

SPECIAL ISSUE:**“Contemporary issues in ensuring excellence in tourism, travel and hospitality”*****GUEST EDITORIAL***

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The special issue “Contemporary issues in ensuring excellence in tourism, travel and hospitality” aims to thoroughly examine current trends, topics, problems and concerns in the field of leisure, tourism and hospitality research, encouraging conversation among academicians and advancing new angles, theoretical and managerial perspectives within the globalised environment we live and operate in.

The special issue, launched in January 2020 before the COVID-19 halted global travel, tourism, and leisure, called for research papers from Marketing and Management fields and was also opened to participants who attended the 3rd International Scientific Conference TOURMAN 2019 “Tourism, travel and hospitality at crossroads: The way ahead” (October 24-27, 2019 in Thessaloniki, Greece) which was organised and hosted by the International Hellenic University.

Eighteen paper proposals were received. All of them were subject to a double round of blind review and nine papers were finally accepted to be published in this special issue (acceptance rate: 45%).

The accepted papers are devoted to analysing contemporary issues pertaining the tourism, travel and hospitality sector adopting both a demand-side and a supply-side, one of which explicitly discussing how smart technologies can help sustain tourism during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The special issue opens with two demand-side studies profiling tourists’ behaviour in different research settings. The first paper authored by Sonia Giaccone and Marco Galvagno “Small-scale cultural festivals in Southern Europe: a motivation-based segmentation study” aims to contribute to the relatively limited scientific debate devoted to small-scale events, presenting and discussing findings of an empirical study carried out at Maiorchino Festival (Sicily, Italy). Results highlight that motivation variables (i.e., novelty, local culture experience, event attractions and socialisation) are more important than demographic or behavioural ones in identifying different clusters of event attendees (i.e., escapers, socialization lovers, loyalists, passionate about local traditions). Furthermore, it confirms that small-scale festivals are a relevant tool for boosting the destination attractiveness and competitiveness, especially when they are organised to focus on the local identity and authenticity of the hosting destination.

Athina Nella and Evangelos Christou, in their paper “Market segmentation for wine tourism: Identifying sub-groups of winery visitors”, highlight that winery visitors in Greece tend to significantly differ in their sociodemographics, tripographics, product involvement and behavioural intentions. Their results contribute to further deepen the scientific debate devoted to investigating the wine tourists’ behaviour, while providing useful knowledge for destination marketers and wine producers attempting to tailor their marketing operations to attract visitors, to make them satisfied and prone to return to the winery and/or to recommend it to others.

The remaining part of the special issue is devoted to offer the reader several studies adopting a supply-side perspective (i.e., policy based, business based, and destination based).

Angeliki Menegaki, Panagiota Dionisopoulou and George Agiomirgianakis co-authored the first paper of this series. Their study titled “The contribution of valuation economics in tourism” underlines the need to adopt ‘new’ tools and methods to estimate the total economic value estimation for a wide array of tourist goods through the employment of stated preference techniques and revealed preference techniques.

The following two papers adopt a “micro-based perspective” (i.e., business perspective). Guych Nuryyev, Anastasia Spyridou, Simon Yeh and Chen-Chang Lo co-authored a paper (“Factors of digital payment adoption in hospitality businesses: A conceptual approach”) aiming to conceptually discuss the factors influencing the hospitality businesses’ intention to use new digital payments such as bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies. Angelo Riviezzo, Antonella Garofano, Michela Mason and Maria Rosaria Napolitano in their study titled “Corporate Museums as Industrial Tourism Destinations: a Data-Driven Segmentation Study” builds on the idea that the cultural heritage enclosed in industrial sites represents an opportunity to develop sustainable forms of tourism. Hence, applying a segmentation study to a sample of 88 corporate museums in Italy, they identified three different clusters of corporate museums based on their strategic orientation and their actual willingness to cooperate with other local stakeholders to enhance industrial tourism in the area (namely: traditionalist, strategist and individualist) with the biggest group (i.e. the ‘strategists’) being represented by those museums that are strategically committed to support the company goals, while being open to any networking activity with external tourism stakeholders to further boost the attractiveness of the whole tourism destination where they operate.

The following four papers are all devoted to the research strand pertaining destination management. Gori et al. and Hernandez-Maskivker et al. discuss the relevant role that collaborative policymaking among local authorities, government agencies, businesses, and host communities, exert for tourism planning and development to be successful and sustainable. Specifically, Elena Gori, Silvia Fissi and Alberto Romolini, in their study “A collaborative approach in tourism planning: The case of Tuscany Region”, apply the Habermas’s framework to the tourism planning of the Tuscany Region (Italy). This is done to analyse the main difficulties policy makers usually face when trying to engage tourism stakeholders in tourism planning, and to foster the systemic dialogue within the network so that this dynamic process can facilitate information and knowledge sharing, and enhance tolerance, mutual learning, co-innovation and co-evolution. Gilda Hernandez-Maskivker, Albert Fornells, Francesc Texeidó-Navarro and Juan Ignacio Pulido co-authored the paper “Exploring Mass Tourism Impacts on Locals: A Comparative Analysis Between Barcelona and Sevilla” with the aim to analyse residents’ perceptions of tourism in very well-established and mature tourism destinations. Based on their results, the authors further underline the need to adopt a collaborative policymaking that considers the residents’ views towards tourism, makes use of internal marketing to shape these views according to the objective impacts generated by tourism activities, and tries to favour local entrepreneurship to empower residents toward sustainable tourism development.

The last two papers deal with the rise of smart tourism and smart tourism destinations. Luisa Errichiello and Roberto Micera, in their study “A process-based perspective of smart tourism destination governance”, combine the relatively recent smart approach with destination governance theory to propose a governance process framework for smart tourism destinations where smartness principles, tools and methods can be applied to increase the sustainable competitiveness of destinations beyond the mere technology dimension, making the role of collaborative structures, user-driven services, social innovation and local community involvement, explicit. Mariapina Trunfio and Cecilia Pasquinelli close the special issue offering the reader an article (“Smart technologies in the COVID-19 crisis: managing tourism flows and shaping visitors’ behaviour”) further discussing the role of smart technologies to effectively manage tourism flows and shape visitors’ behaviours, especially when (post-) COVID-19 pandemic tourism is envisioned. In this vein, they propose the Smart Technology Matrix as a tool that categorises smart technologies based on two different logics of intervention, namely a mono-dimensional logic (i.e., smart tools to engage tourists and tourism stakeholders) and an integrated logic (i.e., smart tools targeting the whole system of stakeholders involved in the tourism phenomenon).

At the end of such a great experience of managing this Special Issue, the guest editors would wish to thank all the authors for contributing to this Special Issue, and all the reviewers and editorial board members for the useful comments and suggestions they provided authors to further improve the quality of their manuscripts. Last, but not least, we are deeply grateful to the Editor-in-Chief of the European Journal of Tourism Research (Professor Stanislav Ivanov) for giving us the possibility to undertake such a wonderful ‘journey’.