeness of the data presented both in the text and in the tables may be a bit overwhelming for the reader. In some sections, the sheer amount of data

offered makes reading a painstaking process. This issue is compounded by the book's layout: tables, graphs, photos and text boxes are inserted without due consideration to the text flow. On the positive side, the index helps the reader in connecting the dots of the five dense chapters. Case studies are also helpful: they exemplify the managerial implications and intricacies of applying in practice water saving policies and systems. Most of these cases are based on recent, original research by the authors and therefore contribute to the relevance of *Tourism and Water* for the field. Sometimes though, such as in Text Box 4.4, conclusions are drawn from a limited sample. In these case a bit more caution in presenting the results would have been welcome.

Concluding, the few weaknesses present in *Tourism and Water* disappear in front of the major contribution of this book: to offer an handsome and powerful overview of a fascinating and vital issue for the future of tourism.

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