

Book review

Susanne Becken
Channel View Publications
Tonawanda, NY
2015
208pp.
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As a natural resource, oil remains a highly commodified substance used in nearly all products, their packaging, and/or their transport to consumers. Oil is an extremely salient factor in the tourism industry relevant to both the travel of tourists from their country of origin to their destination and other lesser, but cumulative, forms of consumption. This review of *Tourism and Oil: Preparing for the Challenge*, by Susanne Becken, provides an overview of the topics covered throughout the book, practicality for multi-disciplinary instructional use, and some future implications for the tourism industry. *Tourism and Oil* is a relevant book concerning the future of tourism on a global scale and provides a comprehensive preview of the implications that the peak of oil consumption and production will impose upon the tourism industry if not addressed and rectified:

Campbell and Heapes (2008) wrote “that a drop of oil, weighing one gram, yields 10,000 calories of energy, which is the equivalent of one day’s hard human labour. In other words, today’s oil production is equivalent in energy terms to the work of 22 billion slaves” (p. 8).

The most frightening notion about this quote is the unavoidable awareness of the increasing growth in human population and the certainty that our oil use and consumption will undoubtedly accumulate. According to that quote and with 7.28 billion people on earth, there are only a third of us to do the work for the energy we consume. Even though tourism may now represent about a tenth of global oil consumption (Becken, 2015), this should remain a constant reminder of our global burden, which I believe is exactly what *Tourism and Oil* achieves.

Through eight chapters over 208 pages, *Tourism and Oil* provides a clear purpose, which is to confront the unaddressed issue concerning Peak Oil and tourism as well as tourism’s physical limits. Chapter 2 breaks down tourism’s use of oil by segment, (e.g. transport, accommodation, leisure activities, etc.) followed by a description of tourism’s potential growth, the physical constraints of oil, and forecasts on aviation and the cruise sector in Chapters 3 and 4. Chapter 5 addresses the socio-political challenges of oil, while Chapter 6 reports the economic ramifications of oil’s cost on tourism. The final chapter concludes with future industry trends, examples of undesirable outcomes as well as achievable recommendations to avoid oil driven threats on tourism and its longevity. Most notably, Becken highlights areas of political, environmental, and economical constraints which limit our ability to consistently account for and measure oil usage and its undesirable global impact; specifically, it addresses the tourism industry’s vulnerability due to the dependence on oil as a vital resource. These aforementioned areas reflect the opportunity and responsibility of diverse stakeholders (e.g. industry leaders, consumers) to demand more accountable measures and transparent approaches to monitoring oil use. Although the book concludes with recommendations in the final chapter, a greater emphasis on actionable improvements throughout the book and in the concluding chapter would have been additionally beneficial.

The complexities of both tourism as an industry and oil as a natural resource make the combination of topics in the book highly informational and practical to multiple disciplines. *Tourism and Oil* would be useful and easily integrated into course curriculums for instruction on tourism planning and development, sustainability initiatives, geography, social psychology, natural resource management, climate change mitigation, and business and economics. Becken also achieves readability for multiple interests as the book offers a wide range of resources including nearly 100 figures, tables, and boxes combined and over 300

Tourism and Oil: Preparing for the Challenge

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peer-reviewed references and sources from contributors mostly based in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand. Furthermore, academics and students with a variety of interests may find this book useful for future tourism planning and risk management. Readers may also be able to draw conclusions as to how their field may relate to or be impacted by tourism, based on oil consumption.

With tourism on the rise and expectations of continued growth, are there realistic and positive prospects for the industry? Although somewhat skeptical, I would optimistically agree there are. Tourism's longevity will require challenging flexibility and innovation on the part of tourism planners and operators, the implementation of renewable, cleaner and shared energy sources, and most importantly, a unified effort to minimize political, economic, and social constraints that cripple movement toward a sustainable future. Finally, I would highly recommend this

book to academics, graduate, and upper-level students as *Tourism and Oil* encourages critical thought about demanding relevant general and tourism-related energy issues of our time, in an oil consuming and driven society.

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References

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Campbell, C. and Heapes, S. (2008), *An Atlas of Oil and Gas Depletion*, Jeremy Mills Publishing Limited, Huddersfield.