

**ICOT2024**  
Corfu, Greece, 26-29 June

**BOOK of  
ABSTRACTS**



# International Conference on Tourism (ICOT2024)

Tourism in the Era of Liquid Modernity:  
Rethinking Tourism Strategy and Facing Uncertainty

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## CONFERENCE AIM

The ICOT2024 conference builds on the eminent support of the international scholarly community and the success of the previous thirteen International Conferences on Tourism (ICOT) held in Greece, China, Cyprus, U.K., Italy, Thailand, Portugal, but also virtually following the COVID-19 outbreak. The scope of ICOT2024 is to examine the complex elements of the current era of liquid modernity, and to understand how phenomena such as overtourism, artificial intelligence and sustainable tourism development impact the contemporary tourism industry. The tourism and hospitality sectors have entered a new era after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, followed by several ongoing crises such as the Russo-Ukrainian War, the climate crisis, the global energy crisis, high inflation and slowing growth of the global economy. This new era is mainly characterized by Bauman's (2000) liquid modernity. Uncertainty is the only certainty left today and nobody is able to predict the forthcoming changes in economic and societal structures based on the rapid transformation that artificial intelligence as well as virtual and augmented reality brought and will continue to bring into peoples' life. Another feature of this era is that the economic, socio-cultural and environmental conditions that guarantee people's well-being today might no longer exist tomorrow. The modern tourist might be affected by digital advertising and the astonishing achievements of information technology, but always travel experiences will create tourists' real memories. The conference will be a unique opportunity where academics, professionals, researchers, policy makers, practitioners, and post-graduate students from the fields and industries of tourism and travel will meet, discuss, exchange ideas and express their views and scientific approaches. The ultimate objective is to stimulate a dialogue on how tourism in current times should invest in innovative sustainable practices for its recovery and resilience, thereby building a more solid ground for sustainable, balanced, and holistic development.

## CONFERENCE THEMES

The conference will focus on a broad range of topics related to tourism, including (but not limited to):

- Tourism Development, Policy and Planning
- Sustainability, Degrowth and Overtourism
- Alternative and Special Forms of Tourism
- Community Responses to Tourists and Tourism
- Collaboration and Cooperation between Stakeholders
- Emerging Tourism Destinations
- Theoretical Perspectives on Tourism
- Economic/Social/Environmental/Cultural Impacts of Tourism
- Tourism Education and its Role in Managing Tourism Development
- World Heritage Sites
- Industry's Role in Managing Growth
- Destination/Place Marketing
- Information Technology in Tourism
- Tourism Research and Methodology
- Globalisation Effects
- Challenges and Best Practices of Hospitality and Tourism Marketing and Management
- Negotiation in Tourism
- Tourism Mobilities
- Transportation and Tourism
- Authenticity and Commodification
- The Future of Tourism
- Climate Change and Natural Disasters
- The Effects of Crime, Terrorism, Safety and Security
- Managing Human Resources in Hospitality and Tourism
- Evolution and Transformation of Booking and Distribution Channels
- Responsible Tourism for Conservation and Development
- Social Networking and New Forms of Tourism
- Innovation in Tourism.

## COMMITTEES

### Chair

- Konstantinos Andriotis, Middlesex University London, UK
- Naoum Mylonas, Ionian University, Greece

### Vice-Chair

- Konstantinos Voglis, Ionian University, Greece

### Social Media Administrator

- Mahmoud Saleh, Helwan University, Egypt and Saint Petersburg State University, Russia

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- Nikolaos Boukas, European University Cyprus, Cyprus
- Carla Pinto Cardoso, Catholic University of Portugal, Portugal
- Samantha Chaperon, University of Greenwich, United Kingdom
- Miju Choi, Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom
- Ana María Domínguez Quintero, University of Seville, Spain
- Martin Fontanari, ISM – International School of Management, Germany
- Fernando Almeida García, University of Malaga, Spain
- Alkmini Gkritzali, Ionian University, Greece
- Sotiris Hji-Avgoustis, Ball State University, United States
- Marta Jacob, University of The Balearic Islands, Spain
- Hania Janta, University of Basel, Switzerland
- Sofia Karampela, Ionian University, Greece
- Sezer Karasakal, Antalya Bilim University, Turkey
- Mihalis Kavaratzis, Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom

- Panagiotis Kloutsiniotis, Ionian University, Greece
- Agisilaos Konidaris, Ionian University, Greece
- Panagiotis Kourouthanasis, Ionian University, Greece
- Panagiotis Manolitzas, Ionian University, Greece
- Bernard Musyck, University of Central Asia, Tajikistan
- Adamantia Pateli, Ionian University, Greece
- Ioannis Poullos, Ionian University, Greece
- Neil Robinson, Edge Hill University, United Kingdom
- Mahmoud Saleh, Helwan University, Egypt and Saint Petersburg State University, Russia
- Markus Schuckert, University of New Hampshire, United States
- Amir Shani, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Israel
- Erose Sthapit, Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom
- Dimitrios Styliadis, University of Crete, Greece
- Anastasia Traskevich, Belarus State Economic University, Belarus
- Anna Serena Vergori, University of Salento, Italy
- Philipp Wassler, University of Bergamo, Italy
- Michał Żemła, Jagiellonian University, Poland

#### **Organizing Committee**

- Konstantinos Andriotis, Middlesex University London, United Kingdom
- Konstantinos Artikis, Ionian University, Greece
- Christina Beneki, Ionian University, Greece
- Miltiadis Botsis, Ionian University, Greece
- Alkmini Gkritzali, Ionian University, Greece
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- Ioannis Poullos, Ionian University, Greece
- Savvas Sakkadas, Cyprus University of Technology, Cyprus
- Konstantinos Voglis, Ionian University, Greece

## SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

### WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE 2024

<b>17.00-18.00</b>	Registration
<b>18:00-20:00</b>	Sightseeing Walking Tour
<b>20:00-20:30</b>	Welcome Speeches
<b>20:30-22:15</b>	Welcome Reception

### THURSDAY 27 JUNE 2024

<b>9:00-10:00</b>	Keynote Speech
<b>10:00-11:30</b>	Parallel Sessions 1 (rooms A, B)
<b>11:30-12:00</b>	Poster Presentations
<b>11:30-12:00</b>	Coffee Break
<b>12:00-13:30</b>	Parallel Sessions 2 (rooms A, B)
<b>13:30-14:30</b>	Lunch
<b>14:30-16:00</b>	Parallel Sessions 3 (rooms A, B)
<b>16:00-16:30</b>	Coffee Break
<b>18:30-18.20</b>	Parallel Sessions 3 (rooms A, B)

### FRIDAY 28 JUNE 2024

<b>9:00-10:00</b>	Keynote Speech
<b>10:00-11:30</b>	Parallel Sessions 1 (rooms A, B)
<b>11:30-12:00</b>	Coffee Break
<b>12.00-13.30</b>	Parallel Sessions 2 (rooms A, B)
<b>13:30-14:30</b>	Lunch
<b>14:30-16:40</b>	Parallel Sessions 3 (rooms A, B)
<b>16:40-17.10</b>	Coffee Break
<b>17.10-17.20</b>	Short Closing Remarks
<b>17:20-17:30</b>	Awards' Ceremony
<b>17:30-17:40</b>	Closing Speeches
<b>20:30-23:30</b>	Gala Dinner

**SATURDAY 29 JUNE 2024****9:00–17:00**

Day Trip

**KEYNOTE SPEAKERS****PROF. SEONGSEOP (SAM) KIM***The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong*

Prof. Seongseop (Sam) Kim received MSc and PhD in Recreation, Park and Tourism Sciences from the Texas A&M University in 1996 and 1999, respectively. He is currently a Professor in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He is one of the most prolific authors in the tourism and hospitality field. In terms of the number of publications in top tourism and hospitality journals, he is listed in the top 3 in SciVal (SCOPUS Journals, 2020-2023) in the Tourism, Leisure and Hospitality field. He was listed in 25th place in 2023 in the Business field in the world among the top 1,000 contributors in ABDC (Australian Business Deans Council) Journal Quality List. His research interests include tourism impacts, sustainability, destination marketing, new technology and consumer behavior, event/convention, and tourism/hospitality marketing. He was a President of APacCHRIE (Asia Pacific in Council on Hotel, Restaurant, Institutional Education) in 2021-2022 term.

## **PROF. MARTIN THOMAS FALK**

*University of South Eastern Norway, Norway*



Martin Thomas Falk is a full professor in management at the University of South-Eastern Norway (USN), School of Business, campus Bø. His career spans several countries and topics where he has worked at research institutes. He holds a PhD in economics. His research interests include environmental management, tourism and hospitality, climate change, sustainability, culture and innovation. Currently, he teaches quantitative research methods, sustainable management, theory of science and research ethics at master's and PhD level. Martin also frequently gives courses for doctoral students from all disciplines, in which they learn how to publish in scientific journals. He regularly evaluates research proposals submitted to national scientific foundations and the European Commission and has participated in several EU-funded projects. Martin has published over 100 scientific articles in Scopus-indexed journals and has an h-index of 29 (Scopus).

## KEYNOTE SPEECH I:

### PROF. SEONGSEOP (SAM) KIM

*The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong*

#### **Impacts of cutting-edge technologies on tourism and hospitality**

Over the coming decades, rapid global growth is projected in the market for intelligent technologies including AI (Artificial Intelligence), service robots, UAM (urban air mobility), the metaverse, Blockchain, CBDC (Central Bank Digital Currency), cryptocurrency, drone food delivery, and other smart technologies. Tourism and hospitality industries are progressively incorporating these technologies in place of human employees as intelligent technologies continue to advance and find practical applications. A growing number of hospitality and tourism businesses are also adopting them to enhance the caliber and effectiveness of customer service. The trend has been facilitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which has catalyzed the automation and digitalization of guest services in the hospitality industry. The introduction of these technologies can have both positive and negative outcomes. Positive aspects mean that the new technologies contribute to enhancing efficiency in the face of rising costs and labor shortages. Also, they facilitate labor productivity, safeguard service quality, and enhance co-creation through human-technology collaboration. Tourism and hospitality businesses have the opportunity to enhance their brand image as leaders in novel technology adoption and innovation. However, innovative technologies can also have negative outcomes including loss of human jobs, miscommunication between humans and technologies, misuse of technologies, the need for continuous upgrading of facilities, increasing budgets for adopting new technologies, and difficulty in learning/updating new technologies. Even though the impacts of these technologies are tremendous, many tourism and hospitality businesses are dependent on the quality of customers' experiences which human emotion can improve. Therefore, the industry needs more human services compared to manufacturing industries. Functional tasks will be

substituted by technology. Technology is taking over human jobs (from chores to important roles) inch by inch. Fast-changing and volatile external factors, including climate change, global issues, changes in human values or preferences, and technological changes will compel old or conventional theories and models to be replaced by new theories and models. Therefore, academicians must attempt to develop new theories and apply them to current and future hospitality and tourism studies.

## KEYNOTE SPEECH II:

### PROF. MARTIN THOMAS FALK

*University of South Eastern Norway, Norway*

#### **A changing publication landscape: How to adjust?**

The keynote aims to overview the trends in academic publishing in tourism. Open-access pay-to-publish and mega journals have led to increased competition among the journals. The publication requirements of many mega and open-access journals have been lowered so that the assessment of a paper should be based on its scientific validity (whether the methods and data analysis have been carried out rigorously and the language is correct) rather than its perceived importance, significance, or impact (Scientific reports, Plos One). The idea is to allow the scientific community to determine the significance of the work. Thus, the academic society have become more inclusive, and the Internet and ICT have greatly facilitated this. Established journals in the field of tourism research are also expanding, and sister journals are being founded, often offered as the pay-to-publish model. Scientific work has become mass production of "papers", and too many journals publish too much research, which is barely read and very often has no impact whatsoever (Peters and Thomas, 2020). Academics have observed an increase in "pseudoscientification of science", "Sham Science", "Bogus Science", "Bullshit research", "Publish for the sake of publishing", increase in "paper mills", "zombie papers" and "predatory journals". There has been a Reproducibility crisis and a Replicability crisis. Academic publishing is increasingly seen as strategic and a business with high profit rates; all actors have a role (authors, universities, editors, reviewers, publishers, governments, retraction watch). At the same time, the official national journal rankings and the Web of Science have begun to devalue some open-access journals. Meanwhile, several universities have started using the DORA principles for hiring and promotion decisions. The presentation aims to provide an overview of the reputation of tourism journals in various official rankings (AJG, ABDC, FNEGE Journal Quality List, ANVUR, etc.). It documents the uneven growth

of the tourism journals included in Scopus. A guide on how and where to publish will be provided. In addition, misbehaviour in tourism research will be investigated (fake peer reviews, fake authorship, Self-plagiarism, plagiarism, paper mills, falsified data, duplicate articles). Evidence is based on the retraction database and on scopus. The overall result is that misconduct in tourism research is low or undetected. The audience is invited to intervene throughout the presentation.

**PATRICIA ARANDA-CUÉLLAR, VÍCTOR MAS-  
PÉREZ AND MARÍA J. SUCH-DEVESA**  
*University of Alcalá, Spain*

**Airbnb's influence on urban residency shifts: A case study on  
the social impacts of tourism**

In recent years, the social sustainability of tourist destinations has become a central concern and issue for policymakers and city tourism planning. This paper analyses overtourism by exploring the relationship between intra-urban population displacement and the concentration of Airbnb rentals for the two main Spanish urban destinations: Madrid and Barcelona. A quantile regression approach is used to evaluate urban population shifts and its association to other variables, such as distance to the city centre, the presence of hotels, or the variation of residential prices. The study of these variables at neighbourhood level allows examining the uneven distribution of population movements within the cities. This quantile approach allows for better capturing heterogeneous effects, essential aspect in an investigation on Airbnb and its effects, with such uneven deployment within cities. This makes it suitable for this study, as studying the effects at different points of the mobility rate is crucial for this analysis, providing more complete results by capturing the sensitivity of the mobility to the explanatory variables at different quantiles, differentiating between neighborhoods that are gaining population and those that are losing it. This new detailed approach allows the research to delve into the phenomenon of overtourism in the 202 neighbourhoods of these two cities, 129 in Madrid and 73 in Barcelona. In this research, the empirical model analyses two schemes of tourist accommodation in which traditional regulated accommodation, hotels, do not play a role in population expulsion, but Airbnb does, although they coexist in the same neighbourhoods. In addition, changes in house prices also turn out to be a significant variable in explaining population movements. Furthermore, this research finds two different deployments of Airbnb's development: a concentric model for Madrid and a more dispersed one for Barcelona. These suggestive results highlight the need to consider different and better tourism

plans and policies, adapting measures to more detailed levels: neighbourhoods, due to the heterogeneous impacts and their social, economic, and cultural consequences on residents and their daily lives.

**ALINA BADULESCU, DIANA-TEODORA TRIP,  
ALEXANDRA-CARMEN HODISAN AND DANIEL  
BADULESCU**

*University of Oradea, Romania*

**How gender, professional experience and education of  
managers and entrepreneurs influence the businesses'  
perspectives in health and spa tourism?**

There is a wide theoretical and practical consensus that a strong link exists between tourism, travel, and health. The general developments of tourism in the last decades have significantly influenced the situation and strategies of health and spa tourism resorts and businesses, facing various challenges: the relationship between ownership, modernization and business expansion, regaining and attracting new segments of customers, considerable investments in high-class medical and wellness services, staff training etc. The challenges are major, as long as the majority of international and young tourists aim rather wellness services and less traditional medical facilities, a higher level of comfort, sanitation and hospitality, a unique atmosphere and experiences, often beyond financial and organizational resources that businesses in this sector could engage. In our research, we attempted to investigate the main aspects describing enterprises in this sector, by employing a survey-based study of small business owners and hotel managers in a relevant Romanian spa resort. We analyzed the factors that differentiate the respondents' businesses, the main challenges encountered, the factors that entrepreneurs and managers would consider when they intend to launch a new service, facility, or product, the factors with the highest negative impact on innovation, how the profile of the respondents, i.e. gender, level of education and experience, influences the perspectives of the respondents on the launch and development of their business. We identified that gender has little impact on their perceptions, but the level of education significantly influences managers' and business-owners' opinions on their businesses' perspectives, on the intention to launch new products or services. Moreover, the professional and managerial experience in tourism contributes to business differentiation, the way of approaching the challenges and

disturbing factors, and supports business modernization. Our research contributes to underlining how the success of health and spa tourism ventures is influenced by the business's transformation based on innovative criteria and models, the adaptation of the still attractive traditional features to the young generation's preferences, the active involvement of stakeholders, the training of human resources and a managerial and entrepreneurial attitude, open to new trends in the field

## **ATTILA BALOGH AND JÁNOS VARGA**

*Óbuda University, Hungary*

### **Advancing for our future: The symbiosis of sustainability and innovation**

Sustainability and innovation are critical drivers of progress in today's rapidly evolving world. The integration of sustainable practices with innovative solutions holds the promise of addressing some of the most pressing environmental and societal challenges. This paper explores the symbiotic relationship between sustainability and innovation, highlighting how innovative approaches can lead to sustainable development and environmental preservation. Through the lens of various case studies, this work demonstrates how breakthroughs in technology, processes, and products are fostering a more sustainable future. However, the journey towards a sustainable and innovative future is not without challenges. The research discusses the significant barriers that organizations and societies face, such as economic constraints, regulatory hurdles, and the need for a cultural shift towards sustainability. Despite these challenges, the opportunities for creating long-lasting positive impacts are immense. Innovations in sustainability not only contribute to environmental protection but also enhance economic growth and improve quality of life. The implementation of a structured comparative analysis process has enabled the identification and categorisation of several main characteristics through different projects and real-life scenarios. It has also been concluded that there is a set of commonly experienced main features of innovation activities that would support sustainability goals and achievements. This research offers a group of different features of works which can be linked to unique projects and situations. However, those experiences could be valuable and usable in other situations as well. This academic work highlights the importance of continued investment in sustainable innovation to achieve long-term ecological balance and social well-being.

## **ABIGAIL BLAS, YANIV PORIA AND ARIE REICHEL** *Ben Gurion University, Israel*

### **Enhancing hotel accessibility for children with autism and their families**

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental condition characterized by challenges in social interaction, limited language and communication skills, resistance to changes, and a preference for routine behaviors. Over the past two decades, diagnoses of ASD have significantly increased. Despite the growing prevalence of ASD and the expansion of the global tourism industry, there is a notable scarcity of research focused on the hotel experience of individuals with autism in general and specifically children with autism. To minimize this gap in the literature, our study – classified as “neglect spotting” research – aims to explore how hotels can enhance accessibility for children with autism and their families. Given the exploratory nature of our work, we chose to employ a qualitative approach. The research tool chosen was semi-structured in-depth interviews, which were conducted face-to-face or virtually and lasted two hours on average. The sample was parents of children (ages 2-18) diagnosed with ASD in Israel, completing a total of 30 interviews. For data analysis, we employed a thematic analysis using ATLAS.ti software to identify and analyze patterns within the data, and the findings indicate that despite the challenges, parents devote considerable efforts and resources to provide their children with an experience tailored to their needs. The thematic analysis revealed four groups of difficulties: (1) Sense of anxiety and insecurity due to fear for the child’s safety, (2) Fear of the public’s offensive reactions to their child’s non-normative behavior, (3) The need to avoid sensory overstimulation, and (4) Difficulty adapting to new settings. The analysis allowed us to draw conclusions about the collective hotel experience of the families and offer managerial implications. Our recommendations for the implementation of changes in the physical environment, training, and public awareness, guided by principles of universal design, will improve the hotel experiences for families with autistic children. Moreover, creating “autism-friendly” hotels concerned with inclusion and sustainability will not only enhance the quality of life for children with but

also potentially generate significant business opportunities for the hospitality industry.

**ERIFYLI BENAKOPOULOU, POLYXENI SARDI,  
KALIPSO KARANTINOU, ANDA KARAYANNI AND  
MARIA STELLA SARIGIANNI**

*Athens University of Economics and Business, Greece*

**A multimethod investigation of destination branding: The case  
of Rhodes**

Developing and managing tourism destinations as brands is a popular practice, with destination image acting as the foundation of destination branding. Rhodes, one of the most popular Greek tourism destinations, is an ideal case in point to assess destination image. While the island's tourist activity is strong, there is significant room for improvement of its brand image within the everchanging tourism environment. The purpose of this study is to investigate and assess Rhodes' brand identity, by examining both the cognitive and the affective aspects of its destination image. A mixed methods approach, enabling the integration of multiple perspectives, was selected to examine the destination in depth. Qualitative research was carried out first in the form of 14 semi-structured interviews, with both tourism industry experts and visitors/potential visitors of Rhodes Island. An online quantitative survey with 446 respondents was subsequently conducted to measure behavioral intentions, as well as visitor satisfaction and non-visitors' sentiments towards Rhodes. Data was computed and analyzed with SPSS version 22. The hypotheses were tested using multiple regression analyses. Online travel-related reviews (n=315) were also collected and subjected to sentiment and content analysis, while participant observation, in the form of a week-long visit to the island, was employed to identify firsthand positive and negative elements of the destination. The mixed methods approach produced useful and complementary insights. The tourists' interviews revealed that the Rhodes' tourist product is a multidimensional one, but the destination image is limited to stereotypical attributes. The supply side stakeholders' interviews characterized the island as a culturally rich destination with a tourist-oriented mindset, while the quantitative analysis indicated that Rhodes enjoys an overall positive image. The participant observation identified the negative effects of the

extreme tourist development. Lack of specific targeting and unified destination message along with infrastructural deficiencies were presented as the main problems of the Rhodes brand through all the different data streams. Building on the identified need for a mixed methods approach incorporating multiple perspectives for comparison purposes, the results provide useful insights for academic research as well as DMO practitioners on destination image assessment and the development of strong destination brands.

## **LUÍS MIGUEL BRITO, VITOR AMBROSIO AND CARLA BRAGA**

*Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies, Portugal*

### **Generation Z Working Style, Needs, and Competencies: From the Academy to the Industry**

The Erasmus+ project "From Research to Working Life (ReWo)" aims to identify best practices for applying tourism research findings in the industry. Project partners include institutions in Portugal, Slovenia, Finland, and Norway. The project aims to make a lasting contribution to tourism literature by establishing methods and practices for developing educational and research structures within educational institutions in collaboration with international companies, as there are currently no guidelines for establishing connections between stakeholders. Recent technological advances such as AI, global events like the COVID-19 pandemic, and ongoing conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East have significantly impacted the tourism industry. Consequently, businesses must stay updated with the latest developments. Furthermore, there is a need for stronger connections between academic institutions, and the industry. The presentation aims to achieve two goals: understanding the motivations and goals of students after completing at least one internship and before entering the market and assessing how generations can work together and help students achieve their ambitions while contributing to innovative practices in the industry. During the research stage, we created cards outlining the core values and work attitudes of different generations. Each country conducted three focus groups with Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Generation Y in March 2024. Each focus group was composed of five to seven people, and the discussions lasted 20 to 50 minutes. The data were transcribed, analysed, categorised, compared, and discussed between countries to produce the final cards for each generation. Additionally, a questionnaire was conducted with 351 Generation Z students. The research aims to understand Generation Z's values and attitudes about work compared to other generations in the tourism sector and create a handbook. The study is still ongoing, so we are currently unable to provide a complete description

of the results. The presentation will include the data we have collected and its analysis. Generation Z is expected to be globally oriented, less focused, better at multitasking, and strong on bargains. In the working environment, Generation Z will prioritise collaboration, clear communication, and personal growth opportunities for self-improvement, allowing them to rewrite their own stories.

## **CARLA PINTO CARDOSO**

*Universidade Católica Portuguesa, Portugal*

### **Building sustainable tourism development: the transformative influence of universities**

In an era marked by the dynamic evolution of urban landscapes and the (re) growth of tourism activities, the role of universities becomes imperative to transcend traditional academic boundaries. They must actively engage with and listen to civil society to ensure no one is left behind. In this context, this study, driven by the aspiration to share experiences, focuses on the symbiotic relationship between universities and urban sustainable tourism. The primary objective is to extend the debate on how universities align with and contribute to the local communities, emphasizing their pivotal role as key influencers in fostering sustainable tourism practices and regional development. To achieve this objective, the study draws on real-world examples, particularly those developed by Universidade Católica Portuguesa in collaboration with various stakeholders, between 2023 and the beginning of 2024. The research concludes that universities are not merely observers, but active contributors to the sustainable development of the cities they inhabit. Through strategic alignment, demonstrated impact, and their role as incubators for change, universities are positioned as pivotal agents of change in shaping the trajectory of urban tourism, aligned with global standards. Theoretically, this paper extends knowledge with a case study in which a comprehensive analysis of various initiatives undertaken by a leading Portuguese university provides tangible evidence of the transformative influence universities can exert on tourism development. Practically, it is hoped that this case study may inspire innovation, education, and sustainable tourism practices within urban environments.

## **MICHAEL CHAMBWE**

*North-West University, South Africa*

### **A comparative analysis of the socio-economic impacts and participation in tourism for communities surrounding the Ukhahlamba Drakensberg Park**

Tourism is promoted worldwide for its ability to transform economies and livelihoods. However, studies have shown how the association between tourism and communities has not always been positive. While studies have highlighted the link between tourism and communities, they have often generalised their findings to the greater society. As such, this study aims to compare the impacts of tourism on rural communities surrounding the same nature reserve. Accordingly, the study's objectives are to compare (i) communities' perceived socioeconomic impacts of tourism, (ii) their levels of participation in tourism activities in and around the park, and (iii) the barriers to participation in tourism. The study utilises a quantitative approach where a community household survey was undertaken in the three communities of Bonjaneni, Kokwane, and Engodini, which are respectively adjacent to entrances of Royal Natal, Cathedral Peak, and Injisuthi, the three main rest camps of the uKhahlamba Drakensberg Park, located in the KwaZulu Natal province of South Africa. Focus on this area was inspired by the park's stature as a world heritage site and the tourism traffic it receives. The target population constituted the 762 combined household population of the three communities. The required sample size was 256 households. With prudence, 326 questionnaires were obtained from the survey. Descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha, ANOVA, and effect sizes were used to analyse and compare the community data sets. The results paint a gloomy picture of tourism's impact on the communities. The communities seldom participate in the activities in and around the park and confirmed the presence of all the barriers to participation presented to them. Further, significant differences are registered between the communities, underscoring how communities are impacted differently despite their proximity and reliance on one product. This paper recommends tailored policy and practice approaches specific to different communities for equitable development. By advancing these

recommendations, this paper makes a practical contribution. Further, this research makes a theoretical contribution by plugging the gap in the different impacts that tourism communities experience despite their proximity to one another and one tourism product.

## **DIMITRA CHRISTOU AND IOANNIS ANTONIADIS**

*Univeristy of Western Macedonia, Greece*

### **Innovation in tourism: The case of blockchain technology and customers' preferences**

In an era of rapid technological advancements and evolving consumer demands, the tourism industry faces unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Amidst this uncertainty, blockchain technology emerges as a transformative force with the potential to revolutionize traditional tourism strategies. This paper presents findings from research investigating factors influencing the acceptance of blockchain technology in tourism. Through surveys and data analysis, we explore tourism stakeholders' preferences for incorporating blockchain into businesses and activities. Specifically, we examine the preferred types of tourism businesses and activities for blockchain implementation. A literature review discusses the theoretical background and potential applications of blockchain in tourism, such as review verification, customer tracking, supply chain control, and payment methods, which can enhance productivity and efficiency. The research methodology combined census surveys with snowball sampling, targeting individuals familiar with blockchain, and gathered 160 samples. The electronic questionnaire, available in Greek and English, was distributed online via email and social media platforms. Data collected were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics to uncover key insights into blockchain's acceptance and application in tourism. Drawing upon respondents' insights, we discuss the promises and challenges of blockchain acceptance, highlighting its potential to enhance transparency, security, and efficiency. The results offer strategic insights for tourism practitioners and policymakers navigating the complexities of modern tourism. Overall, this study advances our understanding of blockchain technology's impact on tourism, providing valuable insights for shaping its future trajectory and considering the introduction of innovations.

## **ÁGNES CSISZÁRIK-KOCSIR**

*Óbuda University, Hungary*

### **The importance of environmental considerations in interpreting the scope of mega projects for tourism**

Measuring project success has been a focus of research for many years. When a project is considered successful depends on a number of factors. Most theories emphasise that project success is best captured in the achievement of the objectives set out in the project scope, on time and within budget. However, recent research and theories have increasingly focused on the perception of end-users. The way users perceive the project, its usability and compatibility with their needs is becoming increasingly important. There is an increasing demand from users for projects to be environmentally sustainable and environmentally aware. It is well known that the construction industry has had a significant impact on the environment, mainly in a negative way. Unfortunately, the same can be said of tourism. However, in addition to the bare facts, it is also important to know what users see and perceive and how this information influences their perception of the project. The aim of this study is to assess the perception of the scale of projects with significant tourism appeal, such as the Burj Khalifa or even the Sydney Opera House, with a particular focus on the environmental and sustainability of the resulting structures. Each of the two projects presented and examined in this study can be understood as a symbol of the country that almost all tourists visiting the country want to visit, and it is therefore important to assess its perception in a project-side interpretation. The aim of this study is to provide a picture of the user perception of these projects and structures, with a particular focus on the sustainability aspects that are taken into account in a tourism decision, among other characteristics.

## **MARGARIDA FERREIRA DA SILVA**

*University of Aveiro, Portugal*

## **HELENA ALBUQUERQUE**

*University Portucalense, Portugal*

## **FILOMENA MARTINS**

*University of Aveiro, Portugal*

## **GILDAS BURON**

*Musée des Marais Salants, France*

### **Traditional salt pans and tourism: Is it an opportunity?**

Traditional salt pans possess significant natural and cultural heritage values that significantly contribute to a region's distinctive landscape, lending them a competitive advantage as a tourism destination. These multifunctional areas combine artisanal salt production with tourism activities. Despite the threat of disappearance, these salt pans persist as emblematic representations of some destinations. However, there is a lack of studies analysing the duality between the risk of disappearance and emerging market trends, supporting the identification and formulation of integrated sustainable strategies for preserving these invaluable assets. To bridge this research gap, a comparative case-study analysis was carried out in two coastal regions characterized by active traditional salt pans with different development conditions: Aveiro, Portugal, and Guérande, France. The selection of case studies was based on information collected in prior research projects and scientific studies examining various models of salt pan development. Data were collected from secondary sources such as existing policy documents, reports and scientific publications to conduct documental analysis for each of the case studies. Secondly, a comparative analysis was undertaken to identify and explore the best practices in the Guérande salt pans and evaluate how they could serve as guidelines for the Aveiro salt pans. Thus, an answer is provided for the research question discussed within this study on whether traditional

saltpans could subsist of market-driven initiatives exclusively focused on tourism purposes. This study presents a set of guidelines for the formulation of sustainable strategies that utilize tourism as an essential tool in the preservation of saltscapes and salt heritage. The findings and insights are considered useful to researchers, policymakers and stakeholders. It approaches the duality between the threats to saltpans (e.g. environmental pollution, weak governance and tourism pressures) and the opportunities they present, by adopting a participatory and inclusive multi-stakeholder approach to overcome these threats. From a managerial perspective, this study delivers key lessons on how to take advantage of market opportunities in empowering local communities such as salt workers and tour guides and enabling them to provide authentic experiences for visitors in the context of natural and cultural heritage. The findings, along with the proposed guidelines, have practical implications for other traditional saltpans.

**IOANNIS DELIYANNIS, SOFIA MARIA  
POULIMENOU, STAMATELLA LABOURA, IOANNA  
AFRODITI MAZI AND KONSTANTINOS VOGKLIS**  
*Ionian University, Greece*

**Intelligent destination management (INDIANA Project): A  
localized metasearch engine with AI, based on big data**

At the forefront of tourism and cultural exploration, the integration of modern technologies to provide enhanced and sustainable visiting experiences has always been of great importance for destinations. This research paper describes the design and research strategies introduced for the design and development of an innovative platform that leverages modern technologies, notably artificial intelligence, to provide visitors with personalized recommendations for activities and points of interest. The system's foundation lies in the synthesis of vast data repositories from varied sources, including popular recommendation systems and official cultural organization websites, which are meticulously filtered and processed to tailor experiences unique to each visitor's profile. Central to the project is the concept of the "Digital Twin" profile, a comprehensive yet anonymous digital representation of the traveler, encompassing basic demographic details, location data, and current activities. This profile not only respects the privacy of users by maintaining anonymity but also allows for customization, enhancing the user experience through personalized service offerings based on detailed Internet of Things information, including real-time location, weather conditions, and physical constraints. The platform's intelligence extends to the creation of distinct tourist typologies, enabling the delivery of targeted recommendations and promotions. This segmentation is further refined through AI analysis, matching tourist behaviors with curated activities, thus enriching the "Quality of Destination Experience." A key innovation of the Indiana project is its dynamic recommendation system, which not only suggests activities but also introduces visitors to unique local events and opportunities, encouraging exploration and immersion in the local culture. The implications of this system are vast, offering valuable insights and feedback mechanisms for both travelers and

professionals within the tourism and cultural sectors, while the sustainability aspects are taken into account, particularly in the field of minimization of the environmental impact, a process that is taken into account when recommending activities, providing a way to avoid great concentration of visitors. This groundbreaking project is the result of a collaborative effort called "Indiana: Intelligent Destination Management", between the researchers at Ionian University and the Greek company DOTSO S.A., funded by the European Union, Regional Operational Programme Ionian Islands for the period 2021-2017.

## **BARTOLOME DEYA TORTELLA**

*University of the Balearic Islands, Spain*

### **Empirical analysis of water savings interventions in hotel rooms**

Water is a key resource for the tourism sector. Accordingly, hotels place written messages in their rooms aimed at saving water. Research on behavioral interventions to promote water conservation among hotel guests have been mainly focused on towel reuse, with only a few studies aimed at nudging guests to reduce water consumption. Research on interventions to encourage in-room water conservation behaviors through boosts – fostering people competences to exercise their own agency – is even scarcer. We examine the impact of informative messages – such as, water scarcity at the destination and best practices to reduce water consumption at hotel bathroom – on hotel guests' water consumption. Data related with room water consumption was collected via digital meters. We conducted a field experiment in Majorca, during the summer 2022 and 2023, at 14 identical hotel rooms equipped with digital water counters. In the treatment rooms, guests were exposed to the designed informative message. In the control condition, rooms had no water saving information. The results show that the informative message (vs. no information) had no impact on water savings. Moreover, a post-stay survey showed that the intervention had no effect on guests' hotel perceptions. Our findings show some limits of behavioral interventions, and in particular of boosts; and give rise to some provocative research questions on when and how information can promote a more sustainable guest behavior. The results have relevant implications for managerial and public policy. The results can be used in order to adapt in room messages to make a more effective effect on tourist behavior related on water consumption. This issue is highly relevant at those destinations with sever fresh water problems, characteristic shared by many tourist destinations in the world.

## **ENGELINA DU PLESSIS, ELMARIE SLABBERT AND TAFADZWA MATIZA**

*North West University, TREES, South Africa*

### **The skills, skills gaps and requirements of the South African hospitality sector**

The sustainable growth and development of the tourism sector depend on attracting and retaining an efficient labour market, thereby ensuring resilience. The recovery of the tourism sector is still in motion globally. However, it was estimated in 2019 that tourism recovery from external shocks associated with epidemics and disease outbreaks would take an average of 19.4 months. Tourism provides a massive boost to both the economy and job creation. An extended recovery can significantly impinge on the medium to long-term demand for travel and tourism. As we advance in the industry's recovery, the look and feel of the labour market are unknown, which can contribute to a slow recovery process. To bridge the gap between South Africa's tourism supply and workforce, the study sought to analyse the tourism sub-sector of Hospitality to assess the skills, skills gaps and requirements of the South African tourism sector. The findings highlight that of the three largest sub-sectors of Tourism in South Africa, hospitality the largest employer is, and it is forecasted that accommodation will grow by 4.3% per annum between 2023-2025 while food and beverage growth will be 2.5% per annum between 2023-2025, making it the most significant contributor to the South African economy. Industry-role players and national skills reports indicated a paucity of critical skills, regardless of growth in skills development aimed at preparing the workforce (learners) for jobs/occupations in the sub-sector. Skills needed in the hospitality sector were indicated as critical and creative thinking, health and safety, verbal communication, financial skills, time management, critical thinking, problem-solving, resilience, and soft skills. Identifying current and future skills is essential; one needs to assess the transferability of skills that can be redirected during times of crisis or shifts in the economy. Transferable skills give flexibility allowing people to move between different sub-sectors and use

available opportunities. The workforce model must be redesigned to rebuild the South African tourism sector.

**ANDREAS K. GRAMMENOS AND GEORGIOS A.  
PAPAIOANNOU**  
*Ionian University, Greece*

**Heritage interpretation in tourist guide training: A research-based proposal**

This paper addresses heritage interpretation as a fundamental component of the tourist guide training in face of the evolving character of the tourism phenomenon. It is based on the results of a composite research conducted in Greece, one of the countries where the tourist guide profession is regulated by the State and the training is also carried out exclusively by the State or under its supervision. The research includes a quantitative study by a digitally issued structured questionnaire about the awareness of the heritage interpretation techniques by the tourist guides and how they use them in their work. The survey was conducted in Corfu, Greece, and was answered by 28 tourist guides out of the 66 members of the local union at the time of the study. However, the results indicated that there was some confusion regarding the notion of heritage interpretation and especially about the training in related techniques. Therefore, the quantitative study was supplemented by a qualitative study with structured interviews of five tourist guides, which clarified the results of the quantitative study. The results of these two phases indicated that the tourist guides' training in Greece, does not include a focused and comprehensive training in the heritage interpretation techniques. However, the tourist guides apply those techniques in their everyday work, albeit in a spontaneous and intuitive manner. Therefore, a research question emerged: "Would the tourist guides employ the heritage interpretation techniques more efficiently, if they were explicitly trained in them?" A pilot training scheme in the heritage interpretation techniques was employed by one of the authors, during a tourist guide training programme implemented in 2024 by the Ionian University. A quantitative survey by a structured questionnaire answered by 48 of the 50 trainees, indicated that they achieved higher awareness about the heritage interpretation, and that a separate, focused module in the tourist guide training would improve their performance. Therefore, a proposal about the

tourist guide training is presented, as a contribution to the ongoing discourse in Greece about the future of the tourist guide training in an increasingly demanding environment.

**ZENANDE GUGWANA, LISEBO TSEANE-GUMBI  
AND LINDIE DU PLESSIS**  
*North West University, South Africa*

**Investigation of destination management and resources in  
contributing to competitive advantage: A tourism business  
perspective**

Destination competitiveness ensures that destinations learn to compete and increase their competitiveness. This however depends on whether destinations' competitive advantages are valuable, rare, not easy to imitate and well organised, acquired, and sustained. The Nelson Mandela Bay Metro situating on the coastal area of the Eastern Cape province in South Africa is rich in natural attractions, history, and culture, yet fails to attract as many tourists as other coastal metropolitans in the country. The current stud investigated tourism businesses perception on metro's competitive advantage, with specific focus on the metro's resources and management in respect of tourism usage. The descriptive study was conducted, qualitative research method in the form of questionnaire survey was done. Questionnaires were distributed online and face-to face to 384 tourism businesses employees and owners linked to marketing activities. The sample size was drawn from the metro data base of 2 837 tourism businesses. A simple random sampling was applied, in which convenience and stratified sampling methods were applicable. A total of 288 questionnaires were successfully completed, making 75% response rate. Besides the descriptive statistics, the Cronbach alpha determined the one dimensional and internal consistency of the data. The exploratory factor analysis specified and summarised the findings. The results revealed metro's strong entertainment activities including shopping opportunities, with less attention on water-based tourism activities and iconic tourism attractions. Two main contributors to the success of the metro's competitive edge cantered around its community's pride and excellent support on tourism activities, which strengthen the management of the area. The downfall of the metro was identified within its inability to manage risks and crises timely and effectively due to poor human resource development in the area. Stakeholder

engagement and resource management audit are worth consideration. The study is closing a gap in determining the fundamental reasons for low tourist arrivals in less popular tourist destinations.

## **JOSE RAMON GUTIERREZ**

*Nebrija University, Spain*

### **Ten years of abenomics in tourism: Has Japan become a slow and sustainable tourist destination?**

In the last years, Sustainability in Tourism has positioned as a key topic among scholars from different academic approaches, since it has widely spread a general awareness about the current unsustainable situation of massive tourism. This general consciousness meets with the recent efforts of Japanese authorities to foster inbound tourism in Japan, where the number of arrivals almost tripled from 2013 to 2018 to a record 31 million. Consequently, the share of international tourists in Japan's total domestic tourism expenditure increased from 4.7 percent in 2009 to 17.3 percent in 2018, marking their increasing importance for the tourism industry in Japan. In this context, this work analyzes the current features of tourism in Japan and its recent evolution, to identify possible factors contributing to Japan's inbound tourism demand. Additionally, they are reviewed the results of ten years of tourism promotion policies in Japan, adopted since launching by PM Abe of supply and reform policies known as Abenomics, to let us understand whether Japan is a slow sustainable tourist destination, oriented to cultural and nature destinies. To carry out research, we have taken data series from the Japan Tourism Agency itself, from April 2010 to December 2022, in order to develop a regression model that allows us to identify the factors that explain the growth of Japanese inbound tourism, both at regional and national level. In this period, we put special attention to the dramatic breakup caused by COVID-19 crisis, that closed the country until October 2022, and the policy measures adopted to relaunch former promotion efforts. These data offer the baseline information used by Japanese Tourism policy makers for designing and evaluating measures to attract foreign tourists, by assessing trends in consumption by international visitors to Japan.

## **MÓNIKA GARAI FODOR HABI**

*Óbuda University, Hungary*

## **NIKOLETT HUSZAK**

*Corvinus University, Hungary*

### **Examining sustainability from the perspective of conscious consumer behaviour among Generation Z**

The global issue of sustainability has economic, social and political dimensions, it is a complex issue that we believe requires a complex solution. In order to make sustainability an active form of behaviour for people, it is necessary to motivate and convince individuals. In our view, it is essential to approach sustainability through conscious consumer behaviour. Conscious living is a sustainable behaviour rooted in individual values, which can directly serve the issue of sustainability, given that it means striving for a harmonious balance between the individual and his or her environment. Conscious behaviour is a combination of the pursuit of natural and economic harmonisation, going beyond individual interests and following ethical principles. This is why the consumer approach to sustainable and conscious behaviour is closely linked. In this study, we investigate the cognitive aspects of conscious consumer behaviour among members of Generation Z. We find that conscious consumption can greatly help to foster social responsibility, environmental and health-conscious behaviour and ethical consumerism. We believe that it is an important educational task to promote and reinforce consumer behaviour among young people that increases and creates community value. In this study, we analysed the dimensions of young people's conscious consumer behaviour and its manifestation in concrete forms of behaviour, purchasing and consumer decisions. Our main objective is to analyse what conscious living means to young people, what behavioural elements they associate with it and what activities they themselves carry out in this context. The primary research used a pre-tested standardised questionnaire online survey using a snowball sampling technique. Data were evaluated using bivariate and multivariate analyses in addition to descriptive statistics.



**MARTA JACOB***University of the Balearic Islands, Spain***MÓNICA MARTÍNEZ-GÓMEZ***Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain***CARMEN FLORIDO***University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria & University of the Balearic Islands, Spain***ALDRIC VIVES***University of the Balearic Islands, Spain***What influences guest loyalty towards green hotels? A case study in Gran Canaria**

As a result of tourists' increasing concern towards sustainability, there is a growing interest in tourism research to identify the main tools to reduce the negative environmental externalities and increase the satisfaction of green consumers. This paper carries out a study in Gran Canaria to identify the factors that influence the adoption of circular practices by guests accommodated in a hotel establishment and their loyalty towards green hotels. A conceptual model is proposed to assess if guest circular preferences and behavior and hotel environmental policy affect guest loyalty towards green hotels. A survey was conducted with tourists accommodated in hotels in Gran Canaria and a sample of 211 hotel's guests was obtained through face-to face interview, using a structured questionnaire with items adapted from previous studies in the literature. This model identifies a wide range of predictors of success and relates them to different measures that help achieve better performance in terms of hotels' circular practices. Each of these constructs has several indicators that were measured using a Likert scale. A multi-group analysis (MGA) by partial least squares (PLS-SEM) was performed to assess the moderation of control variables such as gender, age or hotel booking system of the theoretical model proposed, including the measurement invariance procedure for evaluation of

composite models (MICOM). Results indicate first that the variable that had the highest impact on loyalty towards green hotels is hotel environmental policy; and second, a moderating effect of age, gender, booking system, type of traveler and type of board was found.

**MARTA JACOB***University of the Balearic Islands, Spain***ANA DOMÍNGUEZ-QUINTERO***University of Sevilla, Spain***CARMEN FLORIDO***University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria & University of the Balearic Islands, Spain***MARGARITA PAYERAS***University of the Balearic Islands, Spain***Influence of socio-demographic factors and previous environmental knowledge on the intention to engage in circular economy practices by Gen Z residents in three destinations**

Citizen's attitude and awareness about what circular economy (CE) implies is decisive for that change but few studies have analyzed the determining factors for individuals to implement it in their daily lives. Most of the literature on CE and tourism focuses on the supply side (especially hotels, restaurants) and on the demand side (tourists) and they do not consider the resident's view. Within the population, Generation Z cohort is more concerned about caring for the environment than previous generations and is very interested in environmentally friendly practices and in contributing to the sustainable development of their region. This paper focuses on the Gen Z cohort of the resident population of three tourism destinations. We use the Theory of Planned Behavior to analyze the influence of sociodemographic factors and previous environmental knowledge on the implementation of circular economy practices by Gen Z residents. Some previous tourism literature focuses on analyzing socio-demographic characteristics' effect in shaping the tourists' environmentally friendly attitudes and behaviour, but few studies consider gender, age, educational level or income level in the model. The paper has two main objectives: first, to study the previous CE knowledge and awareness of Gen Z residents in three different destinations: two island sun

and beach destinations, Gran Canaria and Majorca, and an urban destination, Seville, on their circular behaviour. Second, to evaluate the effect of gender, age, educational level, income level, municipality type and municipality size on the implementation of CE practices, related to the 3R principle, by Gen Z residents. Three specific fieldworks were carried out using a structured questionnaire and 403 surveys were collected. We use ANOVA test and logit regression to evaluate the influence of the previous environmental knowledge and sociodemographic variables mentioned on the CE behaviour of Gen Z residents. Findings show that age, previous environmental knowledge, and the municipality size influence the implementation of circular practices by this population cohort in the three destinations, independently of the type of municipality (urban/beach). Results could be used to design educational and communication campaigns on CE for Gen Z residents and provide guidelines for action to practitioners.

## **MANDI JAMALIAN**

*University of Leicester, United Kingdom*

## **MIHALIS KAVARATZIS**

*Manchester Metropolitan University, United Kingdom*

### **Co-creating dark heritage sites**

This study aims at a deeper understanding of the co-creation of the meaning and experience of tourism sites, focusing particularly on places of death and atrocity (or, dark heritage sites). We investigate three such sites adopting the dual perspective of both the supply side (i.e. authorities and managers) and the demand side (i.e. local and international visitors). Using a phenomenological, ethnographic approach, fieldwork took place in Iran's war memorial sites, in Jallianwala Bagh Massacre Memorial (Amritsar, India) and in the Bosworth Battlefield Heritage Centre, UK. We examine how these sites are consumed, produced, reconstructed, and, therefore, co-created through the performances within them, the interactions between people and the influence of the wider environment and its design. The findings show that the co-creation of dark heritage sites occurs within three intertwining contexts, namely the physical context of the site itself, the cognitive context of the co-creators' experience and the digital context of online interactions. Data analysis identifies five main factors within these contexts that influence and determine the co-creation of the meaning of dark heritage sites: a) political/economic interests; b) material/nonhuman agents; c) memory and identity; d) codes of practice; e) relation to the past. Understanding these five factors helps towards more refined understanding of co-creation in the dark heritage field and contributes to a clearer demonstration and deeper theorisation of the dynamics of co-creation in tourism.

**SEBASTIAN KAISER**  
*Heilbronn University, Germany*

**TIMO BECKER**  
*University of Applied Sciences Kaiserslautern, Germany*

**Challenges of sustainable destination development and the contribution of sport and culture: The example of the Greek municipality of Epidaurus**

Innovative developments and solutions that shape a sustainable future emerge in model regions. It is therefore crucial to research these sources of inspiration for other regions and to pool knowledge. Using the example of an international research and consultancy project for Epidaurus in Greece, the paper highlights the challenges of sustainable regional development as a multidimensional concept that is determined by many factors: diversity of stakeholders and targets, the need to involve a wide range of disciplines and approaches, cooperative competition ("coopetition"), changing political support and influence and many more. To address the specific requirements and to accomplish the task of planning and evaluating regional development projects a holistic approach is needed. To combine economic and noneconomic factors we propose the integration of existing strategy models into a cohesive strategy framework. This hybrid holistic framework allows the design of a strategy canvas for a practical application in consulting, education, and practice. The framework not only combines the strategic models it integrates them and defines a process of iteration which allows for evaluation and adaptation as well as in planning phase and in realization phase of regional initiatives. During the presentation, the elements of this strategic concept will be introduced and their practical application will be discussed, using the example of a long-term research cooperation with the Greek municipality of Epidaurus.

**IOANNIS KATSANAKIS, ASTERIOS  
STROUMPOULIS AND EVANGELIA KOPANAKI**  
*University of Piraeus, Greece*

**A theoretical framework for validating and evaluating the  
TANGO platform in smart hospitality**

In the rapidly evolving landscape of smart tourism, robust data management and privacy are essential for enhancing personalized guest experiences. This paper introduces a comprehensive theoretical framework designed to validate and evaluate the TANGO platform, specifically within a pilot implementation in the smart hospitality sector in Mallorca. The TANGO platform aims to provide personalized services while ensuring stringent data privacy and security. The proposed framework integrates several theoretical models, including the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), and the DeLone and McLean Information Systems Success Model, combined with the ISO/IEC 25010:2011 software quality standards. These models collectively address user acceptance, system success, and software quality, providing a holistic view of the platform's potential performance. To complement these theoretical models, the framework incorporates Business Process Model and Notation (BPMN) for mapping and optimizing hospitality processes, and the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle for continuous improvement. BPMN offers a clear visualization of workflows, enabling the identification of inefficiencies and potential areas for enhancement in guest interactions and hotel operations. The PDCA cycle ensures iterative testing and refinement, aligning with agile methodology to adapt to guest feedback and evolving industry requirements. Moreover, metrics for validation and evaluation are meticulously defined, including user satisfaction, system reliability, data accuracy, and compliance with GDPR regulations. These metrics will be crucial in assessing the effectiveness of the TANGO platform in meeting its objectives. The pilot implementation in Mallorca serves as a testbed for this theoretical framework, aiming to gather comprehensive data on the platform's performance and user interactions. This ongoing research focuses on the

theoretical aspects of the framework, setting the stage for subsequent implementation and data collection phases. By integrating these models and frameworks, the research aims to ensure the TANGO platform meets both technical and user-centric requirements, ultimately enhancing guest experiences in the smart hospitality industry. The framework also contributes to the broader discourse on best practices for evaluating complex, data-driven solutions in the tourism sector.

**IOANNIS KATSANAKIS, GEORGIA ZOUNI AND  
MARIZA KOURNIOTI**  
*University of Piraeus, Greece*

**A quantitative evaluation of user experience in digital travel  
platforms**

The rapid advancements in technology and the ubiquitous presence of the internet have profoundly transformed various industries, including tourism. The integration of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has reshaped the travel experience from planning to post-trip evaluation. This study aims to critically assess the effectiveness, usability, and overall user satisfaction of various travel applications and web platforms through a quantitative approach. Leveraging models such as the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), SERVQUAL, and principles of User Experience (UX) design, this research evaluates key factors influencing the adoption and utilization of digital travel services. The study employs a quantitative research method, utilizing an online survey to collect data from a sample of active students at the University of Piraeus. Key findings reveal that perceived usefulness and ease of use are crucial determinants of user satisfaction and platform adoption. The study also highlights the importance of service quality dimensions such as reliability and responsiveness in enhancing user experience. Notably, the research identifies a strong correlation between the usability of travel platforms and user satisfaction, emphasizing the need for continuous improvement in user interfaces and service offerings. The results indicate that while current platforms excel in providing extensive services and real-time data, there are notable challenges in areas such as customer support and data security. Addressing these issues through innovative solutions and robust security measures is essential for fostering user trust and engagement. Future research should focus on exploring the integration of emerging technologies, such as AI and blockchain, to further personalize and secure travel experiences. Additionally, investigating user perceptions of privacy practices and their impact on platform trustworthiness will be critical in

developing more effective and user-friendly travel solutions.

## OLIVER KESAR AND EMA ROGINIĆ

*University of Zagreb, Croatia*

### **Loss or gain for tourism in Croatia? Rethinking the net effects of hosting the Eurovision song contest**

The Eurovision Song Contest (ESC) is a hallmark event with an impressive historical record and enormous popularity among the global audience. Hosting such a prestigious music event has been commonly regarded as a great opportunity for host countries to improve their image and generate substantial socio-economic benefits. However, hosting the ESC has been followed by a variety of negative side effects, such as scandals, controversies and public protests. In the light of the possible Croatia's winning the iconic ESC trophy, the purpose of this paper was to examine and discuss net tourism benefits and costs of hosting this event in the current socio-political and economic context. In order to achieve the objectives of this paper, exploratory research was conducted. Using the desk research method, the academic literature on the ESC indexed in the Google Scholar database as well as the official reports of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and other relevant sources were analysed. Primary quantitative research included data collection through a highly structured questionnaire which was distributed via social networks. It was performed to reveal Croatian residents' attitudes toward ESC and their perception regarding the benefits and costs of possible hosting the ESC. The preliminary results show that hosting the ESC could be a big win for Croatia when it comes to enhancing the country's image, market visibility, and tourism performance. Furthermore, the large media impact from hosting the ESC would enable a global promotion of the country through popular music and attractive tourism motifs. On the other hand, hosting the ESC imposes considerable economic, social and environmental costs, which should not be overlooked or ignored. This study is the first to assess the net effects that could result from hosting the ESC in Croatia. It aims to add to the literature on the impacts of hosting the ESC on tourism, as it is one of the few studies to date that address the total effects of hosting this remarkable event. The study results provide valuable insights for event organizers, public entities'

decision-makers and destination management organizations, interested in the level of support from the national audience.

## **SEONGSEOP (SAM) KIM**

*The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong*

### **Hotel employees' mental health: Their antecedents and consequences**

In hospitality industry, hospitality employees confront a diversity of stressors which determine their mental health. Therefore, they experience emotional exhaustion, depression, and anxiety. However, previous studies lack in efforts to develop and testing a comprehensive framework that incorporate relevant concepts, constructs, or theories. With industrial trends and academic demand, this study investigated hotel employees' diverse antecedents and consequences. Further, this study attempted to conceptualize the constructs, develop a model, and test the theoretical model. To achieve this aim, 756 samples of hotel employees were garnered in China. The findings revealed three work-related stressors (job responsibility, job complexity, teamwork), other work-related stressors (role ambiguity, role overload, job insecurity, superiors' behavior, and pressure to respond to messages). Their mental health showed the three dimensions including depression, nervousness, and loss of peace of mind. As a result, the three work-related stressors alleviated negative mental health, while other work stressors (role ambiguity, role overload, job insecurity, superiors' behavior, pressure to respond to messages) enhanced depression, nervousness, and loss of peace of mind. The three mental health dimensions positively affected coping strategies. More specifically, depression and nervousness led to emotion-focused coping, while loss of peace of mind led to problem-solving, emotion-focused, and avoidance coping. Further, the differences were found between junior vs senior employees and front-of-house vs back-of-house staff in the structural paths. Managerial implications are expected to shed insights to supportive organizational policies for hotel employees.

**VASILEIOS KOMIANOS, IOANNIS DELIYANNIS,  
SOFIA MARIA POULIMENOU, VARVARA GARNELI,  
ATHANASIOS TSIPIS AND KONSTANTINOS  
VOGKLIS**

*Ionian University, Greece*

**Evaluating user experience, audience engagement and satisfaction from “Corfu Virtual Exhibition-V-CORFU” and “Hologrammatic Corfu” cultural projects**

This paper presents the methodology and results of an evaluation procedure that has been designed and implemented by researchers of Ionian University, for two European co-funded cultural projects. The main goal of both projects has been the creation of immersive and interactive experiences for the protection and promotion of the cultural heritage of the Old Town of Corfu in Greece. v-Corfu project focuses on highlighting important elements of Corfu, using virtual, augmented and mixed reality technologies as comparative advantages of the Ionian Islands Region in the fields of Tourism, Culture and Environment. In the framework of Hologrammatic Corfu a complete interactive navigation guide for the UNESCO Monument of the Old Town of Corfu was launched, intended to be used by different users, such visitors, locals and stakeholders of the touristic and cultural industry. The innovative characteristics of the "v-Corfu" and "Hologrammatic Corfu" cultural projects, as outlined in the research and further detailed through web sources, showcase a remarkable use of technology to preserve and promote cultural heritage. Both projects exemplify how digital technologies can be effectively harnessed to safeguard and disseminate cultural heritage, demonstrating innovative approaches to cultural preservation and education. Through the use of immersive technologies, these initiatives enable a deeper connection between the public and cultural assets, ensuring that the rich history and culture of Corfu are accessible to future generations. After the completion of the projects, an assessment procedure has been developed to evaluate the quality assurance of the projects as well as to assist as a feedback mechanism that would help researchers

understand the need for improvement and possible optimization. The paper will highlight the methodology, criteria, and metrics for this evaluation, and will mainly focus on a comparative analysis of the two projects, aiming to unfold the differences between them, but mostly the commonalities, especially from the evaluators feedback. The results of this analysis will be utilized as a valuable tool for the researchers, to establish a basis of good practices in the field of cultural heritage preservation and digital promotion and to comprehend the areas for future elaboration.

## **ESZTER MADARÁSZ AND ZSÓFIA MÁRTA PAPP**

*University of Pannonia, Hungary*

### **From backpacks to briefcases: Unpacking career journeys in tourism with a well-being twist**

The tourism industry has traditionally enticed individuals with promises of adventure, cultural exploration, and new encounters. However, recent labor shortages have shed light on the challenges embedded within tourism employment, such as irregular hours, low wages, and seasonal fluctuations. Consequently, some aspiring professionals are reconsidering their career paths, seeking stability and satisfaction elsewhere. Nonetheless, amidst these transitions lie opportunities for personal and professional growth, emphasizing the importance of finding a balance between passion and practicality for job satisfaction. Employee well-being within the tourism sector encompasses various facets, including physical, emotional, and mental health, as well as factors like work-life balance, compensation, job satisfaction, stress management, and access to healthcare. Addressing these challenges is vital, as they can significantly impact employee well-being and performance. Promoting employee well-being in tourism involves implementing strategies such as flexible scheduling, wellness programs, mental health support, and cultivating supportive work environments. Prioritizing employee well-being not only fosters a more engaged and productive workforce but also contributes to the overall success of the tourism industry. This study focuses on examining the career trajectories and transitions among tourism graduates from the University of Pannonia. Through in-depth interviews, it explores the motivations and reasons behind career changes, highlighting instances where employee well-being played a pivotal role. By analyzing these findings within the framework of the employee well-being circle, the study offers insights for individuals navigating their career paths and practical implications for organizations and educational institutions invested in fostering employee well-being and career success.

**ATHENA H.N. MAK**

*National Taiwan Normal University, Taiwan*

**RICHARD, C.Y. CHANG**

*National Taiwan Ocean University, Taiwan*

### **Positive leadership in the hospitality industry during times of change**

Positive leadership (PL) has increasingly been recognised as an important means to foster a positive relationship among team members. There are calls for more research into PL, particularly with regards to its conceptualisation and operationalisation. To fill this knowledge gap, this study attempts to explore the nature of the PL construct and examine its application in the hospitality industry, using Taiwan as a case. This study defines PL as leadership that involves a set of multiple intentional and systematic practices that aim at elevating individual's, team's, and organisation's strengths, capabilities, well-being, and sustained performance over time. Seligman's (2011) PERMA theory of well-being (i.e., positive emotions, engagement, relationships, meaningful activities, and accomplishments) and Cameron's (2012) five dimensions of PL (i.e., positive climate, positive relationship, positive communication, positive meaning, and positive strategies) are adopted as the theoretical foundations for this study. In-depth semi-structured interview was used as the main method for data collection in this study. Key informants from selected hotels and restaurants in Taiwan were recruited through a purposive sampling method. A total of 19 participants were interviewed, including 12 managers and seven employees. Five main types of leadership styles emerged from the data, namely, open-minded leaders, consultative leaders, participative leaders, friendship leaders, and transformational leaders. Eight key PL strategies were identified, namely, fostering a participative culture, cultivating a positive mindset, creating a positive climate, building a positive relationship, facilitating positive communication, capitalising on strengths, instilling a positive meaning, and providing positive affirmation. The findings of this study provide empirical evidence of the nature of PL in hospitality businesses in an Asian cultural

context, and shed light on the influence of PL on employees' psychological capital and work-related well-being. Such knowledge is especially germane in the hospitality industry, as it is recognised as highly stressful and requires a high level of emotional labour. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted on how hospitality businesses operate, the findings of this study offer insights into how and PL strategies can enhance both individual and team performances, and create the necessary climate to sustain hospitality businesses through difficult time.

## **JULIA MARTI-OCHOA**

*Universitat de Lleida, Spain*

### **Social media listening during the #traveltuesday campaign: Textual, visual and audio sentiment analysis**

The rise in social media and promotional activities, coupled with the user trend of expressing feelings and opinions through text, visuals, and audio, presents new challenges and opportunities for sentiment analysis in marketing. Travel Tuesday, like Black Friday and Cyber Monday, emerged as a key campaign in the hospitality sector, offering worldwide deals and significantly influencing consumer behavior on 28 November 2023. This study examines the campaign's sentiment analysis on TikTok and Instagram, revealing user emotions and perceptions between anger, disgust, fear, joy, neutral, sadness and surprise. The prediction of emotions was obtained using a fine-tuned model of DistilRoBERTa-base combined with Google's AI tools to conduct a three-dimensional sentiment analysis of text, visual, and audio content. Our methodology involves systematic data collection through scraping techniques and subsequent sentiment analysis using AI technologies. Our findings in both social media platforms show a predominance of positive sentiments, with joy and surprise also neutral emotions with minimal negative responses. Being particularly notable emotions in face recognition analysis with the day preceding the event standing out as achieving highest audience engagement. Additionally, the high percentage of neutral comments on social media consist of users tagging their friends, a practice that, while common, typically does not convey a clear positive or negative sentiment but rather serves as a method of sharing or drawing attention. The proposed system can enhance three-dimensional analysis across various sectors on social networks by incorporating text analysis of posts and comments (including hashtags filtering), audio transcription from speech to text in videos featuring human voices, and facial emotion recognition from video images with human faces. Using tools through artificial intelligence to predict emotions. By understanding the emotional and perceptual impacts of campaigns, marketers can tailor their approaches to enhance traveler experiences and develop more effective strategies. This

study offers a detailed methodological framework for sentiment analysis that can be adapted across various sectors within social networks, providing insights into consumer engagement and enabling proactive responses to potential social media crises by identifying negative emotions like anger, fear, disgust, and sadness towards brands.

## JESSICA OHNESORG

*Deggendorf Institute of Technology, Germany*

### **Exploring the dynamics of employer attractiveness: A holistic examination of thermal spas in Lower Bavaria and the strategic formulation of a sustainable employer brand**

Individuals are the foundation of a company's success, and understanding what motivates them is essential for fostering a positive workplace culture and attracting top talent. As Bodo Flaig, CEO of the SINUS institute, once said, "Only those who understand what moves people can also inspire them." In the face of global labor shortages, it's imperative for companies to position themselves as appealing employers, going beyond job descriptions to meet the evolving needs and expectations of potential employees. Labor shortages are a widespread challenge across industries, driven by shifts in values among different generations and resulting in new trends in the workplace. Many employers struggle to attract suitable candidates, highlighting the importance of employer branding and strategic approaches. To address this challenge, it's crucial to examine the preferences of both employers and potential employees in specific sectors and align them for long-term success. This study conducts a comprehensive analysis of key factors shaping an attractive employer brand for thermal spas in Lower Bavaria, aiming to provide insights into strategies that positively influence employer brand perception. A mixed-method approach is employed, combining statistical trends with detailed qualitative insights for a holistic understanding of employer attractiveness. The sampling method includes non-probability sampling methods, specifically convenience sampling (e.g., surveying students) and purposive sampling (e.g., selecting field experts). Moreover, the sample size comprises 115 survey respondents and 8 interview participants. An online questionnaire developed with Lime Survey and a semi-structured interview represent the applied research instruments. The data analysis is conducted using PSPP for quantitative data and grounded theory for qualitative data. The study identifies factors influencing employer attractiveness, such as workplace culture, opportunities for personal growth, and work-life balance. Through effective employer branding strategies,

companies can communicate these attributes to attract top talent. Understanding the dynamics of employer attractiveness is crucial for addressing labor shortages. By aligning employer branding strategies with the needs and expectations of potential employees, companies can enhance their reputation and become employers of choice in the competitive job market. This study provides valuable insights for thermal spas in Lower Bavaria and offers a foundation for future research in employer branding.

## **ADESOLA OSINAKE**

*Canterbury Christ Church University, United Kingdom*

### **Performance steering wheel: A framework for hospitality performance measurements**

Performance measurements are essential indicators to evaluate companies' performance and growth. It helps businesses assess their current positions and improve their business strategies. Performance measurement offers numerous benefits to practitioners, including aiding management in decision-making and communication of renewal strategies, enhancing employee motivation, and enhancing organisational growth. It is crucial for strategic planning and management of hospitality, ideally integrated with overall business strategy and including financial and non-financial metrics. This study explores the understanding, practice, and implementation of performance measuring systems in small and medium-sized independent hotels. Previous research has shown a gap in understanding business performance in hospitality SMEs. It establishes a need to gain a richer understanding of performance phenomena in hotels and establish the metrics used to measure the performance. Existing literature emphasised the need for independently owned and managed hotels to prioritise the development of their performance metrics strategically. Economists and researchers have increasingly focused on studying small and medium-sized companies with unique economic characteristics. These firms face challenges in value creation, often relying on intangible assets. Performance measurement difficulties are exacerbated by the lack of resources, competencies, short-termism, and context dependency. The changing operating risk and revenue growth profiles also complicate the analysis. Studies have recommended the importance of interviewing managers and owners and reviewing industry information to determine hotel performance's operational significance. This study adopted a phenomenological research approach to understand owners'/managers' perceptions of performance measurement within these hotels. The study used the Contingency Theory to analyze 30 independent hotels, revealing that managerial experience and lifestyle influenced their approach to organisational performance

and key indicators measured. The research findings show that performance assessment is multidimensional and supported by multiple definitions and techniques. This study contributes to the performance measurement literature by exploring the definition, design, and implementation of performance assessment in small and medium-independent hotels. The data collected were used to design a framework for small and medium-sized independent accommodations, the Performance Steering Wheel, to aid consistency in performance measurement for hospitality businesses.

**ADESOLA OSINAKE**

*Canterbury Christ Church University, United Kingdom*

**ADE ORIADE**

*University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom*

**ADENIKE D. ADEBAYO**

*Liverpool John Moore University, United Kingdom*

**Sexual harassment awareness and strategic organisational commitment in hotels: Evidence from two developing countries**

The hospitality sector provides customers with great service and unique experiences, from fancy hotels to busy restaurants. With this comes the challenge of sexual harassment that requires urgent attention. Sexual harassment is defined as any unwanted activity of a sexual character that produces an atmosphere that is threatening, unpleasant, or objectionable for workers. Studies showed that 89% of hospitality employees have experienced one or more cases of sexual abuse at work. More specifically, 93% of women and 91% of men restaurant workers have experienced sexual harassment. Sexual harassment in the workplace is offensive and should not be tolerated. These events may have significant emotional, psychological, and professional consequences, affecting people and the broader work environment. It has been highlighted that perceived organizational support can reduce workplace stress, improve employee well-being, and enhance productivity. However, insufficient support can lead to sexual harassment. The study aimed to examine the awareness of sexual harassment among hotel practitioners in Nigeria and Ghana and explore the relationship between employee sexual harassment conformance behaviour awareness among practitioners, the organization's strategic commitment to managing sexual harassment, and employee wellbeing. This study adopted the Rational Choice Theory to explore the employees' awareness, conformance behaviour and organizational commitment to managing sexual harassment in two developing countries, Ghana and Nigeria. Seven hundred twelve questionnaires

were collected, and data was analyzed using WarpPLS version 8.0 partial least squares structural equation structural modelling. The results confirmed a direct negative relationship between hotel employees' conformance behaviour and employee wellbeing, questioning the assumption that employees expect sexual harassment as part of their job and prepare mentally for it. The study also revealed complex patterns in the behaviour of hotel employees regarding sexual harassment and its management suggesting that experienced employees are better at separating their professional and personal identities, making them less vulnerable. The study emphasizes the role of awareness in managing sexual harassment and preventing inconsistencies and chaos in the workplace. Organizations must demonstrate reasonable precautions to prevent harassment or risk legal liability.

## **BEATA PALIŚ**

*Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland*

## **MATYLDA SIWEK**

*University of the National Education Commission, Poland*

### **Sustainable development in the activities of the meetings industry**

The meeting industry is a very dynamic sector, as Pandemia Covid-19 showed, which hit this industry hard. Implementing the principles of sustainable development is currently a management trend also in the meetings industry. Despite the benefits of tourism in the various areas of our lives, its negative effects can also be seen. The meetings industry also recognizes the essence of this problem and introduces the principles of sustainable development into its activities. Business tourism can also be considered from this point of view, and the meetings industry can create its sustainable character. The main research goal was to verify whether the meeting industry is taking action for sustainable development. The utilitarian goal of the conducted research was to indicate guidelines for the industry in the field of appropriate implementation and reporting of ESG (Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance). The following research problems were assumed: whether and what activities are taken by the meeting industry for sustainable development; does it implement a strategy and policy of sustainable development; whether the idea of sustainable development is implemented in cooperation with partners and how; does the leisure trend matter in this context; whether and how Covid - 19 influenced the industry's approach to developing sustainable business tourism products; what activities are crucial for shaping sustainable development by the meeting industry. To achieve the intended research goal, an in - depth query of literature and internet sources of leading industry associations, as well as interviews with industry representatives were used. The study uses the method of collecting opinions based on the deliberate selection of people participating in the study. Each respondent was deliberately chosen and was an expert in his field. Experts were to answer the questions contained in the

questionnaire. 20 entities representing the Polish meeting industry took part in the study. Research has proven that the business tourism industry implements sustainable development activities in its activities. There are activities such as cooperation with local partners or the use of ecological means of transport.

**ZSÓFIA MÁRTA PAPP, PETRA GYURÁCZ-  
NÉMETH AND KATALIN FORMÁDI**  
*University of Pannonia, Hungary*

**Tourism career crossroads: A qualitative study on subjective  
and objective perspectives of tourism career transition**

Employee turnover in tourism has always been a major concern for the industry, and the uncertainty of the past few years has exacerbated the process. According to the Graduate Career Tracking System (GCTS), only 30.99% of former tourism bachelor students who graduated in 2017/2018 are still working in tourism. This makes career transition a relevant area of research, as well as an issue for academics and practitioners. There are several researches focusing on various aspects of the objective and subjective career success or developing measurement tools to evaluate it. But very few articles deal with the topic of career transition, like the one that had concluded that the perceived objective and perceived subjective career-change success are predicted by different combinations of variables. The aim of this research is to define career transition in an objective and subjective way, involving former tourism students who have left the sector. The objective career transition is based on different approaches to tourism and the extent of tourism such as the UN Tourism definition of the content of tourism in different industries. The subjective career transition is based on the interviews. The findings highlight the diverse range of factors influencing career transitions within the tourism sector. Personal motivations, including aspirations for career advancement, pursuit of different passions, and the desire for greater work-life balance, emerge as significant drivers prompting individuals to explore alternative career paths.

**IVANA PAVLIĆ***University of Dubrovnik, Croatia***ANTE MANDIĆ***University of Split, Croatia***BARBARA PUH***University of Dubrovnik, Croatia***Children's responses to tourism development in UNESCO world heritage site**

Sustainability is becoming crucial for the future of tourism development in the post-Covid-19 as the negative impacts associated with mass tourism development become more pronounced. Recently, there has been a growing interest among scholars in children's attitudes, perceptions and reactions towards tourism development, as such research is still rare and needs to be addressed. This gap in the literature creates the opportunity for innovative research to better understand their perceptions and reactions. Children's attitudes and behavior are important as they will be decision-makers in the future. The primary purpose of this paper is to explore children's reactions towards different scenarios of tourism development in UNESCO World Heritage Site - Dubrovnik, Croatia. An experimental method was applied to achieve the paper's main purpose. Two experimental conditions—one video displaying sustainability and the second showcasing over tourism/unsustainable practices. A between-subject design was organized in this research. Since the two groups were randomly organized, causal estimates could be achieved by comparing the reaction of those in one experimental condition with the reaction of the children from the other group. Since, research includes children, consent form with detail explanation of methodology were sent to every school and forwarded it to child parents. Children's participation was voluntary and all collected information were confidential and used just for the purpose of academic research. Research contained neuroscience techniques - Eye tracking (ET), Facial expression analysis (FEA) and Electrodermal activity (EDA). The research area was

Dubrovnik, a city faced with problems of over tourism. 397 children participated in the experiment, and they were randomly assigned to either sustainable or over-tourism block (group). The research was conducted from April to June 2022. Results reveal statistically significant differences in children's reactions towards different tourism development scenarios in regards to gender, age groups and location of living. The paper contrasts and explains children's reactions to videos displaying sustainable and unsustainable tourism practices. Consequently, it creates the foundation for explaining their future acts and choices concerning personality trait development. The analysis results provide one additional argument for integrating sustainability principles into children's education.

## **MARGARITA PAYERAS AND MARTA JACOB**

*University of the Balearic Islands, Spain*

## **ANA DOMÍNGUEZ-QUINTERO**

*University of Sevilla, Spain*

## **CARMEN FLORIDO**

*University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria & University of the Balearic Islands, Spain*

### **Reduce the gender gap in STEM education, key to the digital transformation and sustainability of the tourism sector: the case of the Balearic Islands.**

The Balearic Islands have become one of the most competitive and dynamic tourist destinations worldwide, thanks to their diversity, quality, and capacity to implement continuously technological innovations. Nowadays, the archipelago is an example of a tourism economy; it generates, directly and indirectly, 41% of the island's GDP and 41.6% of total employment. In recent years, the tourism industry has faced a new technological paradigm, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which brings new challenges and opportunities for tourism companies. In the current environment, characterized by the emergence of artificial intelligence, Blockchain technology, advanced robotics, Big Data, augmented virtual reality, among others, digitalisation is configured as a key factor to confront the exhaustion of traditional tourism model and to respond to problems such as over tourism or environmental sustainability. This will favour the transition to a circular economy and, thereby, achieving the objectives of the 2030 Agenda. However, to achieve digital transformation and sustainability in the tourism industry, it is necessary to have a human capital with a STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) profile without gender bias. In this context, the University of the Balearic Islands (UIB) faces the challenge of attracting talent to the STEM field without gender bias. To make it possible, it is necessary to identify the gender gap in STEM bachelor's degrees, and what are the main elements that lead to this STEM gender gap. This work provides empirical evidence on the gender

gap in the STEM field through a survey that collected a sample of 701 students who began a bachelor's degree in the 2022-23 academic year, using an online structured questionnaire with items adapted from the literature. The results show that: i) There is a gender gap in STEM careers at UIB, except in health sciences; ii) lack of guidance and gender stereotypes linked to STEM are factors that act as a barrier for choosing scientific-technological careers. Results of this study allow to propose a set of measures at the UIB to reduce the gender GAP in the STEM bachelor's degrees and contributing to incorporate a more gender balanced human capital in the tourism industry.

## VICENTE RAMOS

*University of the Balearic Islands, Spain*

### **Extreme weather and destinations' vulnerability**

The tourism academic literature has proven that comfortable and safe atmospheric and climate conditions are significant competitiveness resources for tourism destinations. Moreover, nowadays, the topics of air quality and the vulnerability associated with climate change are increasingly entering into public agendas. From one hand, there is an international awareness of the impact of air pollution in human physical and psychological health. From another perspective, with global warming, many international indicators of climate change, such as average surface temperature and coastal sea level, have broken the observed records. Additionally, extreme weather events, such as heatwaves and heavy precipitation, have increased in frequency and intensity. However, most climate indexes used in tourism academia are not integrating air pollution or destinations' vulnerability associated with climate change. This study addresses this gap by developing a modified tourism climate index (MTCI) that can be applied to comprehensively assess destinations vulnerability related with aspects of the climate that might influence tourism under pollution episodes and climate change. The proposed MTCI builds upon a theoretical framework that considers thermal comfort, physical factors, and aesthetics from the thermal comfort index (TCI) and also incorporates air quality and risk perception factors related to and extreme weather. The threshold and score used to build the proposed MTCI were adjusted based on a survey of inbound tourists' climate preferences in six major Chinese cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Wuhan, and Kunming). Daily meteorological data for Shanghai were analysed and compared with monthly inbound tourist numbers. A multiple regression method was used to determine the weight of each weather variable, and a threshold for extreme weather was integrated into the equation. The effectiveness of the MTCI is verified by comparing results of using the MTCI or TCI for estimating tourism arrivals to Shanghai.

**KURT SANT***Central Bank of Malta, Malta***SAMANTHA CHAPERON***University of Greenwich, England***Air connectivity and destination development: Insights from  
Malta**

Understanding the relationship between air connectivity and tourism development is important for island destinations, given their bounded nature and tourism dependency. Many studies suggest that increases in air connectivity inevitably lead to increases in visitor numbers and other positive economic impacts. Much of this research focuses on new airports and their impacts on nearby destination development. However, there is limited research into air connectivity as a tool in itself for meeting broader sustainable tourism policy goals. This paper provides an island perspective by exploring the relationship between air connectivity and tourism in Malta, a small island nation state in the Mediterranean. Drawing firstly on route data for Malta International Airport and using Python for visualisation, this paper presents an analysis of Malta's air connectivity for the period 2005-2019. Both air connectivity and visitor numbers grew significantly during this period. In 2020, COVID-19 led to a reduction in direct connections to Malta, and although still with fewer routes than in 2019, Malta continues to experience strong tourism growth, exceeding 2019 levels. Airline route development was a key aim of Malta's Tourism Policy 2015-2020, and according to Malta's most recent National Tourism Strategy 2021-2030, Malta is 'on the verge of a paradigm shift' in terms of its air connectivity and air passenger processing capacity. As one of the most densely populated countries in the world, Malta is starting to experience resource issues linked to its increasing population, as well as approaching the limits of its tourism carrying capacity. It is vital for Malta to pre-empt the over-tourism challenges that other Mediterranean islands are currently facing and learn lessons from them. Air connectivity is an influential and controllable policy instrument and its role in shaping future

tourism development sustainably should be carefully considered.

## MARIA SAVVINOPOULOU AND NAOUM MYLONAS

*Ionian University, Greece*

### **Wine tourism and entrepreneurship: A perfect blend in Greece**

Wine tourism is developing rapidly worldwide, especially in Greece in recent years a large increase has been noticed. Greece is a new wine tourism area that has still a long way to go before claiming that it can render high-quality services in this very competitive sector. Consistent with the notion that wine tourism entrepreneurship can be associated with “cultural, food and rural tourism”, various authors have noted wine tourism experiences include the arts, cultural tours, wine education, production activities, original food, scenery, and of course events and festivals. Although there is research on wine tourism and entrepreneurship, there is a gap in the management of entrepreneurship development in wine tourism. This work in progress seeks to address this gap, and examine this issue in terms of dynamic capabilities approach, by employing different types of capabilities learning, integrating, alliance management, reconfiguration, coordinating along with the Entrepreneurial Orientation (EO) in order to investigate their impact on firm performance of wine tourism entrepreneurial activities. The EO reflects firm behavior that includes innovativeness, risk-taking and proactiveness in dealing with industry competitors. In the pre-implementation phase of the empirical research, we conducted seven pilot interviews that gave us important feedback regarding the phrasing of the questions. In the implementation phase of the empirical research, a sample of 151 respondents completed the online questionnaire. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) is adopted in order to assess the research model introduced in this work. This study in progress contributes to the literature in two ways. First, we add to the literature by developing a self-report construct of firm performance in terms of managing business development in wine tourism. Second, we provide new insights to the literature on entrepreneurship in wine tourism by examining the reactions of wine entrepreneurs in Greece.

## **VALERIA SCUTARU AND IOANA S. STOICA**

*University of Bedfordshire, United Kingdom*

### **Is the use of virtual reality in travel industry advertising a current fad or here to stay?**

This research explores the utilization of Virtual Reality (VR) in advertising within the travel industry to determine its longevity and effectiveness as a marketing tool. Through a systematic literature review, this study examines qualitative and quantitative data from academic articles published between 2000 and 2024, alongside practical case studies. The analysis focuses on three primary dimensions: the benefits of VR in enhancing user experience and accessibility; the challenges it presents, including technological limitations and cost implications; and the projected future trends which suggest an evolution of VR applications in tourism. Theoretical frameworks such as AIDA (Awareness, Interest, Desire, Action), Ethical Marketing, and Sustainability are employed to assess the impact of VR on consumer behavior and its potential to revolutionize traditional travel marketing paradigms. With tourism experiencing significant disruption from global events like the pandemic, VR offers a transformative approach for the industry to engage with potential travelers in a sustainable and innovative manner. The findings indicate that while VR is faced with certain challenges, its benefits in creating immersive and interactive customer experiences suggest that it is more than a transient trend. This study contributes to the understanding of digital innovation in tourism and supports the strategic integration of VR into future tourism marketing practices.

## **ANGEL PEIRO SIGNES**

*Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain*

## **MARIVAL SEGARRA-OÑA**

*Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain*

### **Self-assessment tool for circularity in hotels**

Due to the ongoing discourse within the hotel industry regarding the adverse externalities that result from its operations, it is becoming ever more critical to advance the Circular Economy in an efficient manner in order to attain the desired standards of sustainability. The primary objective of this paper is to establish a foundational framework for assessment and evaluation of hotels' circular practices, which can be utilized to monitor and strategize their circular initiatives. By developing hotel-specific standardized indicators, procedures, and methods, this model attempts to rectify the lack of uniformity in existing circularity models. We developed a five-dimensional instrument (circularity management, energy, water, waste, and food waste) to gauge the degree of circularity within hotels and from which managers in the sector can derive insightful conclusions. We used co-evaluation by some experts in the sector to improve its usability and potential user experience. The results show that it is a useful tool, but it needs to be accompanied by some training, network support, suppliers' information, and consultancy when some specific data needs to be retrieved or calculated. This instrument enables establishments to not only abide by innovative circularity regulations, such as 3/2022 of the Balearic Islands, but also to predict and augment forthcoming circularity obligations by integrating supplementary metrics alongside those mandated by the law. In addition, evaluation scales and a manual of good practices lend practicality and utility to the instrument, benefiting hotels seeking to enhance their operational procedures. The results could be of interest to hospitality organizations and their suppliers, as well as for the Circular Economy policymakers.

## MARIVAL SEGARRA-ONA, ANGEL PEIRO-SIGNES AND OSCAR TRULL

*Universitat Politècnica de Valencia, Spain*

### **Characterizing Europeans' willingness to have eco-labelled accommodation services**

An accommodation service ecolabel is a voluntary scheme promoting hospitality services that clearly demonstrate environmental awareness. Ecolabels help consumers and hoteliers make sustainable choices. Three decades have past since the launch of the EU Ecolabel and the list of hotels awarded with an ecolabel is continuously increasing. However, only about 51% of Europeans would you like to find more products with the EU Ecolabel in tourist accommodation services. We used the Flash Eurobarometer 535 survey from 2023 and a machine-learning classification algorithm to classify and characterized the Europeans attending to their willingness to have more tourist accommodation services certified with the EU Ecolabel. Our model was able to classify 70% of the respondents correctly. The study reveals that respondents that believe that buying products with a lower environmental impact makes a difference for the environment, that products and services with EU Ecolabel truly have a lower environmental impact than similar products on the market and, the importance respondents gave in the purchasing decision to the impact on the environment and the knowledge they have about the EU Ecolabel, are significant attributes contributing to the classification. Regarding the socio-demographic characteristics, generally speaking their impact is low compared to environmental behavior attributes of the respondents. Respondents within the group of more than 55 years old or without a professional activity are more likely to be on the group that do not demand more accommodation services with environmental labels. On the contrary, people with more years of education are more likely to demand the ecolabels on accommodation services. Finally, it looks that not being a consumer of accommodation services also increases the likelihood of the respondent not to demand this type of labels. Our study

also reveals symmetrical and asymmetrical impacts among these attributes.

## **ELMARIE SLABBERT AND TAFADZWA MATIZA**

*North West University, TREES, South Africa*

### **Delineating the South African tourism accommodation grading system: A demand perspective on contemporary quality indicators**

The star grading of accommodation establishments is a well-established touchpoint for tourists' heuristic cues. Paradigm shifts in consumer preferences related to technology and sustainability have become more pervasive, suggesting that these aspects may be increasingly important contemporary accommodation quality indicators for accommodation establishments. Taking the case of the South African accommodation grading system, the study explored the influence of technology availability and sustainability practices on tourists' perceived value of graded accommodation establishments. A quantitative cross-sectional deductive study was conducted. A composite measuring instrument was designed based on scales adapted from the literature and published online on QuestionPro. Data were generated from an online stratified convenience sample of potential tourists to South Africa. Potential international tourists were drawn from a pre-recruited online consumer panel administered by Cint Global Insights. Screening questions were then used to solicit information only from respondents who utilised paid forms of accommodation when they travelled and were familiar with accommodation grading. The final sample consisted of respondents from Germany (n=482), India (n=428), and the African region (n=440). Partial Least Squares - Structural Equation Modelling using Smart-PLS4 assessed the consumer perception theory-based model developed for the study. The preliminary results indicate that technology and sustainability/green behaviour practices are influential contemporary antecedent product attributes that international and regional tourists consider in their accommodation choices. The modelled positive influence is based on value for money and hedonic value perceptions towards graded establishments. Therefore, there is a discernible need to align shifts in consumer behaviour with the contemporary quality indicators [sustainability of the accommodation, green behaviour in managing the accommodation, and

technology availability] for South African accommodation grading. The study's critical demand-side insights have significant implications for the South African accommodation grading system and graded accommodation establishments' service quality and performance.

## SHARON TEITLER REGEV, SHLOMIT HON-SNIR AND KEREN MICHAEL

*Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Israel*

### **Gender dynamics in threat appraisal, coping strategies, and stress reactions during the "iron sword" war**

Civilian populations worldwide are exposed to stressful life events, such as terrorism, epidemics, and natural disasters. This exposure, whether physical or emotional, triggers short- and long-term negative consequences, including distress and post-traumatic symptoms. This study examined responses to the ongoing "Iron Sword" war in Israel, focusing on gender-based variations. A sample of 660 participants, aged 18–70 ( $M=42.18$ ;  $SD=14.33$ ), comprised 51.8% women and 48.2% men. They completed online questionnaires distributed using online panel company) assessing cognitive evaluations of the event and associated behavioral and affective reactions. Data was analyzed using t-tests for independent samples and path analysis. The results demonstrated that 87.7% of the participants reported high levels of threat due to the war. Regarding gender differences, women scored higher than men on threat appraisals, emotion-focused coping, anxiety, and depression. However, when comparing the genders in background parameters within the context of the war, the proportion of men whose relatives were either kidnapped, murdered, or designated as missing, along with the percentage of men whose relatives or themselves were evacuated from their homes because residing near the country's borders, exceeded that of women. Additionally, across genders, higher levels of threat, using less problem-focused coping and more emotion-focused coping were associated with higher levels of anxiety and depression. The results highlight the vulnerability of women concerning perceived threat, coping strategies, and stress reactions. This study supports the cognitive stress and coping model. It advocates for innovative interventions tailored to foster efficient coping strategies during stressful events, underscoring the necessity for gender-specific approaches in such interventions.

## LORNA THOMAS

*Canterbury Christ Church University, United Kingdom*

### **A quest for survival: The real motivation when visiting dark sites?**

Could the desire, to see where death and macabre situations have taken place, simply be a matter of basic human survival instinct? This research and presentation establish that most so called 'dark tourists' are simply following basic human instinct and psychology when they visit sites of death and the seemingly macabre. This research, paper and presentation explains that there are three basic questions that naturally and sub-consciously arise when seeing death. 1) What happened? 2) How did it happen? 3) What can I do to prevent such a thing from happening to me? And that humans are naturally curious, not because we are morbid and perverse, but 'because we are trying to learn from what occurred'. The findings of this research suggests that peoples' fascination with murder and death stem from the desire to avoid being the victim. and further argues that being drawn to things dying or dead is a sub-conscious drive for survival. This qualitative research, based on Grounded Theory comprised 80 semi-structured interviews on site in in Tuol Sleng and Cheung Ek, two connected dark sites in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. All respondents were English-speaking tourist from across the western world. Some respondents in this research recognized that there is probably something sub-conscious and or instinctive about their fascination with the dark and macabre nature of the Tuol Sleng and/or Cheung Ek. They used words and phrases such as 'instinct', 'sub-consciously', 'human nature', '...somewhere deep in my mind...deep deep in my mind' and 'instinct thing'. It is possible that these desires, instincts and psychological drivers have allowed us to learn and ultimately survive. The findings make the case that a desire for survival and not the desire to see death is present when tourists willingly visit sites of death, especially at the darker end of the dark tourism spectrum.

## **LORNA THOMAS AND SHOLA OSINAKE**

*Canterbury Christ Church University, United Kingdom*

### **Motivations of mountain tourism: Slovakian domestic tourist perspectives.**

Nature-based regions have played an important role in tourism for a few centuries and people's interest has been steadily increasing. Hiking and mountain tourism have become assets in the further development of tourism as well as the economic growth of countries, especially in these largely urbanised times. The importance of natural resources and relatively untouched nature has been rising in the past years due to the new emphasis on Sustainability, which is the topic of many tourism initiatives. The rise in the popularity of hiking seems to be due to modern urbanisation, long and busy work hours, and a lack of natural cities, which also decreases people's emotional well-being. Therefore, hiking and mountain tourism are economically beneficial to countries and improve the quality of life of their citizens. Understanding tourists' motivation and behaviour is one of the essential parts of tourism. Motivations are especially crucial in influencing and attracting visitors to a particular destination. Hiking and mountain tourism have become assets in different countries' economic growth and development. The travel industry needs to understand tourists' motivations to travel due to the constant change of needs and desires of tourists. This study examines what motivates people to visit mountains, especially in Slovakia and what activities they undertake. The qualitative survey contained three parts: visitors' demographic information, travelling habits, and motivations and expectations. The key findings of the study demonstrate that nature and hiking are the main motivating factors for visiting the Slovak mountains. The research also highlights the importance of escapism, relaxation, hiking, and photography as motivations for mountain tourism in Slovakia. The study use social media to facilitate questionnaires, and over 800 responses were ascertained. This research is important as it claims that stakeholders in 'mountain tourism' should be supported and areas protected. With the correct marketing domestically and international, mountain tourism has the power to position Slovakia as a leading tourism destination and

generating significant income for stakeholder businesses and government department.

**DIEGO R. TOUBES, NOELIA ARAÚJO-VILA AND  
JOSÉ ANTONIO FRAIZ-BREA**  
*University of Vigo, Spain*

**Artificial intelligence in tourism: Assessing workforce  
dynamics and the impact on employment status**

The integration of AI technologies in the tourism industry, such as machine learning and data analytics, has the potential to enhance business processes and operations, particularly in managing and analyzing vast data. However, it remains uncertain if these benefits translate into improved customer service quality or the realization of human capital potential. One of the most anticipated economic impacts of AI is its effect on employment, potentially reinforcing trends towards more precarious and temporary job conditions. There has been limited research on how age and on-the-job experience influence the automation of tourism jobs and its subsequent effects on employment and time savings for workers. This study investigates the perceived risks associated with AI adoption in tourism, especially regarding workforce reduction. Through a survey of 245 tourist consumers, we analyzed the differential impact on employment attributable to differences in work experience and age. The study focuses on discerning the perceived effect of the implementation of artificial intelligence (AI) in the tourism sector, specifically in relation to job cuts and time savings for employees. We conducted data collection through an online questionnaire, structured to align with specific research objectives. Using non-probability snowball sampling, we engaged a diverse initial group of respondents, stratified by age and professional experience, to trigger a snowball effect. Data analysis began with a descriptive overview, followed by testing four hypotheses using Pearson's chi-squared test to examine the association between categorical variables. Considering the relationship between age and technological culture, we conducted statistical hypothesis tests to determine the influence of these factors on the perceived impact of AI on employment reduction and time savings for tourism workers. The results reveal the complex relationship between technological advancements and workforce dynamics in the context of AI adoption in tourism. Age

significantly influences perceptions of AI's employment impact, while experienced tourism workers are more optimistic about AI's effects on their jobs. Workers with lower education levels are likely to face the greatest challenges adapting to new technologies. They require retraining and continuing education to stay competitive against machines, a daunting task given the rapid pace of technological change.



## **NATASA UROSEVIC**

*Juraj Dobrila University of Pula, Croatia*

### **Challenges of sustainable urban tourism development in coastal historic cities**

Global trends, marked by uncertainty, instability, and unpredictability due to the current multiple crises indicate the growing need for a critical re-examination of the global growth model and an opportunity to reorient it towards (and beyond) the UN Sustainable Development Goals, including structural transformation, regeneration and a re-boot of tourism and its economic, environmental and social characteristics. Sustainable tourism has gained considerable attention in the last decades, due to the growing recognition of the need to balance economic growth, social wellbeing, and environmental protection in the tourism industry. The need for radical policy transformation, systems and paradigm change introduced a topic of holistic "sustainable wellbeing", which integrates individuals, society and nature, empowering a sustainable transformation. Current global challenges mainly affect countries that are most dependent on tourism, such as Croatia, where international tourists' expenditure amounts to almost 20% of GDP, by far the largest share in the EU. Croatia features a typical "sea and sun" tourism model with stays concentrated in coastal areas in the summer months, with the highest seasonality in the EU. On the other hand, due to its central position and proximity to emissive markets in Central and Western Europe, the image of a safe destination and a great sustainable development potential of special interest tourism, Croatia has an excellent competitive position among the Mediterranean countries. The paper elaborates on the challenges of sustainable urban tourism development in historic cities in the Adriatic, presenting case studies of (un)successful strategies for managing the most important sustainability issues through collaborative governance models and partnerships. The authors analyze innovative approaches of tourism policy making and urban planning in response to overtourism and extreme seasonality through development of special interest tourism. Using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology, through the analysis of strategic documents and statistics and

interviews (N=20) with representatives of key stakeholders (local government, tourism boards, experts and civil sector representatives), the authors presents current challenges related to sustainable urban tourism development in popular Adriatic destinations, such as Dubrovnik, Pula, Šibenik, Poreč, Split and Venice. Keywords: global trends, sustainability, urban tourism, participatory governance coastal cities

## AHMET USAKLI

*Bogazici University, Turkiye*

### **The moderating role of past experience on the relationship between destination attachment and destination loyalty**

Previous research suggests that destination attachment significantly influences behavioral constructs such as tourist satisfaction and loyalty. However, debates exist regarding the development of attachment to places, with some arguing that it occurs over time through repeat visits, while others propose it can be formed before or during the first visit. Extant research in tourism primarily examines the direct effects of destination attachment on tourist behavior, leaving unclear whether these effects differ based on tourists' past experiences with a destination. Thus, this study aims to investigate the moderating role of past experience (i.e., first-time vs. repeat visitors) on the relationship between destination attachment and destination loyalty. To achieve this objective, international tourists visiting Istanbul, Turkey, completed a self-administered questionnaire. The study employs three dimensions to measure destination attachment: place dependence, place identity, and affective attachment, each assessed using three items. Destination loyalty, the endogenous construct, was measured using four items. A convenience sampling method was used to survey 590 international visitors to Istanbul. Data analysis employed partial least squares structural equation modeling. The study uncovers two significant findings regarding the moderating role of past experience. It reveals that the positive effect of place dependence on destination loyalty is stronger for first-time visitors, whereas the positive effect of place identity on destination loyalty is stronger for repeat visitors. On the other hand, no moderating role of past experience was found on the relationship between affective attachment and destination loyalty, indicating that the positive effect of affective attachment on destination loyalty is similar for both first-time and repeat visitors.

## **JÁNOS VARGA AND ÁGNES CSISZÁRIK-KOCSIR** *Óbuda University, Hungary*

### **The responsibility of individuals to protect environmental values from a tourism perspective**

Research shows that traditional models of tourism often have long-term negative impacts on the environment and local communities. Therefore, there is a growing demand for approaches that focus on sustainability. The concept of sustainable tourism encompasses strategies that allow the industry to develop in a way that minimises environmental pressures and supports the well-being of local communities. From a competitiveness perspective, it is important to understand how sustainable practices contribute to the attractiveness and long-term viability of tourism destinations. Destinations and businesses that are committed to sustainability can gain a competitive advantage by building a positive image and attracting conscious travellers. At the same time, not only businesses but also individuals need to show more responsibility. Individuals can have an impact on the environment through their mobility and continuous movement, of which tourism is one of the most organised sectors. Tourism has a significant ecological footprint, which also results in a high environmental impact. Transport, accommodation and tourism activities all contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and other environmental problems. Not only tourism service providers but also tourists themselves play a key role in this. Overall, the study shows that the interlinking of sustainability and tourism is essential for the future success of the industry. It takes sustainability as a starting point and looks at the responsibility of individuals and the impact they can have on their environment through tourism. The impact of tourism on the environment is explored through secondary findings, while the responsibility of individuals is explored through primary studies.

## **NIKOLAOS VAROTSIS AND NAOUM MYLONAS**

*Ionian University, Greece*

### **Travelers' information seeking behavior and service quality satisfaction provided by a tourist destination**

Online information providers have greatly simplified the process of accessing travel destination information. The growth of the service sector, increased competition due to globalization, and the advent of new technologies have hastened the shift towards an economy driven by knowledge and innovation. Nevertheless, the research on tourist information seeking behavior continues to focus on service quality, information quality, barriers to information seeking of the trip location, and tourism information management. The objective of this study is to examine information seeking behavior for travel information online and their level of satisfaction with the quality of service provided by the tourist destination. Prior research has primarily focused on the collective level of information retrieval and contentment with tourism services. This study aims to examine travelers' information seeking behavior and level of satisfaction and quality with the travel information and services offered at Corfu. The theoretical model encompasses factors such as service quality, information quality, experience quality, information sources and needs, and travelers' information seeking behavior. Based on the relevant literature, we identified specific factors that we consider contributing the most to travelers' information seeking behavior and destinations' quality and performance. In terms of quality and performance, our selection includes "quality of service," "quality of experience," and "travel decision making." For the purpose of analyzing travelers' information seeking behavior and satisfaction, we have chosen to focus on three key factors: "information satisfaction", "information sources", and "information seeking behavior". Therefore, the subsequent hypotheses have been formulated: H1. The quality of service positively affects travel decision making; H2. The quality of experience positively affects travel decision making; H3. Information satisfaction positively affects information seeking behavior; H4. Information sources positively influence information seeking behavior. These hypotheses are broken into sub-hypotheses based on the

variables used for their pillars of destination quality and performance and traveler information seeking behavior theoretical frameworks. The research hypotheses are expected to illuminate the factors that strongly influence service quality satisfaction and travelers' information seeking behavior and to inform policy by illustrating tourists' needs for experience tourist destinations.

## **RICHÁRD VERESS AND JÁNOS VARGA**

*Óbuda University, Hungary*

### **Towards a circular economy: Sustainable development in practice**

The current economic paradigms, which are causing an increase in consumption and waste production, are a direct route to sustainability crises. As the world economy and population grow in this direction, the management of more and more waste and the immense energy demand associated with over-consumption are proving to be an unsolvable problem. We need to find solutions to these problems, most of which, unfortunately, are still only theoretical. At the same time, the issue of waste management and the state of our environment is fundamentally linked to the state of society or welfare indicators. Innovation could also have a role to play here, as new tools and methods are needed to solve problems, and the right problem-solving skills and creativity are required. The concept of a circular economy could offer a promising approach to redefining economic activity, where resources are recycled, waste is minimised and product life-cycles are maximised. Sustainability is about meeting current needs without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It involves a balance of ecological, economic and social factors. And a circular economy is an economic model in which waste generated at the end of the life cycle of products is recycled back into the production process, minimising the need to extract raw materials again and landfill waste. The scientific paper gives some examples of how the circular model could be applied in real life. In addition to practical examples, it briefly explains the difference between the linear model and the circular concept. A particularity of the scientific paper is that it also tries to find a link between tourism and the circular concept.

**ALDRIC VIVES AND MARTA JACOB***University of the Balearic Islands, Spain***MÓNICA MARTÍNEZ-GÓMEZ***Universitat Politècnica de València, Spain***CARMEN FLORIDO***University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain***Impact of hotel circular economy practices and green attributes on the online hotel room booking process behavior**

There needs to be more evidence of the role and importance of the Circular Economy (CE) in hotels, especially in the booking process, even though applying CE practices in the sector involves all the industry stakeholders. At the same time, it can boost the industry enterprises to advance towards sustainability. Previous literature indicates that consumers are willing to pay higher prices for green accommodation. Meanwhile, other studies highlight that the extra price customers are willing to pay for green hotels is related to their sociodemographic variables, i.e., the customer segment. The paper has two main objectives: 1) To identify the CE practices and the green attributes the hotel industry can implement to help attract customers engaged in sustainable practices, and 2) to measure their willingness to book and pay. In general, most hotel attributes and characteristics are unobservable and cannot be assessed as they are not sold individually, e.g., the cost of building larger hotel rooms is easily valuable; however, what is the importance of hotel green attributes and circular practices (e.g. including biodegradable and ecological products in hotels, or having an environmental quality certification) in the clients' assessment when they are booking online a room? To this end, an online hotel booking process experiment was designed that incorporates both hotels with CE actions and green attributes and hotels without them. Potential customers can identify the hotel's green attributes and CE practices before booking. This experiment enables us to identify the circular or green consumers' intention, with the Theory of Planned Behavior methodology, and observe the practices and

attributes preferred by the different segments and to evaluate their impact on their booking behaviour, as the design of the experiment also allow the estimation of demand functions. A sample of 340 persons was collected through the experiment. We find that segments that are travelling without children, stay in higher star rating hotels and go to farthest destinations tend to be willing to book greener or more circular hotels, while the level of awareness of the environmental problems significantly increases the willingness to pay for circular or green hotels.

## **GABBY WALTERS**

*University of Queensland, Australia*

### **Uncovering how people ‘really feel’ towards indigenous tourism in Australia via the application of psychophysiological methods**

Indigenous tourism is a niche, yet important part of Australia’s tourism industry. Niche in terms of the relatively modest numbers of visitors engaging in these experiences, but important in terms of the socio-economic opportunity’s created for those Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities engaged in tourism across the country. However, visitor demand has remained low and in the decade prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, demand for Indigenous tourism was in decline. A number of studies have been conducted in an attempt to understand why self-reported interest in Indigenous tourism experiences has not translated into visitor participation. We suggest that these largely questionnaire-based surveys or face-to-face interviews have been impacted by social desirability bias where respondents attempt to present themselves in a socially favourable manner by disguising their true feelings. This research employs a pre-post experimental design that applies multi-modal psychophysiological measures to circumvent this limitation. The study, comprising a sample to date of 20 participants, reveals people’s attentiveness and emotional responses to a variety of Indigenous tourism experiences presented via a 3-minute promotional video. Eye-tracking is used to measure participant eye activity and analyse the sequence of gaze patterns to reveal what specific features of the experience is capturing their attention. EEG is used to monitor participants’ cognitive-affective processing via observation of frontal lobe asymmetry that indicates avoidance or approach motivation, in other words, how they feel about what they are viewing. The results of a pre-post self-report survey measuring attitudes towards Indigenous tourism and Indigenous peoples both before and after viewing the advertisement also reveal the effectiveness of the advertisement in altering attitudes and encouraging participation. The self-report and psychophysiological data are then compared to reveal any differences between self-reported attitudes and feelings and those detected via

psychophysiological measurement to reveal any presence of social desirability bias. The presentation at ICOT will share the preliminary results of this study that seeks to better understand the tourism market's feelings and attitudes towards Australia's indigenous tourism experiences.

## **JULIAN ZARB**

*University of Wales Trinity St. Davids, United Kingdom*

### **The management of tourism today: Working with stakeholders for more effective results**

Following the pandemic which halted all travel and tourism for almost 24 months, there were countless calls from the industry to “re-open” the activity. But this gave the understanding that things needed to open normally, exactly as they were before the pandemic and the lockdowns and travel and tourism stoppages at airports, hotels and travel services. The interpretation here was that reopening would mean, disregarding the problems of overtourism, unsustainable factors and a total disregard to the mitigation of climate change. My paper will focus on the development of a principle of managing tourism using the three R's - rethink, redevelop and restore tourism – starting a new chapter for the tourism activity based on quality, socio-cultural experiences and an activity that looks at the real meaning and scope of travel and tourism – discovering new destinations and localities by enhancing the links and communication between the host and the visitor. This paper will look at how the Integrated Tourism Approach by using the Tourism Planning Triangle could bring stakeholders together to work on the tourism strategy and plan and take ownership of this instead of being inactive bystanders or observers. This is about treating tourism and travel as a profession, a career that will bring back hospitality and service to this activity and not concentrate on a socio-economic industry based on quantity and jobs that are mechanical rather than careers that encourage vibrance, innovation, commitment, trust and synergy getting over unsustainability through degrowth, quality and avoiding overtourism by planning and management is the way forward for the management of tourism today.

**GEORGIA ZOUNI, IOANNIS KATSANAKIS,  
MYRSINI NIKA AND KATERINA MITROPOULOU**  
*University of Piraeus, Greece*

**Understanding tourists' perception and utilization of artificial intelligence**

The tourism industry has undergone significant changes in recent years with the advent of technological innovations. Artificial intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative technology with the potential to revolutionize the tourism industry. AI's benefits in tourism include increased efficiency, cost savings, and enhanced customer experiences. Despite these advantages, the adoption of AI in tourism faces several challenges, particularly data privacy concerns. AI systems rely on extensive data collection and analysis, raising issues such as unauthorized data access, data breaches, and misuse of personal information. These concerns can impact travellers' trust and willingness to use AI-driven services. This study aims to explore the perception and utilization of AI in the tourism sector. The primary objective is to understand how travellers perceive and employ AI during their travel experiences. The research targets individuals with some experience using AI in the context of tourism. A structured questionnaire, consisting of three main sections, was developed. The first section focuses on general AI usage in travel, including questions about past and current usage, motivations, and experiences. The second section seeks feedback on AI in tourism, including preferences for interacting with AI versus human agents during travel research and booking, as well as concerns or expectations regarding AI's role in tourism. The third section gathers demographic data to analyze the correlation between these factors and AI usage patterns. Insights from this research can inform the development of AI tools tailored to traveller preferences, enhancing the overall travel experience. By addressing data privacy challenges and providing empirical data on traveller attitudes and behaviours, this study contributes to the growing body of knowledge on AI in tourism. The findings offer valuable implications for tourism industry stakeholders, helping foster a more secure and user-friendly AI environment.

**SPECIAL SESSION:**

**CORPORATE, NETWORK AND DESTINATION  
RESILIENCE**

**ORGANISED BY**

**MARTIN FONTANARI**

*International School of Management, ISM, Germany*

**ANASTASIA TRASKEVICH**

*Belarus State Economic University, BSEU, Belarus*

## **VARVARA BAMPA, GEORGIA ZOUNI AND IOANNIS KATSANAKIS**

*University of Piraeus, Greece*

### **A theoretical framework integrating resilience, flexibility and sustainability in tourism destinations leveraging emerging technologies**

This paper presents the first phase of an ongoing research project aimed at developing a theoretical framework to enhance the resilience, flexibility, and sustainability of tourism destinations by leveraging emerging technologies. Recognizing the dynamic and unpredictable nature of the tourism industry, this framework is designed to help destinations withstand shocks, adapt to changing conditions, and ensure long-term viability. In this initial phase, our research focuses on integrating advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and big data analytics into the framework. AI enables predictive analytics by processing extensive datasets, helping destination managers anticipate and mitigate potential disruptions (e.g., AI can forecast tourist influxes, weather impacts, and potential crises, providing critical insights for proactive management). IoT devices provide real-time data on environmental conditions and tourist behaviors, enabling adaptive and responsive management strategies. Sensors can monitor air quality, crowd density, and resource usage, facilitating timely and informed decision-making. These technologies also support sustainable practices by optimizing energy use, reducing waste, and promoting sustainable transportation options (e.g., smart grids can manage energy distribution efficiently, while IoT-enabled waste management systems optimize collection routes and recycling processes). The proposed framework aims to enhance the immediate resilience of tourism destinations, allowing for rapid response and recovery from unforeseen events such as natural disasters, pandemics, or economic shocks. At the same time, it emphasizes long-term sustainability by balancing economic growth with environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Flexibility is a key component, highlighting the need for destinations to continuously adapt to evolving conditions and stakeholder

needs. This research provides a foundational guide for policymakers, destination managers, and industry stakeholders, offering actionable insights and strategies for implementing technology-driven solutions. Future phases of this project will involve the practical application and testing of the framework within selected tourism destinations to validate and refine its components based on real-world outcomes. Ultimately, this theoretical framework aims to build more resilient, flexible, and sustainable tourism ecosystems, ensuring they thrive in an increasingly complex and technologically advanced world.

## AHMED HAMMAD

*University of Plymouth, United Kingdom*

### **Transformational leadership and employee innovative behavior in Egypt's travel agents during Covid-19: The mediating role of innovative self-efficacy**

The tourism sector, one of the largest and fastest-growing industries globally, is crucial to the Egyptian economy, significantly contributing to its national revenue. Unfortunately, since 2010, Egypt's tourism industry has faced severe challenges due to terrorist incidents, attacks targeting tourist locales, and recently, the profound impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, greatly diminishing its appeal as a tourist destination. In response to these challenges, frontline employees' innovative behavior (EIB) is crucial due to their direct customer interactions and essential role in meeting customer needs. Consequently, their contributions are vital to the tourism sector's survival. Particularly, research shows that transformational leadership (TL) and innovative self-efficacy (ISE) significantly influence EIB. Yet, there is a lack of comprehensive models explaining the interplay among TL, ISE, and EIB in the Egyptian travel agents, giving that ISE is still a new concept. Accordingly, this study explores the impact of TL on EIB mediated by ISE among frontline employees in Egyptian travel agents. Utilizing a sequential explanatory mixed methods design, 320 valid responses were collected from frontline employees for quantitative analysis using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS – SEM) to analyze the causal relationships between the constructs. Subsequently, 25 interviews were conducted with frontline employees for qualitative analysis to thematically explain unexpected quantitative findings. The quantitative results indicated positive impacts of TL dimensions (except inspirational motivation) and ISE on EIB. Furthermore, all TL dimensions positively affected ISE. Additionally, ISE significantly mediated the impact of both idealized influence (charisma) and inspirational motivation on EIB. Afterward, the qualitative results justified the quantitative results. The study's findings advance understanding of the interplay between TL and EIB mediated by ISE among frontline employees in Egyptian travel agents. Theoretically, they offer valuable insights into

these dynamics within the tourism sector of developing countries, notably Egypt, a context often overlooked in prior research. Practically, they inform leaders, practitioners, and frontline employees on enhancing TL behaviors and stimulating frontline EIB, thereby gaining competitive advantage and resilience. Finally, the study outlines limitations and offers directions for future research.



## **SHLOMIT HON-SNIR, SHARON TEITLER REGEV AND KEREN MICHAEL**

*Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Israel*

### **The impact of war on travel plans: Revenge tourism after conflict**

Periods of violent conflict can severely disturb the domestic and international tourism in the affected regions, partially since the local residents are not capable to engage in leisure activities. However, a new trend called "revenge tourism" suggests that some travelers become even more motivated to travel again once stability returns, making up for missed trips due to past safety issues or as a revenge for the difficult time. The current research focused on revenge tourism during "Iron Sword" war in Israel. The study tested the effect of demographic data, personality traits (control and resilience), and perceived stress on Israelis' travel and leisure intentions. The data included 660 Israeli participants, 51.8% women and 48.2% men, with an average age of 42.18 (SD=14.33). All participants completed self-reported questionnaires. Data was analyzed using path analysis. Analysis showed that demographic factors and personal resources like optimism and resilience impacted reactions to the war. Specifically, women and those with lower resilience viewed it as more stressful. Furthermore, higher stress levels and lower religiousness impacted the levels of revenge tourism. These findings indicate that although the tourism industry is suffering badly during warfare, the high level of stress can create motivation for revenge tourism later on. As a result, the study predicts a rapid rebound effect in post-conflict tourism demand once stability resumes. In summary, periods of violent conflict significantly hurt tourism and leisure industries. However, post conflict tourism can revive the leisure industry in the region and Factors like perceived stress and demographics influence this revenge tourism effect following wars.

## **MARTIN FONTANARI**

*International School of Management, ISM, Germany*

## **ANASTASIA TRASKEVICH**

*Belarus State Economic University, BSEU, Belarus*

### **A mixed-methods research on human resource development for building resilience agility in the hotel business**

The current empirical study aims to investigate the new aspects of human resource development in the hotel industry that have arisen in the era of liquid modernity. The focus is on how human skills improve the resilience of tourism companies. The study is based on theoretical definitions of resilience agility and systemic conceptual models of resilience. It uses an exploratory sequential mixed-method approach. In the qualitative phase, new factors for human resource development need to be identified, focusing on resilience. The next step quantitatively assesses these factors and their impact on the resilience agility of the hotel business. The qualitative research instrument includes expert interviews, which last around 60 minutes. The sample consists of 21 top managers from family-owned and chain hotels in Germany and Austria. The data is transcribed and analyzed using the hermeneutic method. The analysis identifies the factors that promote the transformation of personal resilience traits into employee resilience within human resource development: personal resilience of hotel employees, the hotel's internal communication system, corporate culture and learning organization, human resource development with a focus on the social aspects, employee learning skills, professional performance, work-life balance, and mindful leadership. The research tool includes virtual expert evaluations. The sample for the quantitative phase of research consists of 62 hotel top managers and hotel owners in Germany. The study shows that the concept of resilience is becoming more appealing among hotel professionals. Despite the clear motivation for resilience, the multidimensional nature of resilience in hotel management is not fully understood. The study reveals that current human resource development strategies do not focus on creative approaches to incorporate the innate

personal resilience of hotel employees for building employee and corporate resilience. Hotel managers recognize the growing need to build employee resilience in order to enhance the strategic capabilities of their business. But they fail to engage in specific activities to foster employee resilience in their daily management practice. The research provides practical implications for further developing mindful leadership and learning organizations, which aim to utilize human capital to enhance the resilience agility of hotel businesses.

## **ANASTASIA TRASKEVICH**

*Belarus State Economic University, BSEU, Belarus*

## **MARTIN FONTANARI**

*International School of Management, ISM, Germany*

### **Tourism supply chain intelligence and resilience**

The research addresses the emerging scholarly topic of tourism supply chain resilience with the aim to show its influence on destination resilience. This study explores the correlation between the resilience of the tourism supply chain and the destination's overall resilience. For this purpose, the research proposes defining xenophile destinations as emerging tourism areas that consistently embrace and adjust to technological, social, and competitive changes. This enables them to implement innovative methods in their tourism offerings. This approach is based on the theoretical principles of systemic resilience. The study presents a typology of resilient tourism supply chains. This helps to conceptualize the Tyrex-Model. Tyrex-Model introduces nine archetypes of resilient tourism supply chains. The archetypes are defined by four essential elements: water, food, energy, and personal resilience, knowledge, and well-being. The Tyrex-Model offers key implementation frameworks for resilient tourism supply chain archetypes. This is defined by a set of benchmarks that outline the development level for each implementation framework. The study uses fuzzy clustering to assess the resilience of the supply chain at the destination. The study uses quantitative methods to analyze secondary data that describes the relevant benchmarks of the Tyrex-Model. Furthermore, the assessment model is proposed and implemented as a software tool. This tool helps measure how closely a destination aligns with nine different archetypes of resilient tourism supply chains. This solution offers valuable insights into specific strategies for developing supply chain intelligence in tourism destinations. The software developed using the Tyrex-Model enhances destination resilience by promoting intelligence in resilient tourism supply chains. The study concludes that the tourism industry can adopt sustainable practices by developing

tourism supply chain resilience and intelligence. These practices can be included in a destination's tourism offerings to emphasize the unique selling proposition of xenophile destinations.

**SPECIAL SESSION:**

**XR AND METAVERSE APPLICATIONS IN  
TRANSFORMING TOURISM, EVENTS, AND  
CULTURAL HERITAGE EXPERIENCES**

**ORGANISED BY**

**Mujde Bideci**  
*Canterbury Christ Church University, UK*

## **CATHY BEAUSOLEIL**

*Université du Québec, Canada*

### **Creativity Event Management**

This paper presents the successes and challenges in the IAMCR case (International association for media and communication research). After researching on the subject, we found out creativity is so important while organizing an event that all our decisions are made in line with creativity. I will present to you the different steps we have taken as well as the successes and challenges in the IAMCR case (International association for media and communication research). Experiential events favour novel formats, technologies, and unconventional strategies. Uniqueness and memorable experiences: Unique or experiential event design, layouts, and activities make these events interesting and memorable. Experiential events are about taking risks, thinking up new, creative formats, and engaging your audience. Today's audiences look for immersion and interaction. Connecting with attendees on a deeper level is the goal, and as marketers, using experiential events can help us deepen the engagement with our audience. The more creative your event is, the more likely guests are to remember it and want to share it. Whether that be on social media through Instagram stories and reels or simply telling a friend about it in person. In 2024 the experience of your event is paramount in captivating the audience. It's no good just presenting something, a guest needs to connect to what it is you are trying to convey. Creativity isn't limited to the design of an event either. Creativity in the events industry also relates to problem-solving, maximizing budgets, making the most of sponsors, and relationships and more. It relates to being creative in event concepts and designs, content at the event, pitches, execution, management, how messages are conveyed and more. Creativity maximizes every aspect of your event and therefore has to be used in every aspect of the event from concept through to execution.

## MUJDE BIDECI

*Canterbury Christ Church University, United Kingdom*

### **Between the realities: Solid and liquid consumption utopias in XR technologies**

This research delves into the crossroads of modern consumption trends and the transformative role of practicing different realities such as Extended Reality (XR) technologies including Virtual Reality (VR), Mixed Reality (MR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in crafting Bardhi & Eckhardt's (2017) solid and liquid consumption and Atanasova's (2021) cleverly integrated utopia. While echoing Bauman's (2000) work on liquid modernity, liquid consumption utopia offers a sanctuary from mundane reality and ephemeral experiences by creating an awe and numen led market mediated desire to understand the time by reimagining the past, reframing the present, and redesigning the future realities. The research proposes that XR technologies, with their ability to create immersive, interactive experiences, could serve as the ideal platform for these liquid consumption utopias. Moreover, by enabling consumers to engage with products and experiences in novel, personalized ways, XR technologies could potentially bridge the gap or increase the awareness between the solid and liquid utopias. On the other hand, these technologies may possess drawbacks such as lack of effective representation of the environment, image, idol, product, or stories that they have been designed for, or physical and cognitive effects on users. This research, therefore, calls for a deeper exploration of this intersection of technology and consumer behaviour. It advocates for further research into how XR technologies could revolutionize the landscape of contemporary consumption, transforming how we understand and engage with consumer desires and trends without a polarised viewpoint from solid to liquid consumption. The study employs a methodological approach that involves creating a conceptual framework based on an extensive literature review. The results of the research reveal key themes in the intersection of XR technologies and modern consumption utopias.

**CHRISTINE LUNDBERG***University of Stavanger, Norway***VASSILIOS ZIAKAS***University of Liverpool, UK***KRISTINA N. LINDSTRÖM***University of Stavanger, Norway***The everyday tourist: Traveling the theatre of the mind in the  
wake of permacrisis**

Today's age is marked by permacrisis, characterised by ongoing instability and multiple crises, necessitating a re-evaluation of conventional business models. Digital transformation is proposed as essential to navigate permacrisis, fostering resilient business models through technology adoption. Tourism, profoundly impacted by permacrisis, witnesses the rise of meta-tourism, blending physical and virtual travel experiences. The concept of metaverse, epitomised by collective digital experiences, forecasts a transformative future for travel. Popular culture plays a pivotal role in this digital transformation, shaping virtual travel experiences and blurring traditional tourism boundaries. This presentation explores the notion of everyday tourism, challenging conventional tourism definitions and bridging physical and virtual travel realms. This prompts critical inquiries into sustainability and power dynamics within the tourism system. Virtual travel, characterised by irrealism, offers travellers the freedom to construct multiple realities, fostering a hybridisation of tourism experiences. Amid permacrisis, everyday tourism serves as an antidote, offering escapism and democratising travel experiences. However, concerns arise regarding its impact on sustainability and power distribution within the tourism ecosystem. Analysing the intertwining of tourism mobilities and popular culture reveals the evolving nature of tourism experiences and their socio-economic implications. The emergence of the everyday tourist reflects a paradigm shift, where tourism becomes integrated into daily life, transcending traditional boundaries. This transformation is driven by advanced

digitalisation and socio-economic restructuring, challenging established tourism norms. The concept of everyday tourism calls for a re-evaluation of tourism practices and governance strategies to ensure sustainability and equity. Ultimately, understanding everyday tourism as an expression of popular culture enables critical examination of its implications and potential limitations in navigating permacrisis and shaping future tourism landscapes.

## **BOUCHRA OUKHAYI**

*The International University of Rabat, Morocco*

### **I love travelling-in-metaverse: Exploring the characteristics of destination attachment in metaverse**

The Metaverse is a digital realm where humans may generate virtual representations of themselves, engage in social interactions, and find amusement. The Metaverse enriches experiences in several domains, including entertainment, fashion, and tourism. Tourism-In-Metaverse is a concept that enables tourists to socially connect and discover locations using augmented and virtual reality technologies. This study examines the relationship between spatial presence, aesthetic experience, and destination attachment in the Metaverse. An empirical investigation consisting of three stages was carried out, wherein participants explored three virtual locations within the Metaverse: a music performance in New York, BMW's dedicated place in the Metaverse, and Naoyuki Ogino's island in the Spatial Metaverse. After each 20-minute session at each place, the actions and feedback of the participants were recorded. Findings indicates that engaging in immersive travel inside the Metaverse enhances visitor interest and involvement in virtual places, hence enhancing their commitment to these destinations both in the virtual realm and in the physical world, factors such as being fully immersed in the Metaverse and experiencing pleasurable sensory experiences contribute to users' emotional connection, which provide positive outcomes and profit for the tourism industry. Moreover, the Metaverse has the potential to enhance the visibility and appreciation of cultural landmarks, artistic creations, and other social gatherings such as parties, marriages, and virtual movie screenings or meetings. The transition to virtual tourism has the potential to promote sustainable practices by decreasing carbon emissions and avoiding physical waste generated by wearable items.

**SOFIA MARIA POULIMENOU, IOANNIS  
DELIYANNIS, VASILEIOS KOMIANOS AND  
KONSTANTINOS VOGKLIS**  
*Ionian University, Greece*

**Public spaces and museums: Enhancing cultural engagement  
and tourism experience with XR technologies applications in  
the old town of Corfu, Greece**

Public spaces represent an important component of a place, serving as a hub for social interaction, cultural expression, and community engagement. Museums also benefit from the existence of public spaces, whether they can be used as exhibition places or as a shared space between culture and visitors to interact and involve. In this paper, we explore the dynamic relationship between public spaces and museums, using as a case study the Old Town of Corfu, in Greece. Due to its unique architectural and cultural characteristics, parts of the Old Town can serve as exhibits as well, integrating a sustainable approach and a continuity between museums and the city itself. In present times, where the borders between tangible and intangible heritage are shifting, the research explores the role of the current museums in integrating parts of a city and its community as parts of a collection. Points of interest, personal experiences, urban narratives, can be an integral part of a city's cultural heritage and evolve the connection of museums and a cultural site. This approach will be addressed, by showcasing several technological tools that improve the user experience and create self-engagement sentiments to visitors and the community. Expanding upon this integration of technology and cultural heritage, we propose exploring the creation of an XR (Extended Reality) exhibition that allows visitors to engage with cultural exhibits without the need for physical interventions in the urban environment. Such technology could enable immersive experiences like projection mapping on historical buildings or virtual placement of artifacts in situ, allowing users to visualize and interact with the cultural heritage in innovative ways. This initiative could initiate discussions on applying these technologies, providing a non-invasive method to enhance the understanding and appreciation of historical sites. Our research explores the

impact of such an approach on tourism development and examines the role of public space revitalization by incorporating museum elements in cultural tourism enrichment. By employing XR technologies, we aim to create a bridge between the tangible structures of the city and the intangible threads of its historical narrative, thus offering a richer, more engaging cultural tourism experience.