

RRR

ROSEN RESEARCH REVIEW

*Expanding Research Frontiers
to Serve Humanity*

WINTER 2023



**Rosen College of
Hospitality Management**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



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A message from Dr. Robertico Croes

EXPANDING RESEARCH FRONTIERS TO SERVE HUMANITY

The UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management

Welcome to the Winter Edition of the **Rosen Research Review!** We are thrilled to share with you the groundbreaking research of the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, the #1 ranked hospitality management program in the United States, according to the 2023 Shanghai Rankings.

At UCF Rosen College, we believe that research is the key to understanding and shaping the future of the hospitality industry. Our relentless pursuit of knowledge and innovation enables us to expand the frontiers of research in service to humanity. Through our research initiatives, we strive to enhance the guest experience, improve sustainability practices, and contribute to the development of thriving communities.

Our faculty members are leading experts in their respective fields, and their dedication to research excellence is unparalleled. They are at the forefront of exploring emerging trends and challenges, such as the integration of technology, the evolving needs of diverse guests, and the criticality of sustainability. Their research efforts not only benefit the hospitality industry but also have far-reaching implications for society as a whole.

In this Winter Edition, you will find a rich collection of articles showcasing the impactful research being conducted at Rosen College. From pioneering studies on personalized guest experiences to innovative approaches in sustainable hospitality practices, our researchers are pushing the boundaries of knowledge and making a difference in the world.

Additionally, UCF has launched the Infectious Disease and Travel Health Initiative, securing \$4.5 million in funding to address the global travel challenges impacted by infectious diseases. This initiative aims to establish a disease outbreak warning system, integrate science and behavior, and create a resource hub for tourism businesses. It will pioneer research

in big data, AI, machine learning, and improve collaboration in infectious disease response.

As you delve into the pages of this issue, we hope you find inspiration in the remarkable research endeavors of our faculty and students. This edition of the **Rosen Research Review** reflects our commitment to advancing knowledge, embracing innovation, and serving humanity through hospitality.

We are immensely proud of the achievements of the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our faculty, students, and partners for their unwavering dedication. Together, we are shaping the future of hospitality research, and together, we are making a positive difference in the world.

In a final note, we are delighted to extend a warm invitation to the World Research Summit for Hospitality and Tourism, taking place on the UCF Rosen College Campus from December 8–11, 2023. This prestigious event will bring together leading scholars, industry professionals, and policymakers from around the globe to exchange ideas, foster collaboration, and shape the future of hospitality research. We eagerly await your presence and are confident that the summit will inspire and empower all participants to make a lasting impact in their respective fields.

Enjoy this issue, and we look forward to welcoming you to Orlando for the World Research Summit soon!

Robertico Croes

Sincerely, Dr. Robertico Croes
Professor Tourism Economics and Management
Editor Rosen Research Review (RRR)



**Rosen College of
Hospitality Management**
UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA



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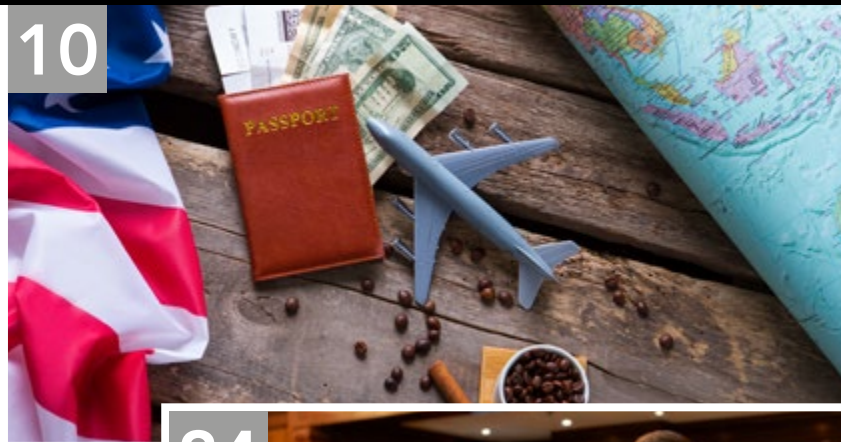
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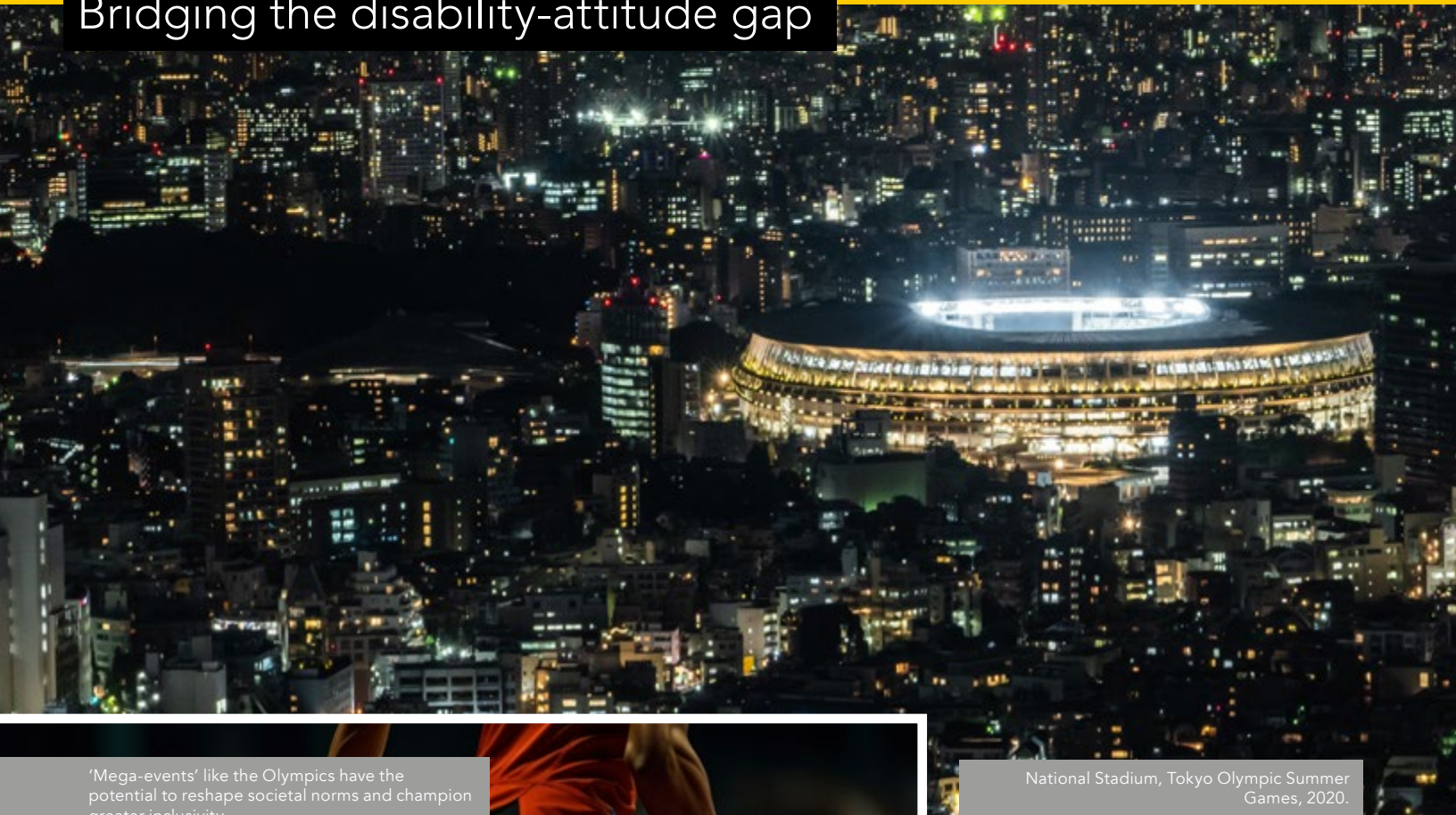
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PROMOTING ACCESSIBLE TOURISM AT MEGA-EVENTS

Bridging the disability-attitude gap



'Mega-events' like the Olympics have the potential to reshape societal norms and champion greater inclusivity.

National Stadium, Tokyo Olympic Summer Games, 2020.

UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Associate Professor Michael B. Duignan and Associate Dean, Academic Affairs, Alan Fyall collaborated with a team of fellow researchers to examine Tokyo 2020's potential to challenge ableist norms. Highlighting Japan's efforts to promote inclusive tourism for Persons with Disabilities (PwD), their collaborative study highlights the tourism sector's ongoing gaps. They argue that mega-events like the Olympics can be pivotal in driving inclusivity, addressing both physical and social barriers. Dive into this revealing examination of the interplay between tourism, events, and societal change.



physical and attitudinal barriers, thus enhancing accessibility for Persons with Disabilities (PwD). In preparation for the event, Japan undertook significant measures to challenge entrenched ableist views by not only modernizing its tourism facilities but also by launching extensive awareness campaigns.

Yet, even with these advancements, persistent biases and stereotypes about disabilities emphasize the need for comprehensive adoption of inclusivity, both in thought and action. The researchers from UCF Rosen College confront the prevalent ableist attitudes, highlighting the frequent preference for able-bodied individuals and the design of physical environments that often endorse normative values. Such designs are in stark contrast to the principles of universal design, which aim to eliminate obstacles faced by PwD in both physical and societal realms. The team employs a field configuring events (FCE) framework to understand how significant events can catalyze social policy shifts and combat widespread issues, such as disablism.

At the core of their research is the exploration of the inherent social injustices when the needs and rights of PwD are sidelined, particularly emphasizing the challenges related to physical disabilities and mobility in the tourism sector.

social model of disability, the team determined that Japan aimed to pioneer inclusive tourism, not only through infrastructural modifications but also by instigating a shift in societal perceptions through the media. This research delves deep into Japan's endeavors, emphasizing environment transformation in preparation for the event, awareness campaigns, and evolving societal attitudes towards PwD, offering critical insights into policy implications, managerial strategies, and potential future research directions.

Overall, their research aims to contribute to the understanding of how mega-events can be leveraged to promote inclusivity and social sustainability. Further to this, their study demonstrated the process by which mega-events catalyze industrial and geographical field development to advance accessible tourism agendas, building upon the experiences of previous mega-events and their inability to advance accessible tourism.

The study used a mixed-methods approach, including interviews, on-the-ground observations, and document analysis. The interviews covered topics such as historical and current accessibility barriers, initiatives to overcome these barriers, and persistent barriers to inclusion. The stakeholders

MEGA-EVENTS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO DRIVE SOCIAL CHANGE AND INCLUSIVITY, MAKING THEM CRUCIAL PLATFORMS FOR ADVANCING ACCESSIBLE TOURISM.

Over the past two decades, advocacy for accessible tourism has gained momentum, reflecting the rise of disability studies that began in the 1970s. While global initiatives, especially those by the United Nations, have fervently promoted inclusivity, a discernible gap remains in the tourism sector's approach to addressing disabilities. A pivotal study by Professor Michael B. Duignan and Associate Dean Alan Fyall from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management suggests that 'mega-events' like the Olympics have the potential to reshape societal norms and champion greater inclusivity. The Tokyo 2020 Olympics stood out as a milestone in this journey, addressing both

While there have been notable advancements in the inclusion of PwD in professional and domestic environments, leisure settings still demand heightened attention. The ultimate goal is clear: to eliminate barriers and foster full participation for PwD across all facets of the tourism industry.

TOKYO 2020: A BEACON FOR INCLUSIVE TOURISM

The team conducted a comprehensive examination of Japan's strategy during the Tokyo 2020 Olympics to address challenges faced by PwD. They argue that Japan leveraged the event to challenge its historical stigmatization of disability, focusing on both physical and attitudinal barriers. Embracing the

interviewed were grouped into four categories: senior government officials responsible for tourism, influential policy and media commentators, tour operators, and physically disabled residents of Tokyo.

BARRIERS TO ACCESSIBLE TOURISM IN JAPAN

The findings from the interviews highlight significant challenges to achieving accessible tourism in Japan, including deep-rooted societal stigmas, negative perceptions of people with disabilities, and infrastructural issues such as the absence of elevators and user-friendly transportation systems. This research sheds light on the broader disability-attitude gap, indicating that, despite

Japan has implemented various physical changes to enhance accessibility for Persons with Disabilities.



Japan's dedicated efforts towards inclusivity, a persistent negative attitude towards PwD remains, resulting in social exclusion and limited mobility. Furthermore, the study underscores the urgency of transitioning from the medical model of disability, which emphasizes individual limitations, to the social model, which acknowledges that societal attitudes and environmental barriers are the primary inhibitors of inclusive practices.

Japan has implemented various physical changes to enhance accessibility for PwD. These include the installation of audible crossings for the visually impaired and construction work in metro stations to improve

to make cities and attractions barrier-free, ensuring equal access for all individuals.

RAISING AWARENESS AND CHANGING ATTITUDES

The study emphasizes the significance of raising awareness among Japanese citizens about the needs and rights of PwD. National campaigns and educational initiatives were developed to promote understanding and compassion. The Tokyo Metropolitan Government, in collaboration with Tokyo 2020, created guides and literature to communicate accessibility guidance and promote Japan's Barrier-Free campaign. The inclusion of PwD in aspects such as the official anthems, videos,

recommendations and managerial implications. These include disability inclusion requirements in the International Olympic Committee's Host City Contract, mandatory training, and implementing large-scale national awareness programs for service providers and the general public, ensuring that inclusivity and social sustainability are prioritized. National awareness campaigns are crucial to change societal views towards PwD and increase acceptance. The team emphasized the need for these recommendations to be mandated, a whole-of-life approach to accessibility, and calls for collaboration among stakeholders to prioritize the rights and needs of PwD. The team argue that then this will help to achieve the goals of inclusivity and social sustainability.

FIELD DEVELOPMENT AND ACCESSIBLE TOURISM

The team's research highlights the role of mega-events in field development and in advancing accessible tourism. While progress has been made, there are still challenges in terms of physical barriers and negative attitudes towards PwD. Unlike piecemeal changes, mega-events can serve as platforms to create greater awareness, and highlight the requirements for accessibility, impacting the entire event planning process from the start. By prioritizing accessibility, mega-events can future-proof destinations and avoid negative publicity associated with inaccessibility. The example of Tokyo 2020 Olympics paves the way for the future by providing valuable lessons for other cities across the globe seeking to create a more inclusive tourism sector.

THE FUTURE AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In summary, the research conducted by the team sheds light on the efforts made by Japan and the Tokyo 2020 Games to address the disability-attitude gap and promote accessible tourism for PwD. While physical changes have been implemented, their study emphasizes the need for ongoing awareness campaigns and attitudinal change. Mega-events have the potential to drive social change and inclusivity, making them crucial platforms for advancing accessible tourism and promoting social change. By implementing the policy recommendations and managerial implications identified in the team's research, destinations can create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for all individuals, regardless of their abilities.

BY PRIORITIZING ACCESSIBILITY, MEGA-EVENTS CAN FUTURE-PROOF DESTINATIONS AND AVOID NEGATIVE PUBLICITY ASSOCIATED WITH INACCESSIBILITY.

accessibility. Designing more inclusive physical and social spaces helps shed light on the challenges, and also the opportunities, to bridging the disability-attitude gap. The Tokyo 2020 Games provided an opportunity to showcase these changes and promote a more inclusive environment. As a whole, the research highlights the importance of ongoing efforts

and city magazines aimed to challenge negative attitudes and generate awareness prior to and during the event.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

To bridge the disability-attitude gap, the team's research proposes several policy

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Drawing on the social model of disability, the study assesses Tokyo 2020's influence on addressing ableism, charting the growth of accessible tourism, and discerning major event stakeholders' inclusivity goals.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How can future mega-events like Tokyo 2020 further disrupt ableist views and promote inclusivity?

Applying principles of Universal Design to ensure access for all is a key step, but that's not enough—we need to address the stigmas that persons with disabilities face too, and this can be helped by large scale communications campaigns that promote their engagement in society. Major events are exceptional platforms for bringing social challenges to the fore and in the public consciousness.

Given the gaps in research on marginalized groups at such events, what actionable steps do you suggest for event organizers and the tourism sector to enhance accessibility for Persons with Disabilities?

This is particularly important with new emerging major event destinations hosting, like Saudi Arabia, and it's about applying some of these positive and progressive policies we note in the paper in new contexts to ensure that large swathes of the population are considered in the design, planning, and delivery of major events.

Dr. Michael B. Duignan



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MORE THAN INCOME

How Americans feel about their finances and how it affects their travel plans

Associate Professor Jorge Ridderstaat of UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management has examined how Americans feel about their finances and how it affects their travel plans. This study provides new, multifaceted details on how U.S. consumer finances can affect their travel decisions, providing valuable behavioral insights for authorities and policymakers when managing tourist destinations effectively.

Predicting tourist demand is critical for successful tourist and hospitality planning. Much research has focused on income as the underlying driver of tourism demand. Income data, however, is rarely available, so proxies, such as gross domestic product (GDP), are employed with varying success. Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat, Associate Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, has already established that, while income provides the ability to travel, the desire to spend can be influenced by many additional factors that are less easily identified. In this study, he investigates how American's perceptions of their financial positions affect their decisions to consume tourism. Moreover, he examines whether people's overall financial positions influence their travel plans more than their income. He also tests the idea that potential visitors' economic fortunes will affect different destinations in different ways.

WHAT INFLUENCES PERCEPTIONS OF FINANCIAL POSITION?

Most travel demand studies have focused on the effect of income in isolation. Ridderstaat has taken a more nuanced approach, proposing that net financial wealth is a more accurate indicator than gross wealth when estimating tourism demand. People's household expenditure and changes in liabilities, such as credit card loans and mortgages, affect their behavior as consumers. Similarly, other non-income factors, particularly perceptions of the economy's strength and


access to credit, affect how they feel about their financial position. Asset values, particularly house prices, are also significant contributors to feelings of financial wellbeing, as homeowners in rising markets feel a wealth effect that is not visible in income statistics. A falling housing market creates the reverse perception of financial weakness. 401(k)s and stock portfolios have similar influences. With so many factors affecting people's perceptions of their financial position, this study goes beyond examining a straight trade-off between income and tourism spending in its analysis of consumer behavior.

TRACKING FINANCIAL WELLBEING

The strength of the broader economy—from employment numbers and salary levels to housing and stock values—tends to fluctuate in cycles. Business and consumer confidence and spending rise, then fall, and later pick up again. Ridderstaat bases his study on this cycle of growth and contraction, using a standard measure of economic growth—gross domestic product (GDP) produced by the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis—to identify fluctuations in general economic activity in the U.S. and observe how rising or falling GDP has affected tourism demand levels.

A WORLD OF CHOICE

Ridderstaat has selected ten popular destinations for U.S. tourists. In addition to eight global regions, he includes Canada and Mexico, as these neighboring countries are the most significant single markets for U.S. tourists. These destinations comprise around 75% of all



Ridderstaat examines how Americans feel about their finances and how it affects their travel plans.

U.S. foreign tourism. The study uses data from the U.S. Dept of Commerce's National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO) from 1996 to 2018 to discover patterns in U.S. foreign travel flow. Over this period, Europe was the most popular region (31.6% of trips), and Africa was the least popular (0.7%). Mexico alone attracted 15.5% of tourist visits, and Canada 9.8%. One aim is to find out how these proportions vary with fluctuations in the U.S. GDP.

In addition, the study uses data from the University of Michigan's Survey of Consumers that segments travelers into three equally sized income segments: a top-, middle- and lower-income group. Ridderstaat maps this destination information for each income group over time against the U.S.A.'s economic cycle.

MODELING THE IMPACT OF CHANGING PERCEPTION

To discover how changing perceptions of financial wellbeing influence different income groups' destination choices, Ridderstaat initially identifies the variables and characteristics of both travelers and destinations. This is time series data with trends, seasonal trends, cyclical variations, and irregular variations,



What influences perceptions of financial position?

so he uses the unobserved components model (UCM) to filter these elements from the variables. He then standardizes the cyclic component to ascertain if the variables are stationary (stationary variables have constant means, variances, and covariances). Ridderstaat considers the possibility that the effects of households' net financial position on tourism demand may be nonlinear. He applies the statistical tool, the U-test, to determine whether the relationships between financial position perceptions and tourism demand are linear, i.e., persistent or not (nonlinear).

Ridderstaat also examines the time taken for the influence of background economic conditions to affect tourism spending, i.e., the lag time, to see if it varies. Are travelers more

or less impulsive during periods of prosperity or economic downturns, and are some destinations affected more than others? Such answers could inform destination planners contemplating the economic conditions in key markets to predict the timing of demand.

Combining all these components in a regression model enables Ridderstaat to estimate the impact of people's perceptions of their financial position on their demand for travel.

TO GO OR NOT TO GO?

Examining the relationship between stages of America's economic cycle and U.S. consumers' foreign tourist travel activity revealed that expansionary stages of the cycle had the most

significant effect on the lower income group's behavior. The less affluent were more likely to go on holiday when they felt wealthier. In contrast, the higher-income group's tourism patterns tended not to be influenced by a more robust economy. In contrast, economic downturns impacted a reduction in tourism across all income groups, although the middle-income group appeared less affected than the other two groups.

DISTANCE MATTERS

The distance of destinations is a key feature of a trip decision partly due to flight costs. This research shows more long-distance travel took place during economic upturns, as might be expected. Downturns reduced long-haul travel but had little or no effect on short- to medium-haul journeys. This suggests that some of the higher- and middle-income consumers, who still went on holiday during downturns, opted to switch from more expensive long-haul destinations to closer, lower-cost flight options.

DESTINATION REALLY MATTERS

When it comes to understanding exactly where people were going, Ridderstaat finds that during upcycles, the lower-income

ARE TRAVELERS MORE OR LESS IMPULSIVE DURING PERIODS OF PROSPERITY OR ECONOMIC DOWNTURNS, AND ARE SOME DESTINATIONS AFFECTED MORE THAN OTHERS?

Ridderstaat's study enhances the developing body of literature concerning the influence of net wealth on tourism demand.



group traveled to all locations more often. Conversely, this group traveled to everywhere except Canada less frequently during economic downturns.

Middle-income earners travel less to Europe and Central America but more to Mexico during economic upcycles. On the other hand, when times are hard, fewer trips are made to faraway Asia and Oceania, and this group is more likely to travel to Central America and Africa. The high-income group is more likely to switch from South America to Africa during growth periods, whereas, during economic downturns, they tend to favor Canada.

These results show that some members of each income group change their destinations in response to their changing perceptions of their financial situation. While their preferences and destination choices vary according to their income level, there is no straightforward relationship between income level and tourism demand.

UNDERSTANDING DESTINATION PLANNING

This study also examines the possibility of a time lag between the psychological influence exerted by the economy and actual tourism spending. Ridderstaat refers to this as an 'impulse response effect'. The study identifies variations in impulse and long-horizon purchases at different times in the economic cycle—and finds that this affected destinations differently.

Interestingly, the study also reveals that travelers tend to plan ahead six months or more during economic expansions. However, as with income levels, there are differences between destinations: more impulse trips (less than six months to plan) were made to Canada and the Middle East in economic upturns, and less to South America. Longer-term planning in expansions benefited South American, African, and Mexican trips, but Europe and Asia had fewer longer-term planned visitors.

PRECISION INSIGHTS

This research clearly shows that several factors influence visitor demand. Background economic conditions affect different income groups in different ways. The precision of the findings provides valuable insights for businesses and regional government planners. For example, South American destinations would benefit by targeting their marketing to lower-income groups during periods of U.S. economic growth. The research also informs planners that there will be around a six-month

SOME MEMBERS OF EACH INCOME GROUP CHANGE THEIR DESTINATIONS IN RESPONSE TO THEIR CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR FINANCIAL SITUATION.

Generally, downturns do not appear to affect the extent to which people travel on impulse or make longer-term plans. Within that stable pattern, there is a slight bias in impulse buys toward Canada, the Caribbean, and Central America, with longer-term planning particularly evident for Mexico. Ridderstaat also finds that any change in perceptions of financial position did not affect tourism demand once a household had decided to go. However, there are exceptions to this rule, with South America seeing increased numbers with more of an upturn in the U.S. economy and Asia witnessing a fall.

time lag between any marketing initiative and increased tourism spending. On the other hand, European destinations would benefit by increasing marketing to the U.S. middle-income bracket during an expansionary phase, as the study shows that this group tends to switch away from Europe in better economic periods. Ridderstaat's study enhances the developing body of literature concerning the influence of net wealth on tourism demand. It blends the characteristics of tourism and demand to offer a broader definition of tourism demand that provides a more holistic understanding of what it means in terms of travel and consumption.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Associate Professor Jorge Ridderstaat examines how people's financial status impacts their decision to engage in tourism.

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Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat



Jorge Ridderstaat is an Associate Professor at Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida. His research agenda focuses primarily on the dynamics in tourism and hospitality, where he specializes in data decomposition and analysis using econometric techniques. Dr. Ridderstaat received his doctorate from the Free University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands, where his dissertation focused on the determinants of tourism demand dynamics in a small island destination. He is the author of two books and many academic publications (refereed journal articles, book chapters, encyclopedia entries, and conference papers).

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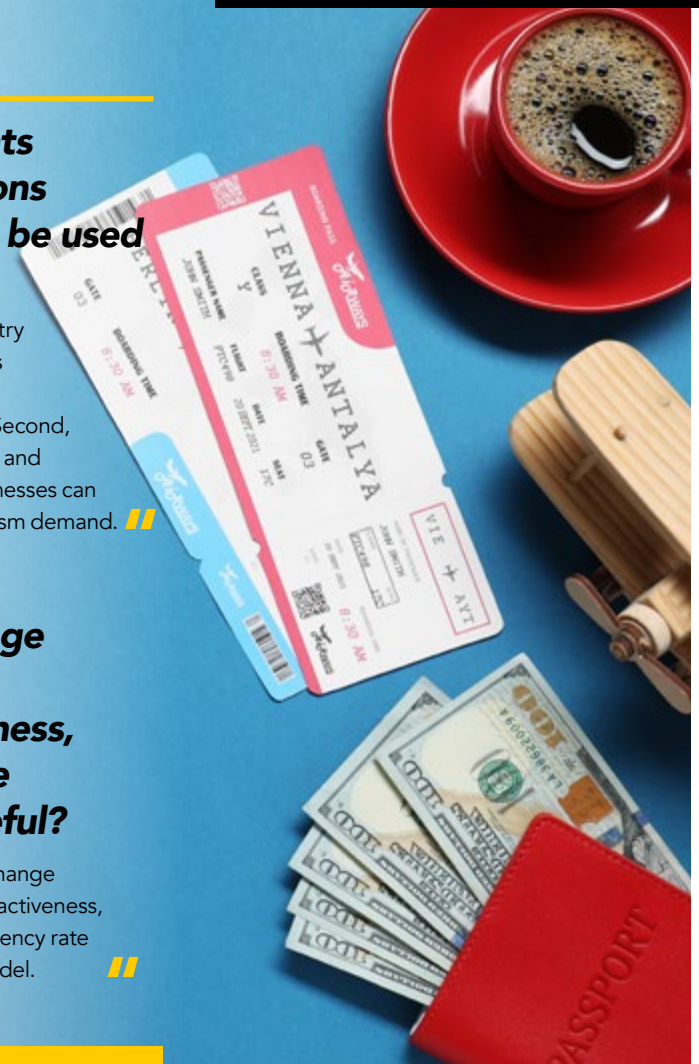
PERSONAL RESPONSE

Your study offers valuable behavioral insights for destination planners in tourist destinations around the world. How might your findings be used to create impact for the industry?

/// The findings from this study can be used to create an impact on the industry in several ways. First, by understanding how different segments of consumers perceive their financial position and how this affects their tourism demand, businesses can tailor their marketing and advertising messages accordingly. Second, businesses can also use the findings from this study to develop new products and services that meet the needs of different segments of consumers. Third, businesses can also use the findings from this study to advocate for policies that support tourism demand. ///

Do you think it would be worthwhile—and practical—to factor fluctuating USD exchange rates into your model, as this could have a significant impact on destination attractiveness, particularly for lower-income tourists; or are currency rate changes too volatile to be useful?

/// Yes, I think it would be worthwhile to be able to factor fluctuating USD exchange rates into the model, as this could have a significant impact on destination attractiveness, particularly for lower-income tourists. However, it is important to note that currency rate changes can be very volatile, making it challenging to develop an accurate model. ///





Rosen Research Focus | Chait Renduchintala & Frank Badu-Baiden

UCF'S INFECTIOUS DISEASE AND TRAVEL HEALTH INITIATIVE

Pioneering resilience for a healthier tomorrow

In a world grappling with the profound challenges posed by infectious diseases and global travel, the University of Central Florida (UCF) stands at the forefront of groundbreaking research and innovation.

An exceptional new initiative—the Infectious Disease and Travel Health Initiative—is set to revolutionize how we approach health resilience, disease outbreak mitigation, traveler safety, and the continuity of essential services. Spearheaded by eminent researchers from UCF's College of Medicine, including Dr. Kenneth A. Alexander, Dr. Griff Parks, Dr. Eric Schrimshaw, and Dr. Taj Azarian, along with Dr. Robertico Croes, principal investigator from the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, this initiative is poised to make a profound impact.

Under the visionary leadership of UCF President Alexander N. Cartwright, who

envisioned UCF as a 'University for the Future', the initiative secured \$4.5 million in funding through the UCF Strategic Investment Program. This substantial backing underscores the institution's commitment to becoming a top public university and the world's leading public metropolitan research university.

THREE PILLARS OF FOCUS

The Infectious Disease and Travel Health Initiative concentrates on three major areas:

1. Advanced Warning System: Using cutting-edge data collection methods, the initiative aims to provide a robust early warning system to anticipate and respond to potential infectious disease outbreaks. This system is critical for safeguarding public health, traveler safety, and economic stability.

2. Bridging Science and Behavior: To ensure the synergy of science and behavior, the initiative brings travelers and those who serve them closer to scientific knowledge. This integration is essential in creating informed and responsible responses to health crises.

3. Supporting Small- and Medium-sized Businesses: The initiative will create a resource hub for small- to medium-sized businesses in tourist areas. This invaluable tool will help businesses navigate and manage future health crisis situations, fostering resilience in the tourism industry.

A COLLABORATIVE POWERHOUSE

The initiative establishes a collaborative platform that brings together the expertise, resources, and influence from areas across UCF, including the College of Medicine, Rosen College of Hospitality Management, College of Engineering and Computer Science, College



of Nursing, College of Health Professions and Sciences, and the UCF Academic Health Science Center. In addition, research clusters such as Coastal and Genomics are actively involved with the project. With an emphasis on interdisciplinarity, the initiative has brought together a remarkable team of 20 world-class faculty members.

These experts address diverse issues in hospitality and travel, population health and community resilience, nanotechnology, vaccines, and infectious diseases, collaborating with hospitals, hospitality, and healthcare stakeholders for community resilience and translational research connections.

PIONEERING RESEARCH THEMES

Recognizing the immense potential in big data, modeling, simulation, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning, the initiative actively

seeks funding opportunities to advance the science of infectious disease mitigation. As part of this expansive research, engineering and computer science researchers delve into bioinformatics, pathogenic outbreak simulation, AI, and machine learning to expedite therapy design. Meanwhile, the team at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management focuses on pivotal research areas that encompass travel-related aspects of infectious diseases, health disparities, social determinants, the dynamics between communities and industries, as well as behavioral economics.

MULTIFACETED APPROACH TO HEALTH RESILIENCE

The research, education, and knowledge dissemination activities of the initiative encompass data analysis, intervention development, commercialization of biomedical science innovations, and collaboration with local, state, federal, and global government agencies, hospitals, community organizations, travel associations, and other stakeholders interested in bolstering health resilience to infectious disease outbreaks.

The initiative envisions a research hub that coordinates efforts on a global scale. In pursuit of this vision, the initiative is developing an online portal to improve connectivity between all stakeholders in infectious disease response. The research hub will be housed in the Rosen College, and the online platform

will bring together government agencies, faculty, academic and industry researchers, healthcare and hospitality corporations, and other stakeholders who share an interest in enhancing our collective response to infectious disease outbreaks.

PROGRESS MADE BY THE INITIATIVE THUS FAR

Since its inception, the initiative has achieved significant milestones, including the successful recruitment of faculty members, the allocation of \$100,000 for seed awards, active engagement in the pursuit of substantial research grants, and the imminent launch of a dedicated website poised to serve as a central hub for information and collaboration.

MEASURING SUCCESS THROUGH RELEVANCE AND IMPACT

The initiative is working towards several positive outcomes, including the establishment of pathways for translating laboratory research outputs—such as new vaccines, personal protective equipment, and modeling data—to the appropriate stakeholders and supply chains. By doing so, these innovations can be readied for commercial use, positively impacting the lives of people in Central Florida. The reputation of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management in research further amplifies the initiative's impact on a global scale.



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Dr. Frank Badu-Baiden is an Assistant Professor at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. He holds a Ph.D. in Hotel and Tourism Management from the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at Hong Kong Polytechnic University, where he also earned his alumnus status. He possesses an M.Phil. degree in Tourism Management from the University of Cape Coast in Ghana. With extensive teaching experience across Asia and Africa and a designation as a Certified Hospitality Educator (CHE), Dr. Badu-Baiden has cultivated profound insights into the hospitality and tourism sectors. His diverse research interests include consumer (tourist) psychology, destination marketing, sustainability and gastronomy, and health and travel medicine, where he collaborates with a team of researchers in the infectious disease and community resilience cluster.

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CAN HUMOR HELP SELL A TOURIST DESTINATION ONLINE?



The authors used a scenario-based experimental design to explore the effects of humor on destination websites.

Destination marketers pack a lot into their websites, assuming potential visitors want detailed information. But perhaps they're missing a simple trick to attracting the attention of potential travelers and getting them to connect with what's on offer: a dash of humor. But humor is a double-edged sword; experimenting with it can be potentially damaging. However, research by Dr. Maksim Godovykh and Dr. Xiaoxiao Fu at UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management has shown that even making light of a crisis can help boost attitudes and intentions.

For most people considering a new holiday destination, the internet is the first port of call; only the fearless or foolish head off to the unknown without doing some background research. While a wealth of information now sits online, a dizzying array of competing websites awaits those doing even a simple search. How, then, can destination marketing companies help their products or those of their clients attract the attention of potential travelers and connect them with what's on offer? A tempting tool is using humor—it is, after all, a key component to addictive social media. However, humor is no laughing matter if you ignore its possible pitfalls, and destination marketers face an added challenge in using humor in website design.

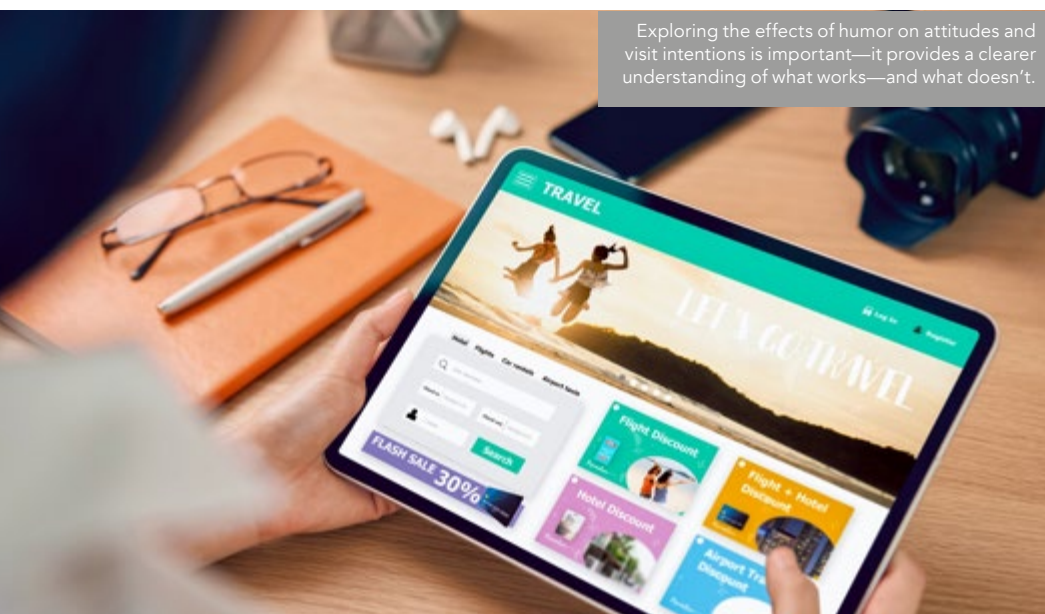
Two researchers from UCF Rosen College are providing some much-needed guidance.

It's fair to say that most people go on holiday to enjoy themselves, so there's some logic to linking humor with destination marketing. Humor sells, and in online marketing, it has multiple benefits. Firstly, it helps capture attention—crucial in a digital landscape where users are bombarded with information. It also breaks down perceptive barriers people can build against being sold to. Humorous content is more likely to be remembered—beneficial for brand recall.

In an age when sharing social media can give a marketing campaign exponential clout, humor commands significant currency



Humorous content is more likely to be remembered—beneficial for brand recall.



Exploring the effects of humor on attitudes and visit intentions is important—it provides a clearer understanding of what works—and what doesn't.

TOURISTS' BEHAVIOR IS INFLUENCED HEAVILY BY THE INFORMATION OBTAINED FROM DESTINATION WEBSITES, SO THERE'S A LOT AT STAKE, PERHAPS TOO MUCH TO EXPERIMENT WITH HUMOR.

because it boosts viral potential; link this with long-term trust, and it's possible to create a community around a brand. Beyond increasing sales and loyalty, humor can also be a valuable tool in mitigating negative public relations or customer service issues. However, this needs to be handled carefully to avoid appearing insensitive.

Humor, then, sounds like it should be a destination marketer's go-to tool. However, in the wrong hands or misapplied, any tool can cause damage, and humor is no exception. This is why their research into the effects of humor on attitudes and visit intentions is so important in providing a clearer understanding of what works and what doesn't.

FRAUGHT WITH CHALLENGES

Dr. Maskim Godovykh and Dr. Xiaoxiao Fu make a good team in this regard. Godovykh is an expert in tourism's economic, social, environmental, and psychological impacts; Fu's research focus includes place marketing and branding, consumer experience and well-being in tourism and hospitality. Working with Dr. Xi Yu Leung of the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at the University of North Texas, they explored the effects of humor on tourism destination websites. Because, nowadays, a traveler's experience of a new destination probably starts when they discover it online, the marketing component in the website design is vital.

However, 'selling' a destination online is already fraught with challenges. As Godovykh and colleagues point out, tourism products are unique due to their intangible, perishable, and experiential natures—characteristics that cannot be sampled beforehand. Furthermore, tourists' behavior is influenced heavily by the information obtained from destination websites, so there's a lot at stake, perhaps too much to experiment with humor.

The researchers also know that humor carries with it serious challenges for destination marketers. Using a cartoon to sell a product in a local newspaper is relatively straightforward. But when your website is reaching across the world, you need to be aware that humor varies widely across cultures, and what is funny in one culture may be offensive in another.

Humor is also open to misinterpretation, increasing the risk it will be inefficient at best; at worst, it could backfire and expose a brand to legal problems. Furthermore, erratic or overuse of humor to connect with a potential customer could make a marketing campaign seem inauthentic and dilute a brand. There's also the issue of timing and context. For example, using humor during a crisis or sensitive situation could be seen as insensitive and harm the destination's reputation. For Godovykh, Fu, and Leung, this last point provided an opportunity.

TAKING YOUR VITAMIN SEA

There's little to laugh about in death, so when the COVID-19 pandemic put a stranglehold on the global tourism industry, it seemed highly unlikely to be used to help sell holidays. In hypothesizing that websites with humorous content would generate better attitudes and

The study shows that even making light of a crisis can help boost attitudes and intentions.



THE RESEARCHERS ADDED AN EXTRA LAYER TO THEIR STUDY: TO SEE IF MAKING LIGHT OF COVID-19 WOULD WORK.

higher visit intentions than those without humor, the researchers added an extra layer to their study: to see if making light of COVID-19 would work.

They conducted an online experiment aimed at individuals from the U.S. with previous travel and destination website experiences who were considering either a future or near-future getaway. The data were collected in January 2021, at the height of the pandemic. There was a reason: they wanted COVID-19 to be a key component in a scenario-based experiment.

Using a website mock-up of an idyllic, tropical beach destination, the researchers randomly assigned participants to examine a different version of the website mock-up. There was one with a cartoon of a man in a swimming costume and the slogan 'Escape your everyday life—take your vitamin sea', one with the same cartoon and the slogan 'Escape COVID-19—take your vitamin sea', and one with no cartoon. In each case, there were two variations: one asking the participant to imagine they were traveling that same month,

and the other to imagine they were traveling the following summer. So, in total, there were six scenarios to test respondents' attitudes, visit intentions and, importantly, the perceived trustworthiness of the site.

To measure destination attitudes, the researchers asked respondents in the accompanying survey to evaluate statements like 'I think that this destination is appealing to me' and 'This destination matches my expectations'. To measure visit intentions, the researchers used statements like 'I would think about spending my holiday in this destination' and 'I would intend to visit this destination if I plan to travel in the near future'. To measure trustworthiness, they asked respondents to evaluate statements such as 'I believe this website is reliable' and 'My intuition tells me I can trust this website'.

Given the risks of using humor, this trust component was critical. The researchers were looking for possible mediating influences of humor on the perceived trustworthiness of the site. They also hypothesized that those

sites designed for near-future travel plans would generate better attitudes and higher visit intentions; the versions with humorous content would encourage better attitudes and higher visit intentions compared to those without humor; and those poking fun about escaping from COVID-19 would have a more positive impact on attitudes and intentions than unrelated humor. That was an intriguing call—remember: at the time, the media were carrying stories of those dying from the disease.

TIME TO RECONSIDER WEBSITE DESIGN

The researchers' insights into tourism consumer behavior meant they were essentially spot on with their hypotheses. Respondents planning a short-term getaway showed better attitudes and stronger intentions than those considering a trip sometime in the future. These findings are consistent with studies in psychology showing people tend to weigh the consequences of their decisions more heavily when making a near-future choice.

On the impact of humor, the results also showed that humor related to COVID-19 increased participants' intentions to visit the destination compared to unrelated humor or no humor at all, especially when they found a website trustworthy. The type of humor didn't affect participants' attitudes towards a destination. The study also found that participants more familiar with travel websites had higher intentions to visit the destination on the website that included COVID-19 humor. Overall, the study suggests that using humor related to current events—even a severe crisis like COVID-19—can positively influence peoples' intentions to visit a destination.

This study has given not only destination marketers cause to reconsider the issue of website design but also different services in hospitality and tourism. If all destination sites traditionally provide detailed information about attractions, accommodation facilities, and events on their websites, how can they differentiate? How can they reach across the online divide, grab and hold the attention of a potential customer, encourage them to like a destination on offer and increase the likelihood they will book a visit? Godovykh, Fu, and Leung have shown that providing special deals for people looking for a last-minute holiday can close a deal, but when it comes to connecting consumers with a tourism brand, making them smile can make all the difference.



RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The authors used a scenario-based experimental design to explore the effects of humor on destination websites.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Your research suggests using humor can help to sell a destination online, but you also acknowledge that humor should be used carefully; so, what is a line that should never be crossed?

/// In addition to its positive effects, there are several negative impacts associated with the use of humor in advertisements. Sometimes, people tend to focus on humor more than on the advertised product or service. Moreover, the effects of humor in advertising have been found to be complex, selective, and short-lived. Therefore, it is necessary to thoroughly evaluate the impact of humor on advertising effectiveness and pre-test each marketing strategy to avoid potential negative outcomes. It is also a good idea to segment propositions to customers based on their socio-demographic, personal, and travel characteristics. ///

Dr. Maksim Godovykh



Dr. Maksim Godovykh leads international research projects on the economic, social, environmental, and psychological impacts of tourism. His research results were published in premium academic journals, as well as disseminated in books, encyclopedias, industry magazines, and news media. He has developed several government programs and organized more than a hundred conferences and workshops.

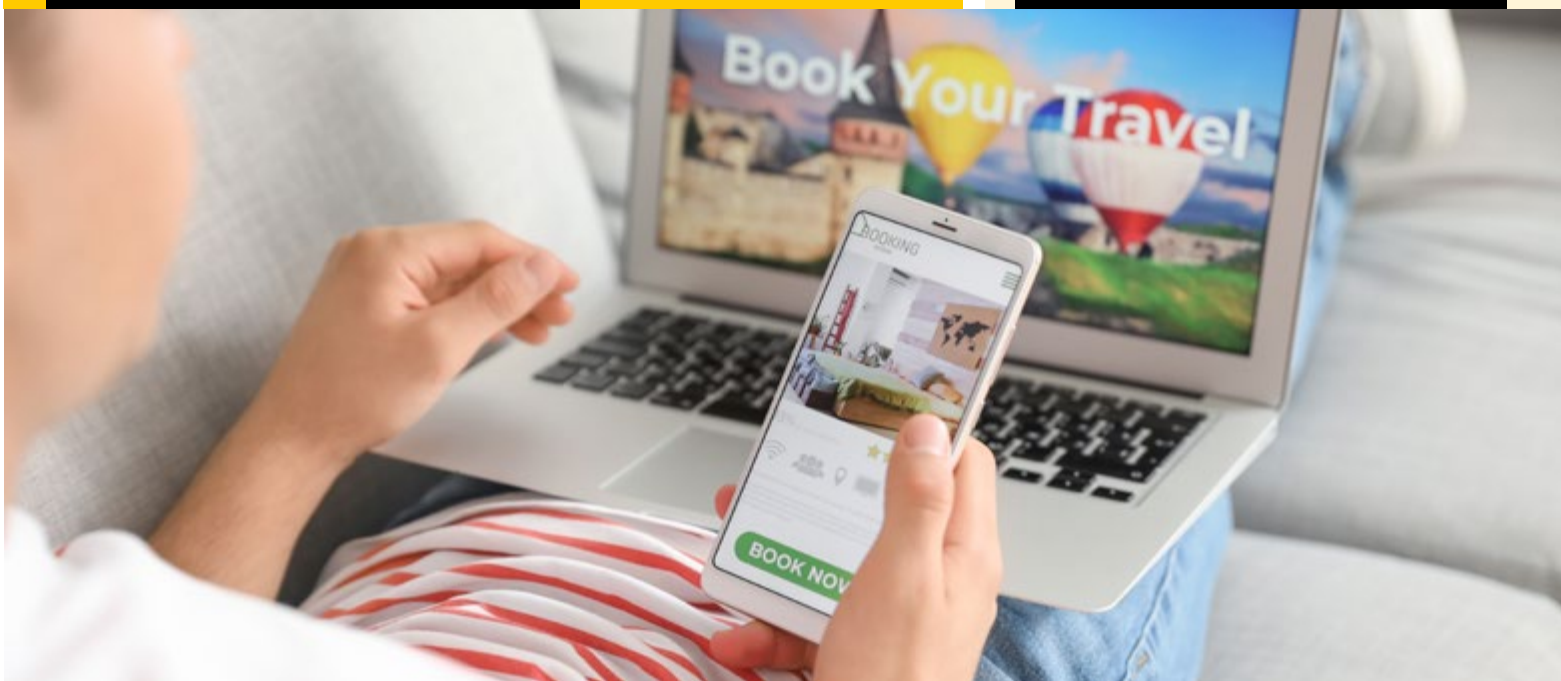
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The London 2012 Summer Olympics.

Rosen Research Focus | Michael Duignan

RETHINKING EVENTS OVER THIRTY YEARS OF RESEARCH

Events are often pitched as business opportunities for the tourism and hospitality sector, but look deeper, and a far more compelling narrative emerges. In examining thirty years of events-related research, Dr. Michael Duignan of UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management has uncovered a highly complex and emerging field of study with significant value for the sector. It is also attracting the eye of researchers from other disciplines looking for insights into why people are drawn to share experiences.

Humans are social animals; they are drawn together to share experiences. And when they do, there's a business opportunity for providing services. This is hospitality and tourism's very foundation, and it's why events that gather people, whether a street performance or the Super Bowl, are crucial areas for research. However, events are more than just a fortuitous conglomeration of potential customers and guests; they are complicated, dynamic entities—no two events are the same. For this reason, research into events has reached out to include other disciplines hoping to make sense of them. It's an area of particular interest to Dr. Michael

Duignan of UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. After examining over thirty years of events-related research, he has revealed why we should all take a closer look.

Duignan's research into events looks beyond their economic benefits to examine their social and cultural impacts. To this end, he has traveled the world studying how hosting major events, including the London 2012, Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games—and the preparations for the Paris 2024 and LA 2028 Games—as well as the Commonwealth Games and regional sports and cultural events changes the physical, social, and cultural nature of a place, sometimes irrevocably.

Understanding such changes is critical for tourism and hospitality research. When a city pitches to host a major event, it always dangles the carrots of revenue generation, job creation, and boosting tourism—music to the ears of the sector. It points to the possible indirect and long-term economic benefits:



Photo Credit: Agência Brasil | CC BY 3.0 BR, via Wikimedia Commons

2016 Summer Olympics opening ceremony, Rio.



Duignan examines how events-related research contributes to tourism studies.



No two events are the same.

the branding and business opportunities and multiplier effects, such as hotel staff spending at local shops. If the event is on the scale of the Olympic Games, there are added pitched benefits of infrastructure investments with legacy planning and the global media marketing of a destination's cultural capital. But decisions around event planning can also have unintended consequences, such as social and economic displacement, negative environmental impacts, and significant risks of crippling costs and over-tourism. No Olympic host city has ever escaped unscathed.

This confluence of complexity is why Duignan is part of a growing body of leading academics across the breadth of hospitality and tourism research who are combining their insights to understand events better. Writing in the *Annals of Tourism Research*, he has mapped this emerging field of study by tracing the development of events-related research in that journal and the *Annals of Tourism Research Empirical Insights*. In his analysis, several clear trends stand out.

NO TYPICAL EVENT

It's tempting to think of 'events' within the realm of tourism and hospitality in terms of large-scale experiences such as the Olympic Games, but in reality, the term's scope is far more complex and diverse. This is one of the things to emerge in Duignan's study. He says that if an 'event' is 'any occasion where two or more stakeholders meet for a purpose, whether planned or unplanned, and typically exist in geographically demarcated and temporally tractable settings,' it encompasses a dizzying array of permutations. He points to research into cycling competitions and voodoo shows as cases in point. Such diversity means the 'stakeholders' whose perspectives we should consider extend beyond governments and

destination marketing organizations to include indigenous communities and vulnerable and marginalized groups. Such considerations are especially the case for events in public spaces, such as urban squares, forests, parks, and village halls. For events in private places, such as hospital conference rooms, impacts can, to an extent, be mitigated.

Events are all temporal, but they can take minutes, hours, days or even weeks. Just as the nature of an event can be difficult to pin down, so too is the impact. A street fair can boost a town's sense of community; a major sporting tournament can be a powerful driver of an entire city's infrastructure and destination marketing strategy. Often, the

EVENTS ARE MORE THAN JUST A FORTUITOUS CONGLOMERATION OF POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS AND GUESTS; THEY ARE COMPLICATED, DYNAMIC ENTITIES.



impacts of staging events continue long after the event has concluded. Consequently, Duignan points to the emerging study of field configuring events—a new intellectual domain of management and organizational studies—increasingly recognizing and seeking to capture the longitudinal value of events for advancing industrial, geographical, and social fields.

THE EVOLUTION OF A FIELD

Something else that Duignan noticed about events-related research is how conceptualizing events changed; ‘evolved’ is probably a more accurate description. Initially, events-related research focused on economic impact analyses and what motivated people to visit an event and their levels of satisfaction. Such studies helped event organizers look at how to maximize returns. However, from about 2002, events-related research began to further explore the sociological significance of events and the social implications and impacts of staging them. It developed a richer

exponentially. As the scope of study into events expanded, drawing in researchers from different fields of study, tourism, and hospitality research was rewarded with a greater diversity of insight. It started embracing issues such as social memory and commemorative events, the contested meaning of place and associated conflicts between different representations. Paradoxically, as more and more researchers started exploring events to provide a better understanding of the concept, the more complex it became. However, one thing was evident: ‘events’ is an established field of analysis in its own right, contributing significantly to tourism and hospitality studies.

GROWING SCOPE OF INFLUENCE

By examining the events-related research in the two journals, Duignan could catalog the scope of its influence. Firstly, events-related research has provided valuable data on the economic benefits of hosting events, such as increased tourism, job creation, and revenue

and contributing to global understanding. Thirdly, events-related research has helped guide policy and planning, especially around sustainability and risk management, helping organizers manage the environmental impact of events and ensuring they are safe for those who are part of them.

Studies into events have also contributed to innovation and adaptation within the tourism and hospitality sector. They have explored how new technologies, such as virtual reality and mobile apps, can enhance an event experience and offer avenues for improvement and development. More recently, studies focused on understanding the impact of global events like the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism and events sector have provided guidelines for recovery and future resilience.

TOWARD A MORE THOROUGH UNDERSTANDING

Beyond the applications of such studies to the tourism and hospitality sector, there is a broader benefit to research and training organizations such as ours. As Duignan has shown, these studies have contributed to developing theories specific to tourism and hospitality. For example, theories around event leverage explain how destinations can maximize the benefits of hosting events and examine events beyond economic drivers—as temporally bound incubators and microcosms of society and social contexts. By evolving and incorporating methodologies and insights from other disciplines like sociology, anthropology, and environmental science, events-related research has enriched tourism and hospitality research overall.

Events that unite people, whether sporting, cultural, or centered around a tourism focal point, impact those who are part of it. In today’s age of social media, the tourism and hospitality sector relies on this—there’s little incentive to share something that doesn’t have meaning. Understanding what makes an event meaningful and successful must look beyond the business side of it. By examining events-related studies over the past thirty years, Duignan has not only provided a concise and fascinating synopsis of a rich, complex, and evolving field of research shaping the direction of the tourism and hospitality sector but encouraged us to, academically and operationally, take a deeper dive into it.

SOMETHING ELSE THAT DUIGNAN NOTICED ABOUT EVENTS-RELATED RESEARCH IS HOW CONCEPTUALIZING EVENTS CHANGED; ‘EVOLVED’ IS PROBABLY A MORE ACCURATE DESCRIPTION.

anthropological lens and a more critical eye—examining and encouraging debates around issues of authenticity, identity formation, and the impacts of events on everyday citizens regarding issues such as crime and how their cultures were represented in events.

Notably for Duignan, this shift was not a result of a vein of events-related research branching off; it emerged as the number of studies grew

for local businesses, helping justify investment in events and shaping economic policies. Secondly, studies have contributed significant social and cultural insights into events, such as how they can catalyze community engagement and social cohesion—particularly important for destination branding and creating a sense of place. Research has also explored how events can be platforms for cultural exchange and understanding, enriching the tourist experience

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Duignan examines how events-related research has increasingly contributed to tourism studies, and how it has evolved over the last thirty years.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

In your opinion, what areas of events-related research require deeper examination?

/// I think it is important to ask the question, *How they can transform individuals to be better and more productive citizens?*

Additionally, further examination of the longitudinal impact of hosting events on society and for local economies is required—we are but at the beginning of our understanding of event impact and legacy.

Finally, there is a need to investigate how they are increasingly permeating into new public spaces like parks, urban squares, residential districts, etc., all with consequences for those who live and work in areas affected. //

Dr. Michael Duignan



Mike is a tenured Associate Professor at UCF Rosen College. He previously held the position of Reader and Chair at the University of Surrey, and was the Director of the UK's Olympic Studies Centre. Mike is the Editor-in-Chief of *Event Management Journal* and Chair of the Event Management Conference.

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RETAINING STAFF – IS IT A MATTER OF INSTILLING PRIDE?



Hotels struggle to attract staff; you can partly blame the public perception of hotel jobs for that. But, why is it difficult to retain staff once they start? Perhaps an answer lies in whether they feel pride in what they do. Professors Murat Hancer and Suja Chaulagain at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management led a team of researchers to unpack the notion of pride among hotel staff in the United States and Vietnam. What they learned has significant importance for a sector that crosses cultures.

Few events in recent history have impacted the hospitality industry more than the COVID-19 pandemic. As hotels emptied and restaurants closed, staff found themselves without work. When the pandemic abated, and the industry tried to return to normal, it found itself struggling to re-employ those staff or

find others to fill their posts. There are reasons for that rooted in popular perceptions of the industry. The great 'reset' that accompanied the pandemic gave those within hospitality a reason to reevaluate the meaning of their work. Frustrating though that may be for employers, it presented an opportunity for researchers to examine a hitherto largely

unexplored component to reducing staff turnover: the impact of pride in one's work. A team from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management tapped into the sentiment of hotel employees in two countries with very different cultures about what their work means to them. What they discovered significantly impacts a global industry staffed by employees from diverse cultural backgrounds.

As an opportunity for employment, hotels have something of an image problem. Hotel jobs suffer the popular perception that they are largely low-skilled and low-paid, demanding long and irregular working hours that impact family life and come with limited promotional opportunities. As such, working in a hotel can



Hancer and Chaulagain unpack the notion of pride among hotel staff in the United States and Vietnam.

AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR EMPLOYMENT, HOTELS HAVE SOMETHING OF AN IMAGE PROBLEM.

CULTURALLY POLES APART

Culturally speaking, the United States and Vietnam are poles apart. The U.S., like many other Western countries, embraces individualism, a cultural value emphasizing the importance of individual goals, rights, and freedoms over collective or group interests. Vietnam, on the other hand, like other Asian countries, emphasizes collectivism—the importance of collective or group goals over individual interests. For the research team, a study that could tap into what work meant to hotel staff in each of the two countries would therefore provide a highly valuable cross-cultural understanding of the notion of pride and its possible role in encouraging people to enter the hospitality industry and, importantly, to stay.

Current empirical evidence within the hospitality industry indicates a correlation between the meaning of work (MOW) and employees' internal motives. That makes sense—if a job encourages a positive self-perception in a staff member, it's less likely they would consider leaving. However, that encourages us to question what makes a job meaningful. It may differ between cultures. Some cultures value notions of service to

others over personal progression; success is reflected in the satisfaction of those served. Other cultures may see personal growth as a measure of success, and work that promotes that is more meaningful. This variation is reflected in research on MOW across cultures, which shows that MOW dimensions can differ vastly. This presented a challenge for Professors Hancer and Chaulagain and their colleagues: what MOW dimension could they use for a study across two different cultures?

ESTABLISHING A MEANING OF WORK

Following a robust literature review, the researchers decided on a multidisciplinary construct of MOW. They identified four dimensions they could use in a cross-cultural survey: work centrality, entitlement norms, obligation norms, and work value. Work centrality refers to the extent to which work is considered a crucial part of an individual's life. Entitlement norms are employees' expectations about what they should receive from their organization, such as salary and benefits, but also respect and recognition. Obligation norms, on the other hand, refer to largely social beliefs or expectations about what employees owe to their organization.

be seen as purely functional—a way to earn a basic income, probably temporarily to fill a career gap—and not befitting significant pride. For industry professionals who have chosen a career in hospitality, this may seem incongruent and is perhaps why empirical research on pride within the industry is scarce, and assumptions of staff motivational programs risk missing their mark, especially where staff have conflicting values on the meaning of work. To fill this space, Rosen College's Professors Murat Hancer and Suja Chaulagain and their colleagues unpack the notion of pride among hotel staff in the United States and Vietnam to search for commonalities and any possible differences. The choice of the two countries was not random.

The study explored what motivates hotel staff.



For the researchers, work value had three components: economic orientation—the financial benefits gained from the job; interpersonal relation—the quality of relationships with colleagues and supervisors; and expressive orientation—how much fun, interest, or satisfaction the job provided. For this study, it was hypothesized workers should feel ‘pride’ in a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction about their work in line with the above constructs of ‘meaning’.

From July to September 2020, the researchers employed online self-administered surveys among hotel workers via the Prolific Academic platform in the United States and via several closed

PRIDE IN THE WORKPLACE

As Professors Hancer and Chaulagain and their co-authors hypothesized, the study found that hotel employees who viewed their jobs as crucial and believed they had certain rights and responsibilities were more likely to consider their work meaningful and take pride in it. Furthermore, in terms of work values, hotel employees found pride in their work if it was financially rewarding, if they derived satisfaction from it, and had good relationships at the workplace. Interestingly, these values were broadly consistent across the two test groups.

Where the differences were clear was on whether pride in their work translated to an intention to stay in it. The study showed only a

This is especially important to international hospitality brands with a presence across culturally diverse countries. But it is equally vital to hotels—and the broader hospitality sector—in individual countries where staff are drawn from diverse cultural backgrounds. It therefore underlines the understanding that human resource strategies must be tailored to fit the cultural context in which a hotel organization operates.

DRAWING INSPIRATION FROM OTHER SECTORS

This study suggests hoteliers should re-evaluate their human resource strategies. Given the public perception that hotel jobs are low-skilled and low-paid and demand long and irregular hours, it’s no surprise that hotels suffer high staff turnover. The researchers have shown that hoteliers can motivate employees to overcome their challenges at work and stay in the field by stimulating their job pride. They have also presented a concise framework for understanding the cross-cultural meaning of work. They recommend that hoteliers use the suggested MOW dimensions in personnel hiring and selection procedures and, after that, in the design of orientation, training interventions, and team-building exercises.

Furthermore, the researchers have shown that giving someone more money to do a job won’t necessarily make them feel prouder about doing it. Sometimes, that requires listening to their contributing ideas and concerns, providing training courses to enrich their job skills, offering them decision-making authority, and maintaining organizational transparency. Sometimes, all it may take is involving their input in the design of their uniforms.

Such changes within hospitality won’t be easy, but other sectors hold some guidance, and the researchers point to nurses and the military for inspiration for building pride within hotel staff for what they do.

The findings of this study provide valuable theoretical contributions regarding employees’ behavioral intentions from a multicultural perspective. But more than that, Professors Hancer and Chaulagain and their colleagues have significantly contributed to our understanding of what motivates hotel staff, and hopefully, by shifting an entire sector’s mindset, could change public opinion about careers in hospitality.

THIS STUDY SUGGESTS HOTELIERS SHOULD REEVALUATE THEIR HUMAN RESOURCE STRATEGIES.

Facebook groups designed explicitly for selected hotel staff in Vietnam—online crowdsourcing platforms for academic research are not common in Vietnam, whereas Facebook is widely used. In total, the researchers secured 455 qualified responses, spread relatively evenly across the two countries, with similar spreads in the samples in terms of gender, age, marital status, and education. There were some clear distinctions, such as around ethnicity—while respondents in the U.S. were diverse, all Vietnamese respondents were Asian. How they responded sent a clear message about what develops pride in the workplace and whether it influences decisions among hotel staff to remain in a job.

strong and statistically significant relationship between job pride and turnover intention among the U.S. respondents. In other words, the more pride American hotel employees felt in their jobs, the less likely they were to leave. The Vietnamese respondents may have shared the values of their U.S. counterparts of what makes a job meaningful, but whether they felt pride in it was not a critical factor in whether or not they would stay in it.

This finding is significant because it shows that cultural values and norms can influence work-related attitudes and behaviors. Specifically, it suggests that the effectiveness of strategies aimed at increasing job pride to reduce turnover may vary from one culture to another.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Murat Hancer, Dr. Suja Chaulagain, and colleagues explored whether employees' turnover intention was decreased by promoting their pride in jobs and how job pride was predicted by dimensions of the meaning of work.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How would you like to see this research developed further?

// The study presents a nuanced exploration of how cultural contexts influence work-related pride and employee turnover in the hospitality sector, focusing on the U.S. and Vietnam. Future research could aim to broaden the cultural scope by incorporating additional cultures, examining the influence of sub-cultures, and expanding the focus to other service sectors or specific roles within hospitality. Methodologically, integrating longitudinal data could offer a more comprehensive understanding. //

How would you like to see your findings used to generate impact for the industry?

// The hotel industry heavily relies on having many competent and qualified staff and there is an urgent need to retain and motivate employees to stay within their jobs. Our findings offer insight into employees' behavioral intention from a multicultural perspective, and this has important managerial implications for hoteliers in human resources management practices.

Since hotel jobs are characterized by low job satisfaction and a high turnover rate induced by low pay, irregular and long working hours, and high stress, we believe that by stimulating employees' job pride, hoteliers can motivate their employees to overcome their challenges at work and stay in the field. In this way, there is the potential to generate real impact for the industry. //

Dr. Murat Hancer



Dr. Murat Hancer is a Professor and Ph.D. Program Coordinator at the University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Specializing in hospitality IT, HR management, and organizational behavior, he is a prolific author with nearly 200 publications. Dr. Hancer also serves on editorial boards of leading journals and mentors upcoming researchers in hospitality management.

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Trivandi:

Creating spectacular and meaningful guest experiences

In an insightful interview with James Bulley OBE, CEO of Trivandi, Dr. Michael B. Duignan learns about Trivandi's 'One Team' approach and their aim to push the boundaries in event and venue delivery.

Borne out of the success of London 2012 Olympics, Trivandi was set up to share knowledge and expertise in leading the design, delivery, and operations of major events and high-profile venues. Since then, Trivandi has gone from strength to strength, delivering the world's biggest and most-complex mega projects. Their impressive portfolio includes 200 projects in 26 countries including Super Bowl 50 in San Francisco, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, Pan American Games, and The Commonwealth Games.

WHO IS TRIVANDI AND WHAT DO YOU DO AS CEO?

Trivandi was set up in 2013 by members of the senior leadership team of the London 2012 Olympic Organizing Committee, to share the knowledge of what it took to deliver the Games. Over the last 10 years, Trivandi has advised on and delivered more than 200 major event and venue projects across 26 countries. Trivandi has grown to 50 permanent staff

with four global offices in the UK, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar, as well as an 'Associate Network' of over 1,400 Subject Matter Experts.

We apply a unique 'One Team' approach where our strategic and commercial advisors, designers, project managers, venue and event managers, and sustainability specialists work side by side to drive projects to success, from concept to execution.

We have worked on every summer Olympic Games since London 2012, Expos in Dubai, Doha and Osaka, Super Bowl 50 in San Francisco, FIFA World Cup Qatar 2022, F1 Grand Prix in Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia, Eden Project UK and International, Aston Villa FC Stadium, the Pyramids of Giza, and multi-sport events such as the Pan American Games, Asian Games and Commonwealth Games.

My role as CEO is to drive forward our mission to continually improve the delivery and operation of events and venues, leave a

sustainable legacy, and train local people to do what we do.

Put simply, I see my job as devising and delivering Trivandi business strategy and inspiring our people and partners to push the boundaries in event and venue delivery, to make an impact in our industry.

At the moment, I am based in Dubai, to support our fast-growing teams in the region, while also overseeing our wider global business. The Middle East has become an epicenter for giga projects where you can design and deliver major events and venues at the most innovative and creative level, with unprecedented ambition and scale.

CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE ABOUT YOURSELF?

In my early years, I was passionate about sport and wanted to follow a career in sport. However, my parents had different ideas and preferred me to make a career in the business

world. I studied real estate and construction, becoming a chartered building surveyor. I started my career as a property consultant and worked for Drivers Jonas (which merged with Deloitte in 2010, becoming Deloitte Real Estate), where fortunately, I was able to combine my profession with my passion, by providing property and construction advice to the sport and leisure sectors in the UK and Europe. In 1998 I co-founded DJ Sport, a sector focused on sport and leisure business within Drivers Jonas. I was working for 40% of the clubs in the English Premier League helping them optimize their assets and delivering new stadia.

However, in October 2003, I landed my dream job when I was appointed as Director of Venues and Infrastructure for London's bid to host the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. When London won the bid in 2005, I was invited to continue in the same position for the Organizing Committee, where I led a department of over 1,100 employees and oversaw 35,000 Games-time staff to plan and operate the 120 sites and venues required for the Games. A key aspect of my brief was to transform a derelict part of East London into a world-class Olympic Park capable of hosting 10,500 athletes and nine million visitors, while leaving a lasting social, economic, sports, and infrastructure legacy for years to come.

After the Games finished, I had caught the bug for delivering major event and venue projects, leading me to form Trivandi with my fellow members of the London 2012 Venues and Infrastructure team, Paul May, and Jonathan Branson, and we're still going 10 years later!

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR CHALLENGES YOU FACE AS CEO?

Mega events like Olympic Games, FIFA World Cups, and Continental level Games have a major impact on the host city/country. They are national projects which require the attention of the country's leadership. As the CEO of Trivandi, I am usually required to brief senior ministers, and so get drawn into a lot of project work. This limits my time to focus on developing our business and delivering strategy. To manage this, we have headhunted the top people in the industry to lead our business units. Each business unit effectively runs their portfolio as a business with their own targets and profit and loss. They are



Trivandi: Creating spectacular and meaningful guest experiences.

responsible for winning work, building their teams, and setting and delivering strategy.

The other challenge is that we are resource constrained. By nature of our industry we require specialists in all fields: broadcast, ticketing, medical, venues, security etc., over 40 specialist service areas. These specialists may be required in Peru or Portugal, Doha or Delhi. You can't build a business of people with all the skills and that flexibility. To manage this, we have developed an Associate Network which gives us access to a pool of specialists from around the world, all of whom we have vetted and can quickly deploy to any project requiring any specialist event role.

their country's leadership, on the world stage. However, the media scrutiny that comes with these high-profile events has also shone a spotlight on repeated failings in major event planning and delivery.

Examples include this year's UEFA Champions League final in Paris where Liverpool fans struggled to get into the stadium, creating dangerous crowd control challenges; the recent Burning Man festival where people were held there due to the lack of a bad weather contingency plan; the start of this year's Rugby World Cup where thousands of ticket-holders missed the start of the England versus Argentina match in Marseille because

Major events have been seized upon by governments to spotlight their nation, and their country's leadership, on the world stage.

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE KEY CHALLENGES FACING MAJOR EVENTS?

I have been in the events industry for over 20 years and one thing that amazes me is that nothing has really changed in the way in which the industry plans and delivers major events.

Major events have been seized upon by governments to spotlight their nation, and

of bottlenecks outside the stadium; the Euro 2020 finals where fans stormed London's Wembley Stadium; or cast your mind back to the tragedy at Brixton Academy in London when two people lost their lives trying to get into a concert.

Why is this repeatedly happening? I can boil it down to three key challenges and problems within the events industry:



Trivandti take a 'One Team' approach, where specialists work side by side to drive projects to success, from concept to execution.

- There's no ISO standard for major event planning that guides and requires compliance of major event planners to meet certain standards and regulate the control of major event delivery.
- There is no industry body assessing professional competence of event planners, and there's no professional members association for event planners to set standards in compliance. If you think about other professions such as lawyers, doctors, solicitors, accountants, engineers, and architects, all require certain standards and professional levels of competence, continuous professional development (CPD) and ethics to practice, and all have member association bodies. There is nothing similar for the events industry.
- There is no industry-recognized certified training qualification for major event planners. While there are degree courses and similar for event management, it's important to understand that events like the Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, World Expos, etc., are highly complex events to plan and operate. The majority of people planning them don't have specific qualifications or training, there's no assessment of professional competence, and there's no effective industry-wide transfer of knowledge.

HOW CAN WE OVERCOME THESE CHALLENGES?

I believe there are three key things we can do to improve the events industry, and we need to do these now:

- Develop an international major event delivery standard. Not only should this provide guidance and recommendations to event planners, but there should be a quality assured certification process to ensure compliance with the standards through ongoing assessment of the planning and delivery of the event.
- Create a member association for the events industry. This should provide a professional assessment and certification of skills, experience, ethics, and professional conduct, along with lifelong CPD. This gives assurance that members have attained and maintained a certain level of competence to deliver major events.
- Create a major event training academic program. This could include a certified course for event professionals covering every stage of the event lifecycle. This could also enable research and innovation to review and thoroughly evaluate what was achieved at previous major events, as well as a critical transfer of knowledge

that goes from people to people, not just organization to organization.

WHAT WOULD BE YOUR FIVE TOP TIPS OR ADVICE FOR STUDENTS THINKING ABOUT WORKING IN THE MAJOR EVENTS INDUSTRY?

My daughter is interested in a career in major events and I have given her this advice:

Do your research on the events ecosystem:

There are many different types of events, from weddings to conferences and major sport events. There are many different event companies and job roles, from creative agencies, production agencies, major event planners and promoters. Discover what you are most interested in, speak to people in the industry; what lights a spark inside you?

Gain job experience: Seek opportunities for internships/work experience/volunteering at different events and different event companies/organisations and gain real life experience to know what it's actually like. Work across as many different functions (show production, spectator services, hospitality, venue management, operations etc.) as you can when you start out to gain an in-depth understanding of the different roles. Ask lots of questions!

Build your network: Meet as many people as possible and build your network in the industry. Get connected on professional networks like LinkedIn. Follow event companies, sponsors, and rights holders.

Find the right company culture for you: An organisation where you really enjoy being around its people, where you can set ambitious goals, and where your colleagues will do whatever they can to help you achieve them. How do you find this place? Search organizations you admire. Search for their values, read their social media posts. Is it about the people, talking passionately about what they do or a corporate entity with no personality? Does it convey a team ethos, one that supports growth? When you get an interview ask this question. 'If I wanted to do x or be y, what support will you give me to get there?' The way this question is answered will tell you a lot about the organisation.

Be prepared to work hard and roll up your sleeves: I've worked with high-profile CEOs who have got involved with moving barriers or furniture when needed. This is the mindset you need to succeed in this industry—it's all about getting the job done whatever it takes, being incredibly resourceful and putting in long shifts. And having fun!

WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE KEY AREAS FOR RESEARCH WITHIN THE EVENTS INDUSTRY?

I think that AI is a key area that is going to transform the events industry, as with all industries. The world of technology is moving so quickly now with AI that we're going to see some extraordinary new advances and changes in a very short space of time compared to the last 10 years. Trivandi has a research and innovation unit which is looking into how we can embrace AI and utilize it to improve and enhance the way we plan, operate, and consume events. This might include architectural design, project planning, crowd flow modeling, event presentation, guest experience, and overall event operations. Driving innovation will be critical to the industry to keep abreast of the speed of change that we will see in the next 10 years. It also is an opportunity to create time, budget and resource efficiencies and ensure that we are delivering highly sustainable outcomes and solutions.

Another key area is sustainability. While many event owners are now embracing sustainability, there is a lot more to be done. I expect to see innovative solutions both in event infrastructure and operations coming forward. I'm Chairman of solar solutions company Solivus Ltd. and, for example, we are pioneering new applications for flexible solar that can be used in innovative ways to reduce reliance on temporary event generators.

Solving problems, like re-use of materials for temporary exhibition stands and event structures, power generation, sustainable transport solutions and technology applications will see us move closer to achieving net zero events.

WHAT HAS BEEN YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH DR. MIKE DUIGNAN AND UCF ROSEN COLLEGE OF HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT?

I continually seek to collaborate and create partnerships with the best in the industry. Dr. Mike Duignan and I connected about two years ago. Together we have had some great conversations and discussed many of the

The Rosen College are doing excellent things in the events education space, particularly their new MS Event Leadership program. They are keen to always engage in dialogue and support the industry.

problems and opportunities I mention above alongside key areas where events education, particularly major events, must improve and develop in the future. He has also used me as a sounding board for developing his own university program content too!



Interview conducted by Dr. Michael B. Duignan, tenured Associate Professor at UCF Rosen College. He previously held the position of Reader and Chair at the University

of Surrey, and was the Director of the UK's Olympic Studies Centre. Mike is the Editor-in-Chief of *Event Management Journal* and Chair of the Event Management Conference.



James Bulley, OBE

Chief Executive Officer, Trivandi

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What we have agreed is that we need a more practical training program that balances practitioner insights and academic rigor to best prepare the next generation of major event organizers and leaders to manage events efficiently and with social responsibility in mind.

Together, universities and organizations like Trivandi can play a strong role to identify, map out, and articulate the key professional skills, knowledge and characteristics required to bring us closer to a more professionalised industry and develop new innovative programs that address the key contemporary needs of industry.

I encourage all those who work in the events and sports industry to reach out to university professors like Mike and world-leading centers like the Rosen College, who are doing excellent things in the events education space—particularly their new MS Event Leadership program—and who are always keen to engage in dialogue and support the industry.

ENGAGING HOTEL STAFF IN ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING INITIATIVE



Human trafficking is a serious global issue, within which the hospitality industry is a point of focus for sex trafficking. Despite increases in government- and corporate-mandated anti-human trafficking training, the level of hotel employee engagement with anti-human trafficking initiatives remains poorly researched. In a collaborative effort, researchers at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Associate Professor Tingting (Christina) Zhang and Associate Professor Diego Bufquin, have set about identifying the factors that influence employee engagement with anti-human trafficking initiatives in the hotel industry in order to establish a practical framework for implementing more effective measures.

More than 40 million people worldwide are victims of human trafficking, a form of modern slavery that involves the forced or coerced exploitation of individuals for labor and/or sexual purposes. To date, the main destination countries have done little to address the issue. Among the worst offenders, the U.S. is thought to include the most victims and survivors of human trafficking, with 22,326 identified in 2019 alone, followed by the Philippines, China, Mexico, and India.

The hospitality industry is a major contributor to human trafficking cases, particularly those related to prostitution and sexual exploitation. More than 10% of all sexual exploitation cases and 72% of all human trafficking for sexual exploitation occur in the hospitality industry. In recent years, the industry has

taken steps towards addressing the issue. Leading the vanguard, in 2017, Marriott instigated mandatory training on human trafficking awareness for all its employees. To date, 700,000 employees have been through the training program, which is offered in 17 languages. Subsequently, a number of other companies in the hotel, travel, and hospitality industry have followed suit. For example, in addition to staff training, Delta Airlines asks its frequent flyers to donate miles for the repatriation of trafficking survivors.

Despite this progress, academic research into the role of the hospitality industry in combating human trafficking is lacking. Most academic research in this field has focused on legal/ political frameworks and perspectives; relatively few studies have explored empirical evidence. A number of studies have focused on the design, implementation, and assessment of



The findings highlighted the potential of technology for improving employee engagement in anti-trafficking initiatives in the hospitality industry.



The study identified key factors that influence employee engagement with anti-human trafficking initiatives in the hotel industry.

THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASES, PARTICULARLY THOSE RELATED TO PROSTITUTION AND SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.

with their colleagues, set about identifying the factors that influence employee engagement with anti-human trafficking initiatives in the hotel industry. Based on their research, the team has established a practical framework for promoting employee engagement and implementing effective anti-human trafficking initiatives in the hospitality industry.

A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ANTI-TRAFFICKING ENGAGEMENT

Zhang, Bufquin, and colleagues focused their efforts on hotel employees in the United States, where they invited current hotel staff to participate in semi-structured interviews via telephone and/or face-to-face. Of 40 invitations issued, 70% (28 hotel staff) agreed to participate. The interviewees represented a broad cross-section of the industry, including those employed to work in the front desk (43%), housekeeping (28%), food & beverage (15%), and recreation (14%) departments. Some held management positions. The respondents represented both international chains and independent establishments. All participants reported having participated in anti-human trafficking training of some kind, which is now mandated in a number of U.S. states, including Florida, where many of the participants were based.

Based on the data collected during the interviews, the researchers identified five main themes (training, technology, peer support, organizational systems, and leadership), containing a total of 21 factors that control the level of engagement of hotel employees in anti-human-trafficking initiatives. Together, these themes and factors provide a practical framework for improving employee engagement in the hospitality industry.

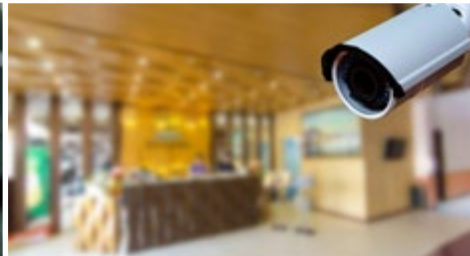
Training: Among the participants, 80% highlighted training as a critical factor in promoting hotel employee engagement. Within this theme, four critical factors emerged: (1) identifying suspicious behavior by customers; (2) the frequency of training, with more regular training (1–2 times per year) seen as important in maintaining knowledge and engagement; (3) a variety of training methods (e.g., online, in person) and perspectives (law enforcement, legal, human resources, etc.);

anti-trafficking initiatives. However, some doubt has been cast over the impartiality of such research, for which the methods are not always clear, and which is often funded by the industry itself. Moreover, there is little research on the practical steps that need to be taken by managers in hospitality venues to identify and prevent human trafficking, or on employee engagement with the issue. Even with mandatory training, which attempts to imbue staff with theoretical and technical knowledge of human trafficking, the level of actual engagement with the issue may remain low, and acting on that training is not guaranteed, giving license to traffickers to continue in their work.

To address this issue, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management researchers Associate Professor Tingting (Christina) Zhang and Associate Professor Diego Bufquin, along

The hospitality industry is a major contributor to human trafficking cases.





and (4) reducing the 'flexibility' of training enrolment, as training currently may or may not be given depending on departmental or management whims.

Technology: Under technology, participants highlighted six factors that are important in robust anti-trafficking initiatives in hotels. Participants reported the importance of mobile technologies that facilitate communication among employees, including: (1) messaging apps, email, and walkie talkies, which were noted as particularly important in emergency situations; and (2) collaboration applications such as video conferencing and group chat applications. (3) Security cameras were also seen as an existing resource that could be better utilized, perhaps by integrating them with emergency alert

trafficking, as social media platforms are often used by trafficking organizations to recruit new victims, in particular by targeting those whose social media outputs suggest low self-esteem or other vulnerabilities.

Peer support: In terms of support, the respondents highlighted the importance of both (1) practical support (e.g., equipment, security staff) and (2) emotional support (e.g., open and clear communication) in ensuring staff engagement with anti-trafficking measures. In a positive finding, most respondents felt that both types of support were offered by the management in their workplace.

Organizational system: The organizational system includes those procedures in places

allowed for employees to engage with each customer (rather than simply encouraging speed and efficiency), which would increase amount of time available to properly assess situations; and (4) clear procedures and chains of communication, such that employees are in no doubt as to what they must do if they suspect human trafficking.

Leadership: The final theme to emerge from the interview process was the importance of strong leadership, with particular factors including the need for management to: (1) promote constant awareness, for example by arranging regular, interactive training; (2) provide clear instructions and directions to employees; (3) be a presence that can offer guidance and feedback; and (4) empower subordinates to act appropriately when they suspect human trafficking, especially in critical or emergency situations, by facilitating an environment of open communication among staff at all levels.

THE WAY FORWARD

This study by Zhang, Bufquin, and colleagues offers significant contributions to the hospitality human trafficking literature. Future research will help to refine the framework and provide robust mechanisms for evaluating its effectiveness, for example, by assessing its generalizability to other areas of the hospitality industry (such as spas, restaurants). It will also be important to assess the applicability of the framework in other geographic regions, outside of the U.S. While the focus of this study was on sex trafficking, trafficking for labor exploitation is also a problem that must be addressed. Finally, approaches for the quantitative and/or mixed-method (qualitative and quantitative) assessment of anti-human-trafficking initiatives would add valuable additional insights.

The hospitality industry is extremely vulnerable to human trafficking crimes, and hotels are an ideal environment for traffickers. This study offers significant contributions to hoteliers and hospitality industry practitioners concerned with this issue. By taking a deeper dive into this issue, Zhang, Bufquin, and colleagues have identified the factors that motivate hotel employees to engage in anti-human-trafficking initiatives. Importantly, their study offers a new, practical resource for hoteliers to improve employee engagement with anti-human trafficking initiatives.

THE FRAMEWORK ESTABLISHED BY THE RESEARCH TEAM OFFERS A NEW, PRACTICAL RESOURCE FOR HOTELIERS TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT WITH ANTI-HUMAN TRAFFICKING INITIATIVES.

systems. Thirdly, participants highlighted the potential of, as yet underused, technologies to improve anti-trafficking success, including: (4) artificial intelligence and facial recognition; and (5) property management systems that allow staff to record critical information about customers. (6) Social media was highlighted as a means to track possible human

to address potential trafficking situations as they arise, including: (1) special signals and secret language (e.g., including certain drinks on the menu, which when ordered trigger a red flag); (2) responsiveness, primarily being given the ability to act quickly (e.g., strong chains of communication, access to relevant phone numbers); (3) increasing the time

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study identified key factors that influence employee engagement with anti-human trafficking initiatives in the hotel industry.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

The data in this study were collected in February 2020, immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. What impacts, if any, did the pandemic have (and continues to have) on human trafficking in the hotel industry?

COVID-19 has significantly affected human trafficking within the hotel industry. The surge in online activity during lockdowns led to a rise in online exploitation and recruitment. Traffickers took advantage of digital platforms to target and exploit individuals, with some ending up in trafficking situations in hotels. Additionally, the pandemic disrupted law enforcement and NGO initiatives focused on combating trafficking. With resources diverted to tackle the health crisis, efforts to monitor and intervene in trafficking cases in hotels might have been reduced.

You offer a practical framework to promote employee engagement and effective anti-human trafficking initiatives in the hospitality industry. To tackle this issue, what do you think are the next steps for implementing this framework?

From our qualitative research, it's evident that technologies, particularly mobile technologies, play a pivotal role in combating human trafficking. They also aid in mobilizing various stakeholders to collaborate in these efforts. Building on this framework, the focus should shift towards leveraging technology to innovate prevention strategies against human trafficking within the hotel industry. Ultimately, this study aims to outline an optimized co-created value network that enhances hotel employees' engagement in counter-human trafficking initiatives, facilitated by diverse mobile technology solutions.

Dr. Tingting Zhang



Dr. Zhang's research addresses human trafficking within hospitality. Her work has resulted in influential publications and significant grant funding. Her notable research impact boasts an i10-index of 45, h-index of 30, and over 5,000 citations.

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Dr. Diego Bufquin



Dr. Bufquin has a multicultural background that has led him to live in six countries and work at several hotels and restaurants in France, Spain, and Brazil. His research agenda focuses on hotel and restaurant management, specifically in the areas of consumer and organizational behavior.

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A HOSPITALITY-INSPIRED APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Patient experience is the individual's perception of how a healthcare institution treats them on their journey through illness or injury. Research shows that patient-centered care not only improves the quality of healthcare services, but also the patient's well-being and health outcomes, and this has resulted in an increased focus on patient experience. Despite its established importance, accurate measurement of patient experience remains a challenge. Applying their experience and knowledge of the hospitality industry, Dr. Maksim Godovykh and Dr. Abraham Pizam at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management are developing a broader and more scientific approach to measuring patient experience.

Patient experience is an important component of healthcare, and an increased focus on patient experience is part of a move towards patient-centered care.

In essence, the patient experience describes what receiving healthcare feels like for the patient, as well as the patient's family or carers. It is the complex combination of factors that can include the individual's interactions and communication with their healthcare providers, but also the non-clinical staff's responsiveness and politeness, the quality of evening meals, the cleanliness and environment of waiting areas and patient rooms, and any other services available within the healthcare institution.

In recent decades, patient experience has been recognized as an indicator of high-quality care alongside the provision of clinical excellence and patient safety. This has made it a key element in modern healthcare performance, with healthcare providers aiming to raise the standard of care by providing a more holistic patient experience. To achieve this, it is important to evaluate and measure patient experience using a number of metrics.

WHY PATIENT EXPERIENCE MATTERS

A positive patient experience increases the levels of patient and family satisfaction, improves the perceived quality of healthcare services, and therefore creates a relationship of trust and loyalty between the healthcare institution and the patient. However, in addition to improving the environment and increasing the status and prestige of healthcare institutions, a great patient experience has more importantly been shown to improve patient safety, patient well-being, and treatment outcomes. Several recent studies support this by demonstrating that hotel-inspired facilities and services increase the patient's perceived feeling of well-being. Additionally, compassionate care, empathetic interactions, and even acts of hospitality have been shown to have positive effects on patient well-being and treatment outcomes. Improved health outcomes will eventually also lead to shorter hospital stays and reduced readmissions.

This connection can often be explained directly, such as in the case of the facility cleanliness ensuring fewer hospital infections, but it could also be supported by the fact that a less anxious patient is potentially more receptive to certain aspects of healthcare.



Godovykh and Pizam are developing a broader and more scientific approach to measuring patient experience.



Patient experience also affects the connection between patients and staff. Clinical and non-clinical staff that can offer their patients a positive experience have a higher morale and job satisfaction. Consequently, this helps them to provide better services which, in turn, further improves patients' satisfaction. Positive patient



experience can also make patients feel more empowered and help them play a more active role in their own healthcare.

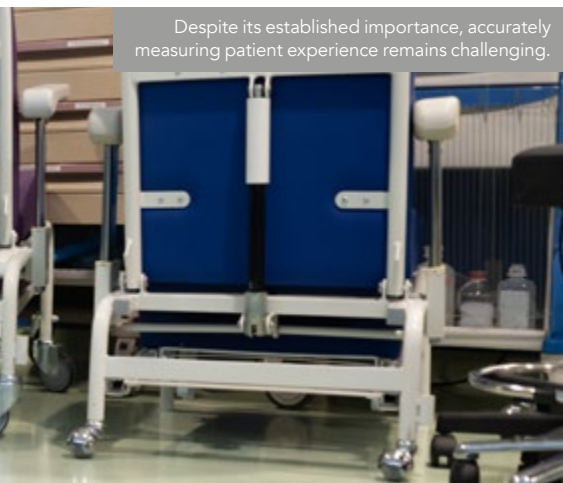
A HOSPITALITY-INSPIRED PHILOSOPHY

This paradigm shift towards patient-centered care has resulted in a shift towards improving patient experience—making changes that reduce waiting times, improve communication with healthcare staff, and offer options of digitalized services. Recent studies show that patient experience within the healthcare sector can be significantly improved by applying principles and practices borrowed from the hospitality industry. These practices—which have been successfully used to deliver high-quality guest experiences in the hospitality industry for decades—offer a valuable bridge between healthcare and hospitality. This hospitality-inspired philosophy has led to changes in healthcare institutions, including those inspired by the customer-relationships model, such as improved booking interactions, increased courtesy of staff, and the addition of flexible services and luxurious experience options to the hospital stay. Important changes also inspired by hospitality include improving the workplace climate and upgrading the architectural and esthetic design of the facilities.

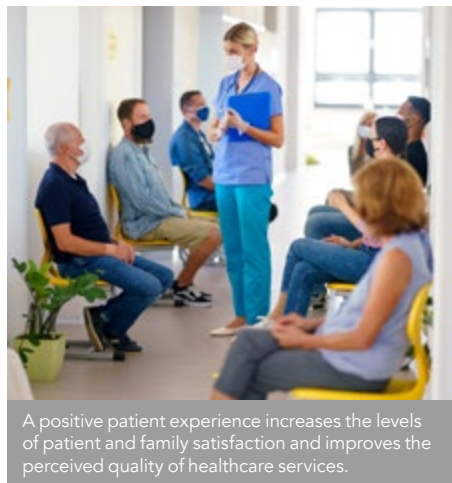
To ensure that patient experience is fully understood and open to improvement, it must be accurately evaluated and measured. Dr. Maksim Godovykh and Dr. Abraham Pizam at UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management have reviewed the potential approaches to measuring patient experience in healthcare and call for bridging between hospitality and healthcare. Their aim was to investigate whether a more comprehensive approach to measuring patient experience could yield a more accurate assessment.

EVALUATING THE PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Despite the recent positive changes in healthcare, traditional methods for measuring patient experience are considered subjective and inaccurate. Common approaches for understanding the patient's perspective and evaluating patient experience include patient-reported experience measures such as patient satisfaction questionnaires, online surveys, reviews and ratings on social media, in-depth interviews, and direct communication with patients and their families. However, patient-reported experience measures

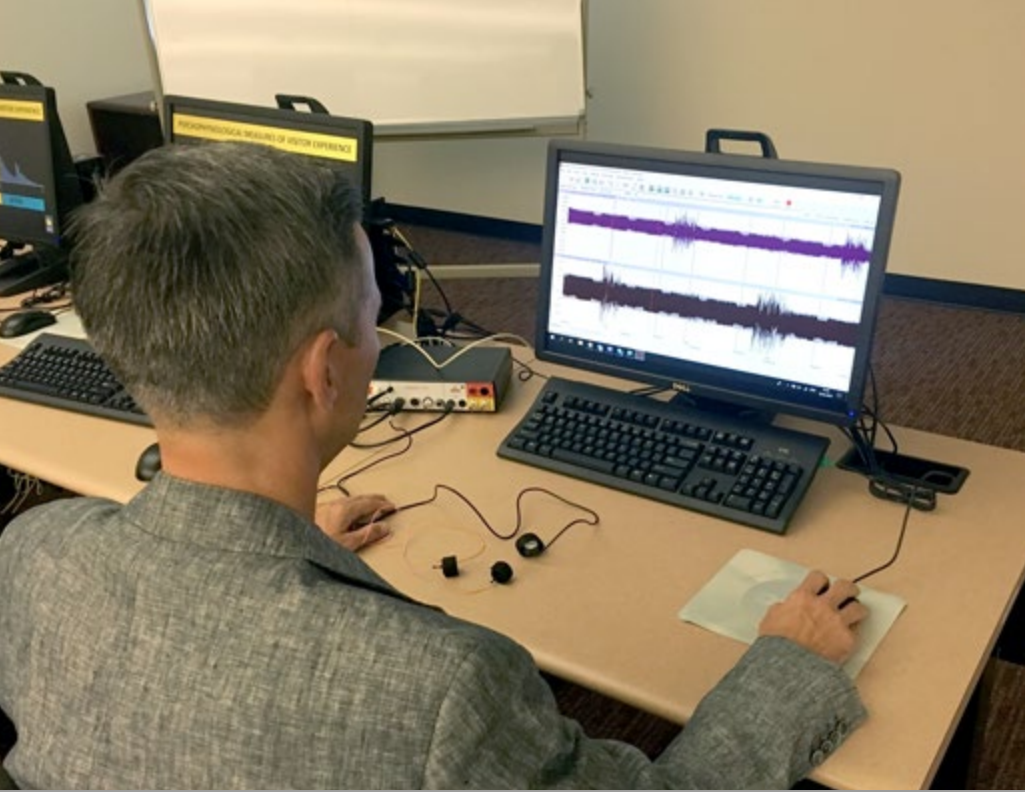


Despite its established importance, accurately measuring patient experience remains challenging.



A positive patient experience increases the levels of patient and family satisfaction and improves the perceived quality of healthcare services.

PATIENT EXPERIENCE CAN BE SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED BY APPLYING PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES BORROWED FROM THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY.



Psychophysiological techniques can provide a broader understanding of patient experience.

A COMBINATION OF PATIENT-REPORTED MEASURES AND A NUMBER OF THE SUBJECTIVE OUTCOME METRICS OFFER A BROADER UNDERSTANDING OF PATIENT EXPERIENCE IN HEALTHCARE.

have limitations, primarily because they rely on factors such as social desirability, prior knowledge, the patient's mood at the time of responding to questions, and subjective interpretations of the patient's health status. These measures may also reflect the satisfaction of the patient's immediate needs rather than the actual outcomes.

Patient experience is subjective and dynamic.



Patient experience is subjective and dynamic, which means it can change over time and is affected by a number of factors. That is why Godovykh and Pizam believe that the only way to accurately assess it is to employ a combination of patients' self-reported evaluations and several specialised metrics. These metrics include the longitudinal experience sampling method, a test that allows for a long-term assessment of the healthcare experience by asking patients to answer questions and share their views at scattered time points after their engagement with the healthcare institution starts. In addition, psycho-physiological techniques can also achieve a broader understanding of patient experience. These are scientific tests that help study the interactions between mental or emotional reactions and the body's functions, such as heart and nerve function. More specifically, they might include measuring galvanic skin response, heart rate and its variability, blood pressure, muscle activity, and changes in the size of the eye

pupil, yielding further information on the intensity of positive and negative patient experiences. Additionally, analyzing brain activity with functional MRI (fMRI) scans can also be effective in capturing patients' emotions and experiences. All of these methods can be used in a complementary fashion to capture different aspects of the patient experience and help overcome any biases related to self-reported approaches. Other useful tools for measuring the deeper patient experience include qualitative approaches such as ethnography—the study of patients' experiences within a specific cultural setting, and the guided tour approach—an interactive method of learning about the patient's experience during which they have to lead researchers through the hospital environment and describe how they are feeling while doing so.

The latest advances in information and communication technology, such as language processing and machine learning tools, open up the way for creating new tools for measuring patient experience. These tools are used to analyze patients' comments and reviews on social media and other online interfaces during the different phases of their engagement with the healthcare institution, providing more objective information on their experience.

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH

According to Godovykh and Pizam, a combination of patient-reported measures as well as the more subjective outcome metrics offer a broader understanding of patient experience in the healthcare sector. This strategy leaves less room for inaccuracies and biases, since it assesses the complex interactions between the patient and the institution on multiple levels.

The reliability of such strategies can be further evaluated in future studies that will incorporate patient surveys, interviews, experiments, and online analytics to help study the patient's interactions with the healthcare institution on multiple levels, as well as in different settings defined by factors such as the patient's age, gender, personality traits, and cultural background. In the future, healthcare providers could implement these strategies to more accurately measure patient experience and make any changes required to improve the facilities, quality of care and, importantly, treatment outcomes.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Taking a hospitality-inspired philosophy, Godovykh and Pizam set out to identify evidence-based methods and metrics to yield a more accurate evaluation of patient experience.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Might it be possible to build a standardized toolkit to measure patient experience in the near future? If so, what steps are required to achieve this?

It is important to bridge hospitality and healthcare by incorporating the principles and practices of hospitality culture into healthcare services. Patient experience should be continuously measured—not only through retrospective patient satisfaction surveys but also continuously before, during, and after the care process. Experimental design can help us understand the real impact of new practices, as experiments are the only way to explore cause-and-effect relationships between innovations and patient experiences. A digital platform can be designed to evaluate the dynamic and instantaneous nature of patient experience, including patients' perceptions, emotions, interactions, and health outcome metrics. The specific techniques applied to each context will depend on the desired outcomes, such as patient satisfaction, health status, or overall well-being.

How would you like to see your findings used to generate positive impact for patient experience in the healthcare setting?

It will be great to see nationwide and international evaluations of patient experience and their impacts on patients' and providers' outcomes, as well as the application of the principles of hospitality culture in all healthcare services.

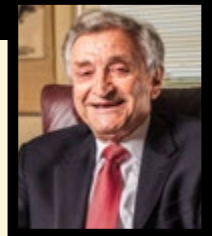
Dr. Maksim Godovykh



Dr. Maksim Godovykh leads international research projects on the economic, social, environmental, and psychological impacts of tourism. He also focuses on developing new methods and technologies to measure customer experience, combining psychophysiological techniques, self-reported surveys, online testing tools, social media analytics, and other metrics. His research results were published in premium academic journals, as well as disseminated in books, encyclopedias, industry magazines, and news media. He has developed several government programs and organized more than a hundred conferences and workshops.

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PATIENT
EXPERIENCE

A CLOSER LOOK AT VISITORS' IMMERSION IN CHINA'S THEME PARKS

Engaging life experiences can become deeply entrenched in the human memory, facilitating mind associations, stimulating the imagination, and inspiring rich storytelling. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Associate Professor Xiaoxiao Fu and Assistant Professor Carissa Baker, along with their co-authors, recently collected the subjective accounts of 30 people who had visited renowned theme parks in China. By analyzing these first-person tales, the researchers were then able to pin-point patterns and processes that characterized the respondents' immersion in experiences at the Chinese theme parks.

Storytelling, the sharing of stories and narration of events to others, is a long-standing human practice that facilitates the passing down of knowledge from generation to generation, cultural dissemination, and personal growth. Through storytelling, humans can learn to make sense of the world around them, while also preserving their culture, sense of identity, and personal histories.

Storytelling can also be a valuable resource for research in the field of tourism and travel, as the first-person experiences of travelers can be transformative and highly nuanced. When traveling, people often immerse themselves in the places they are visiting, with this 'immersion' leading to powerful and memorable experiences. Drs. Xiaoxiao Fu and Carissa Baker at UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management recently carried out a study exploring the immersion of visitors in Chinese theme parks.

BLOOMING OF THE CHINESE THEME PARK INDUSTRY

Theme parks, such as Disney World and Universal Studios, are very popular tourist destinations, receiving millions of visitors every year. The vast majority of globally renowned theme parks are scattered across the United States and Europe. However,

the Chinese theme park industry has seen recent exponential growth, with the country now counting over 100 major parks that are either operating, or under construction. Due to various socioeconomic factors, including the growth of China's middle class, the theme park industry in China is expected to soon become the largest in the world.

Given its recent onset and expansion, studies exploring the development of China's theme park market are of key importance. Fu, Baker, and their co-authors set out to explore the intricacies of this emerging sector, particularly focusing on the immersive experiences of tourists visiting Chinese theme parks.

PARKS CENTRED ON CHINESE CULTURE

In China, most theme parks are centred around culturally relevant stories, myths, and legends. For instance, at Song Dynasty Town visitors can experience epic stage shows evoking stories that are a crucial part of Chinese heritage, while Sunac and Fantawild parks feature rides and shows closely tied to regional Chinese stories. In contrast to Western theme parks, which are often linked to movies and other intellectual property, Chinese theme parks are more prominently centred around Chinese culture itself. While some intellectual properties can be featured as part of specific shows or rides,

they are rarely the central theme of Chinese amusement parks.

So far, studies focusing storytelling in theme parks have been scarce, and existing literature rarely gathered the direct experiences of visitors. Fu, Baker, and their co-authors hoped to address this gap in the literature, unveiling patterns in how theme park visitors immerse themselves in their underlying cultural narratives.

COLLECTING THE STORIES OF VISITORS

To gain insight about how Chinese theme parks immerse visitors in their underlying narratives, the researchers interviewed 30 adults who had visited at least one of China's culturally themed parks. Their interviews were conducted in Chinese over a period of five months, spanning from December 2020 to April 2021.

As the participants were located in different parts of China, 11 were interviewed in



The first of its kind, this study investigates visitors' immersion through storytelling experiences in Chinese domestic theme parks.



Immersion was shown to make a theme park visitor's experiences meaningful and memorable.

person, while the remaining 19 were contacted via a popular video-conference platform. Each of the interviews was recorded and later transcribed for further analysis.

The most prominent theme parks visited by respondents included Fantawild, Song Dynasty Town, Qingming Riverside Landscape Garden, and Sunac Land. During interviews, participants were asked open-ended, non-leading, and general questions about their subjective experiences with storytelling while visiting these parks, without directly touching on the topic of immersion.

A WIDE RANGE OF EXPERIENCES

The first-person accounts collected by Fu, Baker, and co-authors touched on several aspects of theme park storytelling. Interviewees remembered experiencing a variety of stories inside the parks, which were rooted in different themes or 'genres', including romantic, historical, mythical, and fairy-tales. Stories could be conveyed through a variety of attractions, including stage shows or performances, horror/thrill rides, and suggestive environments designed to be explored on foot. The researchers found that some visitors were drawn to stories that they had already encountered

in the past, while others preferred to be surprised by unfamiliar narratives.

Although the interviewees did not always feel immersed in the stories presented in theme parks, reports of instances when they did appeared to follow a similar pattern. By analyzing accounts of immersion during particular rides, shows, or walk-through attractions, the researchers were able to identify four primary dimensions or stages of immersion in Chinese theme park experiences.

THE DIFFERENT DIMENSIONS OF IMMERSION

The first dimension uncovered by the researchers, named 'spatial-temporal immersion', entails a sense of presence and engagement with the surrounding environment. This could be elicited by movie-like settings, the realistic recreation of historical settings, and other scenographic elements.

WHEN TRAVELING, PEOPLE OFTEN IMMERSE THEMSELVES IN THE PLACES THEY ARE VISITING, WITH THIS 'IMMERSION' LEADING TO POWERFUL AND MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES.

Immersion is a meaning-making process that encourages those visiting theme parks to make sense of what they experienced and treasure the most salient moments of their visit.



By understanding the importance of sensory engagement, cultural integration, and social interactions, theme park operators can create more captivating and memorable experiences for visitors.



The second dimension is closely linked to sensory experiences. This dimension is unlocked via striking visual effects, such as changes in lighting, as well as auditory stimuli, which could include effective musical choices, recognizable soundtracks, and terrorizing or evocative sounds, for example. These sensory elements can be further enhanced using holographic 3D and 5D projections, or other technology-fueled special effects.

The next stage of immersion incorporates conceptual and imaginative elements, encouraging visitors to mentally engage with a narrated story. Visitor accounts of conceptual-imaginative immersion mentioned that they had lost track of time, felt detached from reality or had forgotten where they were—they were so enraptured with the story. This dimension of immersion could be facilitated by several factors, including skilful presentations of both old and unfamiliar stories, convincing acting, and moments in which visitors could interact with a given story.

The fourth and final dimension identified by Fu, Baker, and co-authors is what they refer

to as emotional immersion. This occurs when visitors feel emotionally touched by a narrative, feeling overjoyed, shedding a tear, or even identifying themselves with the characters. Whether via the convincing performance of a tumultuous romantic story or the display of other forms of human suffering that elicited feelings of empathy, this dimension of

THE RESEARCHERS IDENTIFIED FOUR PRIMARY DIMENSIONS OR STAGES OF IMMERSION IN CHINESE THEME PARK EXPERIENCES.

immersion was shown to make a theme park visitor's experiences particularly meaningful and memorable.

The researchers also tried to better understand instances in which visitors had not felt immersed. They found that many study participants reported feeling immersed physically or via the senses during theme park attractions, but not mentally or emotionally.

The most commonly reported factors lowering engagement included a lack of personal interest in a story, a perceived lack of authenticity, little or no interactive elements, a disconnection between stories presented as part of the same ride or performance, a general lack of story, too much information presented at once, or immature characters that they could not identify with.

A FRAMEWORK SUMMARIZING THEME PARK IMMERSION

Building on their analyses, the researchers derived a new conceptual framework that outlines elements of storytelling-based immersive experiences in theme parks. This framework describes the process through which theme park visitors become immersed in specific attractions, delineating the different dimensions of immersion and exploring their coexistence.

Fu, Baker, and colleagues suggest that these stages of immersion do not necessarily occur in a linear or ordered sequence. In fact, some of them might not be experienced at all. Their framework depicts immersion as a meaning-making process that encourages those visiting theme parks to make sense of what they experience and treasure the most salient moments of their visit. While spatio-temporal immersion is the most immediate form of immersion, the researchers suggest that it might not necessarily be the most incisive, as emotional and conceptual-imaginative immersion appeared to be most closely associated with participants' most positive recollections.

The recent work by Fu, Baker, and co-authors gathered invaluable insight about factors that can contribute to making theme park experiences desirable, unforgettable, and deeply enchanting. Their conceptual framework and analysis of real-world visitor accounts could soon serve as a guide for the creation of new powerful theme park attractions likely to attract a vast number of tourists.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The first of its kind, this study investigates visitors' immersion through storytelling experiences in Chinese domestic theme parks.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What do you feel are the most striking patterns you observed in how visitors recounted immersing themselves in Chinese theme parks?

“ In our research, we observed several striking patterns in how visitors recounted immersing themselves in Chinese theme parks. One notable pattern was the significant emphasis on sensory experiences. Visitors often described how they were enveloped in a multisensory world, where visual, auditory, and tactile elements played a crucial role in creating a sense of immersion. This suggests that theme parks in China excel at creating immersive environments that stimulate multiple senses simultaneously. Additionally, we found a recurring theme of cultural and historical immersion. Many visitors expressed a deep appreciation for theme parks that incorporated elements of Chinese culture and history, allowing them to connect with their heritage or learn more about it. Finally, the social aspect of immersion was also prominent. Visitors frequently recounted how their experiences were enriched when shared with family and friends, highlighting the importance of social interactions in the immersive theme park experience. ”

Your study is unique in that it investigated visitors' immersion through storytelling experiences in these theme parks. How would you like to see your findings used to generate impact for the industry?

“ Our study's unique focus offers valuable insights for the industry. We hope to see these findings used to generate impact in several ways. Firstly, theme park operators can leverage our research to enhance the design and storytelling elements within their parks. By understanding the importance of sensory engagement, cultural integration, and social interactions, they can create more captivating and memorable experiences for visitors. Secondly, our findings can inform marketing and communication strategies, helping parks to better promote their immersive offerings and attract a wider audience. Furthermore, the research could be a catalyst for collaboration between theme park developers and cultural organizations to create more educational and culturally enriching experiences. Ultimately, we envision that our findings will contribute to the growth and competitiveness of the theme park industry in China, offering visitors even more engaging and immersive adventures. ”

Dr. Xiaoxiao Fu



Dr. Xiaoxiao Fu is an Associate Professor at Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida. Dr. Fu's research expertise is consumptive experience in tourism and hospitality, addressing how destinations and firms improve consumer experience. As an award-winning scholar, Dr. Fu has published many articles in top-tier journals.

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International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management communicates the latest developments and thinking on the management of hospitality and tourism businesses worldwide. emeraldgrouppublishing.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=ijchm

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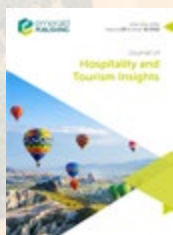
Journal of Destination Marketing & Management seeks to develop a theoretical understanding of destination marketing and management by harnessing knowledge drawn from the full breadth of disciplinary approaches to the study of destinations. www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-destination-marketing-and-management

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Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights aims to enhance the ongoing conversation among hospitality and tourism practitioners, academics, and professionals. emeraldgroupublishing.com/products/journals/journals.htm?id=jhti

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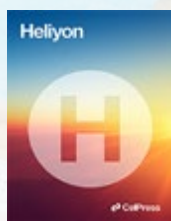
Event Management is an interdisciplinary journal examining the economics and social implications of events and festivals on the places, people, and communities that host them. cognizantcommunication.com/publication/event-management

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DICK POPE SR. INSTITUTE FOR TOURISM STUDIES



The Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies is based at the University of Central Florida.

In 1979, the University of Central Florida established the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies (DPI), after receiving \$25,000 from the Florida Public Relations Association (FPRA), Orange Blossom Chapter. The name honors the late Dick Pope Sr., the former owner of Cypress Gardens, one of Florida's first modern-day attractions, and the first commercial tourist entrepreneur in Florida.

The Institute was established for the purpose of (1) conducting proprietary and public domain research, (2) promulgating information to the public at large about the contributions of the hospitality and tourism industry, especially along economic, sociological, environmental, and quality-of-life dimensions, and (3) carrying out credit and non-credit educational activities.

Since 2020, DPI has secured over \$2 million in contracts and grants for research purposes. Its extensive client list includes:

- categorical sampling*
- destination management organizations*
- convention and visitor bureaus*
- hotels*
- hospitals*
- vacation homes*
- restaurants*
- theme parks*

DPI has also played a significant role in facilitating over \$4 million in non-credit educational programs with international partners. UCF's Rosen College doctoral students are extraordinarily essential to the Institute's ability to meet its objectives and its commitments. In addition, contracts and grants funded through DPI have been an invaluable source of external funds to support graduate assistantships for the doctoral students.

APPLIED INNOVATIVE RESEARCH

The Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies is the intelligent choice for private and public domain hospitality research, both domestically and abroad. We have conducted research for organizations in countries as widespread as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Ecuador, Aruba, and South Korea.

IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TOURISM

We are dedicated to increasing the benefits of tourism through research, public awareness, and education. We invite you to visit the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies digital collection to access our portfolio of research, publications, and white paper series. You may access the digital collection via this link: stars.library.ucf.edu/dickpopeinstitute.



Doctoral students from UCF's Rosen College contribute to the research at DPI.



Rosen College of Hospitality Management is among the top five hospitality and tourism colleges in the world.

In 1983, the Institute's advisory board successfully lobbied the Florida University System's Board of Regents and created the Hospitality Management undergraduate degree program at UCF. Its successor, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, is among the top five hospitality and tourism colleges in the world with six undergraduate degrees, four master's programs, and a Ph.D. program in hospitality management.

LESSONS FROM HOSPITALITY—TOWARDS A HYBRID MODEL OF SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES



Old age gets most of us, and how we spend it should be meaningful. The hospitality sector could play a vital role in this regard. Senior living communities are big business in the U.S., but they face demands from residents, and the family and friends who visit them, for more than the traditional focus on healthcare. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management researchers, Dr. YunYing Zhong, Dr. Tingting Zhang, and their co-author understand the connection between the senior living community and hospitality sectors; their research is giving impetus to a hybrid model that could benefit both.

Aging is inescapable, and old age awaits most of us. How we spend our so-called 'golden years' is important, not only to ourselves but our friends and family. In some countries, older people remain with their family until they pass on, but in other, mainly developed countries, an entire sector exists to care for them. Central to this sector are senior living communities—residential facilities designed to cater to the needs of older adults, particularly those who may require assistance with daily activities, healthcare, and social engagement.

In the United States, such senior living communities are big business. However, the

business is changing, mainly driven by the demands of those with a resigned eye that their life's journey is heading towards such a facility and the friends and family who will, hopefully, visit them. In brief, they expect more. But what, exactly? The senior living community sector is increasingly looking to hospitality, and two researchers from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management have provided clear guidance by tapping into the sentiment of those who care the most.

For Dr. YunYing Zhong, Dr. Tingting Zhang, and their co-author, the connection between the senior living community and hospitality sectors needs re-examining. For years, the two sectors have been viewed differently, and at



Does hospitality matter in senior living?

FOR THE ROSEN COLLEGE RESEARCHERS, THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY AND HOSPITALITY SECTORS NEEDS RE-EXAMINING.

At first glance, that makes sense—hospitality speaks of ‘guests’ who are usually transient or returning at best, while the senior living community sector has ‘residents’ who are usually permanent. There are other differences: senior living communities have a narrow target audience—older adults—and offer specific, associated services, including healthcare, daily assistance, and long-term residential care. Meals, for example, are more likely to be guided by nutritionists rather than master chefs. Because of their healthcare priorities, senior living communities are governed by stricter regulations and employ specialists in healthcare management and social work. Furthermore, financial commitments to senior living communities are substantial and long-term.

Still, Zhong, Zhang and their co-author see the strong associations between hospitality and senior living communities. For example, senior living communities share many operational similarities with hotels, including food and beverage services, recreation and event planning, entertainment, and housekeeping. Therefore, managing senior living communities demands staff with similar

skills to those needed in the hotel sector, including interpersonal skills with staff and residents, organizational ability, and business acuity. Notably, there’s much that hospitality can contribute to senior living communities to bolster their offering. This isn’t an offer; it’s driven by demand. The research team are well aware of this and designed a simple but ingenious study to shine a light on that demand and guide the shift towards a hybrid model of senior living communities that embraces more hospitality.

THE VOICE OF THOSE WHO CARE

Before social media, residents of senior living communities lived primarily hidden from society, visible only to the occasional regulating inspector and the transient eye of visitors popping in. Demands for improvements were, therefore, largely unheard. Social media changed that by giving a very public voice to residents and their friends and families.

Facebook is arguably the most popular social media platform for senior living community residents and baby boomers with parents in senior living communities and the knowledge they’re not too far away

themselves. Senior living community facilities invariably have their own Facebook pages and encourage comments and reviews. And because Facebook also allows various scoring frameworks, such as stars and thumbs-ups, for researchers, this translates into something precious: data.

The researchers combined their respective expertise in senior living management and technology innovations in hospitality and designed a study using RapidMiner Studio 9.3 software—a data mining, text mining, and machine learning tool—to collect and analyze reviews on the official Facebook pages of 125 senior living communities in the U.S. The communities were not randomly selected; they represented the leading companies in the U.S. regarding the number of senior living communities owned or managed, resources, and innovation practices.

They were particularly interested in what residents and their friends and family were saying and their level of satisfaction with their facilities. To measure this, they performed a sentiment analysis—a computational technique to categorize the polarity of each Facebook review, i.e., whether a review was positive or negative based on the star rating. Specifically, a 3+-star rating was considered a proxy for satisfaction, while a one or 2-star rating indicated dissatisfaction. Text mining of the review content—comments such as *‘It is a wonderful place to be in SO many ways!’* or *‘They are unorganized, condescending and act more like salespeople than caregivers’*—added value to the polarity data. The richness of the review text allowed for a more nuanced understanding of the factors affecting the satisfaction and dissatisfaction levels of





There are strong associations between hospitality and senior living communities.

those with connections to a senior living community and whether they'd recommend it to others. What the researchers learned has given impetus to the need for a shift in the priorities of senior living communities.

EXPECTING MORE

The study identified five key factors that influence satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and recommendation behavior: the quality and efficiency of services provided by the facility, its physical layout, the social interactions and community feel within it, the cost of being there, and the amenities that enhance the experience. These are all factors that, to a large degree, resonate with the hospitality sector and drive the necessary innovations for commercial success. They are in the curricula of hospitality training colleges such as the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Furthermore, hotels and other hospital brands are experienced in adjusting to the ever-changing needs of those they serve.

What stands out in the study is that while the traditional priority of senior living community facilities is the healthcare of its residents, those residents and their families and friends expect more. For example, when residents and their family and friends discuss healthcare services on Facebook, their level of satisfaction focuses more on how medical staff behave rather than their clinical skills and expertise. They want a 'hospitality-rich resident experience' beyond just medical care.

Notably, the study found that the 'hospitality' definition is not tied to a single element—it is a combination of multiple integrated elements and practices that may be second nature to the hospitality sector but are increasingly relevant for those managing such facilities. It has highlighted the need for the senior living community sector's evolution from a healthcare-focused model to a hybrid one incorporating healthcare and hospitality to provide residents with a more holistic and enriched experience.

Of course, such a model also has benefits for the hospitality sector.

OPPORTUNITIES IN A HYBRID MODEL

Large senior living companies such as those represented in this study have become attuned to the shift in demands of residents and their families. They are increasingly providing a range of services, including hospitality amenities, to differentiate themselves. Their challenge is finding those with the right skills. This is why senior living operators should engage more with hospitality academic programs and why the senior living industry presents an expanded job replacement opportunity for hospitality graduates. Hospitality students, for example, are trained in customer service, which is, as this study shows, increasingly important in senior living communities, as are the operational aspects of hospitality, such as food and beverage services, housekeeping, and event planning. Hospitality students can apply these skills to enhance the resident experience.

According to the researchers, gerontology and healthcare literature rarely explicitly addresses the role of hospitality in senior living. Most of the research in these fields examines senior living from the lenses of care quality, such as hospitalization rate and resident welfare. Hospitality is something of an add-on—necessary, but not necessarily a focus demanding research.

Zhong, Zhang and their co-author have shown otherwise. They point out that given the many similarities between senior living and hotel industries, they can share the same hospitality formula for success. Such thinking opens the door for innovative collaborations between academic institutions and senior living communities. At the end of the day, such sharing and innovation are critical—the inescapability of old age means that it gets most of us in the end, and we deserve to enjoy it.

OF COURSE, SUCH A MODEL ALSO HAS BENEFITS FOR THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR.



The study aimed to examine the role of hospitality in the senior living setting from the consumer's perspectives.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study aimed to examine the role of hospitality in the senior living setting from the consumers' perspectives, focusing on residents and their family and friends.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What would a hybrid model for the senior living community sector look like?

“ The hybrid model of senior living communities is not new. In the past, there may be 90% of healthcare and 10% of hospitality considerations, whereas the new hybrid model may encompass 2/3 hospitality and 1/3 of healthcare. Certainly, the percentages are not necessarily as precise as mentioned above, the point made here is that hospitality is increasingly important for senior living communities to attract the new generation of retirees. The hospitality-focused model does not only emphasize on the 'resort-like' living, which highlights appealing architectural design, upgrades of hospitality services and amenities, and expansion of life enrichment activities. More importantly, the model emphasizes the consumer-centric philosophy which is commonly seen in the hospitality industry. Historically, the senior living industry has leaned towards a paternalistic model in which residents are passive consumers. They are often told when to eat or what to do. However, today's retirees want to be active co-creators and collaborators within senior living communities. They demand to be listened to in every aspect of community design and operations. They want to relate to the local community, rather than living in an isolated age-segregated community. ”

Your study represents one of the few studies that look to broaden the applicability of hospitality to other service sectors and promote interdisciplinary research between senior living and hospitality. How would you like your research to impact on the hospitality industry?

“ I would like to see our research have impacts on both hospitality education and hospitality industry. First, our research results validate the strong connection between hospitality and senior living. It is our hope that this serves as an initial effort to stimulate more interdisciplinary research activities among hospitality, aging studies, and healthcare. Also, the research results show that hospitality education programs may consider senior living as an opportunity area for curriculum development and graduate replacement. For the hospitality industry, our research results shed light on the hospitality components that senior living residents and their family and friends value. Currently, hospitality companies such as Walt Disney Company or Margaritaville are developing residential communities that aim to appeal to baby boomers and their families. Our research results can provide validation and new insights for such development initiatives in the hospitality industry. ”

Dr. YunYing (Susan) Zhong



Dr. Zhong is a member of the Disability Aging & Technology Cluster and an Assistant Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Her research focuses on relationship marketing and workforce training in hospitality and tourism and bridging hospitality to senior living and healthcare industries.

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Dr. Tingting (Christina) Zhang



Dr. Zhang's research addresses human trafficking within hospitality. Her work has resulted in influential publications and significant grant funding. Her notable research impact boasts an i10-index of 45, h-index of 30, and over 5,000 citations.

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Fu's study breaks new ground by looking at foodstagramming from a psychological perspective.



Rosen Research Focus | Xiaoxiao Fu

THE CAMERA EATS FIRST:

What foodstagramming reveals about personal behavior

Some chefs may try to ban it, but 'foodstagramming'—diners taking photographs of food to post on social media—is a valuable tool that can boost both restaurants' and diners' public image. That's the conclusion of new research led by UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Associate Professor Xiaoxiao Fu. The study takes a psychological perspective and finds that foodstagramming helps both individuals' self-efficacy—the belief that if individuals act in specific ways they can achieve certain goals—and provides opportunities for restaurants to promote their businesses in new and exciting ways.



It's now impossible to eat in a restaurant and not see other diners photographing their food and posting it on social media. 'Foodstagramming' has become such a phenomenon that, according to the restaurant rating platform Zagat, 60% of diners regularly indulge in it. Instagram alone received 400 million photographs tagged #food in 2021, making food one



The study offers practical insights for restaurants, particularly in relation to marketing.

of the most common subjects that users post about.

What lies behind this global trend? Despite its prevalence, foodstagramming has attracted little academic attention. Dr. Xiaoxiao Fu at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management breaks new ground by looking at foodstagramming from a psychological

perspective. Published in the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, her research reveals how posting images of dining experiences has become a leading way in which individuals present themselves in the online world.

Contextual clues reveal as much about a person as the food. For example, posting an image of several pairs of hands above a sharing plate on a stylish table suggests a close friendship group enjoying an evening out. It portrays the person taking the picture in a positive light and suggests they have a fun life. Alternatively, posting a picture of beautifully prepared and presented Japanese sushi on a simple woven mat hints that the photographer has a clean-living, healthy lifestyle, and an elegant, pared-back esthetic. It also suggests they are open to other cultures and food experiences.

SELF-PRESENTATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Fu investigates what foodstagramming tells us about 'food experiential value'—the value that individuals place on their consumption experience. This is understood to have both

influences self-efficacy and strategic self-presentation, and that this in turn has a positive influence on people's perceived enjoyment and subsequent behavior.

TOURIST AND RESIDENT DINERS

The study is based on a questionnaire completed by diners who had posted food experience images on social media in the previous 18 months. Around 600 people took part, half of whom posted about a dining experience as a tourist, and half about a dining experience as a neighborhood resident.

A literature review helped identify the measures tested. To probe extrinsic value, for example, participants were asked whether the restaurant service was friendly, and for intrinsic value whether the food was enjoyable. Self-efficacy was probed by asking, for example, whether diners knew how to share photos to present their images well online.

Statements about strategic self-presentation included whether individuals posted about positive experiences. Statements about perceived enjoyment asked, for example,

INSTAGRAM ALONE RECEIVED 400 MILLION PHOTOGRAPHS TAGGED #FOOD IN 2021.

extrinsic value regarding such things as cost, waiting time, and service, and intrinsic value regarding food style, esthetics, and taste.

Using the lens of psychology, Fu also looks at what foodstagramming tells us about the person posting the image. The study is based on strategic self-presentation theory, as developed by Canadian-American sociologist and psychologist Erving Goffman. According to Goffman, individuals adapt the way they present themselves to other people to suit different social situations. The research is equally indebted to Canadian-American psychologist Albert Bandura, who developed social cognitive theory and the concept of self-efficacy. Social cognitive theory proposes that people learn and acquire new behaviors by observing others. Self-efficacy is an individual's belief that if they act in specific ways they can achieve certain goals.

Fu's research tests the assumption that in foodstagramming, food experiential value

whether they found posting fun. Behavioral intention was probed by asking such things as whether participants would recommend the food experience to others.

Demographic data showed that the tourists and residents in the survey shared a similar profile. Around half identified as male, and the majority of respondents were aged between 30 and 59. In addition, around half had a bachelor's degree, and annual income was widely spread between less than \$15,000 and more than \$104,000 a year.

The responses were analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling—a statistical technique which examines the inter-relationships between observed and latent variables.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

The results show that in foodstagramming, the extrinsic and intrinsic value of the food, together with an individual's feeling of self-efficacy,



The research adds to the social media literature by taking a detailed look at the psychology behind foodstagramming as a strategic self-presentation behavior.

positively influence strategic self-presentation for both resident and tourist diners. In addition, extrinsic value has a positive effect on self-efficacy for residents, and intrinsic value has a positive effect on self-efficacy for both residents and tourists. Perceived enjoyment and behavioral intention were found to be positively influenced by strategic self-presentation for both resident and tourist diners.

Fu argues that the results support the view that how people feel about themselves can be positively affected and enriched by life experiences, including how they experience food and portray themselves when foodstagramming. This is helped by self-efficacy belief and food experiential value. The fact that self-efficacy was positively influenced by food's extrinsic value for residents but not

amount to a recommendation, even if that was not the photographer's original intention.

Last but not least, the research demonstrates the role of self-efficacy in successful foodstagramming. Diners who are confident in their ability to post positive self-images recognize the value of food experiences as a resource they can use to create a positive impression of themselves online.

FEAST YOUR EYES

Fu's study has both theoretical implications for the hospitality and tourism literature and practical implications for the hospitality and tourism industry.

The research adds to the social media literature by taking a detailed look at the psychology

post food images online help to promote food businesses.

As a result, this research also offers practical insights for restaurants, particularly in relation to marketing. For example, it highlights the importance and value of the whole food experience. Fu suggests that restaurants should showcase food styles and local cuisines and consider providing distinctive settings and seating areas with foodstagramming appeal, as well as food that not only tastes good and has a strong story, but also looks good.

As well as inviting diners to post images online, managers could help boost diners' self-efficacy by helping them to improve their postings, for example, offering workshops on culinary skills and food esthetics. The aim should be to help diners create posts that communicate and promote their personal identities, and at the same time woo new customers for their venue.

Foodstagramming has the potential to become a joint marketing tool which brings personal and business branding together and helps restaurants to expand their online communities. The more foodstagrammers enjoy their food experiences and get satisfaction from using food to boost their personal image, the more recommendations restaurants should receive.

Fu's research should prompt restaurants to rethink the value of their dining experience. As the report concludes, 'Foodstagramming permits a multidirectional engagement with existing and potential customers, which opens doors for restaurants to participate in a broader marketing network across consumers' social media sites.'

FOODSTAGRAMMING OPENS DOORS FOR RESTAURANTS TO PARTICIPATE IN A BROADER MARKETING NETWORK ACROSS CONSUMERS' SOCIAL MEDIA SITES.

for tourists might be because tourist diners expect tourist food experiences to be different and exciting.

According to Fu, the study also highlights the importance of strategic self-presentation, not least that it influences diners' perceived enjoyment and behavioral intention. Although the results suggest that behavioral intention is not influenced by perceived enjoyment, this may be because foodstagramming is primarily a self-presentational behavior. Furthermore, a successful self-presentational posting may still

behind foodstagramming as a strategic self-presentation behavior. Specifically, it shows how diners use photographs of food to portray themselves in a certain manner and promote themselves favorably online.

The study adds to the impression management literature by highlighting the importance of food experiential value and diners' feelings of self-efficacy, including how they are linked to strategic self-presentation. In addition, it identifies the behavioral outcomes of foodstagramming, including that people who

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study set out to investigate diners' self-presentation mechanism as manifested in foodstagramming.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

The research gives a fascinating insight into a global trend, but not all postings about food are favorable. What does your research tell us about how restaurants should deal with the negative side of postings in which they are included?

Our research underscores the importance of addressing negative postings about restaurants in today's social media and foodstagramming landscape. To effectively manage such situations, restaurants should adopt a proactive and customer-centric approach. Based on our findings, two key strategies emerge as vital. The first is timely response. Restaurant managers should promptly and professionally acknowledge negative postings. Responding to customer concerns demonstrates the restaurant's commitment to valuing feedback and continuous improvement. The second is quality improvement. Negative feedback should be viewed as an opportunity for enhancing the overall customer experience. Identifying recurring issues and taking steps to address them is crucial. This quality improvement process should involve staff training to ensure consistent and professional handling of negative feedback. In summary, our research suggests that a timely and professional response, coupled with a commitment to quality improvement, are essential for restaurants seeking to manage negative postings effectively in the age of social media and foodstagramming. //

Your unique study theoretically links food experience to foodstagramming behavior via a self-presentation mechanism. How would you like to see your findings used to generate impact for the industry?

Our study's unique theoretical connection between food experience, foodstagramming behavior, and self-presentation provides valuable insights for the food industry. To harness the potential impact of our findings, two important strategies come to the forefront. The first is enhanced customer engagement. Restaurants and food-related businesses can employ our insights to foster more effective customer engagement. By recognizing how food experiences influence self-presentation on social media, they can customize their offerings to boost the visual appeal and shareability of their dishes. The second is tailored marketing strategies. Our research indicates that foodstagramming is often motivated by the desire to project a positive self-image. Restaurants can develop marketing campaigns that align with this aspiration, encouraging patrons to share their experiences on social media platforms. By integrating our research findings into practical strategies, the food industry can adapt to the evolving social media and foodstagramming landscape, ultimately elevating the dining experience and enhancing customer engagement. //

Dr. Xiaoxiao Fu



Dr. Xiaoxiao Fu is an Associate Professor at Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida. Dr. Fu's research expertise is consumptive experience in tourism and hospitality, addressing how destinations and firms improve consumer experience. As an award-winning scholar, Dr. Fu has published many articles in top-tier journals.

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