

Tourism and Climate Change

By: Susanne Becken and John Hay; 2007. Channel View Publications, Clevedon 2007. Pp. xix +329; Price UK£21; ISBN : 13:978-1-84541-066-7 (pbk).

Timely, ambitious, but rather uncritical and indigestible. There is now about a decade's research on tourism and climate change, so a review monograph is much needed. Reaction to climate change within the tourism industry itself also commenced at least a decade ago, as ski resorts scrambled to reposition themselves as mountain resort-residential developments, and airlines started to promote carbon offsets as a political counter to carbon taxes. Associated with this approach has been the calculation of carbon and energy footprints, and this is where Susanne Becken cut her teeth in this field, with a 2002 PhD at Lincoln University in New Zealand. John Hay, the other author of the current volume, is also based in NZ, where he runs a consulting company. Interestingly, a 2005 book on tourism and climate edited by two other New Zealand researchers is not cited: is this inter-university rivalry? It can't be simply timing, because one chapter in that book is indeed mentioned.

Technical research on tourism and climate is still very much in its infancy, and Becken and Hay also draw heavily on more general literature from both these sectors. Indeed, the book contains a general review chapter describing the structure of the tourism industry, and another outlining the processes of climate change, presumably to make it accessible to a broader audience. It includes material on the impacts of climate change on tourism, on mitigation measures, and to a small degree on adaptation and response.

Mitigation and adaptation measures at individual destinations are discussed together, in line with Becken's previous publication on "harmonisation." This, however, is surely letting the tail wag the dog. Mitigation and adaptation measures are of very different scale and significance both for tourism and climate change, and there is no local mechanistic link between the two. Rising temperatures, sea level, storminess and snowlines may have major economic impacts on coastal and mountain resorts, but energy conservation measures by resorts have negligible effects on local sealevel or snowfall. The only connection is political: when tourism industry associations want to lobby for government support or special consideration, e.g. for planning permissions which would not otherwise be granted, they need to demonstrate that they have also taken some steps themselves.

There are a number of other points in this book which indicate a certain lack of analytic clarity. Much is made, for example, of the term "tourism-climate hotspots", presumably borrowed from the decade-old maps of tourism-biodiversity hotspots generated by Conservation International. The regions identified by Becken and Hay, however, seem to cover entire continents (Table 2.3, p. 24): regional patterns perhaps, but hardly hotspots. The high frequency of international travel within Europe, and the low frequency of international travel out of the USA, are referred to without noting that the USA is much larger than the whole of Europe, so that travel patterns at spatially similar scales produce domestic journeys in the US and international journeys in Europe. Likewise, the book says that tourism is an export product (p. 85) without mentioning that in most countries, domestic tourism far outweighs international tourism either inbound or outbound.

This volume certainly does assemble a range of relevant information, but perhaps without critical review. It says blandly (p. 55) that coastal protection works cause erosion elsewhere, which is an oft-repeated but nonetheless erroneous generalisation. It refers to insurance losses associated with tsunamis (p. 63) without mentioning that tsunamis are caused by earthquakes, not climate change. It lists a variety of carbon offset schemes (p. 218) without commenting on how (in)effective they may be. Simply giving each tourist a chance to plant a tree, as apparently happens at Kaikoura in New Zealand (p. 218) may be useful in marketing or politics, but has negligible impact on global warming. Fig. 8.4 (p. 232), taken from Berrittella *et al.* (2006, *Tourism Management* 27: 913-924), purportedly indicates that for nearly all countries worldwide, a one-degree increase in mean global temperatures by 2050 would cause only a couple of tenths of a percent change in international arrivals. In fact, however, it appears that these changes should be fractions, not percentages – i.e., 100 times larger. The legend is copied correctly from the 2006 article, but the data are actually derived from Hamilton *et al.* (2005, *Global Environmental Change A*, 15: 253-266). All of these perhaps suggest a volume published somewhat under pressure. One of Becken's own publications is even cited incorrectly.

These criticisms, however, do not detract from the wealth of material these authors have assembled. Key findings from a large number of journal articles are quoted at intervals. Some well-known examples include: Gössling's calculations of the emissions from international air travel (p. 119), and the forest area needed to offset them (p. 221); statistics on economic losses from Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and from coral bleaching in Palau (p. 138); data on oyster poisoning in Alaska (p. 251) and sea-ice cover in Hudson Bay (p. 255); and many more.

The back-cover blurb for this volume, penned by Daniel Scott at Waterloo, says that it is “authoritative and comprehensive.” As outlined above, there do seem to be some shortcomings on both counts. Despite these, however, this is indeed a very valuable volume, and one which researchers in all areas of tourism studies could well keep close to hand as a routine reference. I certainly expect to make frequent use of my own copy – at least until a second edition appears.

Ralf Buckley

Professor and Director, International Centre for Ecotourism Research

Research, Griffith, University, Australia

Email: r.buckley@griffith.edu.au