



European Tourist Destinations Transition Towards Decarbonisation

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Abstract

Climate change is one of the greatest challenges that the tourism industry must overcome. For the tourism industry to be considered sustainable it must actively contribute to decarbonisation to aid the transition towards a climate-neutral world by 2050. The purpose of this study was to determine the European tourism industries level of commitment to decarbonisation for sustainable destination development and management. This study reviewed 53 European national tourism plans to establish if European tourist destinations are developing evidence-based and location-specific decarbonisation strategies. This study constructed a theoretical framework from global tourism leaders principle guiding documents on sustainable development. The findings of this study identified that within European national tourism plans there is a serious lack of discussion and commitment to tourism decarbonisation, as tourist destinations are not actively measuring, monitoring and reporting tourism emissions. As a result, without the crucial baseline tourism emissions data, European tourist destinations are not prepared to develop evidence-based and location-specific decarbonisation strategies. Additionally, European destinations are unable to monitor and manage the level of tourism decarbonisation occurring and can not compare tourism emissions internationally. Consequently, European tourist destinations that are advocating sustainable tourism may be falling short of the mark and potentially open to claims of greenwashing. As tourism cannot be classified as sustainable unless it is actively decarbonising by measuring, monitoring and reporting tourism emissions to manage, reduce or eliminate them.

Keywords: Climate action, European national tourism plans, Tourism emissions, Decarbonisation, Sustainable Destination Management.