

# RRR

## ROSEN RESEARCH REVIEW

*Expanding Research Frontiers  
to Serve Humanity*

**SUMMER 2024**



**Rosen College of  
Hospitality Management**

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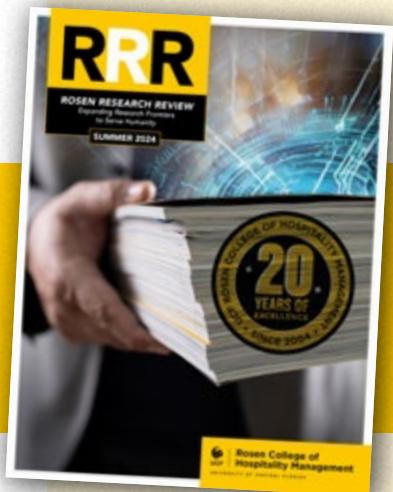
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A message from Dr. Robertico Croes

# Forging Ahead:

Celebrating milestones and embracing global engagement at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management



Welcome to a landmark Summer 2024 edition of the **Rosen Research Review** at an exhilarating time for UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. We are currently celebrating several pivotal milestones: the welcoming of a visionary new dean, our 20th anniversary as a fully recognized college, and the release of the 10th edition of the **Rosen Research Review**. Each of these events not only commemorates our past achievements but also sets the stage for future innovations and growth.

We are delighted to welcome Dr. Cynthia Mejia as the new dean of UCF Rosen College. Since October 2023, Dr. Mejia has led our college with exceptional vision and dedication as interim dean. Known to our community since joining as a faculty member in 2013, Dr. Mejia brings 20 years of industry experience in food and beverage and hotel operations management. Her innovative approach and dedication to fostering a collaborative environment will undoubtedly guide us into a new era of remarkable achievements and growth.

This edition's collection of research articles offers insights into current trends and pivotal issues within the hospitality and tourism industries. From innovative approaches to pricing and customer satisfaction in recreational settings to strategic roles of diversity and data analytics in shaping business practices, each article provides valuable knowledge. We feature our thought leader who has been instrumental in forging an exciting and transformative collaboration between Rosen College and AdventHealth. This collaboration attests to the high caliber and applied research conducted by our college.

We are also thrilled to spotlight our recent engagements with the global academic and

professional community. So far this year, we have been proud to host the International Association for Tourism Economics (IATE) Conference, the International Academy for the Study of Tourism Conference, and the Event Management Conference. These gatherings have been instrumental in fostering dialogue and collaboration among industry leaders, academics, and students.

Adding to our global engagement, I was deeply honored to represent our institution at the United Nations General Assembly as a guest speaker during Sustainability Week. This opportunity to discuss global sustainability issues underscores our commitment to influencing global policies and practices in sustainability, a critical aspect of our industry's future.

As we reflect on the past and look to the future, our mission remains clear: to foster a rich environment for learning and inquiry that propels the hospitality and tourism industries forward. We invite our readers—scholars, industry professionals, government officials, social engineers, and students—to engage with the research presented in this edition. We hope it inspires new ideas, sparks thoughtful discussions, and leads to innovative practices that you will bring into your own professional environments.

Thank you for joining us in this ongoing journey of exploration and impact. We look forward to the vibrant discussions this edition will inspire and to the continuous advancement of our field.

*Robertico Croes*

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

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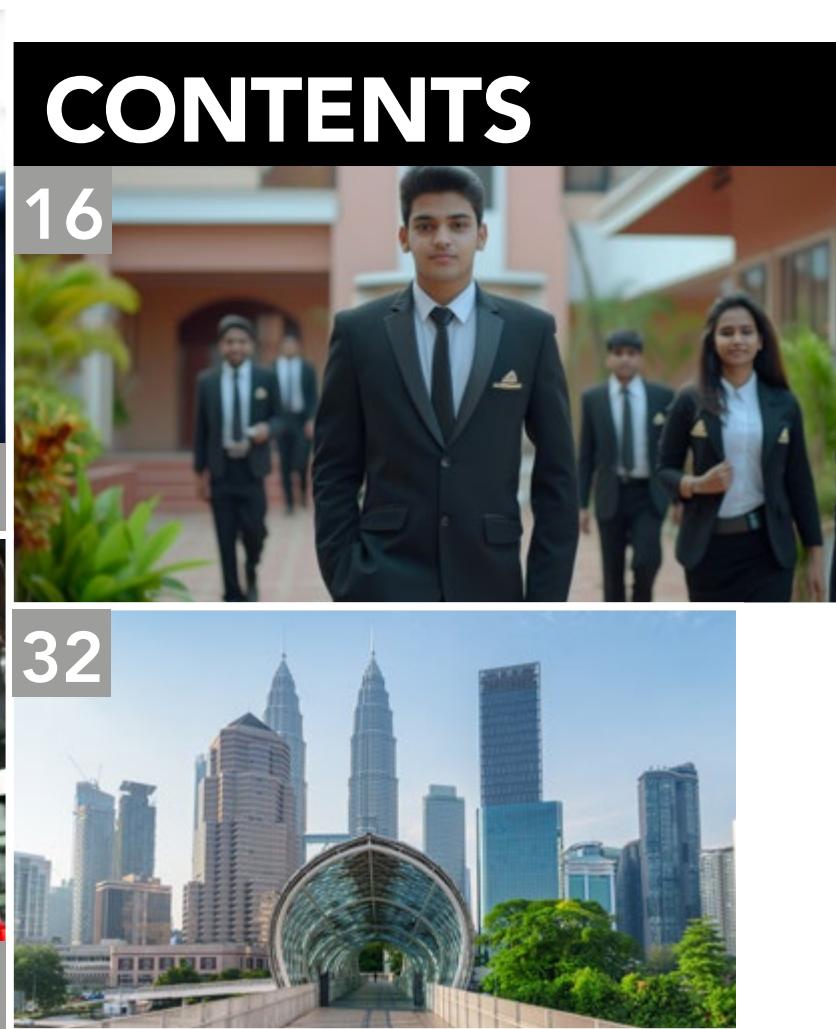
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Rosen Research Focus | Stephen Pratt

# TOWARD RE-EXAMINING TOURISM EDUCATION

Tourism education has its fair share of tenets—cornerstone beliefs emerging from and perpetuated by academia. Many are myths, and tourism educators are failing students—and the sector more broadly—if they don't encourage students to challenge them. Research by Professor Stephen Pratt and co-authors point to widespread belief in these myths by students as well as a worrying psychological phenomenon—the Dunning-Kruger effect. They urge educators to rethink how tourism concepts and theories are taught.

The allure of the tourism sector often paints an idyllic image etched with the promises of economic prosperity, cultural revitalization, and environmental stewardship. Unfortunately, this image is, to a degree, a mirage built upon a foundation of persistent myths masquerading as truths within the academic realm.

A significant and sobering study by 20 senior tourism researchers, headed by Professor Stephen Pratt of UCF Rosen College of

Hospitality Management, critically examines these so-called truths that have long been held sacrosanct in tourism education, and urges educators to rethink how tourism concepts and theories are taught.

Anchored in a rigorous analysis of the tourism curriculum and student perceptions, their research illuminates the myths perpetuated through generations of scholarship and explores the cognitive biases that hinder critical thinking among students. This uncomfortable fact, far from being a disincentive to venture

into tourism, is an invitation to question, reflect, and innovate.

## **EDUCATORS ARE FAILING THEIR STUDENTS**

Research is critical for the hospitality and tourism sector. It ultimately shapes perceptions, policies, and practices. Therefore, the sector's health and sustainability depend on research founded on fact. Unfortunately, like research elsewhere, it is not immune to infections of will and hopeful supposition. These can take root and



Pratt urges educators to rethink how tourism concepts and theories are taught.

dogma—anathema to scientific research—and if they find their way into tourism management training curricula, educators fail their students.

For Pratt and his co-authors, investigating how students understand and perceive tourism knowledge is necessary to inform curriculum design and how the next generations should be taught. So, they designed a study to assess individuals' capacity to question supposed 'truths' alongside self-perceptions of critical thinking skills. At the heart of the study is a psychological phenomenon that illuminates a curious and often counterintuitive aspect of human cognition and self-awareness.

### THE CURIOUS DUNNING-KRUGER EFFECT

It makes sense that having limited knowledge or experience in a particular area is a cause for reserving judgment or action in that area. However, in 1999, two American psychologists, David Dunning and Justin Kruger, suggested people are often not bothered by such logic. They described a phenomenon where people possess an inaccurate assessment of their abilities or knowledge in a particular area to the point that if they perform poorly at a task or lack knowledge of skills in an area, they are less likely to realize they are underperforming. The result is that they overestimate their ability. Widespread evidence of this phenomenon—from university debate teams to mainstream politics and major-league

policymaking, it can lead to policies based on incorrect assumptions around complex issues. Within a career context, people may not recognize the need for further learning or skill development if they believe they are already competent.

Therefore, educators and trainers must be aware of the Dunning-Kruger effect when designing curricula that help learners accurately assess their abilities and knowledge. This is why Pratt put tourism education under the spotlight.

### MYTHS FROM ACADEMIA

Here are some familiar statements: tourism is always good for the economy; tourism leads to cultural preservation; tourists seek authentic experiences; and carrying capacity works in tourism. Such statements seem self-evident. However, they are not valid. Accuracy depends on context, and absolute statements ignore context—tourism can be good for an economy, but not always.

Such so-called 'truths' in tourism aren't marketing slogans; they emerge from academia. Research encourages the belief that tourism is an industry, it revitalizes culture, and that special interest tourism is the mainstream. But these are myths. To what degree tourism students believe such myths and how they assess their own capacity for critical thinking point to the robustness of tourism education. Pratt and his co-authors set out to measure this.

They designed an online survey centered around 30 pre-identified tourism myths. Because they wanted to examine the prevalence and variations of the Dunning-Kruger effect across different cultural and educational contexts, they made the survey available in multiple languages to cater to a diverse group of tourism and hospitality students from first year through to postgraduate level, drawn from 22 universities across 16 countries.

The myths covered a wide range of topics concerning the economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of tourism, among others. Common threads were the belief in tourism as a panacea for economic woes, a catalyst for cultural rejuvenation, and a harbinger of environmental conservation. Participants were asked whether they agreed with the statements.

## ACCORDING TO THE STUDY, THESE 'TRUTHS' HAVE BEEN REPEATED SO MANY TIMES THAT THEY HAVE BECOME PLATITUDES, FREQUENTLY RECITED BY STUDENTS AND ACADEMICS ALIKE.

flourish as accepted foundations of tourism knowledge—even indisputable truths. According to Pratt and co-authors, these 'truths' have been repeated so many times that they have become platitudes, frequently recited by students and academics alike.

However, robust tourism research requires constant critical re-examination. It must be fully understood that nothing is indisputable and that even foundations can be completely overturned. Unquestioned assumptions and long-adhered ideas are cornerstones of

sports—encouraged its recognition within social psychology to the degree it now carries Dunning and Kruger's names.

The Dunning-Kruger effect can produce unfortunate outcomes. If people lack critical thinking about their own capabilities, it can encourage overconfidence in decision-making and unqualified risk-taking. In team settings, individuals who overestimate their competence may dominate discussions and decision-making processes, potentially leading to suboptimal outcomes. In politics and

## The Dunning-Kruger effect



**THE STUDY WAS NOT JUST AN ACADEMIC EXERCISE; IT IS A MIRROR REFLECTING THE INTRICACIES OF HUMAN PERCEPTION AND THE CONSEQUENCES OF UNCHALLENGED ASSUMPTIONS.**

The response options provided were 'Agree', 'Disagree', and 'It depends'. The first two responses were less accurate because they didn't consider context; 'It depends' did. They were also presented with a series of science myths, such as 'humans only use 10% of their brains'. This helped highlight whether the tendency to believe myths was limited to tourism.

After responding to the statements, participants were asked to estimate how many responses they believed they had answered correctly. This self-evaluation was crucial for measuring the Dunning-Kruger effect, as it directly assessed the participants' ability to evaluate their own performance. Furthermore, they were asked to estimate their rank compared to their peers and the average score they believed other tourism and hospitality students would achieve. This allowed Pratt and his co-authors to analyze how participants viewed their own knowledge in relation to the broader community.

### WORRYING FINDINGS

Unfortunately, as hypothesized, a significant number of students agreed with widely held but potentially inaccurate beliefs about tourism, including myths regarding its economic benefits, cultural impacts, and environmental effects. Across different cultures, tourism students generally tended to accept these myths at face value without much critical scrutiny.

On average, students believed that they answered 20 of the statements correctly; in reality, they answered (accurately) 'It depends' on only 12 of the 30 tourism myths. Yet, they ranked themselves better than 66% of other students. The results of the science myths were quite similar.

The study substantiated the presence of the Dunning-Kruger effect. Students with lower actual knowledge or competence in tourism were more likely to overestimate their knowledge and abilities. Conversely, the more knowledgeable

students tended to underestimate their comparative performance.

The study also showed that students who exhibited higher confidence in their understanding of tourism often had lower actual knowledge. This overconfidence was particularly pronounced among students who accepted the myths as true. These students were also less likely to appreciate the complexity of the issues and were more resistant to reconsidering their views.

### PRACTICAL AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The practical and theoretical implications of this study are profound. It urges educators to rethink how tourism concepts and theories are taught. In a discipline marked by complexity and dynamism, fostering an environment that encourages critical thinking and skepticism towards accepted norms is paramount. This work serves as a clarion call for a pedagogical revolution in tourism education that should embrace complexity, cultivate critical thinking, and prepare students not just as professionals but as thinkers capable of challenging and reshaping the industry's future.

The study was not just an academic exercise; it is a mirror reflecting the intricacies of human perception and the consequences of unchallenged assumptions. As we navigate the complex landscape of tourism, Pratt and co-authors beckon us to tread with caution, armed with the knowledge that true wisdom lies in recognizing the extent of our ignorance. It is a journey from illusion to enlightenment, charting a course toward a more sustainable and introspective future for tourism scholarship and practice.

# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Stephen Pratt and co-authors investigated the prevalence of commonly held tourism myths among tourism students worldwide, and aimed to validate the Dunning-Kruger effect among these students.

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Pratt, S., Pan, B., Agyeiwaah, E. et al. (2024). Tourism myths and the Dunning Kruger effect. *Annals of Tourism Research*. 104, [doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103620](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.annals.2023.103620).

## PERSONAL RESPONSE

### **How can tourism educators encourage the requisite critical thinking among students to minimize the Dunning-Kruger effect?**

Thinking skills: Begin by teaching students the fundamentals of critical thinking, including how to analyze information, evaluate sources, recognize bias, and construct well-reasoned arguments.

Incorporate real-world case studies into the curriculum that challenge students to apply critical thinking skills to complex tourism-related issues. Encourage students to consider multiple perspectives and possible solutions.

Encourage students to question assumptions, challenge conventional wisdom, and seek out evidence to support their arguments. Create an environment where curiosity is rewarded, and students feel empowered to explore different viewpoints.

Engage in Socratic dialogue: Use the Socratic method to facilitate discussions in which students are encouraged to critically examine their own beliefs and assumptions. Ask probing questions that prompt students to defend their positions and consider alternative perspectives.

## Dr. Stephen Pratt

Dr. Stephen Pratt (Ph.D.) is Full Professor and Chair of the Department of Tourism, Events, and Attractions at Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. He has previously held positions at the University of the South Pacific and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University.



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Students with lower actual knowledge or competence in tourism were more likely to overestimate their knowledge and abilities.



# A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY THROUGH HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT EDUCATION



UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management commands a strong reputation in hospitality management education because it produces students who can hit the ground running when they graduate. They not only have knowledge of the sector they'll be operating in but also the essential skills the sector expects. So, what is the correct mix of pedagogical methods and content delivery in hospitality education? Research by Dr. Amy M. Gregory points to a potential pathway for academic staff to put students on the correct track.

**T**ourism and hospitality degrees are becoming increasingly popular worldwide, and the burgeoning hospitality sector has a growing appetite for highly educated and trained students. Importantly, those students need more than academic knowledge—they should be able to hit the ground running after graduating. Therefore, there is significant pressure on institutions training the next generation of tourism and hospitality staff to design courses and employ faculty with the depth and experience to ensure students are adequately prepared with the correct skills and, importantly, confidence that comes with knowing this. Research by Dr. Amy M.

Gregory, published in the *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, points to a potential pathway for academic staff to put students on the correct track.

Because hospitality and tourism are service-focused, providers must excel in areas directly affecting customer satisfaction and operational efficiency. While academic rigor is crucial in developing the necessary knowledge in this regard, there is no substitute for hands-on experience. The Rosen College has a strong reputation for academic staff that can boast both, and designing courses around the sector's needs. This is crucial because if its students are to be employable, they need



Dr. Gregory's research identifies pathways for bringing academia and the hospitality industry closer together to effectively prepare graduates for a growing and rapidly changing work environment.

a deep knowledge of the sector they'll be operating in and the essential skills it expects. But what is the correct mix of pedagogical methods and content delivery in hospitality education? Dr. Gregory suggests examining connections between employability, self-efficacy, problem-solving, and transformational leadership within a broader framework of social cognitive career theory (SCCT). Her research in this area has unearthed some surprising insights.

#### A TRANSFORMATIONAL JOURNEY

Hospitality is not a formula; it is a mindset. Because customers are human with concomitant idiosyncrasies, hospitality requires

the ability to adapt to changing circumstances and the confidence to do so. Self-efficacy—the ability to apply skills across different settings—is therefore critical. Self-efficacy is not taught, it is acquired; a resultant personal belief that grows through personal accomplishment, learning, social influence, and the correct emotional and physiological state.

Such a journey is transformational and, in students, is encouraged through teachers' transformational leadership. This is a teaching approach where educators inspire and motivate students to exceed their own expectations and achieve higher levels of performance and personal development. Teachers act as role models, earning the respect and trust of their students, and inspire and motivate students by setting clear visions and expressing them appealingly and compellingly. Teachers also challenge students to think critically and question their own beliefs and assumptions, and foster an environment of creativity and innovation, encouraging students to explore new ideas and solutions. They also support students' personal development by listening to their concerns and providing personalized feedback.

Theoretically, if applied successfully in management education and training, transformational leadership should equip students with the necessary self-efficacy, problem-solving skills, and confidence so they can step into any people and situation

Research has been done on this, but in other fields, including nursing and engineering and with general business students; hospitality management is relatively underexamined in this respect. So, Dr. Gregory turned to one of the richest sources of valuable data.

#### A WEALTH OF DATA

Over four years, from Spring 2017 to Fall 2020, Dr. Gregory conducted an online survey with junior and senior undergraduate Rosen College students enrolled in a specific elective course: timeshare. She designed the survey to address three research questions: Does transformational leadership positively predict students' self-efficacy and employability, does problem-based learning positively predict their self-efficacy and employability, and is there a difference in their self-efficacy and employability based on faculty members' context-specific industry experience?

Focusing on a specific elective—as opposed to the whole hospitality management course—provided several benefits. Firstly, it allowed for a deeper, more detailed examination of the impact of context-specific coursework on students' learning outcomes, self-efficacy, and employability. Secondly, studying the effects of pedagogical approaches and leadership styles within the confines of a single elective course allows for a more controlled environment. Thirdly, elective courses often allow for more pedagogical flexibility and innovation compared to core courses that

## HOSPITALITY IS NOT A FORMULA; IT IS A MINDSET.

management space and say, 'I can do this.' It's what employers look for; the issue is how to measure it, and this is where SCCT comes in.

SCCT is a theoretical framework that seeks to explain how people develop their career interests, make professional choices, and achieve career success. It considers self-efficacy, outcome expectations—beliefs about the outcomes of career-related behaviors—and personal goals as critical factors influencing career progression. Therefore, for Dr. Gregory, SCCT is an appropriate framework to examine the relationship between educational practices and students' employability and career progression.

might have stricter curricular requirements—conditions that encourage transformational leadership. Finally, timeshare is a unique and significant segment of the hospitality and tourism industry, with distinct business models, customer service challenges, and operational strategies. By focusing on timeshare, Dr. Gregory could gather specific, actionable insights to inform curriculum development, teaching practices, and industry collaboration efforts in hospitality education, especially related to enhancing student outcomes in this area.

The surveys carried multiple measurement tools that allowed students to rate their self-

The study underscores the importance of teaching styles and course content in preparing students for successful hospitality careers.



## THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE OVERALL EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES WERE BROADLY EFFECTIVE, NOT THE INFLUENCE OF INDIVIDUAL TEACHERS.

efficacy, the levels of problem-based learning within the timeshare coursework, their perceived employability skills, knowledge, and qualities that are attractive to employers, and the extent to which teachers exhibited transformational leadership characteristics, such as the ability to inspire and motivate, intellectually stimulate, provide individualized consideration, and model ideal behaviors.

Dr. Gregory distributed the survey within three weeks of a semester's end to 919 students across multiple academic years, ensuring a broad sample. Of the surveys submitted, 773 were valid—slightly more than an 84% success rate. Armed with a wealth of data, Dr. Gregory started connecting the dots, and a clear picture emerged.

### A CLEAR PICTURE

The data showed that, indeed, when teachers exhibit transformational leadership qualities and employ problem-based learning approaches, students not only believe more in their capabilities but also become more

appealing to potential employers. What was surprising—and encouraging—is that, given the wide sample range, the study could compare differences among students enrolled in courses taught by different faculty and yet found no significant differences. This suggests that the overall educational strategies were broadly effective, not the influence of individual teachers.

The data also showed a definite link between problem-based learning, as opposed to simple instruction, and the development of students' self-efficacy and perceived employability. Essentially, Dr. Gregory's research underscores the importance of teaching styles and course content in preparing students for successful hospitality careers. It proposes that such educational practices can significantly enhance students' self-belief and job prospects. The research also supports the relationships of transformational leadership, problem-solving, self-efficacy, and employability within the framework of social cognitive career theory.

Importantly, this study provides a clear starting point for evaluating various pedagogical methods and content delivery in hospitality education. It also provides a method that can be replicated over different electives within hospitality management education to build a solid pedagogical framework for designing and delivering new courses, which is much needed. Dr. Gregory's research also identifies pathways for bringing academia and the hospitality industry closer together to effectively prepare graduates for a growing and rapidly changing work environment, something that benefits the industry, the education and training institutions that serve it, and the students they produce. That this research emerged from Rosen College faculty and students is notable.

Students choose Rosen College for various reasons, one of which is the impressive impact its name has on potential employers. Attending a hospitality education institution—and there are many—is of little use if it carries no weight with the sector. Students' employability cuts both ways—the sector must see the students as employable, and the students should see themselves as such. They should know that when they emerge from their studies, they will have the requisite technical and interpersonal skills and readiness for the hospitality industry—they should indeed be able to hit the ground running and tackle whatever comes their way. This requires more than academic staff telling them, 'Listen to this, do that.' It requires a committed, highly experienced faculty employing educational practices that are truly transformational.



# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Gregory applies the social cognitive career theory to investigate context-specific elective coursework and students' employability development in hospitality education.

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## PERSONAL RESPONSE

***This study provides a method that can be replicated over different electives. What area within hospitality management education could benefit most from such a study, and why?***

|| The applications are limitless since the primary reliance is upon problem-based learning and student self-efficacy and employability. To be successful in preparing students for their next level course, internship, or career placement, faculty should examine their learning objectives and work with students to help them understand how they can achieve them and what success looks like. It is a shift in mindset from evaluating students in their achievement of correct answers on an assessment to progressing students through correct application of terminology and problem-solving from which they can justify their strategy, construct novel outcomes, and be confident in their ability to do so. ||

## Dr. Amy Gregory

Dr. Gregory is an Associate Professor teaching various lodging courses at UCF. She is well published throughout leading hospitality management journals, and a recurring contributor to industry publications and conferences. Dr. Gregory is a previous corporate executive with more than 25 years of international sales, marketing, and business development experience.



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Rosen Research Focus | Holly Robbins

## CELEBRATING TWO DECADES OF EXCELLENCE

UCF Rosen College's legacy of innovation in hospitality education and research

**A**s we mark the 20th anniversary of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida, we celebrate a legacy that has profoundly reshaped hospitality education. This legacy, sparked by the pioneering generosity of Mr. Harris Rosen and the visionary spirit of Dr. Abraham Pizam, has transformed our institution from its modest beginnings into a beacon of global excellence. This milestone not only commemorates two decades of transformative impact but also heralds a future ripe with innovation and leadership in the world of hospitality.

From the outset, Rosen College was more than just an educational institution; it was envisioned as a hub of learning, knowledge, and practical application, ideally situated in the heart of Orlando's vibrant tourism corridor. This strategic location not only offers unmatched internship opportunities but also embeds real-world industry practices into our

academic framework, enhancing our students' educational experience.

The college opened its doors in 2004, thanks to Mr. Harris Rosen's transformative \$18 million donation, which facilitated the construction of a state-of-the-art campus specifically designed for hospitality management education. This generous start was complemented by the vision of Dr. Abraham Pizam, whose robust academic planning laid a foundation to support a diverse and dynamic curriculum.

Over the past two decades, Rosen College has expanded its academic offerings to include a range of innovative programs at both

undergraduate and graduate levels. Unique areas of study, such as our undergraduate degree programs in Entertainment Management and Theme Park and Attraction Management—the first of its kind in Florida—leverage our localized expertise and Orlando's status as the theme park capital of the world. Our graduate offerings, including the master's in hospitality and tourism management and the pioneering master's in event leadership, exemplify our innovative approach to hospitality education. These programs are designed to advance knowledge and dynamically respond to the evolving landscapes of hospitality and tourism.

Our Ph.D. program attracts scholars dedicated to making significant contributions to both theory and practice. It is a rigorous program that encourages original research,

**OUR COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH EXCELLENCE CONTINUES TO PLACE US AT THE FOREFRONT OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION.**



fostering a scholarly environment with global industry impact. To complement these academic pursuits, we've developed partnerships with leading hospitality businesses to provide our students with practical, hands-on experiences that are critical to their professional development. Research is a cornerstone of our mission at Rosen College. We host four highly cited research journals, positioning us as leaders in hospitality research. Our faculty, hailing from 18 different countries, bring diverse and rich perspectives to our research initiatives. They

explore a wide array of topics, from sustainable tourism practices to the economic impacts of tourism, providing valuable insights that continually advance industry practices.

Our commitment to research excellence continues to place us at the forefront of hospitality education. Through rigorous inquiry and innovative studies, our faculty and students deepen the industry's understanding of its impact on global economies, communities, and cultures. This research-driven approach ensures that our educational programs not only meet current industry standards but also anticipate future trends and challenges.

The *Rosen Research Review* (RRR) plays a crucial role in disseminating our groundbreaking research globally. It showcases studies addressing critical challenges in hospitality, providing thought leadership that bridges academic inquiry with practical industry applications. RRR reached more than one million impressions in more than 150 countries in just nine editions. This research enriches the academic experience and substantially contributes to the global hospitality discourse, influencing policy, and enhancing community and economic development.

As we look toward the future, Rosen College is committed to expanding its global partnerships and enhancing its research capabilities. We aim to foster an educational environment that not only anticipates the needs

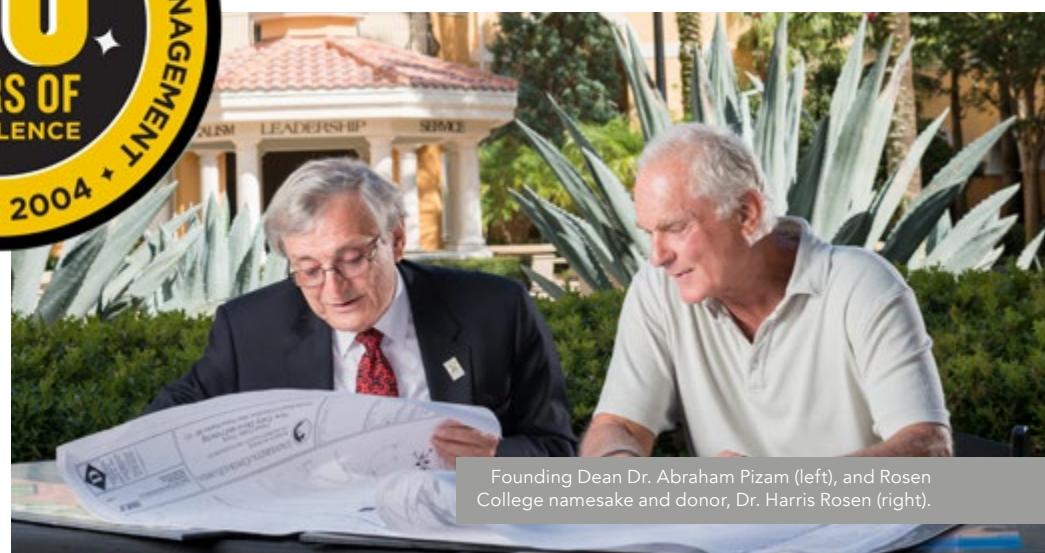
of the hospitality industry but also proactively responds to global challenges with innovative solutions. As we continue to expand our contributions to global hospitality standards, we know that our graduates are well-prepared to lead and innovate in an increasingly interconnected world. Our ongoing efforts to refine educational delivery and expand research capabilities highlight our commitment to maintaining and extending our leadership in hospitality education.

This anniversary is not just a celebration of our past achievements but also a reaffirmation of our commitment to remain at the forefront of hospitality education and research. We honor the legacy of Dr. Abraham Pizam, and the many contributors—our benefactors, our alumni, faculty, staff, students, industry partners, and all our stakeholders—who have shaped this institution, propelling it to its current stature as a global leader in hospitality education.

As we continue to lead and innovate, we are excited about the future, poised to shape the hospitality industry, cultivate the leaders of tomorrow, and push boundaries that unleash the potential of our industry. Here's to many more decades of establishing benchmarks in educational excellence and pioneering research.



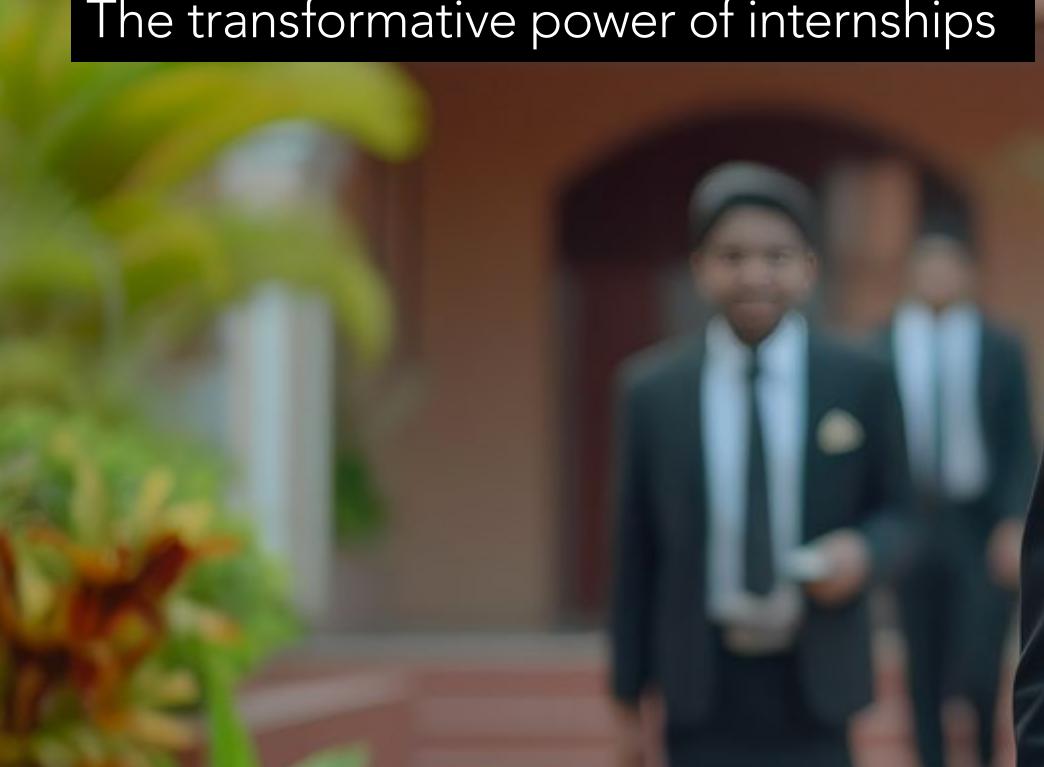
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UCF Rosen College of  
Hospitality Management



Founding Dean Dr. Abraham Pizam (left), and Rosen College namesake and donor, Dr. Harris Rosen (right).

# BUILDING BRIDGES IN HOSPITALITY

The transformative power of internships



Drs. Cynthia Mejia and Jessica Wickey Byrd's research explores the pivotal role of internships in shaping the future of the hospitality and tourism industry through boundary crossing—a transformative journey that bridges academic theory with professional practice, fostering a resilient talent pipeline poised to revolutionize the sector.

In the rich tapestry of the hospitality and tourism (H&T) industry, internships are not merely transient experiences but are critical pathways, forging connections between the rich theoretical knowledge acquired in academic settings and the vibrant, fast-paced practicality of industry. This dynamic landscape, with its pulse on global travel and leisure trends, has faced its share of tribulation. Labor shortages have long been a simmering issue, only to boil over as the pandemic and existing stigmas surrounding service work have amplified

the industry's challenges. In such times, the bridge that internships represent becomes not just a pathway but a lifeline, supporting a sector in urgent need of rejuvenation.

At the intersection of academic rigor and industry savvy stands UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, where the pursuit of hospitality education is seamlessly blended with the spark of innovation. Here, a conceptual approach to internships spearheaded by Drs. Cynthia Mejia and Jessica Wickey Byrd delves into the essence

of 'boundary crossing'—a transformative journey that equips interns with the tools to effectively translate their classroom learning into the competencies and insights needed for their future careers. This intricate process of knowledge transfer is more than an academic exercise; it's a developmental journey ensuring that the flow of skilled professionals into the hospitality and tourism industry remains steady and strong, even as the industry itself continues to evolve and expand. Through this lens, internships are elevated from functional assignments to experiential catalysts, bolstering the industry with a fresh talent pipeline and novel perspectives that keep it moving forward, even in the most challenging of times.

## BOUNDARY CROSSING: AN INTERNSHIP'S JOURNEY

The journey from the classroom to the



Internships help students become innovative thinkers, capable of bridging the gap between knowledge and practice.

workplace is a transformative experience for interns, marked by the process of boundary crossing. It's in this critical phase that interns weave their theoretical knowledge into the very fabric of practical experience. This complex fusion is at the heart of the research, suggesting that the leaders in hospitality and tourism are forged in this transitional space where academic concepts are applied to real-world challenges.

Drs. Mejia and Wickey Byrd's research focuses on turning educational experiences into real-world success. Internships serve as crucial gateways for this transition, providing more than just a glimpse into the industry. They are active engagements where students challenge norms, connect disparate ideas, and apply classroom lessons in ways that can reshape both their own viewpoints and the practices within their host organizations.

Internships are no longer seen as mere stints of work experience but as crucial stages of cognitive and professional growth. As interns navigate new environments, they encounter a reality different from their academic training, a discovery that is both daunting and enriching. The process not only enhances their employability and career satisfaction but also imbues them with essential life skills such as time management and effective collaboration. It's through these experiences that students emerge not just as workforce-ready graduates but as innovative thinkers capable of bridging the gap between knowledge and practice. Drs. Mejia and Wickey Byrd's research suggests that when students cross these boundaries through internships, they're not just observing—they're engaging, challenging, and connecting dots in ways that transform both their own perspectives and the practices of their host organizations.

#### **METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO INTERNSHIP RESEARCH**

This conceptual paper adopts a theory adaptation approach, which is crucial for reframing traditional views of internships

growing specialization of knowledge within organizations. As an interpretative framework, boundary crossing delves into how interns merge their educational identities with their emerging professional roles, illuminating the often challenging transition from academia to the professional world. The initial stages of internships are highlighted as periods rich with potential for growth, where interns not only adopt new skills and improve their employability but also develop essential coping strategies. These processes are paramount in equipping interns with the capabilities necessary to navigate the complexities of the H&T industry successfully.

#### **MECHANISMS AT WORK IN THE H&T INTERNSHIP BOUNDARY ZONE**

Interns often face the daunting task of reconciling academic theories with the practical demands of the industry—a challenge intensified by the dichotomy between theoretical constructs and applied workplace structures. Drs. Mejia and Wickey Byrd's research scrutinizes these transitional mechanisms, pinpointing where the bridge between school and work is formed, traversed,

## **INTERNSHIPS BENEFIT ALL PARTIES INVOLVED. STUDENTS GAIN INVALUABLE REAL-WORLD EXPERIENCE THAT PAVES THE WAY FOR THEIR FUTURE CAREERS.**

within the H&T industry. By examining the established body of literature on boundary spanning and crossing, the research expands on the concept of knowledge transfer from academia to practical settings. This approach acknowledges the evolving complexities of hospitality education and the role of internships as pivotal, experiential learning stages that extend beyond the scope of typical classroom instruction. By grounding this research in a rich array of prior studies, it draws a comprehensive understanding of how internships can be strategically re-envisioned to enhance the learning and adaptability of hospitality and tourism management (HTM) students.

#### **BOUNDARY CROSSING: A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The concept of boundary crossing gains prominence against the backdrop of rapidly advancing technology and the

and sometimes, where it needs support. The implications are significant, suggesting that internships, if well-designed, not only facilitate personal growth but also seed organizational innovation. They become crucibles for developing a talent pipeline that can sustain and propel the industry forward.

#### **INTERNSHIPS AND EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN ACADEMIC PROGRAMMING**

The delineation between internships and traditional jobs is made clear: internships are structured, educational experiences, often characterized by a higher degree of supervision and assessment. Within these roles, interns engage in experiential learning, where critical reflection and professional development are paramount. Such internships offer more than just work; they provide a scaffolded environment where theoretical knowledge is



Educational institutions have a clear mandate to design internship programs that prepare students for the complexities of the industry.

applied and tested, ensuring that the student's journey into the professional sphere is both informed and introspective.

#### RESEARCHING THE BRIDGES

Diving into the mechanisms of knowledge transfer, the researchers employed a qualitative approach, analyzing the experiences of interns and the operational dynamics of the organizations they serve. The findings emphasized that internships should be transformational, not transactional. Rather than perceiving interns as temporary labor, the industry is called to embrace them as potential innovators, who can contribute fresh insights and drive organizational change.

#### FINDINGS: A TWO-WAY STREET

Internships, as uncovered by the research, benefit all parties involved. Students gain invaluable real-world experience that paves the way for their future careers; institutions like the Rosen College reinforce their relevance by producing industry-ready graduates, and the hospitality sector itself is endowed with a

stream of fresh talent, eager and capable of leading the industry into the future.

More importantly, the research identified the reciprocal nature of internships. While interns learn from their immersive experiences, they also bring fresh new ideas and approaches into the professional environment, prompting a cycle of continuous learning and innovation.

#### MEANING AND IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this conceptualization is far-reaching. For educational institutions, there is a clear mandate to design internship programs that are not just placements but are rich, integrative experiences that prepare students for the complexities of the industry.

For the hospitality and tourism sector, the call is to engage with academic institutions like Rosen College in crafting these experiences, investing in the interns not as temporary aides but as the architects of the industry's future. Drs. Mejia and Wickey Byrd advocate for a strategic, collaborative approach to

internships, with a focus on nurturing the intern's ability to navigate, negotiate, and network across the boundaries of school and work.

#### CHARTING THE FUTURE

Looking ahead, the research emphasizes the longitudinal studies as essential in unlocking the long-term benefits of internships in the hospitality and tourism industry, facilitating a deeper understanding of career progression and the effectiveness of various internship models. This approach is vital for the industry to refine its strategies and maintain a steady supply of skilled talent. The emphasis on cultivating boundary spanners through internships is a pivotal strategy, as these individuals bridge the gap between academic learning and industry application, driving the evolution of the H&T sector. Such internships are more than experiences; they are critical for building a resilient, innovative workforce poised to tackle future challenges.

Amidst debates on the value of higher education in the H&T sector, evidence points to the significant benefits of paid internships and part-time work during college, such as accelerated loan repayment and wealth accumulation. The decline in enrollment in HTM programs, attributed to perceived industry disadvantages, underscores the need for innovative industry-academic partnerships. These collaborations can create a mutually beneficial scenario for students, institutions, and the industry, emphasizing the shift towards purpose-driven, long-term internship models that focus on boundary crossing and organizational innovation.

As Rosen College continues to pioneer in hospitality education, the lessons drawn from this research are clear. HTM educators play a crucial role in preparing students for their internships, using case studies, discussions, and guest lectures to equip them with the necessary soft skills and confidence to navigate the transition from school to work. This preparation not only sets students up for success in their internships but also fosters long-term careers as effective boundary spanners in the H&T industry. By focusing on boundary crossing, the industry and academia can collaboratively ensure students are ready to contribute to the industry's growth and adaptability.

**THE RESEARCH ADOPTS A THEORY ADAPTATION APPROACH, WHICH IS CRUCIAL FOR REFRAMING TRADITIONAL VIEWS OF INTERNSHIPS WITHIN THE H&T INDUSTRY.**

# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Taking a theory adaptation approach, this conceptual paper explores the pivotal role of internships in shaping the future of the hospitality and tourism industry.

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Mejia, C. Wickey-Byrd, J. (2023). Boundary crossing, internships, and the hospitality and tourism talent pipeline. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*. 33, 100441. [doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2023.100441](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jhlste.2023.100441)

## PERSONAL RESPONSE

**What are the long-term career outcomes for hospitality and tourism management students who have engaged in boundary crossing internships compared to those who have not?**

“ We are still in the beginning stages of pilot testing transformational internships; however, early evidence shows that students who have completed progressive internships with intentional support around boundary-crossing have a higher internship to industry conversion rate, thus staying within the same organization upon completing their internship. ”



## Dr. Cynthia Mejia



Dr. Cynthia Mejia has over 20 years of industry experience in F&B and hotel operations management, primarily working for luxury hotel brands both in the U.S. and in Singapore. Her areas of research include hospitality human resource management, cross-cultural organizational management, technology acceptance, empathy across the services industries, and hospitality education.

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## Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd



Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd holds a doctorate in Educational Leadership with a focus on Higher Education from the University of Central Florida. Dr. Wickey Byrd is the Director of the Internship Program at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and oversees recruitment for the college. She has more than 25 years of experience working in the hospitality industry including lodging, restaurants, live entertainment, events, and non-profits.

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Rosen Research Focus | Hyoungju Song

# HARMONY IN DIVERSITY

## Orchestrating a profitable future in hospitality through TMT diversity and CSR

A groundbreaking study from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, led by Dr. Hyoungju Song, examines the intricate interplay between corporate social responsibility and financial performance in the hospitality sector. The study reveals how the composition of top management team diversity acts as the conductor in this complex symphony. Discover the strategic impact that top management team (TMT) diversity has on creating a profitable and sustainable future.

In the bustling realm of the hospitality industry, where guest experiences intersect with environmental stewardship and community engagement, there lies a delicate balance between ethical practice and financial success. At the heart of this balance are the decisions and directions set forth by the top management teams (TMTs) that drive the course of hospitality firms. It is within this context that UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management introduces a compelling body of research. Led by Dr. Hyoungju Song, this work delves into the dynamics of TMT diversity and its

impact on the interplay between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and financial performance (FP).

The hospitality industry is uniquely positioned at the crossroads of service excellence and sustainable practice, where every strategic decision can have far-reaching implications for both reputation and revenue. This complex ecosystem of business operations demands an investigation into the leadership structures that drive it. Dr. Song's research provides a critical examination of how variations in TMT composition, in terms of gender, age,

industry experience, and tenure, contribute to, or detract from, the efficacy of CSR initiatives in driving financial goals.

As the industry navigates a landscape marked by increasing consumer consciousness and global challenges, the role of TMTs in aligning CSR with financial aspirations becomes ever more crucial. The insights gleaned from this study offer a roadmap for hospitality firms looking to optimize their strategic approach to CSR, ensuring that it contributes positively to their financial health. The study reveals how different dimensions of diversity within the leadership ranks affect the delicate dance between doing good and doing well financially, providing a nuanced understanding of the leadership qualities that are most conducive to achieving success in both arenas.

### THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN CSR AND FP

Dr. Song embarks on a journey to dissect



What impact does top management team diversity have in creating a profitable and sustainable future?

the CSR–FP relationship, a crucial linkage in the hospitality sector that hinges upon the decisions of the TMT. This relationship is pivotal as it dictates how a firm's socially responsible practices can translate into financial gains or losses. What the study unveils is a nuanced picture where different facets of TMT diversity play varying roles in either strengthening or weakening this link.

#### THE INFLUENCE OF TMT DIVERSITY

Delving into four specific types of demographic diversity—gender, age, industry experience,

and tenure—the research offers surprising revelations on their influence on financial performance. It emerges that diversity in age and industry experience serves as a positive moderator. In other words, a melange of generations and a tapestry of industry backgrounds can amplify the benefits of CSR initiatives on a firm's bottom line. These forms of diversity bring a breadth of perspectives and a wealth of knowledge that enrich the strategic implementation of CSR activities.

However, the study's findings add a layer of complexity by revealing that tenure diversity tends to have a negative moderating effect. This suggests that when team members have varying lengths of service within the organization, it may lead to a lack of cohesion in how CSR strategies are executed and perceived, ultimately affecting financial outcomes.

of decision-making styles, underpinned by a higher inclination towards ethics and community-oriented values. These qualities are essential in CSR, aiming to satisfy a broad range of stakeholder needs while maintaining a strong reputation. Female leaders, often attributed with greater ethical behavior, could potentially ensure that CSR practices are genuinely beneficial rather than superficial, thus theoretically enhancing firm performance.

However, the research team found that the presence of gender diversity in TMTs surprisingly did not show a significant impact on the CSR–FP nexus in the hospitality industry. This counterintuitive finding hints at underlying complexities in how gender roles influence corporate strategy and suggests that the actual impact of gender diversity may be nuanced, interwoven with industry-specific dynamics, or potentially overshadowed by other facets



#### THE UNANTICIPATED ROLE OF GENDER DIVERSITY

Gender diversity within TMT is traditionally expected to influence CSR and FP outcomes. It's anticipated that the inclusion of female executives would introduce a spectrum

of TMT diversity. The unexpected outcome paves the way for further research into the subtle ways in which female leadership affects CSR effectiveness and how this translates into tangible financial results in a sector where the gender distribution in the workforce does not reflect that of its leadership.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR INDUSTRY PRACTITIONERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

Dr. Song's research underscores the critical importance of age and industry experience diversity within TMTs to amplify the impact of CSR initiatives on financial outcomes. The study elucidates that assembling a TMT with a rich tapestry of generational insights and sector-

**DR. SONG EMBARKS ON A JOURNEY TO DISSECT THE CSR–FP RELATIONSHIP, A CRUCIAL LINKAGE IN THE HOSPITALITY SECTOR THAT HINGES UPON THE DECISIONS OF THE TMT.**



This research offers a lens through which the hospitality sector can re-examine and potentially redefine its approach to corporate governance and social responsibility.

## AS THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY FACES THE DUAL CHALLENGES OF EVOLVING CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS AND THE NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH, THE STUDY OFFERS A BLUEPRINT FOR ALIGNING ETHICAL INITIATIVES WITH FINANCIAL OUTCOMES.

specific experiences is key to harnessing a broader spectrum of innovative CSR strategies that align with profitability goals.

This revelation is pivotal for those at the helm of hospitality enterprises. It underscores that strategic TMT composition, with a deliberate inclusion of diverse ages and industry backgrounds, offers a multifaceted approach to CSR that can propel financial performance. These findings are set to inform and refine the blueprint of decision-making processes, influencing strategies that industry leaders and stakeholders may employ to knit CSR more closely with financial success.

The insights from this study are poised to drive a strategic shift, where the emphasis on age and experience diversity becomes integral to forming TMTs. The notion that diversity transcends mere representation and is a cornerstone for strategic advancement is a powerful takeaway for the industry. This knowledge provides a lens for practitioners

to reassess and innovate their approach to leadership assembly, ultimately capitalizing on the variegated perspectives that such diversity brings to the table in fostering financially viable CSR practices.

### CHARTING THE COURSE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Beyond its immediate findings, the study opens up a wealth of opportunities for further exploration. It beckons future researchers to delve into other forms of TMT diversity and their potential impacts on the CSR-FP relationship. The call to investigate the effects of short-term versus long-term tenure instability on financial outcomes is a particularly poignant one, inviting a more longitudinal approach to understanding these dynamics.

### FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Dr. Song's investigation illuminates a path for hospitality leaders, demonstrating how the nuanced interplay of TMT diversity can shape the efficacy of CSR efforts. The implications of

this study are profound, extending beyond theoretical discourse into actionable strategies. With a focus on age and industry experience, this work underscores an often-overlooked aspect of leadership composition that can pivot CSR from a principled endeavor to a profitable strategy.

The insight provided by Dr. Song's research is particularly timely. As the hospitality industry faces the dual challenges of evolving consumer expectations and the need for sustainable growth, the study offers a blueprint for aligning ethical initiatives with financial outcomes. Dr. Song's findings serve as a valuable resource for those within the sector who are in a position to make impactful decisions—highlighting the potential of well-considered TMT diversity to turn CSR into a competitive advantage.

Through this research, Rosen College reaffirms its role as an incubator for innovative thought and practical solutions in hospitality management. By focusing on the critical intersection of CSR and financial performance, and the moderating role of TMT diversity, Dr. Song not only contributes to the college's prestigious academic legacy but also influences the industry's approach to leadership and corporate strategy. This research offers a lens through which the hospitality sector can re-examine and potentially redefine its approach to corporate governance and social responsibility.

In summary, Dr. Song's team's study is more than an academic endeavor; it is a call to action for industry leaders to strategically leverage the diversity within their ranks. This research is poised to inspire a forward-thinking dialogue and a re-evaluation of best practices that could shape the future of hospitality management.



# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Song analyzes TMT diversity's effect on the CSR–FP link in hospitality and identifies which aspects enhance or detract from financial performance.

## REFERENCES

Song, H.J., Yeon, J., & Lin, M.S. (2024). The more diverse, the better? Exploring the moderating role of hospitality top management team diversity on CSR–FP link. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. 117, 103650. [doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103650](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103650)

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## PERSONAL RESPONSE

**How did exploring the specific moderating roles of age, gender, industry experience, and tenure within TMT diversity shape your understanding of the CSR–FP relationship in the hospitality industry?**

|| The findings of this study elucidate the complex roles played by various dimensions of TMT diversity in the relationship between CSR and FP. Specifically, the study highlights the imperative for strategic alignment within TMTs, asserting that diversity should transcend mere symbolic representation. The empirical evidence suggests that the mere presence of a diverse TMT is inadequate; rather, the particular mix of diversity, characterized by age, experience, and tenure, profoundly impacts the capacity to utilize CSR initiatives for enhancing firm performance within the hospitality sector. This finding holds significant implications for the hospitality industry, wherein customer satisfaction and CSR are increasingly intertwined with business success. Consequently, this study not only contributes to the theoretical discourse by illustrating that the CSR–FP nexus is contingent upon the TMT's diversity but also provides practical guidance for industry stakeholders in optimizing TMT composition to achieve superior CSR outcomes. ||

## Dr. Hyoungju Song

Dr. Hyoungju Song, Assistant Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, specializes in environmental, social, and governance issues and growth strategies within the hospitality sector from a financial analysis perspective. His research has expanded to include regulatory changes and entrepreneurship, with a focus on small and medium enterprises (SMEs).



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# Whole-person health care for the body, mind, and spirit

An interview with Michael Griffin, Senior Vice President of Advocacy and Public Policy, AdventHealth, by Dr. Robertico Croes and Dr. Chaithanya Renduchintala



Michael Griffin is the Senior Vice President of Advocacy and Public Policy, providing advocacy leadership to AdventHealth. The AdventHealth system includes 52 hospital facilities located across nine states and serves more than eight million patients every year. In this interview, we learn more about AdventHealth's aim to provide whole-person health care through community-focused services—to rejuvenate the body, mind, and spirit.

## COULD YOU PROVIDE AN OVERVIEW OF ADVENTHEALTH'S COMMUNITY HEALTH INITIATIVES, INCLUDING ITS VISION, MISSION, AND CURRENT CHALLENGES?

**A**faith-based, not-for-profit health care system, AdventHealth's mission is to 'Extend The Healing Ministry of Christ'. Our community health initiatives are a key part of that extension. While AdventHealth provides incredible Whole-Person Care in our clinical settings, we know that a person's health is determined by

much more than traditional health care. We are continuing to grow our focus on the Social Determinants/Drivers of Health (SDOH), meaning those factors outside of a clinical setting that contribute to an individual's health. Things like housing, food, gainful employment, education, etc. And while our primary business is and will remain delivering world-class clinical care, we invest significant resources in the communities we serve to address SDOH needs. We do this primarily through community partners: local, not-for-profit organizations who know our community and how to best serve them. We arm our

partners with resources to carry out these community initiatives. Our biggest challenge in this work is having a clear picture of exactly what effect those initiatives are having, and if we are having an impact on the needs we are trying to address.

## WITHIN ADVENTHEALTH, WHAT IS YOUR SPECIFIC ROLE AND PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY?

I am the Senior Vice President of Advocacy and Public Policy for the AdventHealth system of 52 hospitals in nine different states. Specifically, I have responsibility for our



AdventHealth Headquarters,  
Altamonte Springs, Florida.

Government, Public Policy, Regulatory and Community Advocacy teams.

**IN COMMUNITY HEALTH, WHAT WOULD YOU IDENTIFY AS THE PRIMARY CHALLENGE FACING ADVENTHEALTH, AND WHAT FACTORS CONTRIBUTE TO THIS CHALLENGE?**

Our primary challenge is our lack of clarity of what impact our community initiatives and investments are making. As a community-focused health care system, we want to ensure our resources are being utilized to their highest potential to make our communities healthier. Additionally, we are incentivized by governmental and commercial insurance payers to prevent our discharged patients from returning to the hospital. One way we do this is by referring patients in need to our community partners offering social services. Unfortunately, similar to our community investments, we do not have clarity on what happens to these patients after they leave our

**The hospitality industry, with Rosen College being preeminent in this space, are experts in driving consumer behavior to utilize their assets.**



AdventHealth improves the lives of those in Central Florida.

# We are excited about our partnership with Rosen College because it starts to get at the heart of our challenges in community health.

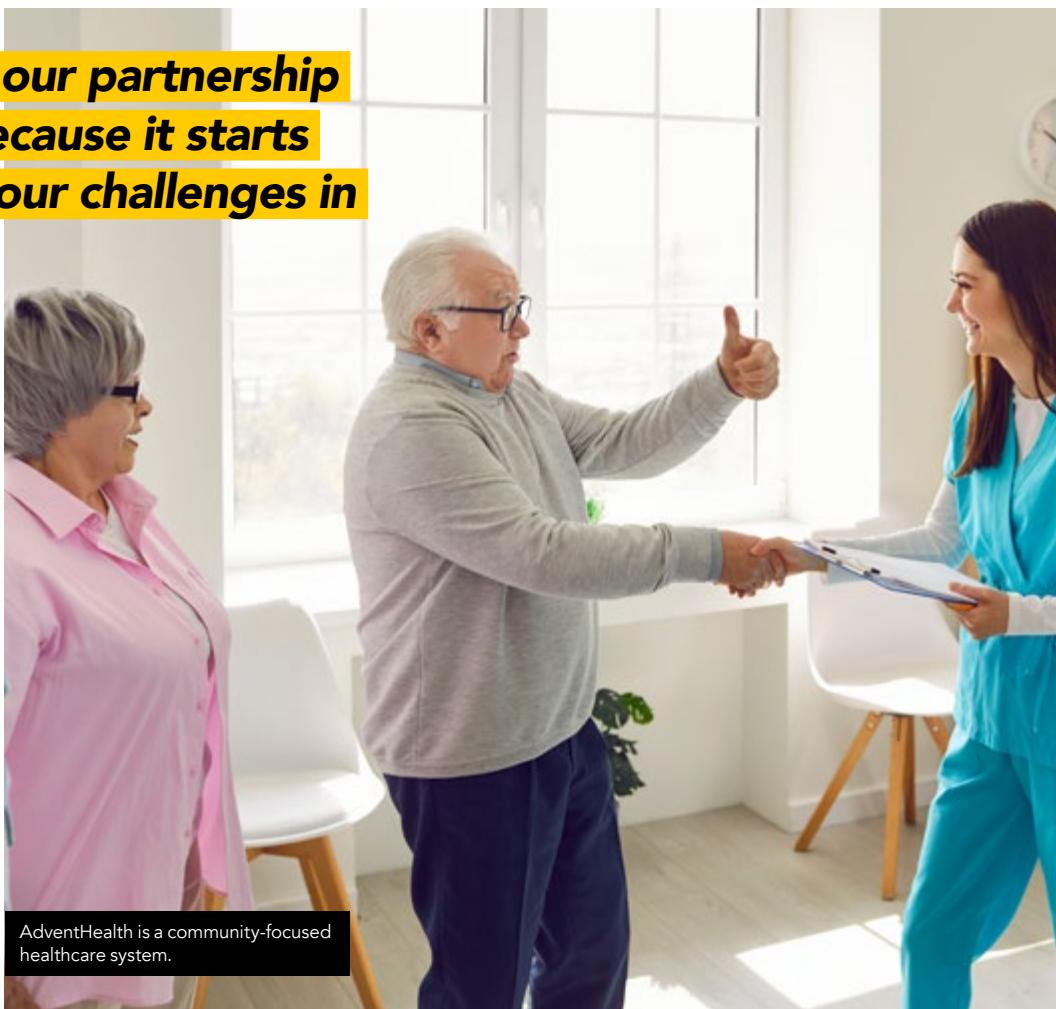
care, and therefore, do not have a data-driven way of measuring the effectiveness of the social services we are referring them to.

## COULD YOU DETAIL THE NATURE OF YOUR COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS WITH ROSEN COLLEGE? WHAT ASPECTS ARE ENCOMPASSED WITHIN THIS PARTNERSHIP?

We are excited about our partnership with Rosen College because it starts to get at the heart of our challenges in community health. AdventHealth invests heavily in our Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) that informs what community initiatives we focus on. Working with Dr. Robertico Croes and Dr. Chaithanya Renduchintala, we will be exploring ways of measuring the impact of these community initiatives and those of our partners. Our plan is to start with one shared community health priority (e.g. diabetes) that both AdventHealth and our community partners are interested in, create a cohort of community members that are struggling with this health issue, then create a learning model of focus groups, surveys, etc. to understand what resources need to be deployed to affect the behavior and intention of these community members. We will then be able to use these learnings to design community initiatives based on these findings. As the model progresses, using the same learning networks, we will be able to measure real outcomes of interventions, allowing us to better direct our funding and resources to the most effective programs and partners.

## GIVEN THE INNOVATIVE NATURE OF COMBINING HEALTH CARE AND HOSPITALITY, WHAT SPECIFIC GOALS DO YOU AIM TO ACHIEVE THROUGH THIS COLLABORATION, AND WHAT ARE YOUR ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES?

We are excited to be working with Rosen College to achieve the goals and outcomes mentioned above. The hospitality industry, with Rosen College being preeminent in



this space, are experts in driving consumer behavior to utilize their assets. If we can leverage this expertise to better understand health behaviors of our community members, what initiatives are having the greatest impact, and driving people to these initiatives, we will be changing the game in community health.

## WHY IS THE TIMING OPTIMAL FOR INITIATING THIS COLLABORATION BETWEEN HEALTH CARE AND HOSPITALITY SECTORS?

Both of our industries were hugely impacted by the pandemic. As we continue to recover from this terrible event, there are learnings that are emerging in both of our areas that offer deeper insights into consumer behavior and community health outcomes.

## WHAT MOTIVATED ADVENTHEALTH TO SELECT ROSEN COLLEGE AS A PARTNER FOR THIS COLLABORATION? COULD YOU ELABORATE ON THE





### **SPECIFIC STRENGTHS OR RESOURCES THEY BRING TO THE TABLE?**

Rosen College is world class in the hospitality and consumer behavior arena. It just makes sense to work with them to utilize our combined expertise to improve the lives of Central Floridians, especially those dealing with poor health. In addition to their stellar reputation in this space, I have a long-standing personal connection with UCF as my alma mater and was honored to be inducted into the Nicholson School of Communication and Media (NSCM) Alumni Hall of Fame in 2015. I currently serve on the Dean's Advisory Board and the NSCM Advisory Board, and you'll find me cheering on the Knights at most of our home games. UCF is a key part of my history, and I'm excited to get to work with them on this initiative.

### **LOOKING AHEAD, HOW DO YOU ENVISION THE EVOLUTION OF THIS COLLABORATION IN TERMS OF RESEARCH, INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES, AND POTENTIAL CAREER PATHWAYS WITHIN BOTH SECTORS?**

As we work to perfect the model, this collaboration has a lot of potential to create additional research opportunities, which will necessitate internship and educational opportunities for students within both the hospitality and health care sectors.



**Michael Griffin**

**Senior Vice President of Advocacy and Public Policy, AdventHealth**

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**Robertico Croes** is a Professor of Tourism Economics and Management at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. He is the editor of the *Rosen Research Review*. His research interests are

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**Dr. Chait Renduchintala** is an Assistant Professor at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management (RCHM) with the department of Tourism, Events and Attractions. Dr. Rendu works with the infectious disease and travel health initiative at the

Rosen College of Hospitality Management. He holds a master's degree in Bio Medical Science and a Ph.D. in Modelling and Simulation from the University of Central Florida. His research interests include travel and health data modeling with a focus on community health and resiliency. Prior to joining RCHM, he worked as a senior community health data analyst for the Cleveland Clinic Foundation. While with the Business Incubator at University of Central Florida, he coached over 100+ technology startups as a growth strategist.

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Rosen Research Focus | Arthur Huang

# UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RESTAURANTS' SAFETY VIOLATIONS AND COVID-19 TRANSMISSION



The restaurant industry was among the most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The restaurant industry was among the most severely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Restaurants had to redesign their operations to provide higher safety standards to encourage people to dine out. Even with research into these adaptive approaches in shifting environments, there is still the question of how to enhance quality of service and customer satisfaction while reducing COVID-19 transmission. Bridging this gap, Associate Professor Arthur Huang from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management investigates whether a correlation exists between diners' complaints about restaurant safety violations and COVID-19 cases.

**T**he COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the hospitality industry. Business closures and capacity controls together with travel restrictions triggered an immediate decline in the hospitality market. Most states in the U.S.

lifted stay-at-home orders at the beginning of April 2020 and businesses were allowed to reopen during late April and early May 2020. This resulted in an increase in COVID-19 cases during May and June 2020. One quarter of COVID-19 cases were associated with visits to restaurants and bars. The high-contact nature

of food and beverage businesses intensified people's fears of catching the COVID-19 disease. Restaurants had to redesign their operations to provide heightened safety and security standards for their clientele with flexible mechanisms, including screens between tables, contactless menus, routine sanitization practices, and mobile payment systems, to encourage people to dine out.

Even with the upsurge in research into the adaptive approaches taken by restaurants in these shifting environments, there is still a 'general halo of uncertainty' surrounding the question of how to enhance quality of service and customer satisfaction but still reduce COVID-19 transmission. Bridging this knowledge gap, Associate Professor Arthur



## PSYCHOLOGICAL MECHANISMS

The researchers adopted several theories to uncover the rationale supporting diners' behavior during the pandemic and discover whether the complaints they raised are justified reactions to their perceived threats.

To demonstrate how psychological processes enable people to know that infectious pathogens may be present in the dining environment and prompt their behaviors to prevent any contact with sources of infection, they turn to the stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) paradigm and the theory of behavioral immune system. The S-O-R model describes how environmental features can act as stimuli (S) influencing individuals' emotional states (O) and subsequently trigger a behavioral response (R). The risk of infection can also activate diners' behavioral immune system and alter their reaction to such stimuli, possibly increasing aversive reactions.

When people are exposed to pathogenic diseases, the behavioral immune system activates behavioral and cognitive responses. This encourages people to assess their environment and notice pathogen cues. Cues, such as seeing or hearing an employee cough or violate safety protocols, may cause diners to experience disgust, develop aversive responses, and judge the restaurant negatively. This may lead to them withdrawing their patronage or raising complaints.

The health belief model and the protection motivation theory explain the significant part played by diners' perceptions and motives during this process. The health belief model explains diners' strategies for preventing infection. It predicts whether a particular health behavior is more or less likely depending on a person's perceptions of the severity of a disease and their susceptibility to it. During the pandemic, diners perceiving themselves to be highly susceptible to COVID-19 may choose to visit restaurants that follow safety protocols with social distancing and good sanitation. They may pay close attention to these details and if

the restaurant doesn't follow the procedures, the diners might complain or display a lack of patronage as a cautionary way of preventing contracting the disease.

The protection motivation theory is similar to the health belief model, but it also includes the influence of self-efficacy on preventive health behaviors. If diners with high self-efficacy perceive any violations of safety protocols and think that they can demonstrate an effective reaction, they may well complain.

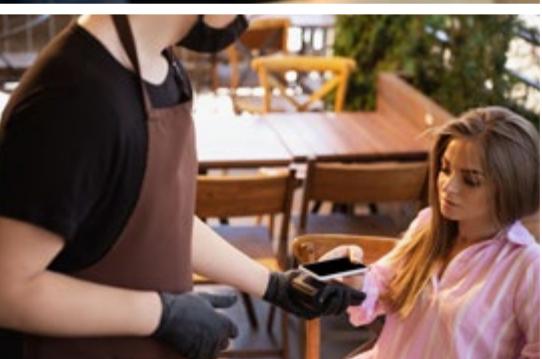
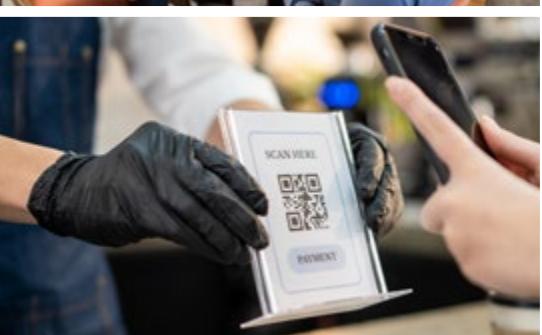
## COMPLAINTS: A PROXY INDICATOR

These theories suggest that customers' complaints are not exaggerated responses to threatening conditions. Due to pandemic constraints, the researchers were unable to observe safety violations in person and health authority inspections occurred biannually, so identifications of violations were limited. Building on these concepts, the research team used customers' complaints as a proxy indicator to better understand the relationship between restaurants' safety violations and COVID-19 cases.

An extensive review of the literature showed that diners' perceived risk of catching COVID-19 was the main reason discouraging them from visiting restaurants during the pandemic, although safety violations in the restaurant industry were an ongoing problem before the pandemic. A positive correlation between the number of customers' complaints and the rates of foodborne outbreaks in the U.S. was revealed. Indoor dining was also connected with COVID-19 cases.

The researchers hypothesized that diners' complaints about safety violations during the pandemic are positively correlated with  $H_1$ : COVID-19 cases,  $H_2$ : COVID-19 positivity rates, and  $H_3$ : COVID-19 hospitalizations. In addition to testing these hypotheses, the researchers performed spatial analysis to confirm that diners' complaints were correlated with COVID-19 cases.

The research team obtained data from a government-operated database, the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation (DBPR) complaint portal. This dataset comprises 2,297 location-based complaints made by restaurant guests during May and June 2020, as businesses reopened in Florida. Data variables included the date of



Huang from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and his co-authors investigated the link between restaurants' safety violations and COVID-19 cases. The researchers took an interdisciplinary approach employing methods and models from statistics, computer science, and geography to find out if there is a correlation between complaints made by diners regarding restaurant safety violations and the occurrence of COVID-19 cases.

## THE HIGH-CONTACT NATURE OF FOOD AND BEVERAGE BUSINESSES INTENSIFIED PEOPLE'S FEARS OF CATCHING THE COVID-19 DISEASE.

Is there a correlation between diners' complaints about restaurant safety violations and COVID-19 cases?



complaint, restaurant address, and allegation notes. The dataset was linked to Florida's daily COVID-19 cases during the same period. Initially, the data trend suggested that the number of daily complaints and COVID-19 cases were highly related.

### UNDERSTANDING THE CORRELATION

The researchers carried out a statistical analysis to investigate the correlation between restaurants' safety violations and COVID-19 transmission. To identify and analyze themes that were present within data, a thematic analysis was performed. The researchers devised a coding theme using a sample of 200 complaints. Given the large number of complaints, they developed a neural network-based natural language processing model to label the rest of the complaints. This model was

were not necessarily related to COVID-19 transmission. Fine-dining restaurants received most (75%) complaints. Casual dining restaurants accounted for 19% and fast-food restaurants received only 6% of the total complaints, probably due to drive-through, take-out, and delivery options. Most complaints were about the lack of masks (both staff and customers) and social distancing.

Dr. Huang and co-authors then devised a mixed-effect linear regression model (an extension of simple linear models allowing for both fixed and random effects that account for the unmeasured sources of variance). They found statistically significant, positive correlations between the number of daily complaints and all COVID-19 transmission measures. This supports all three hypotheses.

## A 'GENERAL HALO OF UNCERTAINTY' STILL SURROUNDS HOW TO ENHANCE QUALITY OF SERVICE AND CUSTOMER SATISFACTION BUT STILL REDUCE COVID-19 TRANSMISSION.

pre-trained on more than 10 million restaurant reviews from Yelp.com, before fine-tuning it with the complaint data. The resulting deep learning model could classify customers' complaints and recognize the nature of the safety violations.

More than 80% of complaints related to violations of personal protection and environmental safety measures. These increased dramatically after early June 2020. Conversely, complaints relating to food safety and quality remained stable, accounting for less than 10% of the total complaints. These

Further analysis found that complaints about personal protection measures, such as not wearing masks, had the highest correlation with COVID-19 cases. This was followed by environmental safety measures and personal sanitation measures. Although these do not automatically indicate causal relationships, these findings align with the findings of previous research.

### UNCOVERING GEOGRAPHIC HOTSPOTS

COVID-19 rates may well differ across county, city, and state levels due to regional

variations in both policies and human behavior. In addition to geographical variations in consumers' restaurant patronage, densely populated areas can attract many tourists, impacting on the number of restaurants, visits, and safety violations. The researchers therefore performed spatial modeling of the geographic distribution of complaints to identify hotspots and throw light on the correlation between customers' complaints concerning safety violations and COVID-19 cases.

Using the ArcGIS tool, Dr. Huang and co-authors calculated the Getis Ord Gi\* statistics to identify geographic hotspots. This exposed an uneven distribution of customers' complaints and COVID-19 cases but supported the positive relationship between restaurants' violations and COVID-19 cases at the county level. As suggested in the literature, they found a significantly higher number of complaints regarding violations and COVID-19 cases at major tourist destinations, such as Miami and Orlando, than other counties. Broward County and Miami-Dade County had the most complaints about safety violations with 121 and 112 complaints, respectively.

### THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Huang and his co-authors describe how this research enriches the three key environmental psychology theories explaining consumers' behavior during the outbreak of disease. The stimulus-organism-response (S-O-R) theory is enhanced with the identification of novel atmospheric subfactors in restaurants that can influence consumers' emotions and lead to avoidance responses. The findings suggest that consumers' behavioral immune systems may have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Their research findings enhance both the health belief model and the protection motivation theory. Along with people's internal factors, perceived environmental risks may affect consumers' perceived threat, and this might influence the likelihood of their engagement in health-protective behaviors.

These analytical methods and their findings reveal consumers' behavioral shifts and demonstrate how hospitality businesses adapt their practices in a pandemic. They also highlight how new management practices together with economic policies can support the safe and successful reopening and operation of restaurants.

# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Taking an interdisciplinary approach, Dr. Huang explores the relationship between restaurants' safety violations and COVID-19 transmission.

## CO-AUTHORS

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## PERSONAL RESPONSE

**What inspired you to combine statistical analysis, natural language processing and spatial analysis to find out if there is a correlation between consumers' complaints about restaurant safety violations and COVID-19 transmission?**

As an interdisciplinary researcher in machine learning, public policy, and consumer behavior, I was motivated to investigate the connections between restaurant safety, customer perceptions, and COVID-19 transmission, given the pandemic's severe impact on the restaurant industry. Our team employed natural language processing to mine insights from customer reviews, statistical modeling to quantify key relationships, and spatial analysis to correlate these metrics with local infection rates. Ultimately, our goal was to showcase the power of combining diverse data sources and interdisciplinary method to derive novel insights and push the boundaries of knowledge at the confluence of consumer psychology, management, and data science.

## Dr. Arthur Huang

Dr. Arthur Huang is an Assistant Professor at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management. He has an interdisciplinary background, with a Ph.D. in civil engineering focusing on data analytics and an M.S. in computer engineering. His research interests include travel technology, data-driven business decision-making, artificial intelligence, and sustainability. He has led multiple externally funded projects by federal and state agencies and has been frequently invited as a keynote speaker at international conferences on smart city, big data, and tourism and hospitality technologies.



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# EMPOWERING RESIDENTS THROUGH TOURISM

Destination competitiveness can generate resources that improve the lives of the residents while creating memorable experiences for tourists. But how do those relationships work, and what influence do human agency and governance play? This is what Professor Robertico Croes and Associate Professor Jorge Ridderstaat set out to determine in their research exploring the force of human agency on destination competitiveness and human development.

**D**estination competitiveness can promote tourism demand and create memorable experiences for tourists. These experiences may then trigger higher consumption which generates more occupational opportunities for local residents. And since income is fundamental for achieving freedom, this can impact human development and enhance the quality of life for locals.

Viewed through this lens, tourism performance is critical for destinations and government officials when it comes to garnering residents' support for related development. This support hinges on the perceived benefits of tourism. However, these benefits may not reach all residents because of various factors including social arrangement, unemployment, and lack of financial credit, and human agency in the form of individual and collective action to demand a say in decision-making processes.

A study by Professor Robertico Croes and Associate Professor Jorge Ridderstaat from the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management delves into this complex relationship to uncover how capabilities and context can influence the relationship between competitiveness and human development. Research is highly important in this sector because the ways in which tourism is governed and how human agency is employed may benefit or impede how local residents live their lives. It could, for example, create more job opportunities for women that could then lead to more empowerment to demand their rights.

## DEFINING DESTINATION COMPETITIVENESS

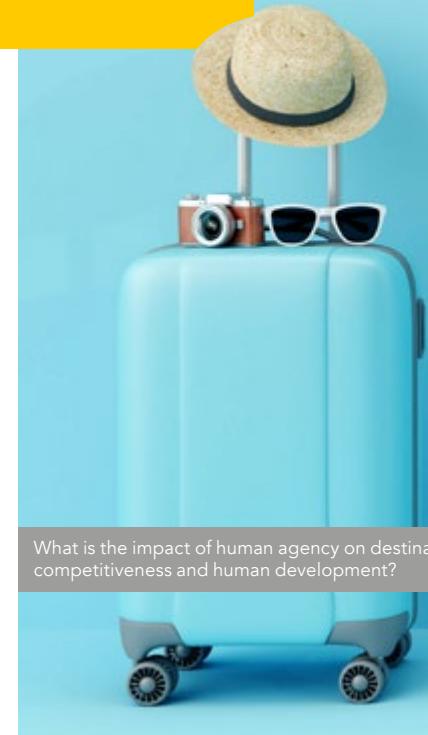
The challenge to define the concept of destination competitiveness lies in its multidimensionality and the array of factors that influence it. Past studies argue that characterization relies on comparative and competitive advantages, but over time, that definition has evolved to market share-oriented and, more recently, sustainability-oriented.

With no universal definition available, Croes and Ridderstaat define destination competitiveness as a set of resources that can provide memorable experiences for tourists, promote demand, and enhance quality of life. This echoes the destination competitiveness theory, which unifies competitiveness with human development. Essentially, competitiveness provides the resources that can enlarge residents' choices and social connectedness.

## A FOCUS ON HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

Human development includes and enhances health, education, and skills that are essential for destination competitiveness. However, little is currently known about these influences, their nature, or their potential in relation to destination competitiveness.

The shift to focusing on human development resulted from the disappointment of conceptualizing wellbeing as a reflection of material possessions, and the disillusionment with the existing gap between economic



What is the impact of human agency on destination competitiveness and human development?

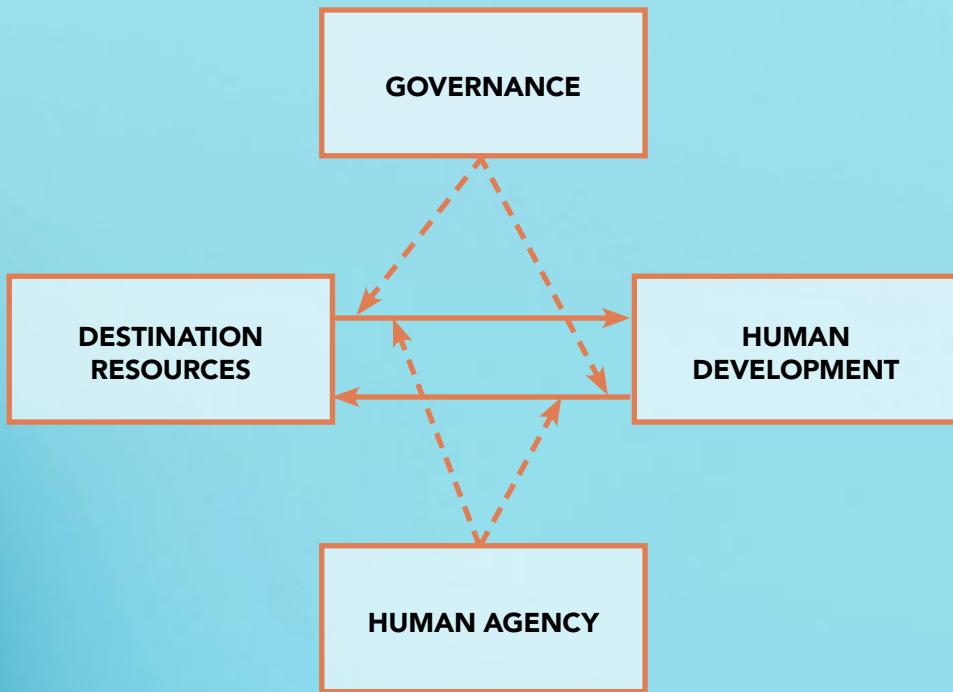
growth and improvements in the quality of life of many people. A capability approach instead proposes that progress and development should enhance people's choices and opportunities, and shifts focus from production and economic growth to people as individuals and life's intrinsic values.

This framework has three pillars: capabilities, functioning, and freedom to choose and seize opportunities. Capabilities covers fundamental freedoms such as being able to vote, study, and belong, and functioning refers to what people do and who they are, such as having a job and being healthy.

## THE ROLE OF AGENCY

How these capabilities convert into functioning depends on agency, which refers to a person's ability to seize opportunities to improve their life conditions.

This is heavily dependent on social, economic, and cultural context, as well



Tourism contributes to job creation both directly and indirectly.



80% of the tourism industry comprises micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises.

as individual characteristics including intelligence, gender, and disabilities, and social factors such as legal frameworks and population density. Environmental considerations like geographical conditions and pollution also play a part.

When combined, these conversion factors evaluate the human development outcomes that can be triggered by resources stemming from destination competitiveness.

#### REDEFINING THE EVALUATIVE BASIS

The capability approach used by Croes and Ridderstaat in this study also redefines the evaluative basis for assessing people and

development. In this approach, the focus moves away from economic performance and instead embeds itself in the potential for tangible improvements in human lives.

This approach is reflected in the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI), which is an alternative to gross domestic product (GDP) for measuring human achievements.

#### THE ROLE OF GOVERNANCE AND AGENCY

In contrast to the majority of existing tourism studies, Croes and Ridderstaat have integrated governance and agency

as relevant conversion factors to examine the relationship between destination competitiveness and human development.

Tourism plays a leading role in economic development for many destinations and is a notable contributor to GDP. Tourism also contributes to job creation both directly and indirectly, promotes entrepreneurship, and, for many developing economies, provides a primary source of foreign currency income. However, until recently, the critical role of government and its influence on destination competitiveness, an individual's capabilities, and the quality of life that a person can choose has often been overlooked.

**THE FOCUS MOVES AWAY FROM ECONOMIC PERFORMANCE AND INSTEAD EMBEDS ITSELF IN THE POTENTIAL FOR TANGIBLE IMPROVEMENTS IN HUMAN LIVES.**

#### A FRAGMENTED INDUSTRY

The tourism industry is unique in that almost 80% of it comprises micro-, small-, and medium-sized enterprises. This fragmented nature means that the government is the sole entity with the power to implement the consistent, long-term policies needed for tourism to thrive.



Malaysia offered an ideal case study due to its unique standing in the global tourism industry.

Tourism is also more susceptible to market failure and distortion than other industries, which makes government involvement even more necessary. This should be actualized in new and renewed destinations by providing infrastructure and facilities, promoting sustainable development, maximizing social welfare, and protecting public interest.

#### A CASE STUDY IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia was chosen as a case study because of its unique standing in the global tourism industry. This Southeast Asian nation has a multi-ethnic population and elected monarchy and is an important economic

destination competitiveness and human development and explored whether governance and human agency play a part in shaping their relationship. The study argues that destination competitiveness is, in fact, intrinsically linked to human development and that the two are mutually dependent.

#### EMPOWERING RESIDENTS THROUGH OPPORTUNITIES

The theoretical implications of this study suggest that destination competitiveness and human development can be mutually reinforcing in upper-middle-income countries, and that human agency

This research points to the idea that the promotion of tourism through higher spending could generate the necessary resources and opportunities needed for sustained human development. However, it is imperative to ensure that resources and opportunities resulting from tourism promotion are effectively allocated to improve public resources, tourist infrastructure, hygiene and public health, and public areas and facilities.

Destination managers should be honest and transparent about the real economic, social, and environmental costs of tourism and develop country-specific plans and programs to tackle these problems.

#### FOUNDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Findings from this study support three requisites: empowering people through occupational opportunities, promoting tourism toward sustaining human development, and placing agency over governance regarding public resource allocation.

For Malaysia specifically, this means that improving its brand image on these issues is crucial. However, Croes and Ridderstaat warn against blindly applying best practices and instead factoring in human diversity and country-specific circumstances.

This research sets the stage for further investigations focusing on urban versus rural destinations and exploring gender roles to develop a better understanding of the nature and impact of such relationships.

and trade link in the region. Malaysia has successfully transformed itself from a producer of raw materials to an upper-middle-income country and growing tech hub. The country's tourism industry is on the rise and in 2019, it accounted for 13.3% of the GDP with 26 million arrivals during that year alone.

In their research, Croes and Ridderstaat examined the interactions between

supersedes governance regarding tourism-related public resource allocation choices. Additionally, results identify that it is critical to empower residents through occupational opportunities for the benefit of reinforcing the link between destination competitiveness and human development. It also revealed that, surprisingly, there is a lack of governance in the relationship between destination competitiveness and human development.

# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Professor Robertico Croes and Associate Professor Jorge Ridderstaat examine the impact of human agency on destination competitiveness and human development.

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## PERSONAL RESPONSE

### **How do gender roles play a part in the relationship between destination competitiveness and human development?**

Gender dynamics intersect with tourism competitiveness and human development in a nuanced relationship, where addressing gender disparities becomes pivotal for sustainable progress. In the tourism sector, equal access to occupational opportunities, regardless of gender, is essential, as it empowers individuals, fostering economic stability, skill development, and social empowerment. Moreover, promoting tourism initiatives that prioritize gender equality enhances local livelihoods and contributes to inclusive growth and social equity. This can involve showcasing women's traditional skills and crafts through tourism experiences or ensuring equal representation of women in leadership roles within the tourism industry. Gender-inclusive governance practices further ensure equitable distribution of tourism-related benefits and resources, fostering participatory decision-making processes. By implementing policies promoting equal pay, parental leave, and representation within tourism, destinations can create a more equitable environment.



## Dr. Robertico Croes



Robertico Croes is a Professor of Tourism Economics and Management at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. He is the editor of the Rosen Research Review. His research interests are in Tourism Economics, Human Development, Poverty, and Tourism Management with a special interest in small and developing economies.

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## Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat



Jorge Ridderstaat is an Associate Professor at Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, USA. 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, encyclopaedia entries, and conference papers).

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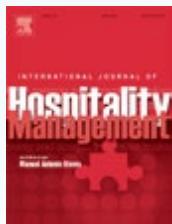
Malaysia's tourism is on the rise; in 2019, it accounted for 13.3% of the GDP.

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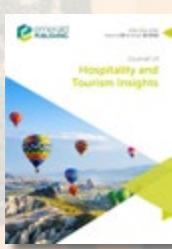


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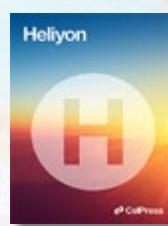
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# DICK POPE SR. INSTITUTE FOR TOURISM STUDIES



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](http://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.

# MODELING CUSTOMER RESPONSES TO ALTERNATIVE GOLF EXPERIENCES



With alternative golf experiences, the industry hopes to strengthen a wider interest in golf.

Golf is often perceived as outdated, and its popularity has declined in recent years, particularly among younger generations. To stimulate interest in this sport, some recreational venues have introduced alternative golf experiences relying on indoor golf simulators or other innovative set-ups. Dr. Jeeyeon Jeannie Hahm, Dr. David J. Kwun, and Dr. Juhee Kang at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management recently set out to model the satisfaction and behavioral responses of people who engaged in alternative golf experiences, building on a framework known as the Mehrabian-Russell model.

Over the past decades, the golf industry has faced considerable challenges due to the sport's declining popularity and difficulty recruiting newer generations. The strict entry requirements posed by traditional golf facilities, such as expensive golf club fees and fewer options for beginners, often limit people's access to the sport.

Recent efforts within the golf industry have been aimed at retaining existing customers while also attracting new players and encouraging beginners to further improve their skills. The COVID-19 pandemic revived some interest in golf as more people started perceiving it as a safe outdoor activity while social distancing measures were in place.

To strengthen this renewed interest in the sport and encourage younger generations to start playing, some venues introduced alternative golf experiences, such as indoor golf simulators. Research investigating how these

alternative golfing experiences are received and what draws players to these new options could help to enhance future implementations, ultimately contributing to the golf industry's growth and renovation.

Dr. Jeeyeon Jeannie Hahm, Dr. David J. Kwun, and Dr. Juhee Kang, Associate Professors at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, recently carried out a study aimed at better understanding the environmental stimuli and recreational motivation that drive consumers towards alternative golf options, as well as the satisfaction and behavioral responses of people who tried these emerging golf-inspired experiences. Their paper introduces an extended version of the Mehrabian-Russell (M-R) model, a framework used to study how consumers respond to environmental stimuli, which specifically focuses on alternative golf.

#### **AN EXTENDED MEHRABIAN-RUSSELL MODEL**

The M-R model is a psychological framework introduced by Albert Mehrabian and James A. Russell. This framework can be used to better understand and describe how people respond to environmental stimuli, both in terms of their behavior and emotional responses.

The M-R model has been widely used in both psychology and marketing research, where it can help to examine the impact of environmental stimuli on specific consumption behaviors (e.g., how much a consumer purchases a specific product or uses a specific service). In their paper, Hahm, Kwun, and Kang specifically used this framework to examine consumer evaluations of alternative golf facilities.

The traditional version of the M-R model proposes that environmental stimuli impact people's emotions, which in turn influence their behavioral intentions (i.e., their intention to engage in particular behaviors). In recent years, this model has been adapted for marketing research by integrating additional elements that are closely related to consumer behavior and service evaluations.

Hahm, Kwun, and Kang further extended the model by including environmental attributes, behavioral responses, and moderating factors specific to alternative golf experiences. In terms of the environmental stimuli influencing



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consumer behavior, their model considers the physical environments where alternative golf experiences take place, the quality of food and beverages served at these venues, and the overall quality of the service offered.

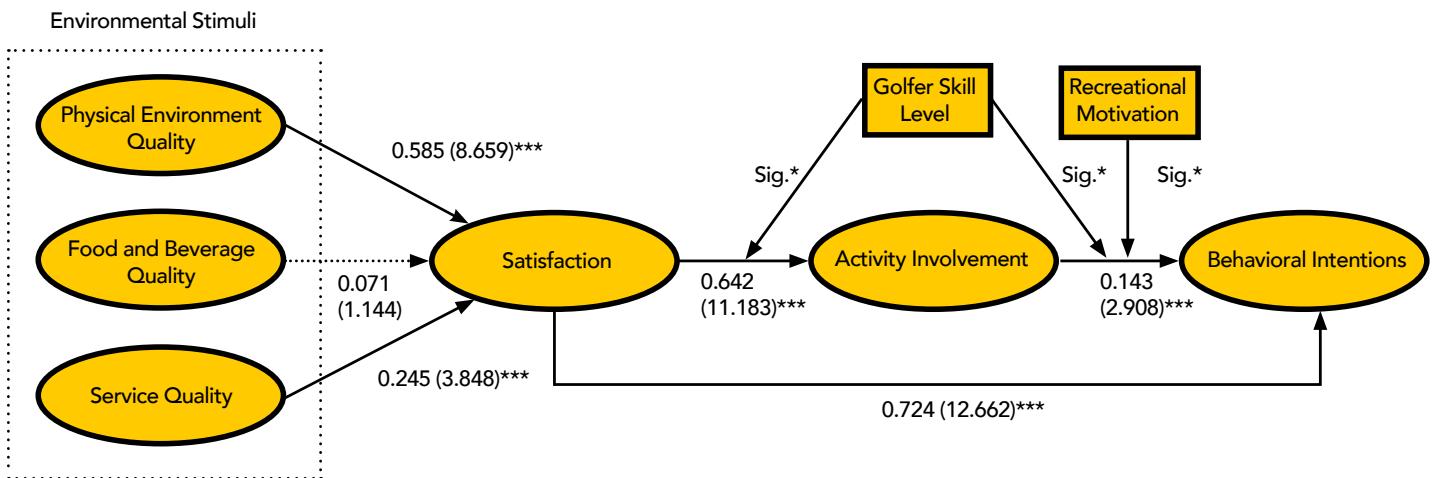
These environmental stimuli are proposed to affect the satisfaction of consumers and, consequently, their behavioral responses. The behavioral responses examined in this study include both people's activity involvement (i.e., how relevant it is for them to play alternative golf and visit sites where they can do this) and their behavioral intentions (i.e., to what extent they intend to play alternative golf).

Finally, the team's model considers factors that could moderate the effects of environmental stimuli on people's behavioral responses. These effects include the recreational motivation that can drive people towards alternative golf experiences and the golfer's skill level.

#### **TESTING DIFFERENT HYPOTHESES**

Building on previous hospitality and marketing research, the researchers set out to test various hypotheses. Firstly, they hypothesized that an alternative golf venue's physical environment, the quality of food and drinks it offered, and the overall quality of its services would positively affect customers' satisfaction.

They then postulated that the consumers' satisfaction would positively affect both their activity involvement and behavioral intentions, suggesting that activity involvement would also positively affect behavioral intentions. Finally, the team hypothesized that recreational motivation would moderate the relationship between activity involvement and behavioral intentions. In contrast, a golfer's skill level would moderate the relationship between a customer's satisfaction with the service and activity involvement.



Results of structural equation modeling  
(Significance \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ ).

Hahm, Kwun, and Kang created a questionnaire designed to test these hypotheses and distributed it online to people over 18 years of age who had visited an alternative golf venue in the United States within the past 12 months. The researchers analyzed the answers of 493 survey respondents who had visited an alternative golf facility: 63.7% had visited Topgolf; Drive Shack (19.3%), ReaLiTEE Golf (8.1%), Nextlinks (6.3%), and 2.6% had visited 4ore.

significantly impact the customers' satisfaction was the quality of food and beverages served at venues. All the other factors analyzed (i.e., the physical environment and service quality) positively impacted the visitors' satisfaction.

Secondly, as the team had hypothesized, the satisfaction of customers was found to significantly influence their activity involvement and behavioral intentions, with activity involvement also influencing behavioral intentions. Notably, they also found that the interaction between recreational motivation and activity involvement predicted the behavioral

## SHAPING THE FUTURE OF ALTERNATIVE GOLF

Overall, the study offers valuable insight into the factors that influence customers' satisfaction with alternative golf services and their behavioral responses to these experiences. The M-R extended model they devised has proved to be a valuable framework to unpack the feedback from those who tried alternative golf.

This model could be used in other golf-specific hospitality studies or help examine reviews by customers of a particular alternative golf venue. The results could also inform the design and implementation of new alternative golf experiences.

Specifically, their findings could inspire business owners to invest more in their venue's physical environment and the services offered. Even if food and drinks were found to have no positive effect on the satisfaction of customers, the researchers think that venues should not entirely disregard them, as they can add value to the overall service provided.

While this study suggests that alternative golf venues attract both experienced and new golfers, the satisfaction of expert golfers appears to be higher than that of beginners. This observation could encourage owners and managers to introduce additional activities that meet the needs of beginners and novices, as well as competitions and advanced simulations for seasoned golf players.

Collectively, the suggestions put forward by the Rosen researchers could contribute to the future growth and innovation of the golf industry, potentially helping to revitalize a sport that is sometimes perceived as elitist and old-fashioned.

## THIS MODEL COULD BE USED IN OTHER GOLF-SPECIFIC HOSPITALITY STUDIES OR COULD HELP TO EXAMINE REVIEWS BY CUSTOMERS OF A PARTICULAR ALTERNATIVE GOLF VENUE.

More than half of the respondents were female, and the vast majority were White, followed by Black or African American. 20.7% of the study participants identified as new golfers, 16.6% as beginners, 15.6% as intermediate, 15.6% as novices, and 9.9% as 'beginner plus'. Out of the 493 respondents, 69 (14%) had never played traditional golf before, and only 36 (7.3%) identified as advanced players.

intentions of respondents. Specifically, people with a high motivation to have fun and who were more engaged in the alternative golf experience had stronger behavioral intentions to play the sport than those with a low recreational motivation.

The researchers also found that the skill level of golfers moderated the relationship between satisfaction and activity involvement. Advanced golfers who were satisfied with the experience tended to be more involved in the sport than beginners. Moreover, advanced golfers who were engaged in the alternative golf experience appeared more likely to revisit the venue than engaged beginners.

## MAIN FINDINGS AND INTERACTION EFFECTS

Upon analysis of the collected survey responses, the Rosen researchers found that they had confirmed most of their hypotheses. The only environmental factor that did not

# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Jeeyeon Jeannie Hahm, Dr. David J. Kwun, and Dr. Juhee Kang aimed to better understand the environmental stimuli and recreational motivation that drive consumers towards alternative golf options, as well as the satisfaction and behavioral responses of people who tried these emerging golf-inspired experiences.

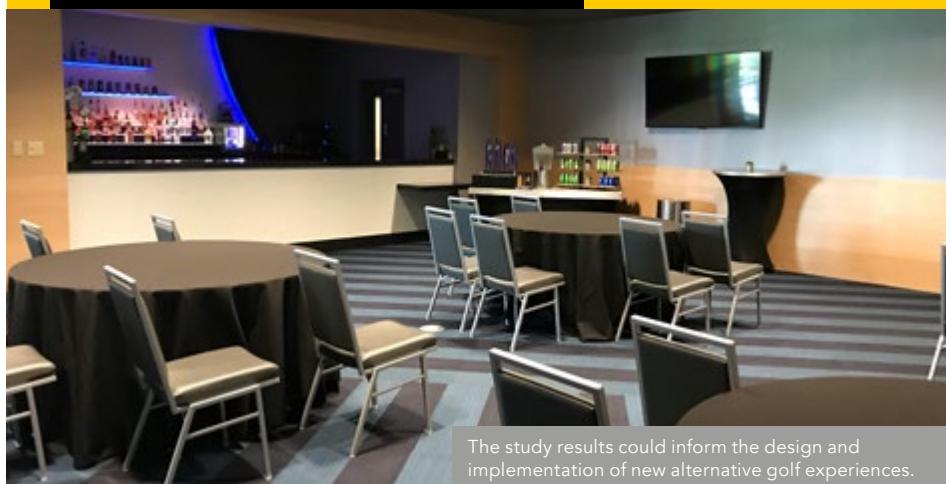
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## PERSONAL RESPONSE

### **How could your extended Mehrabian-Russell model inform the future development of alternative golf experiences?**

Our study underscores the pivotal role of activity involvement within the extended model. This activity involvement was gauged not only through golf participation but also by engaging in social gatherings and philanthropic endeavors at alternative golf venues. The findings of our research indicate that it is imperative for alternative golf facilities to prioritize visitor satisfaction with the environmental stimuli to enhance engagement in the array of activities available, consequently fostering repeat visits and positive recommendations for the facility. Notably, this effect was more pronounced among experienced golfers compared to novices. Hence, alternative golf facilities ought to curate appealing products and services tailored to the varying skill levels of golf consumers. Specifically, offering events and services customized for advanced golfers, such as competitions for low handicappers, club fitting sessions, demonstrations of new golf clubs, swing analyses, and golf tutorials, can prove highly effective.



The study results could inform the design and implementation of new alternative golf experiences.

## Dr. Jeeyeon Jeannie Hahm

Dr. Jeeyeon Jeannie Hahm is an Associate Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. She earned her M.S. and Ph.D. in Hospitality and Tourism Management from UCF. Dr. Hahm teaches event-related courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Her research interests include film-induced tourism, sense of community of event attendees, destination image and marketing, mega event image, and consumer behavior in tourism and events.



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## Dr. David Kwun

Dr. David Kwun received his Ph.D. in Foodservice and Lodging Management at Iowa State University. He teaches marketing and strategy-related courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels. His research areas are marketing, consumer behavior, and brand management. In addition, he serves as the M.S. Program Coordinator. Prior to joining Rosen College faculty, he was a faculty member and served as a Program Director in Hospitality Management at the University of Mississippi.



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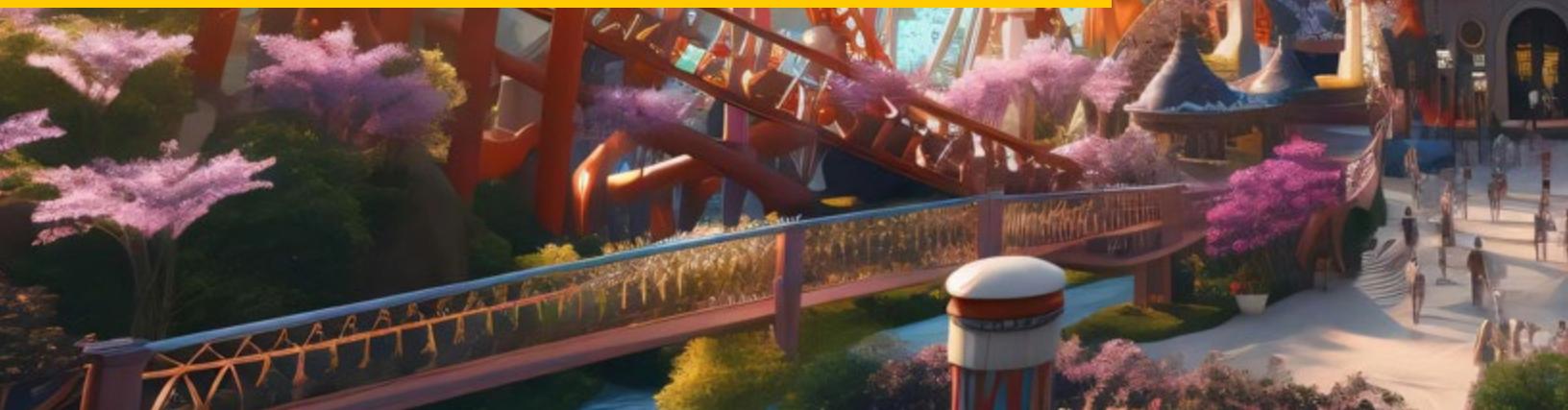
## Dr. Juhee Kang

Dr. Juhee Kang joined Rosen College of Hospitality Management in 2012. She earned her Ph.D. in Hospitality Management from Iowa State University. She is a Certified Hospitality Educator. Dr. Kang teaches Hospitality and Tourism Marketing at the Rosen College. Her research interests have focused on social media marketing, consumer behavior, brand image, and brand experience.



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# CONSUMER ATTITUDES TOWARD DYNAMIC PRICING STRATEGIES IN THEME PARKS



Admission prices account for more than half of theme parks' overall revenue. Many theme parks employ dynamic pricing policies to increase their earnings, control peak time attendance, and improve visitors' experience. Professor Ady Milman and Professor Asli D.A. Tasci from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management examine the impact of dynamic pricing on the theme park industry. They introduce scenarios when guests are aware and unaware that they are paying more or less than other customers and analyze their trust, brand loyalty, and perceived value.

**S**ince the early 1980s, the hotel and airline industries have used dynamic pricing to improve their inventory control and increase their profits. Dynamic pricing involves changing the price of a product or service at various times, points of sale, or for different segments of the market. Also known as revenue management and yield management, dynamic pricing was initially practiced by retailers to cope with the challenges of managing their stock of perishable goods, with price changes driven by inventory and expiration dates.

## DYNAMIC PRICING IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY

Hospitality and tourism are among many economic sectors employing dynamic pricing to maximize their revenues. Although the services marketed by hospitality and tourism businesses differ from physical goods, hotel rooms, airline seats, and cruise cabins can still be considered perishable with expiration dates, and if left unsold, are described as losses. Factors including variable demand, perishable inventory, advanced reservations, fixed capacity, and various market segments influence revenue management.

Technological advances enable businesses to collect their customers' data and analyze it to accurately predict what prices their customers are willing to pay and implement price changes accordingly.

Over the past twenty years, several successful applications of dynamic pricing strategies have inspired research investigating the impact of these tactics on consumer perceptions and behavior. These include how customers perceive price fairness, their willingness to purchase, and how these strategies affect their trust and satisfaction. While some studies have explored how dynamic pricing affects various tourism and hospitality businesses, its impact on the theme park industry has been ignored until now.

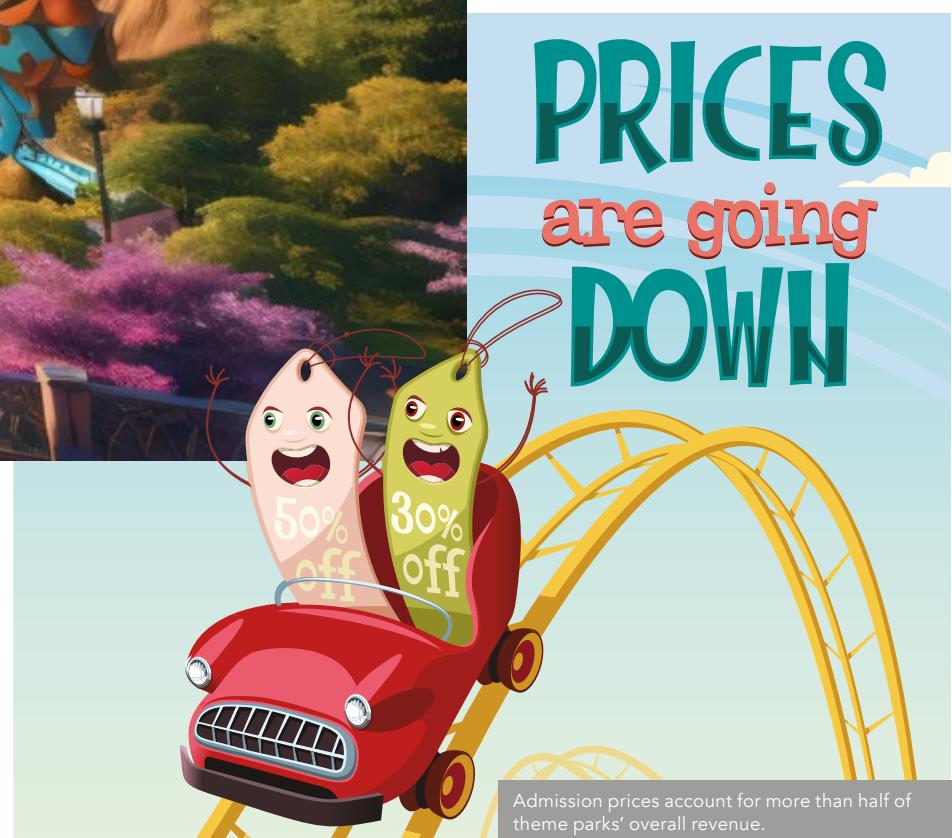
To increase their earnings, many theme parks employ dynamic pricing strategies. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management Professors Ady Milman and Asli D.A. Tasci explain the impact of dynamic admission prices on theme park visitors' behavior. They assess consumer



trust, brand loyalty, and perceived value under six different pricing conditions. These include scenarios when guests are aware and unaware that they are paying more or less than other customers.

#### MANAGING PRICES IN THEME PARKS

Dynamic pricing has been adopted by theme parks to improve revenue and manage crowds by persuading consumers to swap their visits from busy crowded days to less-crowded ones,



Admission prices account for more than half of theme parks' overall revenue.

## PARTICIPANTS DISPLAYED THE BEST POSITIVE ATTITUDES AND LOYALTY WHEN THEY KNEW THAT THEY WERE PAYING LESS THAN SOME OTHER CUSTOMERS.

so visitors aren't turned away. For instance, Disney launched a type of dynamic pricing for its parks in 2018, when they offered 'value', 'regular', and 'peak' prices that depended on three categories of dates.

The researchers used a cross-sectional survey design to explore consumers' attitudes toward various dynamic pricing strategies employed in theme parks. They designed a structured survey with a screening question to find

participants who had visited a theme park within the last year. Respondents were given a list of North America's most popular theme parks and asked to indicate all the theme parks that they have visited, and then pick out the last one they had visited. Participants were asked how many times and at what time of year they usually visit theme parks within a twelve-month period.

#### DYNAMIC PRICING STRATEGIES

Respondents were then randomly assigned to 6 scenarios. The first scenario was a control scenario with no dynamic pricing. Scenarios 2 to 6 involved different dynamic pricing strategies. Participants allocated to scenario 2

**PRICES**  
are going  
**DOWN**

were aware that they were paying a different price to some other visitors, but they did not know if their prices were higher or lower than others. In scenario 3, visitors knew that they were paying less than some other customers. Those allocated to scenario 4 knew that they were paying more than some other visitors. In scenario 5, customers knew that they were paying more than some other visitors, but part of the extra payment was going to a charity. Those assigned to scenario 6 knew that they were paying more than some others to support sustainability efforts such as refillable



Overall, participants displayed the best positive attitudes and loyalty when they knew that they were paying less than some other customers.

water bottles, sustainably sourced food, environmentally friendly containers, fair-trade products, waste management, recycling, and water conservation on site.

Participants were asked to imagine that they were visiting their last theme park again with their families and asked to answer the remaining questions based on their knowledge of the pricing strategies in their given scenarios. They were asked to rate their trust, perceived value, and brand loyalty on a 7-point agreement scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. They were also invited to rate their acceptance of the various pricing strategies that theme parks use with 1 = extremely unacceptable and 7 = extremely acceptable. The questionnaire concluded with some sociodemographic questions regarding their age, gender, state of residence, level of education, annual household income, marital status, the number of children under 18 in the household, and ethnicity.

with industry data showing a steady increase in the number of millennials visiting theme parks.

#### PARTICIPANT PROFILES

Participants were grouped by scenario and the average age for each group ranged from 32 to 38 years. There were more males than females in each group and more than half of the respondents had a college or university degree. Approximately half of the respondents were married. Between a quarter and a third of all participants had children under 18, averaging 1 or 2 children per household. More than half of the participants had an annual income between \$35,000 and \$75,000. Nearly three-quarters of the respondents in each group were White.

The most popular theme parks visited were Florida's four Disney theme parks, California's two Disney theme parks, and Universal Studios Florida. The respondents' last theme park participants visited in the past year included Disneyland in California, Disney's Animal

the six groups, brand trust was highest when there was no dynamic pricing employed (scenario 1), and lowest when customers knew that they were paying more than others (scenario 4). Introducing charity and sustainability factors resulted in slight increases in consumers' level of trust.

Consumers paying less saw more value than those paying more. Moreover, it appears that the participants' perceived emotional, financial, and reputational values were highest in scenario 1, when dynamic pricing was not used, but social value was highest in scenario 3 when customers knew that they were paying less. All four perceived values were lowest in scenario 4 when consumers knew that they were paying more. Consumers paying less had greater intentions to recommend and revisit the parks than those paying more, although they were not willing to pay any more. Visitors' reactions to paying premium prices showed little change when they knew that the premium went towards charitable causes or sustainability.

#### WHEN IS DYNAMIC PRICING ACCEPTABLE?

Overall, participants displayed the best positive attitudes and loyalty when they knew that they were paying less than some other customers. They thought that charging lower admission for in-state residents, frequent visitors, and off-season visitors was highly acceptable. Conversely, charging these visitors more was seen as acceptable if part of their payment was contributed to charity. Some consumers choose to visit theme parks at times such as national vacations when admission prices are higher, but they are unlikely to approve of the dynamic pricing strategies that increase the cost of their visits.

While decision-makers are aware of the negative effects of dynamic pricing strategies, they use these strategies to control peak-time attendance and to improve visitor experience. However, consumers may have resentment due to what they perceive to be unfair policy. Loyal customers feel that they should be paying lower prices, but many theme parks are practicing the opposite. Professors Milman and Taschi recommend that these businesses consider strategies to avoid consumer bitterness, such as advertising their involvement with charities and sustainability and offering transparent reasons for their dynamic pricing policies.

## CONSUMERS PAYING LESS FOR ADMISSION TICKETS HAD MORE TRUST THAN THOSE PAYING MORE.

The researchers aimed to have 50 respondents for each of the six scenarios. Following data cleaning, the study had 286 valid surveys with between 47 and 49 respondents per scenario. They analyzed the data using SPSS software to generate frequencies, descriptive statistics, a one-way ANOVA test, and a chi-square test. Respondent characteristics were consistent

Kingdom in Florida, Universal Studios Florida, SeaWorld in Orlando, and Busch Gardens in Virginia. In all groups, the respondents' theme park visits corresponded with reported U.S. theme park annual visitation patterns.

#### TRUST, VALUE, AND BRAND LOYALTY

Consumers paying less for admission tickets had more trust than those paying more. Across

# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Ady Milman and Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci investigate consumer attitudes toward dynamic pricing strategies in the theme park industry.

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## PERSONAL RESPONSE

### What has been the most surprising aspect of your research into dynamic pricing in theme parks?

Visitors' reactions to paying premium prices showed little change when they knew that the premium went towards charitable causes or sustainability.

## Dr. Ady Milman



Dr. Ady Milman is a Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. His teaching and research expertise includes theme park and attraction management, consumer behavior, experience management, and more. He is frequently invited to speak internationally, is a recipient of several awards, and serves on editorial boards.

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## Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci



Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci is a Professor in the field of tourism and hospitality marketing at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. After receiving her doctoral degree (destination marketing) from Michigan State University in 2003, she worked in Turkey, Hong Kong, and the U.S.A. Her research interests include tourism and hospitality marketing, particularly consumer behavior. She completed several studies measuring destination image and branding with a cross-cultural perspective.

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Rosen Research Focus | Suja Chaulagain, Nan Hua & Youcheng Wang

# DECODING PATIENT DECISIONS

The impact of perceived value on medical hotel stays

UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management's academic luminaries, including Assistant Professor Suja Chaulagain, Professor Nan Hua, and Professor Youcheng Wang, probe the decision-making facets influencing stays at medical hotels. Their incisive research decodes how perceived benefits like convenience, along with perceived risks and overall perceived value, shape the modern patient's choices in the evolving healthcare landscape.

In an era where health tourism is becoming increasingly mainstream, a pioneering study by Assistant Professor Suja Chaulagain, Professors Nan Hua and Youcheng Wang, and Dr. Melissa Farboudi Jahromi offers groundbreaking insights into the burgeoning concept of medical hotels. Their research ventures into the intricate dynamics influencing patients' decisions to opt for medical hotels—a hybrid hospitality service that caters to the health and comfort needs of medical patients.

Building upon a comprehensive analysis of customer value and its pivotal role in shaping consumer choices, the study meticulously examines the multifaceted factors that compel individuals to choose medical hotels over traditional healthcare facilities or standard hotels. It delves into the core elements of perceived value, including the quality of medical care, the level of comfort and hospitality, accessibility to medical services, and the overall cost-benefit analysis from the perspective of patients. By

exploring these dimensions, the research illuminates how medical hotels have evolved to offer a unique amalgamation of healthcare and hospitality, providing a serene and recuperative environment that significantly enhances patient satisfaction and intent to stay. This novel insight into consumer behavior within the niche market of health tourism underscores the growing importance of integrating patient care with hospitality services to meet the evolving demands of health-conscious travelers.

## THE NEXUS OF HEALTHCARE AND HOSPITALITY

The intersection of healthcare and hospitality within medical hotels is not only a response to evolving patient demands but also a testament to the shifting paradigms in the healthcare industry. As the emphasis on patient-centric care intensifies, these establishments provide a sanctuary where



space that transcends the clinical atmosphere of traditional hospitals. The research delves deeper into the psychological and emotional benefits of such an environment, positing that the blend of these two domains could lead to better health outcomes and elevated patient morale.

### UNPACKING THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The research team proposed a theoretical framework focusing on three primary areas: perceived benefits, perceived risks, and perceived value. Perceived benefits, such as the convenience of being in a homelike environment and the potential savings compared to prolonged hospital stays, were hypothesized to bolster the perceived

multiple variables, the team analyzed responses from 351 patients who had recently stayed in a hospital overnight. Their findings painted a clear picture: convenience and potential savings were significant draws, enhancing the perceived value of medical hotels. Conversely, performance risk and psychological risk were deterrents, potentially overshadowing the perceived benefits.

### THE POSITIVE LOOP OF VALUE AND INTENTION

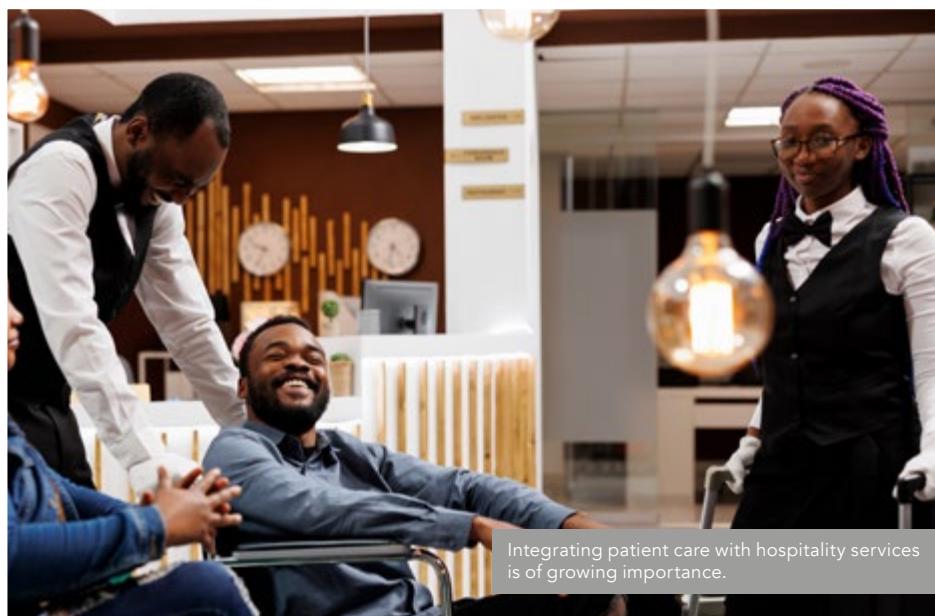
A key discovery from the study was the positive correlation between the perceived value of medical hotels and the intention of patients to choose these facilities for future medical needs. This relationship underscores the importance of perceived value in the

## THE RESEARCH ILLUMINATES HOW MEDICAL HOTELS HAVE EVOLVED TO OFFER A UNIQUE AMALGAMATION OF HEALTHCARE AND HOSPITALITY.

decision-making process of healthcare consumers, which can be a deciding factor in the growth of the medical hotel industry. The concept of perceived value extends beyond just the financial aspect; it encompasses the emotional comfort, privacy, personalization of services, and the seamless integration of high-quality medical care with exceptional hospitality services. This perceived value becomes a powerful metric that could predict and drive the success of the medical hotel industry. It suggests that when patients feel that their individual needs are met with dignity and their stay is coupled with the assurance of professional healthcare, their intention to return or recommend the facility to others increases. The research thereby pinpoints perceived value as a key lever for medical hotels, proposing that by enhancing value through strategic services and empathetic care, medical hotels can foster a loyal customer base that sees these facilities not just as a service, but as a preferred choice for holistic healing and wellbeing.

### NAVIGATING LIMITATIONS AND LOOKING FORWARD

While the study marks a significant stride in understanding the healthcare hospitality sector, it acknowledges its limitations—namely, the reliance on patients' perceptions



medical efficiency meets the comfort of a tailored hotel experience. The study seeks to decode the intricacies of this choice, examining the allure of medical hotels in providing a semblance of normalcy and autonomy to patients undergoing treatment. The confluence of professional healthcare services with the luxuries and conveniences of a hotel setting emerges as a significant driver of patient preference, offering a recuperative

value of medical hotels. On the flip side, perceived risks—including concerns about the adequacy of medical care (performance risk) and psychological discomfort associated with medical treatments—might detract from their appeal.

Utilizing structural equation modeling (SEM), a sophisticated statistical technique that helps to understand the relationship between

The healthcare landscape is evolving.



rather than experiences. Not all respondents had previously stayed at a medical hotel, which means their perceptions could differ significantly from the actual experience.

The researchers advocate for future studies to delve deeper, considering other factors that might influence perceived value and behavioral intentions, such as personal traits and contextual variables. They call upon future scholars to broaden the scope of research to include these and other unexplored factors.

#### **BRIDGING GAPS, BUILDING FUTURES**

This pivotal study illuminates critical pathways for synergy between the healthcare and hospitality sectors, especially within the burgeoning domain of medical tourism. The detailed insights offer a roadmap for medical hotel operators and healthcare providers to navigate the intricacies of the medical tourism market effectively. By delving into the nuances of customer value, the research underscores the importance of balancing perceived risks against benefits. This balance is not merely a business consideration; it is a cornerstone for cultivating trust and satisfaction among patients who travel for medical care.

For operators in the medical hotel industry, these findings are more than empirical data; they represent a clarion call to fine-tune services and offerings to align with patient expectations and needs. The strategic mitigation of risks—be it concerns about

clinical outcomes, privacy, or service quality—paired with the amplification of benefits such as convenience, comfort, and comprehensive care, could be decisive factors in a patient's decision to choose a medical hotel.

Moreover, the implications of this research ripple out to inform policy-making and strategic planning. Policymakers and industry leaders are provided with evidence-based insights that can guide the development of health tourism policies. These policies, if sculpted with a keen understanding of patient psychology and the determinants of customer value, can bolster the competitiveness of a region as a medical tourism destination.

## **THE RESEARCH TEAM PROPOSED A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOCUSING ON THREE PRIMARY AREAS: PERCEIVED BENEFITS, PERCEIVED RISKS, AND PERCEIVED VALUE.**

Strategically, this could lead to an infusion of innovative designs in healthcare service delivery that prioritize patient wellbeing and satisfaction. The concept of 'empathetic and patient-centered care' emerges as a central theme, advocating for services that extend beyond clinical excellence to include emotional support and holistic care. In essence, the study advocates for a future where health

tourism is not just about crossing borders for treatment but is an integrated, patient-centric experience that begins the moment a patient considers traveling for medical care.

By championing a customer value perspective, the research offers a lens through which medical hotels and healthcare providers can envision and enact a future where the health and comfort of patients are paramount. It's a future that hinges on bridging gaps between patient expectations and service delivery, and ultimately, on building robust, patient-focused futures in the realm of health tourism.

#### **A STEP TOWARDS INFORMED DECISION-MAKING**

Assistant Professor Suja Chaulagain, Professor Nan Hua, Professor Youcheng Wang, and Dr. Melissa Farboudi Jahromi have laid down a foundational piece of research that bridges the gap between theory and practice. Their work lights the way for medical hoteliers to craft experiences that resonate with patients' values, expectations, and needs.

As the healthcare landscape evolves, the harmonization of medical efficacy with the comfort of hospitality will likely become more pertinent. This study not only contributes a vital piece of knowledge to this emerging field but also spotlights the patient's voice in the narrative of healthcare innovation.

In conclusion, while medical hotels may still be in their infancy, the insights garnered from this study offer a promising glimpse into a future where health and hospitality converge to deliver care that is as comforting as it is curative. The work of Chaulagain, Hua, Wang, and Farboudi Jahromi marks not the end but the beginning of a journey towards comprehensively understanding and serving the modern patient's needs.

# RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Drs. Chaulagain, Hua, and Wang investigated patient choice dynamics for medical hotels, analyze customer value, and investigate decision-making processes for healthcare consumers.

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## PERSONAL RESPONSE

### **How did your personal experiences or observations in the healthcare industry lead you to investigate the role of perceived risks and benefits in patient choices for medical hotels?**

■ A hospital stay is often an unpleasant yet unavoidable experience for patients. However, during my tenure in the healthcare industry, I observed that integrating hospitality elements within healthcare environments can positively affect patient experience, reduce anxiety, and improve their comfort, ultimately enhancing their overall hospital stay experience. I also noted that the majority of patient complaints were related to the staff's hospitability, the environment of the facility, and the amenities and food services, which can be proactively addressed by adopting hospitality principles. Thus, a concerted effort to blend hospitality with healthcare could lead to significant improvements in patient satisfaction and overall healthcare outcomes. Medical hotels are great examples of such initiatives which combine medical care with hospitality services in a hotel-like environment and present a great alternative to traditional hospital stays. Thus, we initiated this study to understand patients' perception of perceived benefits and risks of staying in medical hotels. Our findings indicate that prospective patients consider both the negative and positive aspects of medical hotels when deciding whether to utilize them. As such, both the healthcare and hospitality industries, including medical tourism destinations, should articulate the benefits such as cost savings, convenience, and hospitable features of these facilities, and take steps to mitigate patient anxiety and psychological discomfort as they pursue innovative projects that merge elements of both sectors to improve service quality and enhance patient satisfaction. ■



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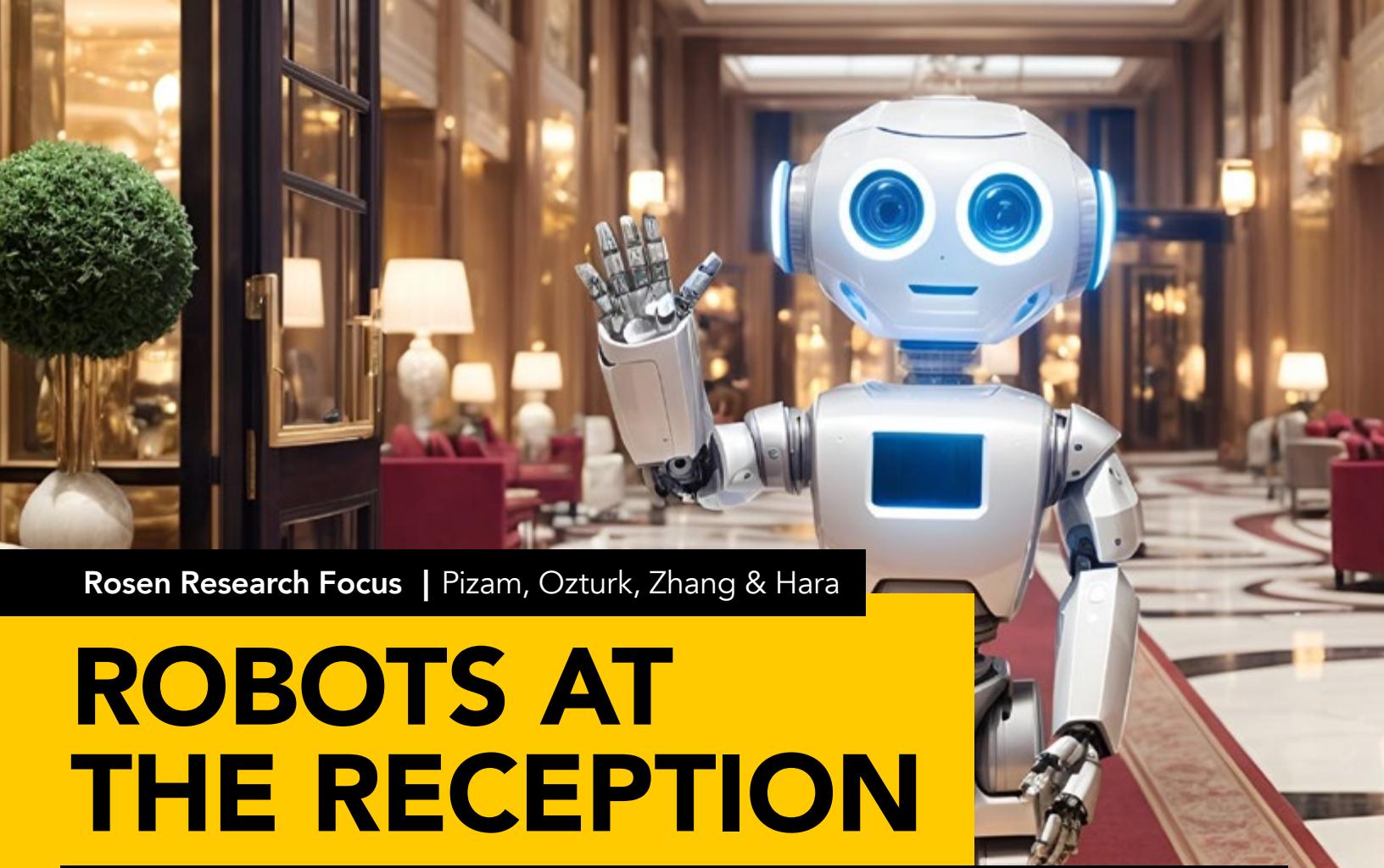
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Rosen Research Focus | Pizam, Ozturk, Zhang & Hara

# ROBOTS AT THE RECEPTION

## Understanding guests' apprehension about robotic technology

Hospitality, by its very nature, relies on the human touch, yet service robots have worked their way into hotels with promises of enhanced efficiency and novel guest experiences. The question is how far they can go. Professor Abraham Pizam and Dr. Ahmet Bulent Ozturk set out to explore how perceived risks and information security concerns influence guests' willingness to engage with robotic technology. What they learned provides a roadmap for managing the transition to a more automated service environment.

Imagine a future where you enter a hotel lobby, and instead of a smile and a warm greeting from a human concierge, a robot with a polished chrome surface and a touchscreen interface welcomes you. This scene is rapidly transitioning from science fiction to reality, and the hospitality industry stands on the brink of a robotic revolution. The allure of service robots promises a future of enhanced efficiency and novel guest experiences. However, their integration into such a profoundly personalized industry raises significant questions about guests' perceived

risks and security concerns. Pioneering this exploration into uncharted territories are UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Professor Abraham Pizam, Dr. Ahmet Ozturk and their co-authors. Their extensive study seeks to decode the complexities surrounding the deployment of robotic technologies in hotels.

Service robots have worked their way into widespread locales within the broader hospitality industry, including hotels, cruise ships, restaurants, and senior living facilities. Currently, their roles are limited, but their

future looks bright. With the remarkable development, spread, and acceptance of AI over recent years, robots, in general, are likely to become more prevalent and expansive in their roles. However, what sets hospitality—the service of welcoming, receiving, hosting, or entertaining guests—apart from many other industries is its reliance on the human touch. That doesn't necessarily mean hospitality robots will be relegated to non-guest-facing roles. The roles of service robots in hospitality will be determined by how guests feel about reaching out to them.

### UNDERSTANDING THE UNKNOWNS

The hesitation to accept robots in service roles is not merely a reluctance towards new technology but a multifaceted concern deeply rooted in perceived risks. New technology comes with sparkle and promise, but its novelty harbors deep unknowns. Understanding and addressing those unknowns is critical for any new technology's uptake. This is especially the case where robots and humans interact.



What is the role of perceived risk on customers' acceptance of service robots in the hotel industry?

Recognizing the profound implications of integrating service robots within an industry celebrated for its personalized services, Professor Pizam, Dr. Ozturk and their co-authors set out to explore how perceived risks and information security concerns influence guests' willingness to engage with such technology.

Their combined expertise bridges the gap between theoretical research and practical insights. Pizam, with his profound understanding of hospitality management, and Ozturk, with his analytical acumen as a specialist in IT adoption, together crafted a study that not only adds to academic literature but also offers tangible strategies for hospitality practitioners looking to navigate the new terrain of service robotics. Their inquiry centered on whether the efficiency and novelty offered by robots could harmoniously coexist with the high-touch ethos of hospitality.

The researchers constructed a methodological framework that was as thorough as it was

rigorous. Their study was structured around a survey designed to probe deep into the guests' psyche, exploring their concerns and expectations regarding hotel robotic services. They developed a series of questions that assessed guests' comfort levels with robots and their apprehensions about the physical safety, privacy, performance reliability, and economic implications of robotic interactions.

They deployed the survey targeting individuals who had recently stayed in a hotel—sometime in the previous 12 months—ensuring that the respondents were well-acquainted with the current dynamics of hotel services. This approach helped accurately reflect current guest expectations and their readiness to accept new technologies.

To ensure a diverse and culturally rich dataset, Pizam, Ozturk and their co-authors reached out to former hotel guests across eleven countries—the United States, United Kingdom, Turkey, Spain, Romania, Japan, Israel, India, Greece, Canada, and Brazil. This international scope was crucial because cultural predispositions can significantly influence technological acceptance. What emerged was a wealth of data from which the researchers hoped to paint a comprehensive picture of how hotel guests worldwide perceive the risks of engaging with hotel robots and issues of information security.

## PIZAM AND OZTURK CONSTRUCTED A METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK THAT WAS AS THOROUGH AS IT WAS RIGOROUS.

### TELLING THE STORY

Data on their own don't tell a story—the connections between the data do. The researchers were able to rigorously analyze the data by using structural equation modeling (SEM). This powerful statistical technique combines aspects of factor analysis and multiple regression analysis to explore complex causal relationships and construct models that include both observed (measurable) variables and latent (unobservable) constructs. For Pizam and Ozturk, this wasn't just about crunching numbers but about interpreting complex relationships within the data to extract meaningful insights.

The findings were revealing. Perceived risk emerged as a significant barrier. The study dissected this into four categories: physical, psychological, performance, and financial risks. Each played a role in shaping a guest's reluctance or readiness to interact with a robotic service. Guests expressed significant concerns about the potential for robots to malfunction, potentially leading to physical mishaps. Moreover, there was a palpable fear that interactions with robots might lack the personal touch and warmth quintessential to the hospitality experience, highlighting psychological risks.

Conversely, the study found that robust information security practices could dramatically enhance guest trust. It demonstrated that when guests trust that their personal information is secure, their willingness to engage with robotic services increases. This is a crucial finding, emphasizing the need for hotels to invest in advanced cybersecurity measures as they integrate more digital and robotic solutions into their operations.

An intriguing aspect of the study was how it spotlighted the role of guests' personal traits, like self-efficacy and innovativeness, in mediating the relationship between perceived risk and the acceptance of robots. Behavioral intentions are critical facilitating conditions. Guests who are confident in

their ability to use new technologies and those who are naturally inclined toward innovations are more likely to embrace robotic services. This points to a broader implication: education and familiarization could play critical roles in accelerating the adoption of robotics in hospitality.

### IMPLICATION AND INSIGHTS

Pizam and Ozturk's work offers profound insights for the hospitality industry as it navigates this new technological frontier. Their findings suggest that while integrating robots in service roles presents clear advantages in terms of efficiency and novelty, it also requires careful management of guest perceptions and concerns.

Their study emphasizes the need for hotels to invest in robust cybersecurity measures and communicate transparently with guests

Robots must enhance, not detract from the guest experience.



about how their data is protected. Additionally, the hospitality sector must address guests' psychological and performance-related apprehensions to ensure that the robotic revolution enhances rather than detracts from the guest experience.

As the hospitality industry continues to evolve, the insights provided by this study will undoubtedly play a crucial role in shaping strategies for robotic integration. The research highlights the importance of balancing technological advancements with an unwavering commitment to guest satisfaction and trust.

## THERE WAS A PALPABLE FEAR THAT INTERACTIONS WITH ROBOTS MIGHT LACK THE PERSONAL TOUCH AND WARMTH QUINTESSENTIAL TO THE HOSPITALITY EXPERIENCE, HIGHLIGHTING PSYCHOLOGICAL RISKS.

To this end, the study is not just an academic exercise but a beacon for the hospitality industry as it stands on the threshold of a technological revolution. The insights

from their research provide a roadmap for managing the transition to a more automated service environment, where guest acceptance is as much about managing perceptions of risk as it is about ensuring robust security protocols.

As robots begin to find their place in hotel receptions and corridors, the work of Pizam, Ozturk and their co-authors will undoubtedly continue to guide the industry toward a future where technology enhances human service rather than replaces it. In this brave new world of hospitality, understanding and addressing

## RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Professor Pizam, Dr. Ozturk and co-authors investigate the role of perceived risk and information security on customers' acceptance of service robots in the hotel industry.

### REFERENCES

Pizam, A., Ozturk, A.B. et al., (2024) The role of perceived risk and information security on customers' acceptance of service robots in the hotel industry, *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Volume 117, [doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103641](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2023.103641)

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## PERSONAL RESPONSE

### **Based on what you've learned, can you describe a hotel environment in the near future where robotic technology has been properly integrated into the service setting in a way that provides an efficient and memorable guest experience?**

It is feasible to envisage a hotel environment in the near future where robotic technology is seamlessly integrated into service settings to enhance efficiency and create a memorable guest experience.

In such a scenario, guests might be greeted by robot concierges upon arrival. These robots, equipped with advanced AI, could handle check-ins, answer inquiries, and provide personalized recommendations based on guest preferences and past behavior. This integration allows for a streamlined and highly personalized welcome experience, reducing wait times and increasing customer satisfaction.

Inside the hotel, robotic assistants could be used for room service, delivering food and amenities directly to guest rooms. These robots would navigate hallways autonomously, ensuring timely and efficient service delivery. Additionally, housekeeping robots could be employed to maintain cleanliness in both guest rooms and common areas, thereby upholding high standards of hygiene while minimizing human error. Furthermore, in dining settings, robotic servers could assist human staff by handling repetitive or heavy tasks, such as setting tables or carrying large trays, allowing human employees to focus on providing a more personalized and engaging service to guests.

Overall, the integration of service robots in hotel environments promises not only to increase operational efficiency but also to enhance the guest experience by offering services that are both innovative and responsive to individual needs. This futuristic vision aligns with a commitment to hospitality excellence, leveraging technology to meet and exceed guest expectations.

## Dr. Abraham Pizam

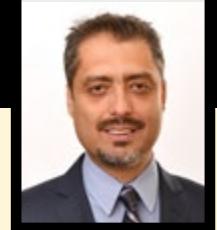


Abraham Pizam is the founding Dean (2000–2018) of Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. Currently he serves as Professor and Linda Chapin Eminent Scholar Chair in Tourism Management. Professor Pizam is widely known in the field of Hospitality and Tourism Management and has conducted research projects, lectured, and served as a consultant in more than 30 countries. He has authored more than 250 publications and published ten books. He is Editor Emeritus of the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* and serves on the editorial boards of 26 academic journals. Professor Pizam has conducted consulting and research projects for a variety of international, national, and regional tourism organizations. He holds a Master's degree from New York University and a Ph.D. from Cornell University, and is the recipient of several academic and industry awards.

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# The tenth edition of Rosen Research Review

## Celebrating a successful collaboration

Successful partnerships should be celebrated and honored. The Rosen Research Review began with a collaboration in 2019 between UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and Research Features. Through this ongoing collaboration, we showcase the successes and achievements of the Rosen College and share research findings that impact the tourism and hospitality industry. Now, as we mark the tenth edition of Rosen Research Review, Research Features reflects on an enjoyable partnership, the milestones achieved, knowledge shared, and the impact made.



**S**ince its first edition in early 2019, the vision for Rosen Research Review has been to showcase the strong research output of UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and to emphasize the college's strong relations with industry. Published twice yearly, each edition summarizes the latest research, successes, and accomplishments of the Rosen College researchers, alumni, and thought leaders.

### A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

The Rosen Research Review is created through a close partnership between the Rosen College and Research Features. As we mark a milestone tenth edition, Research Features takes time to reflect on our collaboration

with the Rosen College and to celebrate its achievements. The Rosen Research Review provides a platform for disseminating cutting-edge findings to a broad audience, including industry professionals, academic peers, and students. It translates complex research into accessible articles—bridging the gap between scholarly research and practical applications in the hospitality industry.

An international leader in their field of research, the Rosen College has had many successes and achievements. In each issue, we shine a light on diverse topics—from tourism management to hospitality technology—playing a crucial role in presenting the college's research to a global audience.

### OUR IMPACT

Research Features is proud to have supported the college's impact and reach within the global hospitality community. Via social media dissemination, Rosen Research Review has been well-received all across the world—making impact in more than 150 countries. Quantifying the magazine's reach through Research Features' social media channels, we have seen a strong engagement which continues to grow. The first edition in Summer 2019 was well-received with 147,025 impressions via X (formerly Twitter). By 2023, this had increased to more than one million impressions, with over four times as many click-throughs (13,845 click-throughs in 2023, compared to 2,494 in 2019).

Research Features is proud and privileged to partner with UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and excited to share their future research outputs through the Rosen Research Review.

Rachel Perrin, Ph.D.,  
Managing Editor, [ResearchFeatures.com](https://ResearchFeatures.com)





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