



Is scientific research on water-tourism nexus responding to the challenges identified by stakeholders and policy-makers? The case of Benidorm, Spain

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Since the middle of the 20th century, urban-tourist development in tourist destinations on the Mediterranean coast has required the creation of complex water supply systems to guarantee a growing water demand. At present, the challenges posed by climate change around the management of water resources requires the implementation of adequate water policies and sustainable environmental solutions to foster the adaptation to a foreseeable future characterized by lower availability of conventional water resources and more recurrent and intense droughts. In this context, the link between the scientific field, the stakeholders from the tourism sector, and the decision-makers is vital to favor viable, effective, and consensual solutions that shift the focus from the objective of guarantee tourist water demand to a sustainability scenario from both an environmental, economic, and social point of view. Therefore, it is relevant to question whether there is a large gap between the actions and focus of attention in each of these three areas (scientific, decision-makers, and stakeholders). In other words, does scientific research related to water consumption by the tourism sector adequately respond to the knowledge needs required by stakeholders and decision-makers to achieve the aforementioned sustainability objectives? Through a literature review, this study addresses the main topics, methodologies, and results related to water consumption in hotels on the Spanish Mediterranean coast and their possible impact on the actions made by managers, decision-makers or stakeholders from the tourism sector. To evaluate the science-policy interface, it has also been made a policy review of the main laws, regulations, and plans developed by the different levels of public administration and other private entities in the tourism sector concerning water consumption in hotels, for the Benidorm case study, located in the southeast of Spain. To identify the measures implemented by stakeholders from the tourism sector to reduce water consumption and their vision about the challenges and barriers in this issue, we have taken into account the results of previous projects in which more than twenty surveys and interviews have been carried out to the hotel managers as well as to the Benidorm hotel association (HOSBEC). Likewise, to contextualize the results of these surveys and interviews, we have analyzed the raw water supply data provided by the entity in charge of this service, the Marina Baja Water Consortium, as well as billing and smart meter data

from the hotels, provided by the company in charge of the local water supply service, Hidraqua. The results will make possible to highlight the links and differences found between the problems and research approaches raised from the scientific field, the regulations and plans proposed by the public administration and other private decision-makers and the actions and future challenges identified by the tourism sector in the city of Benidorm. The identification of the existing gaps between the three areas (scientists, policy-makers, and stakeholders) will be useful to reshape the agenda of future research and re-think the role of science when responding to managers and decision-makers' requests on water management and tourism nexus.