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ROSEN RESEARCH REVIEW

WINTER 2024

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A message from Dr. Robertico Croes

Innovating Today, Transforming Tomorrow

Welcome to the Winter 2024 edition of the *Rosen Research Review*, where we showcase pioneering research that addresses the evolving challenges and opportunities in the hospitality and tourism industries. This issue highlights the intersection of academic rigor and practical relevance, offering insights that aim to inform, inspire, and influence both scholarship and industry practices.

This year Rosen College celebrates being ranked the #1 hospitality and tourism program in the USA for the fifth consecutive year and advancing to #4 globally in the 2024 ShanghaiRanking Global Ranking of Academic Subjects. This achievement underscores the dedication of our faculty, staff, and students and highlights Rosen College's role as a leader in advancing the future of hospitality and tourism education. And as part of the University of Central Florida, a university for the future, Rosen College is embracing innovation and leveraging technology to transform service delivery, enhance guest experiences, and foster resilience in a rapidly evolving global landscape.

In this edition, you will find a diverse array of studies that explore critical topics shaping the industry. From norovirus and coronavirus risks in food service to consumer attitudes toward dynamic pricing in theme parks, the research presented here reflects the breadth and depth of our faculty's expertise. Other featured studies delve into the economic impact of tourism, the role of service robots in hospitality, the resilience of the hospitality industry during crises, and innovative perspectives on regenerative coastal tourism management.

We are also proud to showcase work that addresses pressing global issues, such as mitigating human trafficking at major events and the value of international internships from a European student perspective. These studies underscore the Rosen College community's commitment to fostering understanding, collaboration, and action on a global scale.

As always, our mission is to connect scholars, practitioners, and students with the latest research that drives the hospitality and tourism industries forward. We invite you to engage with the articles in this edition, share your thoughts, and apply these insights to your professional and academic endeavors.

Before we close, we want to acknowledge the passing of Harris Rosen, a visionary leader whose generosity and commitment built the foundation of our college. His influence shaped not just this institution but the future of hospitality education, leaving a legacy that will continue to guide us.

Thank you for joining us in exploring the cutting edge of hospitality and tourism research. We look forward to continuing this journey of discovery together in the seasons to come. From all of us at Rosen College, we wish you a joyful holiday season and all the best for a bright and successful 2025.

Robertico Croes

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



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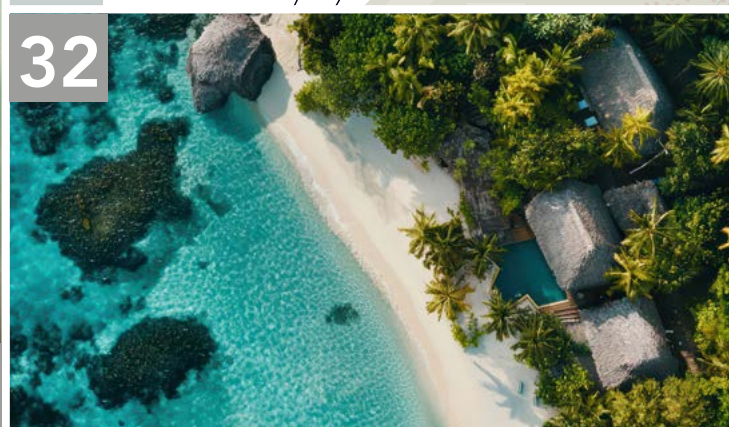
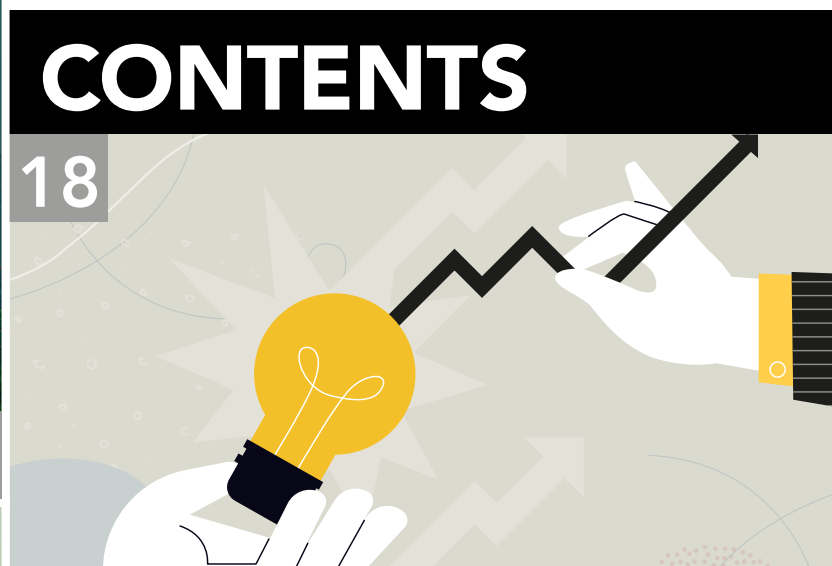
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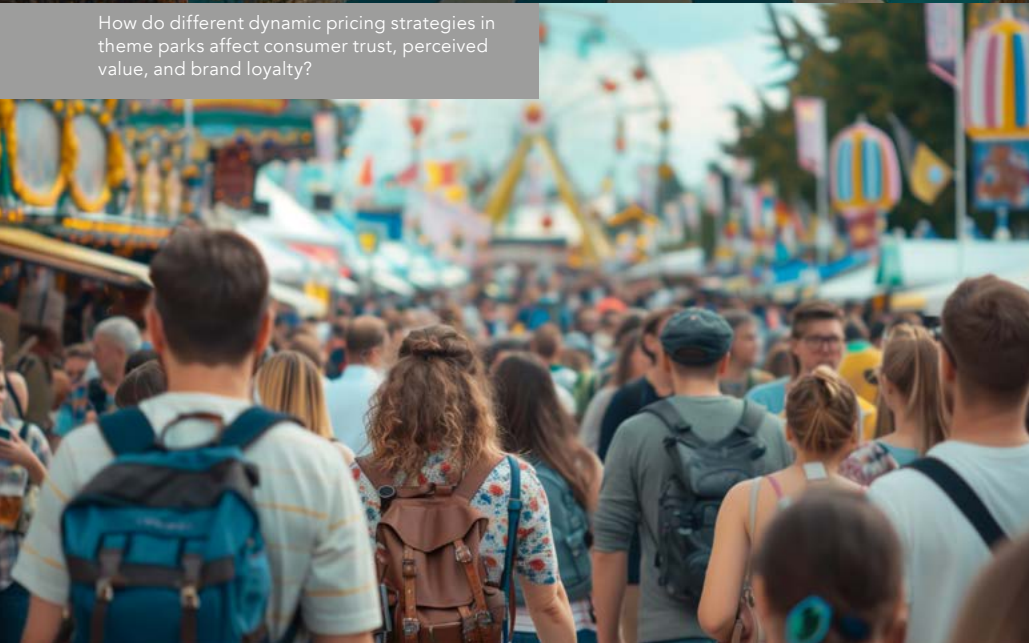
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INSIGHTS ON DYNAMIC PRICING IN THEME PARKS



How do different dynamic pricing strategies in theme parks affect consumer trust, perceived value, and brand loyalty?



In a recent study, Professors Ady Milman and Asli D.A. Tasci of Rosen College of Hospitality Management explore how theme park visitors respond to dynamic pricing strategies. Their research highlights the impact of pricing knowledge on consumer trust, perceived value, and brand loyalty, offering crucial insights for theme park operators looking to balance effective revenue management with customer satisfaction.



Dynamic pricing has become a staple in various industries, including travel, entertainment, and hospitality. It allows businesses to adjust prices based on factors like demand, time of consumption, and customer segmentation. For theme parks, where consumer experiences are at the heart of the business, pricing strategies not only impact revenue but also shape visitors' perceptions of value, trust, and brand loyalty. As these parks often compete on more than just attractions—such as customer service,

atmosphere, and overall value—the way pricing is communicated and implemented becomes a crucial component of the guest experience. Understanding how these pricing strategies affect customer loyalty and perceptions is critical for maintaining a competitive edge in an industry driven by repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations.

A recent study conducted by Professor Ady Milman and Professor Asli D.A. Tasci's research team at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management dives into the nuances of dynamic pricing in theme parks and its effects on consumer trust, perceived value, and brand loyalty. Recognizing that consumer behavior is influenced not just by how much they pay but also by how the pricing structure is framed, the researchers sought to uncover how

understanding which pricing models elicit the most positive consumer responses, theme park operators can better tailor their pricing strategies to boost customer satisfaction and encourage brand loyalty. The findings from this study are likely to have broader implications beyond theme parks, providing valuable insights for any industry where dynamic pricing is increasingly common. The work of Professors Milman and Tasci offers a critical exploration of how thoughtful pricing practices can contribute to both short-term revenue and long-term brand success.

KEY PRICING SCENARIOS EXPLORED

This Rosen College study introduced participants to six distinct dynamic pricing scenarios to gauge their reactions. In the first scenario, no dynamic pricing was used, and

THE RESEARCH OFFERS VALUABLE TAKEAWAYS FOR THEME PARK OPERATORS LOOKING TO IMPLEMENT DYNAMIC PRICING STRATEGIES WITHOUT ALIENATING THEIR CUSTOMER BASE.

transparency and the purpose behind price increases—such as contributions to charitable causes or sustainability initiatives—might affect visitors' willingness to pay premium prices and attitudes toward the brand.

The research was carried out through a scenario-based randomized online experiment, which exposed participants to six different dynamic pricing models. The scenarios ranged from traditional, non-dynamic pricing (where consumers do not know of price variations) to dynamic pricing models where consumers are informed if they are paying more or less, and where extra costs are directed towards charity or sustainability efforts. This method allowed the researchers to gather valuable data on how consumers' trust, perceived value, and loyalty fluctuate depending on the pricing model used and the transparency of the pricing information provided.

Contextually, this research is particularly relevant as the hospitality and theme park industries continue to adopt more sophisticated revenue management strategies to maximize profits while still aiming to build long-term relationships with consumers. By

visitors had no knowledge of paying more or less, which mirrors traditional pricing structures where there is no awareness of price variations. The second scenario involved dynamic pricing without informing visitors whether they were paying more or less compared to others. In the third scenario, dynamic pricing was used, and visitors were explicitly told they were paying less than others. The fourth scenario involved dynamic pricing where visitors were informed that they were paying more. The fifth scenario saw visitors paying more, but with the knowledge that the extra cost was directed toward charitable causes. Lastly, the sixth scenario involved dynamic pricing where visitors paid more, with the additional funds supporting sustainability initiatives within the theme park. Each of these scenarios provided insights into how pricing knowledge affects consumer behavior.

CONSUMER TRUST AND DYNAMIC PRICING

When it comes to consumer trust, the research revealed some fascinating patterns. Trust was highest in Scenario 1, where there was no dynamic pricing and visitors had no knowledge of paying more or less. Essentially, consumers



The research offers valuable takeaways for theme park operators looking to implement dynamic pricing strategies without alienating their customer base.

felt more comfortable with a stable and predictable pricing structure.

On the other hand, Scenario 4 (dynamic pricing where visitors knew they paid more) saw the lowest trust levels. Visitors were less inclined to trust the brand when they were aware they had paid more, even if they understood the reasoning behind the price fluctuations. Interestingly, this trust deficit improved slightly when the extra payment was directed towards sustainability efforts, suggesting that while consumers may be wary of paying more, they are more accepting if they know their money is contributing to a positive environmental impact.

PERCEIVED VALUE: WHAT REALLY MATTERS?

Perceived value followed a similar trend to trust. Once again, Scenario 1 ranked highest, as visitors felt they received fair value when there

efforts (Scenarios 5 and 6), their perceived value didn't drastically improve compared to simply knowing they paid more. This highlights that while altruistic causes are important, the personal impact on a visitor's wallet remains a significant factor in their perception of value.

THE INFLUENCE ON BRAND LOYALTY

Brand loyalty—measured through intentions to recommend the park and revisit it in the future—was similarly influenced by pricing knowledge. Scenario 3, where visitors knew they paid less, fostered the highest loyalty. This underscores the importance of perceived fairness and value in cultivating repeat customers.

Conversely, brand loyalty took a hit when visitors knew they paid more under dynamic pricing (Scenario 4). The frustration of paying a premium diminished their willingness to recommend the park or plan a return visit.

THEME PARK VISITORS GENERALLY PREFER STABLE PRICING MODELS AND TEND TO REACT NEGATIVELY WHEN THEY KNOW THEY'VE PAID MORE.

was no knowledge of paying more or less. On the flip side, perceived value was lowest in Scenario 4, where visitors were aware they had paid a premium.

However, the study also introduced the concept of social value—how consumers perceive the broader benefits of their purchase. Scenario 3, where visitors knew they paid less, resulted in the highest social value scores. Knowing they got a deal, visitors felt their purchase had more value, leading to higher satisfaction with the overall experience.

Notably, when visitors knew their extra payment was for charity or sustainability

Interestingly, however, willingness to pay a price premium wasn't significantly affected by any of the scenarios, suggesting that while visitors might grumble about dynamic pricing, they are still open to paying more under certain circumstances.

THE BIGGER PICTURE: IMPLICATIONS FOR THEME PARK OPERATORS

The research offers valuable takeaways for theme park operators looking to implement dynamic pricing strategies without alienating their customer base. One key recommendation is to maintain pricing transparency while keeping certain price fluctuations discreet. Consumers tend to trust and value their

experience more when they are unaware of paying more or less. As such, keeping pricing policies less overt could help prevent negative reactions associated with price discrepancies.

Additionally, the study highlights the potential for marketing campaigns centered around sustainability and charitable initiatives. While paying more for such causes didn't significantly boost perceived value or trust, the slight improvement in consumer sentiment suggests that these initiatives can still enhance the brand's image if communicated effectively. Theme parks might also consider broadening the scope of dynamic pricing beyond daily or weekly fluctuations, perhaps using more personalized, behavior-based pricing models that are harder to detect and therefore less likely to incite consumer resentment.

Finally, the study also touches on the importance of international research into dynamic pricing, as consumer reactions may vary across cultures and regions. For instance, visitors in one country might be more inclined to accept charitable or sustainability-based premiums than those in another, offering opportunities for more tailored pricing strategies.

NAVIGATING THE DYNAMIC PRICING LANDSCAPE

Dynamic pricing is undoubtedly a powerful tool for revenue management, but it comes with inherent risks to consumer trust, perceived value, and brand loyalty. As the study from Professors Milman and Asli D.A. Tasci shows, theme park visitors generally prefer stable pricing models and tend to react negatively when they know they've paid more. However, these effects can be mitigated through strategic pricing policies, transparency, and a focus on sustainability.

For theme park operators, the challenge lies in finding the balance between maximizing revenue and maintaining consumer goodwill. By carefully crafting their pricing strategies and keeping customer perceptions in mind, parks can build stronger relationships with their visitors while ensuring long-term profitability.

In summary, this research provides essential guidance for the theme park industry, showing that while dynamic pricing can be effective, it must be approached with care and consideration of the consumer experience.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Ady Milman and Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci investigated how different dynamic pricing strategies in theme parks affect consumer trust, perceived value, and brand loyalty under varying conditions.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How do you think the insights from your research on consumer trust and perceived value under different dynamic pricing scenarios can help theme parks balance profitability with maintaining brand loyalty?

Unfair pricing and deceptions are to be avoided as they can break the fragile consumer trust, which would deter value perception, loyalty, and therefore, profitability. Conversely, support for the cause of sustainability can justify higher prices that could otherwise be perceived as unfair. In any case, understanding consumers is a key before applying any pricing strategy.

Dr. Ady Milman



Dr. Ady Milman is a Professor and Linda Chapin Endowed Chair in Tourism Management at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at UCF.

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.

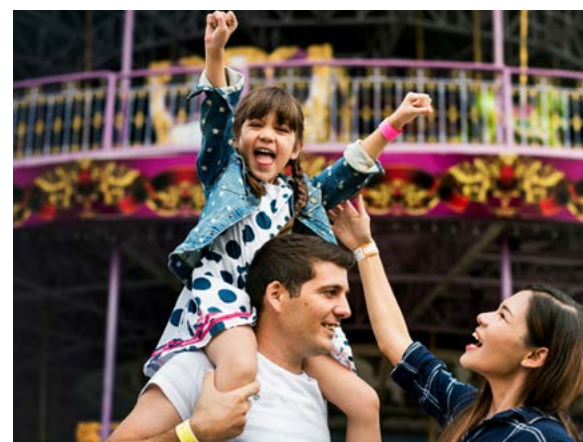
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UNCOVERING THE HIDDEN DEMAND BEHIND HEALTH TOURISM

What outbound medical travel tells us about the industry's future

Health tourism is a relatively nascent area for hospitality research. Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat, Associate Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management suggests that we should learn more about it. His research identifies key demand drivers and helps uncover a largely unexplored market potential. It also offers some surprises. Critically, it serves as a call to action for industry leaders to embrace the opportunities that lie ahead.

At the intersection of healthcare and hospitality lies a rapidly growing industry: health tourism. Every year, thousands of Americans look beyond their borders for medical procedures such as dental surgery, cosmetic enhancements, and life-saving treatments, all while seeking more affordable options without compromising quality. The concept is simple: travel abroad for care and potentially save thousands of dollars, perhaps recuperating in a sun-soaked paradise.

This growing phenomenon is the focus of groundbreaking research by Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. His recent work offers fresh insights into the unmet or unrecorded demand and price behaviors associated with U.S. outbound health tourism spending. It has also uncovered some surprises. Through an in-depth analysis of U.S. outbound health tourism spending, Dr. Ridderstaat's research provides a lens through which we can better understand the dynamics that are driving—and in some cases, hindering—the growth of this tract within hospitality.

HIDDEN DEMAND

Little is known about exactly how many people in the U.S. travel abroad for health tourism. Dr. Ridderstaat refers to this unmet or unrecorded demand in the health tourism market as a 'hidden demand'. It is 'hidden' because of various factors, such as untracked patient motivations, undocumented spending behaviors, and the absence of standardized data on outbound health tourists. For example, many U.S. citizens seeking treatment abroad do so without formally reporting it or as part of undocumented personal travel plans, making it difficult to capture the full extent of demand. This hidden demand reflects a gap in the data and is often estimated through indirect metrics, such as spending patterns on health services across popular health tourism destinations. Many U.S. travelers who might not officially identify as health tourists are indeed part of this demand. By combining travel with medical services or wellness activities, these travelers make health tourism a fluid, multi-purpose segment.

By analyzing these indirect measures, like fluctuations in spending aligned



with healthcare needs and cost-saving motivations, Dr. Ridderstaat helps reveal the latent or 'hidden' interest in health tourism, which may not appear in conventional tourism or healthcare statistics. Importantly, this hidden demand represents an exciting growth opportunity for healthcare providers and the hospitality sector.

OPPORTUNITY AT THE INTERSECTION

Globally, health tourism has grown into a multibillion-dollar industry. The U.S. is not immune to this trend. As healthcare costs rise domestically, more Americans are looking abroad for affordable, quality medical care—

But what's surprising, as Dr. Ridderstaat reveals, is the impact of the real exchange rate on health tourism. When the U.S. dollar strengthens against the currencies of popular medical tourism destinations like Mexico, Thailand, or India, the prices for healthcare services in these countries effectively become lower for U.S. residents. This encourages more Americans to travel for treatment during periods of favorable exchange rates, making the dollar's strength a significant driver of tourism demand for health services abroad.

In addition, Dr. Ridderstaat's use of dynamic time warping—a sophisticated technique for analyzing time series data—allows for a deeper understanding of the relationship between prices, exchange rates, and demand over time. By comparing the timing of fluctuations in real exchange rates with changes in tourism demand for health services, his research paints a clearer picture of how economic forces influence the U.S. health tourism market.

Dr. Ridderstaat obviates the need for a direct tally of specific healthcare costs—which are ‘hidden’—and instead uses an innovative approach based on average spending per tourist. His method captures shifts in demand by tracking changes over time rather than focusing on exact prices. Since it’s impractical to obtain detailed cost data for every medical procedure abroad, the study uses the ‘real exchange rate’ as a proxy. This rate serves as a measure of relative affordability by showing how U.S. spending power translates to local spending power in health tourism destinations, factoring in inflation differences and nominal exchange rates.

fueling the growth of health tourism. Popular destinations such as Mexico, India, and Thailand offer high-quality care at a fraction of the cost. For many, the combination of healthcare and hospitality is an enticing prospect: why not combine treatment with

At the center of Dr. Ridderstaat's study is an exploration of how economic factors—particularly price behaviors and the real

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Health tourism is a rapidly growing industry.

DR. RIDDERSTAAT'S RESEARCH ILLUMINATES HEALTH TOURISM AS A DYNAMIC MARKET SHAPED AS MUCH BY ECONOMICS AS BY HEALTHCARE NEEDS.

example, it shows how much more or less a U.S. tourist can buy there over time. By capturing these shifts, Dr. Ridderstaat's study provides a clearer picture of economic forces shaping health tourism trends—revealing, in essence, how the flow of health tourism dollars responds to both exchange rates and local price changes. This approach not only sidesteps the difficulty of tracking individual healthcare costs abroad but also grounds the findings in tangible economic indicators that fluctuate with global market conditions.

PRICE SENSITIVITY

One of the most significant takeaways from Dr. Ridderstaat's research is the role of pricing in driving health tourism. In the U.S., where healthcare costs can be prohibitively high, price is a significant factor for those considering treatment abroad. The study delves deep into the price elasticity of demand for health services, which means how sensitive consumers are to changes in price.

Through statistical modeling, Dr. Ridderstaat found that elective procedures—think:

cosmetic surgeries and dental implants—are highly price-sensitive. Even small increases in cost can significantly reduce demand. Conversely, modest price reductions or special packages can lead to substantial growth in consumer interest. For lower-income groups, in particular, the decision to travel for medical care hinges almost entirely on cost. These individuals often delay or forgo procedures in the U.S. due to the expense, which presents a critical opportunity for destinations offering affordable care abroad.

TRENDS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS, AND INDUSTRY INSIGHTS

Dr. Ridderstaat's research identifies current trends and offers actionable insights for policy-makers and industry leaders. The study suggests that governments in key medical tourism destinations could stimulate demand by offering tax incentives or subsidies during low-demand periods. These measures could help attract more patients from the U.S. during off-peak times, balancing out the natural ebb and flow of the market.

Dr. Ridderstaat's estimate that between 1.1% and 1.5% of U.S. travelers are health tourists provides a more accurate picture of this market segment, offering valuable information to governments aiming to cater to health tourists.

For healthcare providers, Dr. Ridderstaat's research points to the strategic benefits of aligning pricing models with real exchange rates. By understanding how affordability drives demand, providers in popular health tourism destinations can more effectively position themselves to attract U.S. travelers, particularly during times of economic downturn or exchange rate shifts. This insight could help create a more resilient health tourism industry, one attuned to both healthcare and economic demands.

Moreover, U.S. insurance companies could explore partnerships with foreign healthcare providers, creating cross-border healthcare networks. Such collaborations could lower patients' out-of-pocket expenses while increasing access to high-quality care. By facilitating these international healthcare partnerships, insurance companies could make health tourism a more viable option for their clients, expanding the market further.

HEALTH TOURISM'S FUTURE

Dr. Ridderstaat's research illuminates health tourism as a dynamic market shaped as much by economics as by healthcare needs. Through his analysis of hidden demand and real exchange rates, he challenges the notion that health tourism is solely driven by medical necessity, showing instead how affordability and economic timing create powerful incentives for U.S. travelers.

In a landscape where healthcare costs continue to climb, understanding these hidden factors may be crucial for policy-makers and providers alike. Dr. Ridderstaat's work not only enhances our understanding of health tourism but also highlights Rosen College's commitment to advancing research that intersects hospitality, healthcare, and economics. This commitment continues to place Rosen College at the forefront of hospitality innovation.

Critically, Dr. Ridderstaat's research is a testament to the power of data-driven insights in unlocking health tourism's potential. It also serves as a call to action for industry leaders to embrace the opportunities that lie ahead.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat researches the hidden potential within the health tourism sector and identifies key drivers of demand. The study applies the dynamic time warping approach to investigate outbound health spending with demand and prices. The findings could help policy-makers in better managing the health tourism industry.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What research outcomes surprised you, and where do you see urgent opportunities for further research in health tourism?

/// Economic factors, such as demand and price elasticity, play a crucial role in shaping the future of health tourism. As healthcare costs rise domestically, more Americans are looking abroad for affordable, quality medical care—fueling the growth of health tourism. ///

Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat



Jorge Ridderstaat is an Associate Professor at UCF 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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TOURISM, ECONOMIC GROWTH, AND THE HIDDEN ASYMMETRY

Unveiling the fragile tourism-growth nexus

For years, scholars of tourism economics have examined how tourism affects a nation's economic growth. Typically, the idea of this tourism-growth nexus assumes some measure of symmetry: more tourists—more economic growth; less tourism—less growth. At UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Professor Fevzi Okumus and his collaborator have shown that not only is the relationship more complex, but it is also highly asymmetrical. Their work forces a reexamination of the tourism-led growth hypothesis and encourages the tourism industry to rethink strategies.

Take your mind back to 2019. The world's tourism industry is flourishing. People are traveling more than ever—visiting ancient ruins, relaxing on tropical beaches, and exploring bustling cityscapes. The hospitality industry is thriving, and nations across the globe are reaping the economic rewards. A year later, the world grinds to a halt. The COVID-19 pandemic is sweeping across continents, and international travel has all but ceased. Hotels close their doors, and restaurants sit empty; tourism-dependent economies feel

the sting of sudden revenue loss and look for solutions.

This is where Professor Fevzi Okumus's work comes in. His coauthored paper titled "Tourism and economic output: Do asymmetries matter?", recently published in the *Annals of Tourism Research*, delves into a crucial yet often overlooked aspect of tourism's role in the economy. It explores what is known as the tourism-growth nexus—the connection between tourism and economic output—and challenges a longstanding assumption that the effects of tourism growth and decline are symmetrical.

A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING ECONOMIC FRAGILITY

This research highlights something striking and perhaps unsettling for those in the hospitality industry: a shock contraction in tourism has a much more significant impact on the economy than a surge in tourist numbers during good times. This article uses the term de-tourism to describe the severe consequences of such a tourism downturn. While tourism growth can buoy economies with increased employment, spending and investment, de-tourism—such as what the world witnessed during the COVID-19 pandemic—does far more damage than previously understood.

To unpack this non-linear relationship between tourism and economic output, this article used a neo-classical production function—a widely accepted economic model that explains how different factors contribute to economic growth. Typically, economists look at capital (such as investments in infrastructure), labor (the people employed in the tourism and hospitality sectors), and, in this case, tourism arrivals (the number of international visitors) as key drivers of growth.

However, this study introduced a new variable: pandemic-induced uncertainty. This variable

Professor Okumus examines the tourism-growth nexus—the relationship between tourism and economic output.



was crucial, allowing the researcher to capture the economic disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This uncertainty doesn't just affect tourism numbers; it creates a ripple effect that impacts the broader economy, stalling investments, disrupting supply chains, and halting employment in tourism-related sectors.

By factoring in the pandemic, this study could examine the profound effect such crises have on tourism and, by extension, economic output. The model's ability to capture these asymmetrical effects paints a more accurate picture of how economies reliant on tourism respond to shocks, revealing their inherent fragility.

THE HIDDEN WEIGHT OF DE-TOURISM

So, how much more damaging is a tourism downturn than the benefits of a tourism boom? This is where the numbers tell a compelling story. According to the research, an increase in tourism arrivals leads to a 0.004 increase in economic output—a modest but positive effect. On the other hand, a decrease in tourism has a -0.028 impact on economic output. This means that the negative impact of a tourism decline is nearly seven times greater than the positive effect of growth.

Let's break that down. Imagine a city that benefits from a 4% increase in economic output due to a tourism boom during a peak season. That same city would see a 28% drop in economic output if the tourism sector experiences a downturn of similar magnitude—like the one triggered by COVID-19. In business terms, this means the pain felt by hotels, restaurants, and other tourism-related businesses during a downturn is far more profound than the joy they feel during periods of growth.

This asymmetry is crucial because it forces us to rethink how we plan for tourism growth and decline. For policymakers, it suggests that while efforts to boost tourism are

protect against the severe economic losses caused by de-tourism.

DE-TOURISM: A CONCEPT THAT HITS HARD

De-tourism is not just about fewer visitors; it's about the cascading effects of fewer tourists on every facet of the economy. When international arrivals fall, the loss ripples through sectors like transportation, retail and food services, dragging down not only the direct beneficiaries of tourism but also the entire economy.

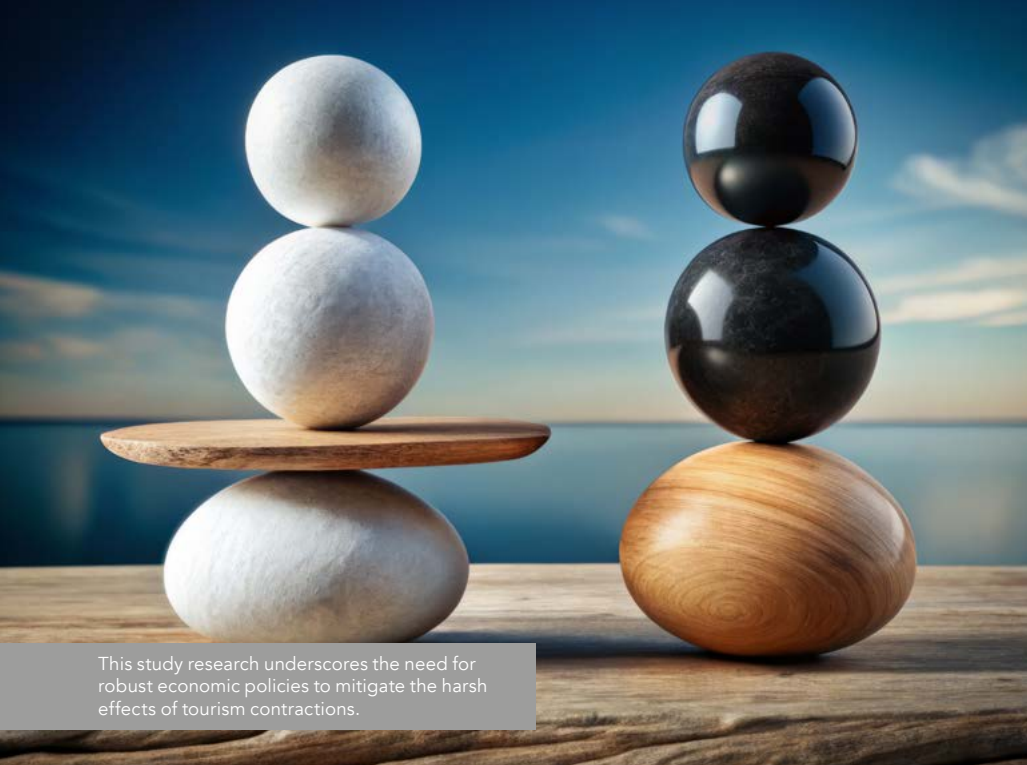
For the researchers, de-tourism is more than just a short-term disruption. The study's model, which tracks the long-term impact of tourism downturns, reveals that the effects linger well

A SHOCK CONTRACTION IN TOURISM HAS A MUCH MORE SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY THAN A SURGE IN TOURIST NUMBERS DURING GOOD TIMES.

essential, they should be accompanied by strategies that cushion the blow of tourism downturns. For businesses, it underscores the importance of diversifying revenue streams to

beyond the immediate period of contraction. Even as tourism eventually rebounds, the losses from a downturn continue to weigh on the economy. This suggests that recovery from





This study research underscores the need for robust economic policies to mitigate the harsh effects of tourism contractions.

a downturn is far slower and more painful than expected.

For instance, the study highlights the error correction model coefficient of -0.378, which indicates that about 38% of the deviations from economic equilibrium caused by tourism downturns are corrected within each quarter. While this means the economy eventually returns to equilibrium, it also shows that the road to recovery is slow, with the scars of tourism declines lasting longer than the temporary gains of a tourism boom.

UNDERSTANDING THE ASYMMETRY

This imbalance is critical for policymakers and industry leaders to understand. It reveals that strategies solely focused on promoting tourism growth might overlook the more significant challenge of mitigating the damage of tourism downturns.

The asymmetry this study reveals has significant implications for the hospitality and tourism sectors. First, it highlights the

vulnerability of economies dependent on tourism. If a negative tourism shock—such as a global health crisis or natural disaster—can cause far more damage than a corresponding positive tourism boom can repair, it suggests that strategies focused on resilience should be a top priority for businesses and policymakers.

From a business perspective, this could mean diversifying revenue streams to protect against the impacts of de-tourism. Hotels and resorts, for example, might explore long-term residential clients or pivot toward corporate events and meetings to ensure they aren't solely dependent on international travelers. This approach could create a more stable income base during tourism downturns.

For governments, this research underscores the need for robust economic policies to mitigate the harsh effects of tourism contractions. Instead of focusing solely on promoting tourism, there should be a strong emphasis on preparing for inevitable downturns—whether caused by pandemics, natural disasters, or

political instability. This might include stimulus packages for tourism-dependent businesses, support for workers displaced by downturns, or infrastructure investments that serve multiple economic sectors.

THE TOURISM-LED GROWTH HYPOTHESIS RECONSIDERED

One of this study's critical contributions is its reexamination of the tourism-led growth hypothesis, which suggests that tourism can drive economic growth. While the hypothesis holds in many respects, this study's findings show that the story is more complex than previously thought. Yes, tourism can fuel growth, but the impact is far from symmetrical.

The research demonstrates that while tourism booms may contribute to economic prosperity, the real challenge lies in addressing the disproportionate damage caused by de-tourism. For someone aspiring to work in the tourism industry, this study offers valuable lessons about the fragility of the tourism-growth nexus. The idea that tourism downturns have a far greater impact on the economy than tourism booms should serve as a wake-up call.

Understanding these asymmetries means recognizing that tourism is not just about growth. It's about building an industry that can weather inevitable storms. For future leaders in the hospitality and tourism sectors, this could mean focusing not just on expanding markets and attracting more tourists but also on developing strategies that build resilience during periods of de-tourism. Diversifying services, investing in sustainable tourism, and planning for downturns should be key elements of any successful tourism strategy.

By uncovering the non-linearity and asymmetry of the tourism-growth nexus, this study has shifted the conversation around how tourism impacts economic output. Ultimately, his research offers a sobering reminder that while tourism can drive economic growth, it can also leave economies vulnerable when things go wrong. As we look to the future of the hospitality and tourism sectors, the insights gained from this research could be the key to creating a more resilient, adaptable industry—one that understands the profound risks of de-tourism and prepares for them. The question remains: how do we build an industry that can thrive in both good times and bad?

BY UNCOVERING THE NON-LINEARITY AND ASYMMETRY OF THE TOURISM-GROWTH NEXUS, PROFESSOR OKUMUS HAS SHIFTED THE CONVERSATION AROUND HOW TOURISM IMPACTS ECONOMIC OUTPUT.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Professor Fevzi Okumus examines the tourism-growth nexus—the relationship between tourism and economic output.

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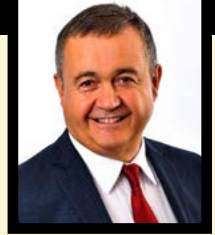
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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Your research prompts an overhaul of strategies among leaders in the hospitality and tourism industry. To consider building resilience during periods of de-tourism, what areas can researchers focus on to guide such strategies?

// They can focus on how organizations, destinations, and countries can build resilience and be better prepared for such crises. //

Dr. Fevzi Okumus



Dr. Fevzi Okumus is the CFHLA Preeminent Chair Professor within the Hospitality Services Department at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. His main teaching and research areas include strategic management, leadership, hospitality management and lodging. He has over 300 academic publications. According to [Google Scholar](https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=c89CnUIAAAAJ&hl=en), his publications received over 28,625 citations and he has an h-index of 77. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (IF: 9.10) and the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights* (IF: 4.80). He is a frequent speaker at international conferences and has received numerous prestigious research awards and recognitions.

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Rosen Research Focus | Holly Robbins

TURNING INSIGHTS INTO IMPACT

The power of marketing to transform the world

Marketing is not a megaphone—it's an alchemist, turning sparks of insight into roaring flames of action. In the world of higher education, marketing transforms knowledge into change, bridging the brilliance of academia with the raw pulse of the world. And at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, marketing is the invisible hand that connects research with those who dare to dream bigger, think bolder, and create lasting impact. Because it's not just about being heard—it's about compelling people to listen.

But marketing isn't just about communication; it's about connection. It carries ideas from the quiet corridors of academia to the places where they can do

the most good—boardrooms, classrooms, communities, and beyond. Without it, even the most groundbreaking discoveries would remain invisible. Marketing transforms data into destiny and ensures that innovation not only exists but thrives in the light of the world's attention.

STORIES THAT MOVE MOUNTAINS

Every great movement begins with a story—not with dry facts or figures, but with a narrative that connects on a human level. Numbers can explain how a theme park layout

influences emotions, but they can't capture the magic of a space that sparks joy so vivid it becomes an unforgettable memory. Marketing takes that magic and shapes it into a story that resonates, embedding it into the lives of those who experience it. It's not just about telling the story—it's about *making it matter*.

At Rosen College, our stories are as varied and dynamic as the industry we serve. Research into tourism's role in human development doesn't just gather data—it reveals how responsible tourism can

IT'S NOT ENOUGH TO SAY WHAT HOSPITALITY CAN DO; WE MUST SHOW HOW IT TRANSFORMS LIVES—FOR OUR STUDENTS, OUR INDUSTRY, AND THE WORLD.

uplift underserved communities and create opportunities that drive meaningful change. Sustainability studies go beyond measuring environmental impact, envisioning a future where tourism supports both thriving economies and a healthier planet. Insights shared on global platforms like the United Nations demonstrate how tourism policy can foster resilience and address some of the world's most pressing challenges. Each of these insights carries transformative power, and marketing brings their true potential to light, turning findings into compelling stories that inspire action, ignite curiosity, and show how hospitality has the power to reshape the world.

Because it's not just about creating awareness—it's about sparking connection. Marketing breathes life into data, transforming it into stories that resonate, crafting insights into melodies that linger with audiences long after the moment has passed. This is the essence of storytelling—the heart of marketing's power to shape minds, shift perspectives, and create meaningful change.

PURPOSE IS THE REVOLUTION

Marketing isn't about selling; it's about shaking the foundations of what people believe is possible. It's about purpose. It's about asking, *Why does this matter?* and refusing to settle for anything less than the truth. At Rosen College, our marketing is driven by this relentless pursuit of meaning. It is about making the impossible—possible. Because it's not enough to say what hospitality can do; **we must show how it transforms lives**—for our students, our industry, and the world.

Marketing reshapes the boundaries of the industry, pushing them outward to embrace new possibilities. Hospitality becomes a tool for inclusion, a vehicle for sustainability, and a catalyst for joy. Because at its core, hospitality is not about profits—it's about people. At Rosen College, we don't just amplify that message; we engrave it into the soul of our audience, making them see the world not as it is but as it could be.

Marketing also plays a crucial role in shaping the next generation of leaders. Students come to us with dreams, and through our stories, they see a vision of what's possible. From entertainment management to theme parks, lodging, and more, our programs are framed not as paths to careers but as

journeys to shape the future of hospitality itself. For students dreaming of transforming the hospitality industry, they hear a clear and timeless message: *This is where your story begins.*

TURNING IDEAS INTO IMPACT

Without marketing, even the brightest ideas risk falling into obscurity. It's the bridge between discovery and destiny, taking research from the page to the streets, from theory to transformation. At Rosen College, marketing is the heartbeat of progress, ensuring that every insight pulses with potential.

But effective marketing doesn't just celebrate what has been done; it inspires what is yet to come. A study on theme park innovations can do more than enhance guest experiences—it can spark conversations that influence the future of entertainment and tourism. Similarly, a groundbreaking sustainability report has the potential to move beyond academic circles, becoming a guide for businesses to adopt greener practices and create lasting environmental impact. Marketing vehicles, like the *Rosen Research Review*, transform these insights into accessible and actionable tools, bridging the gap between research and the industries that need it most. It ensures that studies on lodging and restaurant management reach those redefining hospitality spaces, making them more welcoming, efficient, and impactful.

Whether redefining accessibility in tourism or reimagining how we connect with the world, marketing turns vision into action. It doesn't just tell a story—it creates a movement.

This is where Rosen College leads—not just in education, but in inspiration. From partnerships with industry giants like Disney and Universal to shaping global trends in theme parks, lodging, and entertainment, our impact is magnified through the stories we share. It ensures that our research integrates with other disciplines to benefit humanity and shape the future.

WE ARE HOSPITALITY

At Rosen College, marketing is more than a function—it's our lifeline to the world. It ensures that our purpose resonates, that our insights are heard, and that our mission to change lives and shape industries is fulfilled.

Through marketing, we ensure that every story—whether about a student dreaming of a career, a researcher uncovering new truths, or an alum reshaping the industry—is not just told but remembered. This is the force of marketing. This is the power of possibility. This is how we change the world.



Holly Robbins
Marketing and
Communications Manager,
UCF Rosen College of
Hospitality Management



Marketing isn't just about communication,
it's about connection.



Rosen Research Focus | Zhong, Murphy & Weinland

INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIPS

Unlocking the value of global experience

In much of Europe, internships are mandatory for students. Despite their importance, international internships remain an underexplored area of research regarding how they shape hospitality and tourism students' skills, attitudes, and connections with their institutions. At UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, a study by Dr. YunYing Zhong, Dr. Kevin Murphy, and the late Dr. Jeffrey Weinland has uncovered that internships are far more than just resumé builders. The research has a significant impact on advancing educational practices that meet the demands of a globalized industry.

As the hospitality and tourism industry becomes increasingly global, the demand for professionals with cross-cultural skills and experience has never been greater. In this context, international internships have become a staple of hospitality and tourism education, allowing students to work abroad and

gain real-world exposure. Yet, despite the industry's value placed on these internships, most studies mainly describe the benefits of international internship, rather than quantify its effects on critical outcomes such as student satisfaction and loyalty. Recognizing this gap, Dr. YunYing Zhong, Dr. Kevin Murphy, and the late Dr. Jeffrey Weinland conducted a landmark study, uncovering

insights into the value of international internships for European hospitality students.

Published in the *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, this research is one of the first to apply a structured 'value' framework to capture the impact of international internships on students. It addresses critical questions about what students gain, their sacrifices, and the factors influencing their satisfaction and loyalty to their institutions. By filling this research gap, the study provides a foundation for future inquiries into global hospitality and tourism education and offers valuable guidelines for institutions aiming to strengthen their internship programs.

Despite their importance, international internships in hospitality and tourism remain an underexplored area of research, particularly in Europe. International professional training has been a long-standing tradition and is strategically important at a policy level in Europe. The European Union's Blueprint for



International internships allow students to work abroad and gain real-world exposure.

Sector Cooperation on Skills, introduced in 2016, emphasizes building a globally competent workforce, especially in industries like hospitality and tourism that benefit from cultural exchange and mobility. Thus, many European hospitality and tourism programs require them for graduation.

Dr. Zhong and her colleagues sought to understand how European students evaluate these mandatory experiences, making their study one of the few to focus on this demographic. The research has broader relevance—the study provides a structured ‘value’ structure to assess how international internships shape careers in a globalized industry, not only among European student populations but also other student demographics.

UNPACKING THE ‘GIVE VS. GET’ FRAMEWORK

To address the complex dynamics of student internships, the researchers adopted a structured methodology centered on the concept of ‘value’ derived from marketing literature. In this study, value is defined as a balance between what students ‘get’ (e.g., skills, networking opportunities) and

what they ‘give’ (e.g., financial and personal sacrifices). This ‘give vs. get’ framework provides a lens through which to measure the benefits of internships relative to the costs borne by students.

The study focused on hospitality management students from two European universities, using a purposive sampling method to recruit participants who had completed at least one international internship. These students, ranging across bachelor’s and master’s programs, were surveyed to assess their perceptions of value, satisfaction and loyalty intentions toward their institutions. The researchers distributed an online questionnaire measuring ten core constructs within the ‘give’ and ‘get’ dimensions, including conditional value (support services provided), functional value (career advancement opportunities), social value (networking), and monetary sacrifice (costs associated with travel and living abroad).

Using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), the relationships between these constructs were analyzed to determine how different factors influenced students’ overall satisfaction and loyalty to their universities. PLS-SEM allowed the team to explore complex, multidimensional constructs and provided a robust analysis of the variables involved in students’ internship experiences. By examining these constructs individually and collectively, the researchers could reveal

that values adaptability, customer service and problem-solving. For hospitality and tourism students, experiential learning through internships is a way to bridge classroom knowledge with real-world applications.

European hospitality students reported that their internships allowed them to handle guest interactions, coordinate events and take on responsibilities that enhanced their practical skills. This ‘learning by doing’ approach strengthened their technical abilities and fostered a sense of resilience and confidence that traditional classroom learning could not. The study highlights that experiential learning through internships builds ‘a toolkit of skills’ for students, preparing them for the complexities of the hospitality industry.

The study validates the benefits of experiential learning in hospitality and confirms that international internships offer value beyond what students can achieve in a classroom. Students gain critical skills in managing diverse cultural dynamics, working within unfamiliar regulatory environments and solving real-world challenges, which are essential for a globally oriented career in hospitality and tourism.

MORE THAN HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

The study’s findings reveal that students’ perceptions of value are complex and influenced by various factors. Overall, students reported that the ‘get’ side of their experience, such as career opportunities, social networking

*DESPITE THEIR IMPORTANCE,
INTERNATIONAL INTERNSHIPS
IN HOSPITALITY REMAIN AN
UNDEREXPLORED AREA OF RESEARCH,
PARTICULARLY IN EUROPE.*

insights into how different facets of the internship experience contribute to perceived value and loyalty.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IN HOSPITALITY: BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

The study grounds its findings in the experiential learning theory, which emphasizes the value of hands-on experience in building practical skills. This concept is especially relevant to hospitality and tourism, an industry

and emotional growth, far outweighed the ‘give’ side, which included financial costs and personal sacrifices. Social value and networking, in particular, were highlighted as key benefits, as students connected with industry professionals who could open doors for their future careers.

However, the study also found that perceived value was not solely professional. Students gained emotional fulfillment and a sense of



Future studies can continue to uncover best practices for integrating global experiences into hospitality education.

personal achievement, reporting that the internship experience enhanced their self-confidence and resilience. These findings indicate that emotional and social growth are integral to students' perceived value, reflecting the holistic impact of international internships on personal and professional development.

Critically, the study revealed that students' satisfaction with their internship experience directly influenced their loyalty intentions toward their universities. Students who felt their internships were valuable were likelier to recommend the program and maintain connections with their alma mater. The research team explains that satisfaction fosters loyalty, turning students into ambassadors for their institutions. This loyalty, in turn, has significant implications for universities, underscoring the long-term impact of structured, supportive internship programs.

LOYALTY AND INTENTIONS— STRENGTHENING UNIVERSITY- STUDENT BONDS

A central aspect of this study is the connection between internship value and students' loyalty intentions. Students who derive satisfaction from their internships develop stronger bonds with their institutions, which is essential for fostering ongoing alum engagement. Satisfaction and loyalty are linked, with students who find high value in their internships being more likely to endorse their programs to others and stay engaged with alumni networks.

This connection holds meaningful implications for Rosen College's approach to alum relations. Dr. Weinland, whose legacy of dedication to

hospitality education endures, long supported the concept of internships as a pathway to lasting loyalty. This study captures his insights, which reveal that satisfied students who value their internships highly form stronger ties to their institutions. For institutes like Rosen College, this insight highlights the importance of well-structured internship programs for building lasting alum relationships.

ADDRESSING THE EU'S VISION FOR TRANSNATIONAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This study provides evidence for the EU supporting their commitment to fostering cross-border educational experiences. International internships are not merely

academic exercises—they are tools for skill development that address the EU's objective to create a workforce prepared for the demands of a globally interconnected industry. The study confirms that the EU's investment in mobility initiatives aligns well with students' career goals and learning needs, suggesting that such programs are essential for building a skilled, versatile workforce.

The findings from this study offer practical recommendations for universities and policymakers aiming to enhance the value

of internship programs. To optimize student outcomes, the Rosen College team advises universities to communicate internship expectations, provide logistical support and establish a feedback loop with industry partners. Such support helps students navigate challenges like securing visas, finding accommodations and covering travel expenses, allowing them to focus more fully on their professional development.

Additionally, the study opens new avenues for future research, inviting scholars to investigate international internships in diverse contexts. The team suggests that further studies could compare mandatory and voluntary internships across regions, examine industry-specific factors that impact satisfaction and assess the long-term career impacts of international experiences. By expanding on this research, future studies can continue to uncover best practices for integrating global experiences into hospitality education.

A LEGACY OF RESEARCH AND IMPACT

This research, led by Zhong, Murphy, and Weinland, represents a significant contribution to hospitality and tourism education. By highlighting the untapped value of international internships, the study provides insights to shape future approaches to hospitality training and alum engagement. The findings affirm that internships are more than just resume builders—they are

CRITICALLY, THE STUDY REVEALED THAT STUDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THEIR INTERNSHIP EXPERIENCE DIRECTLY INFLUENCED THEIR LOYALTY INTENTIONS TOWARD THEIR UNIVERSITIES.

transformative experiences that foster personal and professional growth, lifelong loyalty, and cultural competence.

This study also underscores Rosen College's leadership in hospitality research and dedication to advancing educational practices that meet the demands of a globalized industry. The insights from this research will guide students, universities and industry stakeholders as they work together to prepare the next generation of hospitality professionals.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. YunYing Zhong, Dr. Kevin Murphy, and Dr. Jeffrey Weinland highlight the impact of internships on advancing educational practices that meet the demands of a globalized industry. The study was funded by a grant from The American University of Florence.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What surprised you in the outcome of your study, and why?

// The study found that multiple factors influence students' perceptions of value from international internships. Students felt that the benefits—such as career opportunities, networking, and emotional growth—far outweighed the costs, including financial and personal sacrifices. Social value and networking were particularly important, as students connected with industry professionals who could benefit their careers. Additionally, emotional fulfillment and personal achievement were significant, with students reporting increased self-confidence and resilience. Interestingly, these findings highlight internships' universal impact on personal and professional development and their loyalty intentions to their universities. //



Dr. YunYing Zhong



Dr. Zhong is a member of the Disability Aging & Technology Cluster and an Assistant Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Since her appointment, she has helped develop the new Bachelor of Science degree in Lifestyle Community Management and actively engaged with industry partners such as Florida Senior Living Association, Westminster Communities of Florida, Brookdale, Holiday Retirement, Harbor Chase, Legacy Point, and LIFE at UCF.

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Dr. Kevin Murphy



Dr. Murphy joined UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management in 2003 and earned his Ph.D. in Management and Human Resources from the department of Hospitality Tourism Management, Virginia Tech, Pamplin College of Business. He is one of a very few Certified Executive Chefs in the USA to hold a Ph.D. He has researched and published extensively in top journals in the area of foodservice sanitation, safety and health and other restaurant related issues and he has over 80 academic publications. Dr. Murphy has been an invited speaker and presenter nationally and internationally and has given over 120 media interviews in TV and press at the international, national and local level on these topics.

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Dr. Jeffrey Weinland

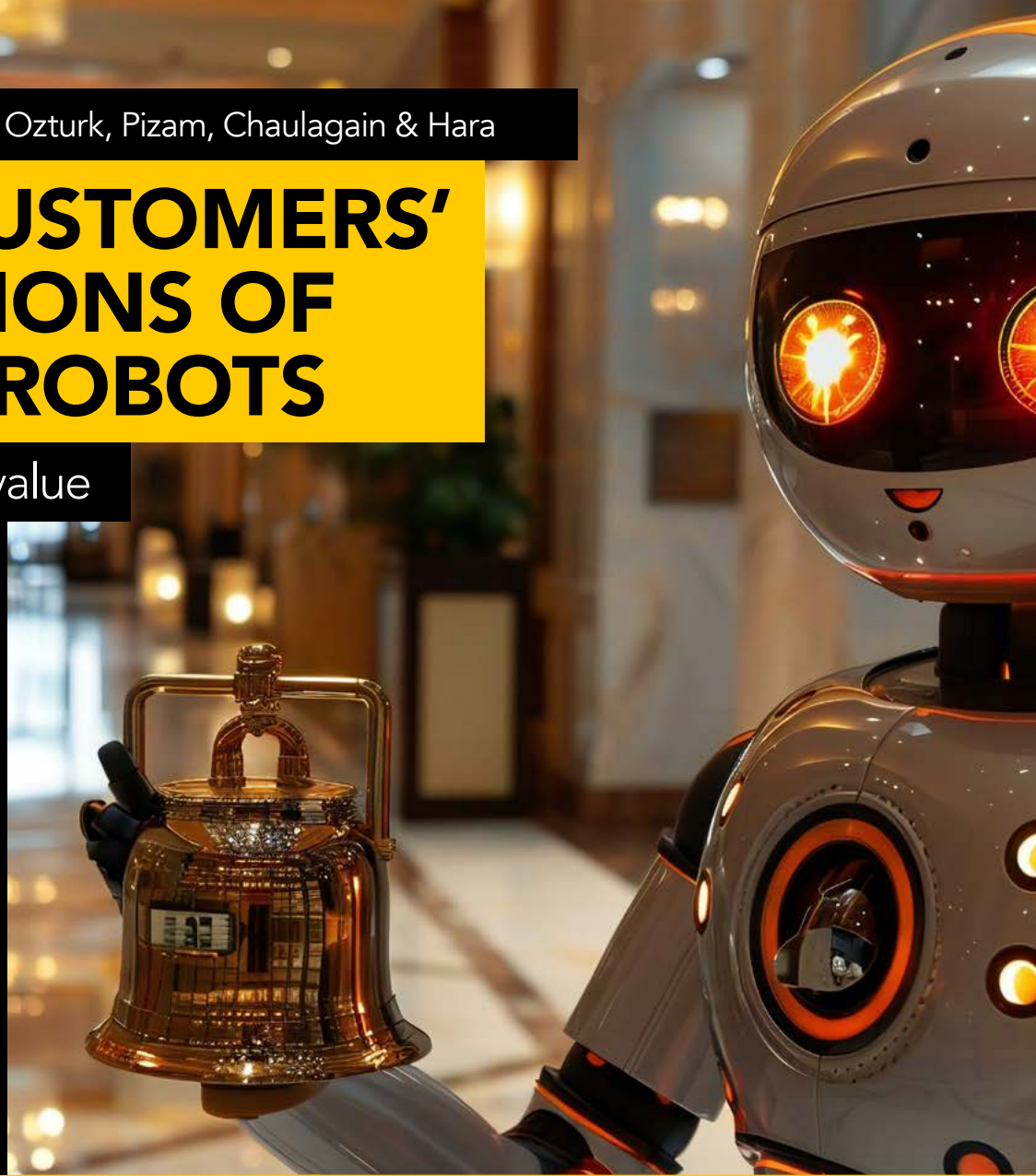


Jeffrey Weinland's career in the hospitality industry spanned more than 30 years, during which time he operated businesses, provided consulting services, developed training programs, and investigated embezzlement and fraud cases. He held several professional licenses and earned numerous professional designations in the areas of lodging management, real estate brokerage and hospitality accounting.

HOTEL CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF SERVICE ROBOTS

A global view on value

A recent study conducted by a team of researchers at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management explored the influence of utilitarian and hedonic values on hotel customers' intentions to use service robots. Analyzing data from 11 countries, the study reveals utilitarian and hedonic values significantly affect customer perceptions, shedding light on the growing role of hospitality robots in enhancing guest experiences. This research offers valuable insights for industry decision-makers aiming to integrate innovative robotic services effectively.





The researchers are examining how utilitarian and hedonic values influence hotel customers' intentions to use service robots.

In an era of rapid technological advancement, the hospitality industry has increasingly integrated robotics to enhance guest experiences and streamline operations. Service robots are now a growing presence in hotels, performing a variety of functions ranging from check-in assistance to room service. But what drives hotel customers' acceptance of these technologies, and how do their perceptions of service robots influence their intent to use them? A recent study conducted by researchers at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, including Ahmet Bulent Ozturk, Abraham Pizam, Suja Chaulagain, and Tadayuki Hara, investigates these questions, focusing on how perceived

utilitarian and hedonic values shape hotel guests' attitudes toward service robots.

The study sheds light on key factors—utilitarian and hedonic values, ease of use, and compatibility—that influence hotel customers' behavioral intentions regarding service robots. The research provides valuable insights for hotel managers and decision-makers, helping them understand how to better implement and optimize service robot technologies in hospitality settings in the future.

KEY RESEARCH FOCUS: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF VALUE PERCEPTIONS

The research study investigates two main types of value perceptions that shape customer intentions to use service robots: utilitarian value and hedonic value. Utilitarian value refers to the practical and functional benefits that customers derive from the technology, such as efficiency and convenience. In contrast, hedonic value encompasses the enjoyment, novelty, and entertainment that robots can provide, contributing to a more delightful customer experience.

The researchers aimed to determine how these value perceptions influence the behavioral

intentions to use service robots. The data was collected from 11 different countries, ensuring a more global perspective on the topic. This cross-country analysis enhances the robustness of the findings, addressing gaps in previous studies that have typically focused on single-country perspectives.

The study also tested several key hypotheses, including whether innovativeness, ease of use and compatibility with customer lifestyles positively impact their perceptions of utilitarian and hedonic values and, in turn, their willingness to adopt the technology.

UTILITARIAN AND HEDONIC VALUE DRIVE ADOPTION

The results of the study clearly indicate that both utilitarian value and hedonic value have a significant positive influence on hotel customers' behavioral intentions to use service robots. In other words, customers are more likely to embrace these technologies if they perceive them as both functional and enjoyable.

For instance, guests who value the efficiency and practicality of robots are inclined to use them because they see them as a way to

SERVICE ROBOTS ARE NOW A GROWING PRESENCE IN HOTELS, PERFORMING A VARIETY OF FUNCTIONS RANGING FROM CHECK-IN ASSISTANCE TO ROOM SERVICE.

intention to use service robots in hotels. Specifically, they sought to uncover whether customers are drawn to robots primarily for their practical benefits or for the unique, enjoyable experiences they offer. This is an important distinction, as it provides insight into how service robots can be designed and marketed to cater to both the functional and emotional needs of hotel guests.

METHODOLOGY: A GLOBAL VIEW ON SERVICE ROBOT ACCEPTANCE

To gather data, the research team employed a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach, allowing them to examine complex relationships between the various factors

improve the speed and ease of hotel services. At the same time, guests who appreciate the novelty or entertainment aspect of interacting with robots are more likely to engage with them, viewing the experience as a unique and fun part of their stay.

THE ROLE OF EASE OF USE AND COMPATIBILITY

Another particularly notable finding from the study is the strong impact of ease of use and compatibility on customers' utilitarian and hedonic value perceptions of service robots. Customers who found service robots easy to operate and who believed that robots aligned with their needs and lifestyles were more likely

to perceive higher utilitarian and hedonic value, which in turn boosted their intention to use the robots.

This insight offers practical guidance for hotel managers and technology developers. Ensuring that service robots are intuitive, user-friendly, and capable of seamlessly integrating with the guest experience will be key to maximizing their utility and enjoyment for hotel customers.

THE INNOVATIVENESS FACTOR

Surprisingly, the study did not find a significant relationship between innovativeness—the degree to which customers see themselves as open to new technologies—and their perceptions of utilitarian and hedonic values. This suggests that even guests who may not consider themselves particularly tech-savvy are still willing to use service robots if they perceive clear practical and emotional benefits. Therefore, focusing on the direct functional and experiential benefits of service robots might be more effective in driving adoption than simply appealing to a sense of novelty or innovation.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

The findings of this study have significant implications for the hospitality industry, particularly for decision-makers looking to integrate robotics into their service offerings. By understanding the factors that influence customer perceptions and adoption of service robots, hotels can tailor their implementation

strategies to meet guest expectations and enhance overall satisfaction. For example, designing robots that optimize both utilitarian performance and hedonic appeal can help hotels cater to a wide range of customer preferences. Robots that perform tasks quickly and efficiently while also offering a fun or novel experience are likely to be well-received by a broader audience.

Moreover, ease of use and compatibility should be top priorities in the development of service robots. Hotels should invest in technologies that are easy for guests to interact with and that fit seamlessly into their existing service models. This includes ensuring that robots can meet diverse guest needs, from tech-savvy travelers to those less familiar with technology.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

While this study lays a solid foundation for understanding hotel customers' perceptions of service robots, future research could expand on these findings by exploring additional dimensions of service robot adoption in hospitality. For instance, subsequent studies could investigate how cultural differences influence the acceptance of service robots. Understanding the varying perceptions and

attitudes towards technology across different cultural contexts can provide deeper insights for international hotel chains looking to implement these technologies.

Another avenue for future research could involve examining the impact of prior experience with robots or similar technologies on customer perceptions. Investigating whether guests who have previously interacted with service robots have different attitudes compared to those who have not could unveil critical insights for tailoring marketing strategies and educational initiatives.

Additionally, researchers could explore the role of specific demographics, such as age, gender, and socioeconomic status, in shaping perceptions of service robots. Understanding how different demographic factors influence utilitarian and hedonic value perceptions can aid hotels in customizing their service robots to meet the diverse needs of their guests.

Lastly, further investigation into the long-term effects of service robot integration on customer satisfaction and loyalty could be valuable. Research could examine whether initial acceptance of service robots translates

THE FINDINGS PROVIDE ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS FOR HOSPITALITY LEADERS LOOKING TO ENHANCE GUEST EXPERIENCES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY.

The study findings have significant implications for the hospitality industry.



into sustained usage over time and how it affects overall customer experiences in hotels.

THE FUTURE OF SERVICE ROBOTS IN HOSPITALITY

The study conducted by the Rosen College researchers offers a compelling look at the role of utilitarian and hedonic values in shaping customer intentions to use service robots in hotels. By highlighting the importance of ease of use and compatibility, the findings provide actionable insights for hospitality leaders looking to enhance guest experiences through technology. As service robots become an integral part of the hotel industry, understanding these dynamics will be essential for driving successful adoption and ensuring that robots contribute to both the efficiency and enjoyment of hotel stays.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study examines how utilitarian and hedonic values influence hotel customers' intentions to use service robots. In addition, the influences of innovativeness, ease of use and compatibility on hotel customers' perceived utilitarian and hedonic values are investigated.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How do you believe your findings on the importance of utilitarian and hedonic values, ease of use, and compatibility in service robots will shape customer experiences in hotels, and what personal insights did you gain while conducting this research?

/// The findings indicate that ease of use and compatibility strongly enhance utilitarian and hedonic values in service robots, ultimately shaping customers' intentions to use them in hotels. When robotic services are perceived as intuitive, straightforward, and aligned with customers' lifestyles, both practical benefits and enjoyment are seen in the experience. Ease of use allows greater comfort, as robotics are understood to be accessible and valuable, reducing hesitation. Compatibility strengthens both utilitarian and hedonic values by fitting naturally with lifestyle preferences. Customers find robotic services both functional and enjoyable when these factors are met. Through this study, it was observed that balancing functionality with enjoyment is essential. It was highlighted that ease of use and compatibility enhance both practical and emotional values, fostering positive customer intentions toward service robots in hospitality. ///

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Rosen Research Focus | Jessica Wickey Byrd & Alan Fyall

EXPLORING AND MITIGATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE U.S. EVENT INDUSTRY

Human trafficking is a global problem that affects multiple industries. The tourism and hospitality industry is particularly prone to this illicit activity, with traffickers often exploiting workers at touristic destinations and major events. Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd and Associate Dean Alan Fyall at UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management recently investigated the causes, scale, reach, and impact of human trafficking at popular events. By interviewing stakeholders in the U.S., the team gathered valuable insight that could inform the mitigation of human trafficking in the event industry.

Human trafficking, the illegal capture, recruitment, transport, accommodation and/or exploitation of one or more people via force, fraud or coercion, is a serious human rights violation that currently affects 46 million people worldwide. The most common forms of human trafficking involve sexual exploitation or labor trafficking, yet victims also include children and adults who are forced into marriage or warfare.

Human trafficking spans across a wide range of industries, including the sex industry, agriculture, construction, and manufacturing. Understanding the root causes, characteristics, and effects of human trafficking in each affected industry could

help to devise more effective strategies to mitigate these illicit activities.

Hospitality and tourism are among the most vulnerable industries to the trafficking and exploitation of people, which is particularly widespread at touristic destinations and major events. Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd and Associate Dean Alan Fyall at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management recently carried out a study aimed at better understanding human trafficking in the event industry, by interviewing nine experts that are combatting these activities daily.

GLOBAL EFFORTS TO MITIGATE HUMAN TRAFFICKING

While human trafficking is a crime in most

developed nations, over one third of countries worldwide have not yet criminalized it. International organizations have thus been introducing various instruments for combatting human trafficking worldwide.

These instruments include non-profit organizations such as ECPAT and Airline Ambassadors International (AAI), global networks committed to ending the exploitation of children and adults, as well as prevention policies, industry-relevant codes of conduct, and technological tools aimed at detecting trafficking. These instruments have been employed by many large players in the hospitality and tourism industry, including hotel chains (e.g., Marriott, InterContinental Hotels Group, and Hilton), airlines (e.g., Delta Airlines, United Airlines, and Southwest), and large multi-national restaurants (e.g., Subway, McDonald's, and Starbucks).

Despite these widespread efforts, some segments of the hospitality and tourism industry remain particularly vulnerable to human trafficking. These include large events and popular touristic destinations.



The study aims to identify the causes, scale, reach, and impact of human trafficking in the context of major events.



MAJOR EVENTS DO NOT NECESSARILY ATTRACT HUMAN TRAFFICKING, YET THEY CREATE CONDITIONS THAT ARE FAVORABLE FOR THOSE SEEKING TO PARTICIPATE IN THESE ACTIVITIES.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY AND AT POPULAR EVENTS

Compared to other dimensions of the hospitality industry, the event industry has not yet introduced as many measures to prevent, detect, and mitigate human

trafficking. Most cities worldwide are still unprepared to deal with the occurrence of sex trafficking at major events, particularly those with a large number of attendees.

For instance, World Cup events in Brazil, South Africa, and Russia, as well as the Olympics and Formula 1 Grand Prix, have been found to be hubs for prostitution and child labor. Moreover, estimates suggest that approximately 10,000 girls and women were taken to Miami and sexually exploited during the course of the 2010 SuperBowl. At a previous event, the American Football

SuperBowl LIII, law enforcement made 169 arrests related to human trafficking.

In addition to forced prostitution and sexual exploitation, large events appear to facilitate other forms of abuse and inhumane labor, such as the exploitation of migrant workers

and the coercion of minors into selling goods or sexual favors.

GATHERING INSIGHT FROM STAKEHOLDERS

Wickey Byrd and Fyall interviewed nine individuals who have been involved in efforts to mitigate human trafficking. Each of the study participants was interviewed via the online conferencing platform Zoom for a period of 30 to 40 minutes.

The interviewees included three people working at Human Rights Advocacy organizations, which filled the roles of U.S. Director of Partnerships, President, and President and Founder, respectively. They also included a law enforcement agent and a sergeant operating in Orlando, a human trafficking task force coordinator, a retired Sheriff for the Sheriff's Office, a Professor specialized in Human Trafficking and Modern Slavery Education, and a Youth and Family Services Manager.

All interviews were semi-structured, meaning that they touched on similar topics while leaving space for individual respondents to elaborate on themes of their choosing. The researchers transcribed the interviews using AI software and analyzed them using a phenomenological approach (i.e., a method to study the experiences of individuals and identify recurring themes in their accounts).

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE EXPERT INTERVIEWS

The responses gathered by the researchers suggest that major events do not necessarily attract human trafficking, yet they create conditions that are favorable for those seeking to participate in these activities. This is because event attendees are often trying to escape their normal routine, which could contribute to thrill-seeking, unusual, and irresponsible behaviors. The respondents collectively stated that often there is a sense of 'the rules do not apply here' and a more hedonistic mindset sets in; where attendees of these major and mega events act in ways where the consequences are not part of the decision-making process. They make bad choices to engage in activities that they normally would not engage in, like human trafficking.

As mentioned by one respondent: 'Sometimes there's a tendency for people to



put on their vacation hat, which leaves many wise decisions at the door when they get off the 'plane'.

The reckless behavior of visitors can also damage an event's reputation, resulting in greater media scrutiny. Event organizers might thus believe that openly introducing anti-trafficking measures will ruin an event's reputation further, by accentuating the presence of these illicit activities.

Some respondents emphasized that vulnerable individuals are at greater risk of becoming victims of human trafficking in the hope of earning money quickly at events.

'Surrounding major events, I see minor children who are exploited either in person or online and brought into a situation where sex trafficking can occur', says one



Hospitality and tourism are among the most vulnerable industries to the trafficking and exploitation of people.

are being trafficked and might simply be looking for ways to earn some money.

Some of the interviewees also observed a rise in digital forms of trafficking, that are much harder to trace. 'Whether it be apps or websites, you're seeing a lot of the buying, the grooming, the actual sale is happening online; we're even starting to see it move into digital currency being used to pay, which makes it hard to track', they explain.

COLLECTIVE EFFORTS AND OPEN CONVERSATIONS AMONG STAKEHOLDERS ARE LIKELY TO BE MORE FRUITFUL IN MITIGATING HUMAN TRAFFICKING.

respondent. 'Women who may be perceived as prostitutes are being forced into prostitution, but they may also be forced into doing other things against their will'.

The same respondent explained that children and minors are often also recruited to sell products outside stadiums or other venues. These children may not be aware that they

POSSIBLE STRATEGIES TO MITIGATE HUMAN TRAFFICKING AT MAJOR EVENTS

The people interviewed by Wickey Byrd and Fyall also offered suggestions for combatting human trafficking at major events. Firstly, they highlighted the need to initiate discussions between anti-trafficking agencies, law enforcement, and event organizers.

These conversations can help raise awareness of how trafficking occurs at events and measures to address these illicit activities, such as marketing campaigns, more law enforcement and emergency shelters for victims. Interviewees also highlighted the importance of prevention measures, including investigative efforts aimed at rescuing victims early, as well as educational tools for vulnerable individuals at greater risk of becoming victims, enablers, or even traffickers.

'Early intervention means that I can get to the vulnerable victim who can be exploited, the trafficker, educating them as to human worth and value in human dignity, and the buyer, before they've ever bought the first person for sex or labor', says one respondent.

Additional mitigation strategies could include coordinated efforts by law enforcement, federal agencies, and state officials, as well as regulations that force event managers to meet specific standards of conduct if they wish to continue operating in the industry. Technology could also prove valuable for tracking human trafficking activities at events. These include tools like TraffickCam, a crowdsourcing platform where people can upload images of hotel rooms they stayed at, helping law enforcement agencies to identify places where trafficking victims were spotted.

THE CRUCIAL IMPORTANCE OF COLLABORATION

This recent study by Wickey Byrd and Fyall could soon serve as a guideline for all parties addressing the exploitation of people in the event industry. In their paper, the researchers emphasize the huge value of collaboration, suggesting that collective efforts and open conversations among stakeholders are likely to be more fruitful in mitigating human trafficking.

The study was carried out in the Southeast of the U.S., where stakeholders are already working together to address a wide range of human trafficking activities. In the future, the team's findings could pave the way for new joint efforts between policymakers, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, educators, human rights advocates, and event managers across the U.S., which could help to drastically reduce both sex and labor trafficking in the event industry.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This exploratory study, underpinned by collaboration theory, adopts a qualitative approach by interviewing stakeholders in the U.S. to identify the causes, scale, reach, and impact of human trafficking in the context of major events.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Based on your study findings, what could be some viable strategies for mitigating human trafficking at major events?

// Creating a registration template for event organizers to include in the registration process that includes a) verbiage condoning human trafficking, b) the local laws for participating in human trafficking, and c) what a possible human trafficking social media post or advertisement may look like. When we educate the attendees before they arrive, we can mitigate future behaviors.

It is imperative for event organizers to meet with local law enforcement and advocates to have a safety plan in place in case someone encounters a trafficking victim or a trafficker. Where do they go? Who do they call for victim support? Preparing a plan ahead of time ensures all people are trained in the event that they encounter trafficking. //

Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd



Dr. Jessica Wickey Byrd, EdD has 25 years of experience in the hospitality industry, including restaurants, resorts, events, convention centers, non-profit fundraising, and live entertainment. As Director of the Internship Program, she launched human trafficking education in the Summer of 2020, creating robust curriculum to enhance the student's internship education.

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SECURITY

UN Tourism: Driving social and economic change

An interview with Natalia Bayona, UN Tourism Executive Director by Dr. Stephen Pratt

UN Tourism is the specialized agency for tourism and the global leader of tourism for development, driving social and economic change to ensure that 'people and planet' are always center stage. As society progresses, the tourism sector, much like many other sectors, needs to transform to serve as a catalyst for prosperity at a universal scale. Enhancing the wellbeing of individuals, safeguarding the natural environment, stimulating economic advancement, and fostering international harmony are key goals that are the fundamental essence of UN Tourism. Dr. Stephen Pratt talks to UN Tourism Executive Director Natalia Bayona about UN Tourism's role of driving a sustainable force that is now central to many economies.

UN TOURISM RECENTLY CHANGED ITS NAME. WHAT PROMPTED THE CHANGE, AND HOW HAS IT BEEN RECEIVED SO FAR?

The rebranding to 'UN Tourism' reflects our commitment to a more inclusive approach to global tourism, emphasizing interconnectedness, collaboration, and the achievement of a more sustainable sector. This change highlights the vital role of tourism in promoting economic growth, cultural exchange, and fostering innovation, while also making clear tourism's key role in the wider work and mission of the United Nations.

The response to our new name has been overwhelmingly positive, reflecting a shared vision for an equitable future. With this new brand, the organization aims to reaffirm its

status as the global leader of tourism for development, driving social and economic change to ensure that 'people and planet' are always center stage and they come along with prosperity.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF YOUR ORGANIZATION, AND WHICH AREAS HAVE SEEN THE MOST SIGNIFICANT INFLUENCE?

The global impact of UN Tourism is extensive, shaping various regions and sectors while promoting responsible, sustainable, and universally accessible tourism alongside inclusive growth and sustainable development.

As one of key economic drivers, tourism plays a vital role in poverty alleviation and job creation, especially among youth, with over

50% of the workforce under the age of 25. Education remains at the heart of our mission, exemplified by initiatives like the [UN Tourism Online Academy](#), which equips tourism professionals with essential training and resources for responsible tourism practices. This not only enhances career opportunities but also positively impacts local economies.

Innovation is another key area where we make a difference, as we facilitate global entrepreneurship competitions, national challenges, and innovation forums that stimulate creative solutions within the tourism sector.

Overall, UN Tourism's influence encompasses sustainable practices, policy development but also investments. Because tourism is an economic sector—and the most human economic sector at that—it needs strategic



investments and the development of investment frameworks so that all actors in the sector can participate in the multiple benefits that tourism can bring.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS THE MAIN CHALLENGES FACING GLOBAL TOURISM TODAY?

There are many challenges that tourism is facing today. Starting from the economic ones, arising from the economic uncertainty and geopolitical instability, and followed by the informality of the sector and the environmental issues.

But tourism has proven to be resilient, both during the pandemic and with its ability to be at the forefront of technological change. Nevertheless, digital adaptation is a challenge itself; the rapid evolution of technology requires the sector to embrace new tools and platforms to enhance customer experiences and streamline operations. The

sector needs to scale up efforts to support all actors so that no one is left behind in digitalization.

Additionally, education plays a crucial role in addressing the skills gap within the industry and ending the informality of employment. Many tourism professionals lack the training necessary to navigate emerging trends, which could hinder growth and innovation. To tackle

As the global leader of tourism for development, UN Tourism drives social and economic change to ensure that 'people and planet' are always center stage and they come along with prosperity.

these challenges effectively, we must foster a culture of ongoing learning and investment in human capital.

THE WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM NOTED THAT GLOBAL TOURISM RECOVERY HAS BEEN UNEVEN. HOW DOES UN TOURISM PLAN TO FACILITATE A MORE BALANCED RECOVERY MOVING FORWARD?

UN Tourism is committed to fostering not only partnerships between public and private sectors but investments in the sector promoting sustainable development practices. Our focus includes enhancing regional tourism cooperation, investing in community resilience, and ensuring marginalized groups are included in planning processes.

We recognize how tourism has a unique power to provide opportunity and help traditionally marginalized groups find work, grow professionally and personally, and become more firmly integrated into wider society. In Colombia and Panama, for example, UN Tourism has worked to promote innovation among women and in post-conflict communities. Thanks to this, they have grown to become social entrepreneurs, leaving their marginalized status behind through innovation. It's a clear illustration of how investing in new ideas and talented individuals, wherever they are, can have a profound impact on whole communities, while ensuring that tourism's recovery and growth is enjoyed by everybody.

WHAT STEPS SHOULD COUNTRIES TAKE TO SUSTAINABLY LEVERAGE THEIR NATURAL AND CULTURAL ASSETS TO ACHIEVE BALANCED PROSPERITY?

To achieve balanced prosperity, countries should sustainably leverage their natural and cultural assets through an integrated approach. This begins with thorough assessments to identify unique offerings that attract mindful tourists. Developing

sustainable tourism strategies is essential, prioritizing the preservation of natural and cultural resources alongside economic growth. Stakeholder engagement is critical; involving local communities in decision-making empowers residents and ensures their stories and traditions enrich tourist experiences.

Investment in sustainable infrastructure, including renewable energy and efficient waste management, must support tourism



UN Tourism Executive Director,
Natalia Bayona

Thought Leader

One UN Tourism initiative involves developing responsible tourism guidelines.

initiatives, fostering broad economic benefits. Educational programs that integrate sustainability principles can cultivate a new generation of informed travelers and professionals in the sector. Promoting authentic experiences rooted in local culture not only fosters deeper connections between visitors and destinations but also supports local artisans. Collaborative efforts between public and private sectors can share best practices, ultimately maximizing tourism's positive impact on socio-economic development while safeguarding unique assets.

HOW DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION ASSESS ITS COLLABORATION WITH UNIVERSITIES? WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBJECTIVES, AND HOW IS THIS PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURED AND EVALUATED FOR EFFECTIVENESS?

Partnerships are key to UN Tourism achieving its goal of promoting tourism education at every level. Through our ever-growing network, we aim to reach both young people and established tourism professionals, to inspire and empower them to build their futures within our sector.

The UN Tourism Online Academy now offers around 50 courses from 18 academic partners. A total of almost 30,000 students, more than half of them (54%) women, are registered to the platform, with India, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, México, Argentina, Italy, and Indonesia, the top ten most-represented countries, highlighting the truly global reach. And to ensure everyone can be part of our sector's future, we have made 250 scholarships available to our Member States this year alone.

Alongside this, around 100 universities are part of the UN Tourism Affiliate Members Network, while our own network of 'Academies in Collaboration with UN Tourism' also continues to grow. Most recently, we signed an agreement to open a Culinary Arts Academy in Zimbabwe, to go alongside the Riyadh School of Tourism and Hospitality in Saudi Arabia and the Samarkand Academy in Uzbekistan.

That's just a small overview of our work in the field of education, and we continue to advance initiatives at every level, from high school to continuing professional development and training.

Our collaboration with universities centers on knowledge exchange, capacity building, and research initiatives. We aim to foster innovation in tourism, enhance educational curricula, and tackle critical sector challenges. Effectiveness is assessed through measurable outcomes, including research publications, student engagement, and real-world result implementation. Partnerships focus on research and innovation that informs policymaking, with key objectives in community engagement and skills development. We disseminate knowledge through conferences and publications.

By facilitating internships and experiential learning opportunities, Rosen College can connect theoretical concepts with real-world applications.

WHAT ARE THE TOP PRIORITIES FOR THE NEXT FIVE YEARS, AND WHAT FACTORS ARE DRIVING THESE PRIORITIES? HOW DO YOU ENVISION UNIVERSITIES AND RESEARCH CONTRIBUTING TO THESE STRATEGIC GOALS?

In the next five years, we aim to drive both economic and social growth within tourism. To achieve this, we will continue to prioritize innovation, investments and education – three proven pillars of transformation and empowerment.

These are exciting times for our sector, and we are leading from the front. The digital transformation of tourism continues at pace, and we are working to harness the huge potential of Artificial Intelligence. For example, AI could transform how destinations promote themselves and manage their tourist inflows, allowing for more efficiency and greater diversity. There is also significant potential for more and better-targeted investment into our sector. In that sense, for example, we are connecting private investors with community tourism projects, supporting growth while also supporting local businesses, entrepreneurs and artisans and safeguarding local heritage.

Crucially, education will empower future tourism workers as well as sector leaders with the necessary skills and knowledge to

address these challenges effectively. This is key to future-proofing jobs and improving conditions for everyone who works in our sector, including through better pay and more opportunities to grow professional within tourism.

HOW COULD THE ROSEN COLLEGE CONTRIBUTE TO ACHIEVING UN TOURISM'S PRIORITIES?

Rosen College can play a role in achieving UN Tourism's priorities through focused research and innovative educational programs. By engaging in projects related to sustainable

tourism practices, visitor management, and community impact, the college can provide actionable insights that align with UN initiatives. Its strong emphasis on hospitality education and industry collaboration fosters a comprehensive understanding of consumer behaviour and responsible practices.

Moreover, Rosen College can enhance its curriculum to prioritize innovation, effectively preparing students to become future leaders in the tourism sector. The college also serves as a hub for knowledge transfer, offering training programs designed to build resilience among tourism professionals. By facilitating internships and experiential learning opportunities, Rosen College can connect theoretical concepts with real-world applications.



Natalia Bayona

UN Tourism Executive Director

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UN Tourism strives to promote tourism development that supports the conservation of biodiversity.

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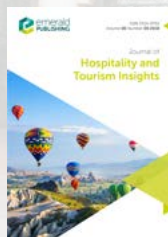
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DICK POPE SR. INSTITUTE FOR TOURISM STUDIES



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.



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.

OUT OF THE BLUE

Harnessing coastal tourism for ecosystem regeneration

Tourism is simultaneously a driver and victim of climate change. Coastal zones host an estimated 50% of all tourist infrastructure, much of it developed at the expense of coastal vegetated habitats (such as marshes, mangroves, seagrass, etc.). Collectively, these habitats are known as blue carbon ecosystems as they sequester more carbon than they produce. At UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Dr. Sergio Alvarez argues that green restoration tourism offers a pathway to address this issue. Restored and protected blue carbon ecosystems offer not only a tourist attraction with opportunities for economic development, but will also contribute to mitigating global climate change.

Across the expanse of terrestrial history, a little over 4.5 billion years, Earth has witnessed periods of stability and periods of rapid and dramatic change.

The periods of dramatic change include those associated with mass extinctions, during which more than three quarters of species on Earth are lost within a short (geologically speaking) timeframe (approximately 2 million years). The last confirmed mass extinction was the most famous: 65 million years ago, the collision of Earth with an asteroid marked the end of the Cretaceous Period and of the dinosaurs. Recent Earth history, the 11,700-year-long (to date) post-ice age Holocene epoch, has been a period of relative stability that has allowed for the advent of modern human beings and human civilizations. However, Earth may now have entered a new epoch, the Anthropocene. While no official recognition for this epoch has been given, human-driven

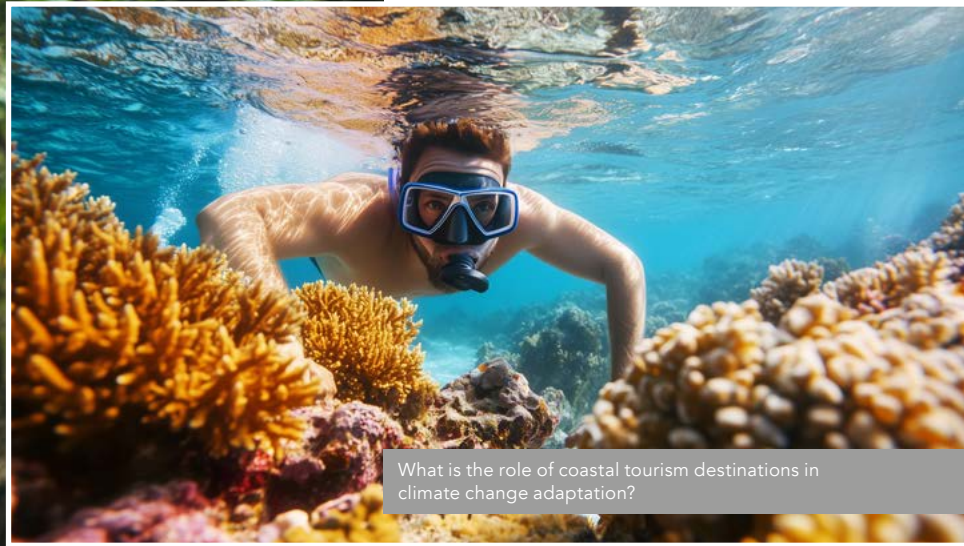
climate change is almost universally accepted as fact, and early signs suggest that we may be heading towards a sixth mass extinction event. Unlike the end of the Cretaceous, earlier extinction events likely came about because of dramatic changes in the carbon cycle, probably driven by widespread volcanic activity. Today, volcanoes remain a source of carbon emissions, but their contribution is grossly outweighed by CO₂ from human activities.

ANTHROPOGENIC CLIMATE CHANGE

From the Greek word 'anthropo' (meaning man), the Anthropocene marks the time period in which human activities have impacted on Earth to a degree sufficient to

make a mark on the geological record. Some people place the start of this period in the late 1940s/early 1950s, when the testing and deployment of atomic weapons caused the deposition of radioactive particles in the soil. Others argue that the Anthropocene can be dated to the Industrial Revolution of the 1800s, before which atmospheric CO₂ never exceeded 300 ppm, and since which it has risen to more than 400 ppm. The most notable impact of increasing greenhouse gases is increasing global temperatures, occurring because solar energy reflected by the Earth is absorbed by the greenhouse gas particles and re-reflected back to the surface. Increasing air and water temperatures have complex and far-reaching implications,





What is the role of coastal tourism destinations in climate change adaptation?

destination management strategies has the potential to turn coastal tourism hotspots into carbon sinks; that is, places that absorb more atmospheric carbon than they produce.

TOURISM IN THE ANTHROPOCENE

Taken as the early 1800s, the birth of the Anthropocene largely coincides with the birth of the modern tourism industry. Moreover, the growth and development of the tourism industry mirrors the growth and development of industrialization and globalization. As such, tourism is intricately linked with anthropogenic climate change, being both a cause of greenhouse gas emissions and environmental degradation (e.g., aviation emissions, over-development, habitat loss) and a victim of the consequences (e.g., sargassum blooms, extreme weather, sea level rise).

Some estimates suggest that up to 8% of annual global CO₂ emissions are linked to the tourism industry, approximately 50% of which occurs in the coastal zone. Tourism infrastructure to support mass tourism is often achieved by clearing natural habitats and ecosystems; for example, by draining wetlands to build new developments or building roads along coastal sand dunes, damaging the dune system and exacerbating erosion. In some cases, beaches are constructed by shipping sand in from other sites, damaging the natural environments in both the supplying and receiving locations, and emitting CO₂ in the process. Conversely, coastal areas also bear the brunt of climate change-driven impacts. As low-lying areas, coasts are susceptible to rising sea level. Hurricanes, which develop over open ocean, hit coastal areas the hardest. Coastal

including driving changes in climate patterns and extreme weather, altering habitats, and reducing the ice volume of glaciers and polar ice caps, in turn leading to rising sea level. Extinctions are on the rise, with one estimate suggesting that 7% of the animal species alive in 1800 are now extinct, equal to around 130,000 species.

Climate change and environmental degradation have come to define the times

in which we live. Beyond the impacts on our natural world, the implications for human society are also profound and wide reaching, impacting on economics, politics, social systems, resource availability, and health and wellbeing. At UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Dr. Sergio Alvarez is focused on the role of coastal tourism destinations in climate change adaptation. In particular, he argues that employing landscape-scale regeneration and green

*THE BEGINNING OF THE ANTHROPOCENE
LARGELY COINCIDES WITH THE BIRTH OF
THE MODERN TOURISM INDUSTRY.*



A landscape-scale regenerative tourism management strategy has potential to transform coastal destinations into carbon sinks.

landforms are often dynamic (e.g., beaches, lagoons, sand dunes, estuaries), placing them at significant risk when the supply and transport of materials are altered by changed climate patterns or human intervention; for example, erosion and changes in sand supply.

A major victim of coastal tourism development is vegetated coastal ecosystems, also known as blue carbon ecosystems, including marshes, mangroves, and sea-grass meadows, at least 50% of which have been lost to human intervention. Blue carbon ecosystems are natural carbon sinks; that is, they sequester more carbon than they produce. When they are replaced with tourism infrastructure, not only is this carbon sequestration ability lost, but excess CO₂ is generated by the development of new infrastructure and long-term execution of tourism activities.

Dr. Sergio Alvarez suggests that the restoration of blue carbon ecosystems offers a cost-effective approach to not only ameliorate environmental degradation at the local level, but also to mitigate the effects of climate change at the global scale.



which together facilitate the regeneration of natural processes and native plant species in coastal areas:

- (1) Reducing nutrient input to waterbodies to improve water quality. Sources of such nutrients include agricultural pollution from high-density livestock rearing and fertilizer leaching/run-off, untreated wastewater, and stormwater overflow. Better management of these sources is needed to improve the water environment.
- (2) Restoring natural water flow; for example, by removing water control structures such as dams.

- (3) Controlling the population of burrowing animals (e.g., crabs and earthworms), which alter plant growth and carbon flows within the ecosystem. Management strategies include

the protection of predators high in the food chain, such as shorebirds and fish that feed on burrowing species.

For the best results, restoration should occur in tandem with the conservation of existing blue carbon ecosystems.

However, this process is hampered by high financial outlay, including both upfront costs and ongoing costs associated with monitoring, management, and protection. Moreover, natural ecosystems provide limited scope for economic development. As such, securing funding for such ecosystem restoration projects has traditionally been challenging. One option is to harness the commodification of carbon. tCO₂e (tons of carbon dioxide equivalent) are already traded via numerous schemes around the world. Companies or individuals wishing to offset their CO₂ emissions can purchase tCO₂e credits from carbon sequestration schemes (either voluntarily or to comply with regulatory requirements), such as blue carbon ecosystem regeneration projects. tCO₂e trading has downsides, including high administrative costs, high risk investment, and risk of abuse, but nonetheless offers an opportunity for coastal tourism areas to transition from being part of the problem to being part of the solution.

REGENERATIVE TOURISM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

At present, selling tCO₂e credits is insufficient to cover the cost of blue carbon ecosystem restoration. To address the shortfall, other sources of revenue are also needed. The tourism industry is in a unique position to offer an economically viable pathway for green coastal regeneration as it can monetize natural habitats as a 'green attraction', drawing in visitors who pay an entrance fee and generating additional funds via associated guiding, merchandise, and hospitality endeavours. Ultimately, the goal is to create a business model that relies on the long-term success of ecosystem regeneration; in turn, this offers the potential for long-term income generation. Partnerships with universities offer a route to long-term monitoring and assessment of the social, economic, and environmental project impacts. Ultimately, blue carbon ecosystem regeneration offers a potential blueprint for best practice in economically viable, socially responsible, green restoration tourism.

BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEMS ARE NATURAL CARBON SINKS; THAT IS, THEY SEQUESTER MORE CARBON THAN THEY PRODUCE.

BLUE CARBON ECOSYSTEM REGENERATION

The restoration of blue carbon ecosystems requires three main management strategies,

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Sergio Alvarez advocates for a landscape-scale regenerative tourism management strategy aimed at transforming coastal destinations into carbon sinks.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Can you share some examples of blue ecosystem restoration projects that have effectively harnessed an economically viable business model?

// One place that impressed me was Atlantis Paradise Island Bahamas. It has a casino, a waterpark, and many restaurants, so it has all the things you find in a luxury mass tourism resort in the Caribbean basin. But the unique thing is that the resort is set in the middle of a restoration and conservation project. The property is a massive aquarium where rescued animals are rehabilitated. It is built around a lagoon teeming with animals where beginner scuba divers can swim with fish and corals. To protect the island from erosion, they built breakwaters using artificial reefs and planted seagrass. To give back to the community, they built a mangrove nursery and donate mangroves to local wetland restoration projects. I had an encounter with wild sea turtles while snorkelling around the island when I visited for a conference a couple years ago. //

Dr. Sergio Alvarez



Dr. Sergio Alvarez is an associate professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and the Sustainable Coastal Systems Cluster at the University of Central Florida. He is an economist researching how natural resources and the environment contribute to human wellbeing through the provision of ecosystem services such as food, recreation, and protection from natural and man-made hazards.

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RESILIENCE IN HOSPITALITY

Lessons from the 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19

Insights on the effects of the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic reveal the industry's vulnerabilities.

In groundbreaking research from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Dr. Hyoungju Song and co-researchers compare the effects of the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic on the hospitality industry. The study explores how firm-specific financial characteristics and business strategies shaped resilience during these crises, offering valuable insights for industry leaders and policymakers on how to navigate future disruptions.

The hospitality industry is no stranger to crises, but few events in recent memory have tested its resilience as profoundly as the 2008 financial crisis (FC)

and the COVID-19 pandemic. In research conducted at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Dr. Hyoungju Song and co-researchers explored how firm-specific financial characteristics and business

strategies influenced the ability of hospitality firms to endure and recover from these crises. The study involved analyzing financial data from a range of hospitality firms, comparing their performance during both crises to understand which factors contributed to greater resilience in the face of economic downturns and global disruptions. These insights not only reveal the vulnerabilities within the industry but also provide a roadmap for future crisis management—offering valuable lessons that hospitality leaders cannot afford to miss.

INDUSTRY-WIDE IMPACTS: COVID-19 VS. THE 2008 FINANCIAL CRISIS

The hospitality industry is particularly sensitive to external forces, with its fortunes rising and falling in response to global economic trends, pandemics, and social upheaval. The study explored the impacts of both the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic on the industry, revealing distinct differences in firm performance, measured by both Tobin's q (market-based performance) and ROA (operating performance).

Operating performance (ROA) was stronger during the 2008 financial crisis, as firms managed quicker recovery from financial disruptions without prolonged operational shutdowns. During the 2008 financial crisis, consumer spending dropped significantly, and the hospitality industry experienced revenue declines. However, hotels remained open, restaurants adapted, and while the industry took a hit, it recovered in the years following. In contrast, the COVID-19 pandemic brought the industry to a near standstill. Travel restrictions, social distancing measures, and widespread lockdowns led to dramatic drops in occupancy rates, closures, and a sudden shift in consumer behavior. Consumers gravitated toward domestic tourism and sought out safe, contactless service encounters, prompting the industry to adopt new technologies quickly to meet these demands. The severity of the pandemic's impact prompted the need for businesses to rethink their resilience strategies.

Conversely, market-based performance (Tobin's q) was higher during COVID-19. During the 2008 FC, market-based performance suffered more significantly because it was primarily a financial crisis that directly affected investor sentiment, credit markets, and liquidity. In contrast, COVID-19 saw a relatively faster recovery in market-based performance, as reflected in higher Tobin's q values. This improvement was driven by substantial government support measures (e.g., stimulus packages and loan programs), which restored investor confidence and provided a more optimistic market outlook. The financial markets anticipated future recovery, boosting the valuation of firms despite ongoing operational challenges.



This contrast underscores that the 2008 FC primarily affected financial liquidity and credit markets, while COVID-19 imposed deeper, longer-lasting operational disruptions, yet saw faster stock market recovery due to broad economic support measures.

KEY FACTORS OF RESILIENCE: FIRM-SPECIFIC FINANCIAL CHARACTERISTICS

The study zeroed in on the role of firm-specific characteristics in determining how resilient a

economies of scale and market power. However, this effect was not significant during COVID-19, suggesting that size alone was insufficient against operational disruptions during COVID-19.

LEVERAGE

Leverage, or the amount of debt a company holds, proved to be a double-edged sword. During both the 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19, leverage did not significantly

COVID-19 CAUSED ABRUPT AND WIDESPREAD CLOSURES, LEADING TO MASSIVE REVENUE LOSSES, ESPECIALLY IN THE U.S. HOSPITALITY AND RESTAURANT SECTORS.

hospitality firm could be during a crisis. These characteristics included firm size, leverage, dividend payouts, retained earnings, capital intensity, cash holdings, and previous return on assets. Each of these elements played a role in shaping a firm's ability to weather the storm, whether during the 2008 financial crisis or the COVID-19 pandemic.

FIRM SIZE

Larger firm size had a positive impact on ROA during the 2008 FC. The findings indicate that larger firms had better operational resilience during financial challenges, benefiting from

affect a firm's operation measured by ROA. However, leverage positively affected Tobin's q during COVID-19 but not during the 2008 FC, indicating that debt financing became more beneficial during COVID-19, likely due to government-backed loan guarantees.

DIVIDEND

Dividend payouts were detrimental to ROA during COVID-19, as maintaining dividends under financial strain depleted resources needed for survival. This impact was not observed during the 2008 FC.



The pandemic's effects were immediate and far-reaching.

RETAINED EARNINGS

Retained earnings positively influenced both ROA and Tobin's q during COVID-19, reflecting the importance of internal cash reserves in managing prolonged operational downturns. But the effect was not significant during the 2008 FC.

CAPITAL INTENSITY

Capital intensity, which refers to the amount of capital tied up in physical assets like building and equipment, negatively affected ROA during COVID-19, likely due to higher fixed costs amid demand drops, while it had

CASH HOLDINGS

Cash holdings positively influenced Tobin's q during COVID-19, reflecting liquidity's importance in market valuation, but showed no significant impact in the 2008 FC. This result highlights liquidity's role in enhancing both operational stability and investors' confidence during the pandemic.

BUSINESS STRATEGIES: FRANCHISING AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

In addition to firm-specific financial characteristics, the study explored the role of business strategies, particularly

Internationalization positively influenced Tobin's q during COVID-19 but not during the 2008 FC, suggesting that geographic diversification helped manage pandemic-related risks by leveraging varying regional impacts. Hospitality firms should strategically diversify across markets to mitigate global crises, benefiting from different recovery timelines and regional conditions.

INDUSTRY-WIDE IMPACTS

While both the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted the hospitality industry, the pandemic's effects were more immediate and far-reaching. The financial crisis led to a gradual decline in consumer spending and a slow recovery, but the hospitality industry never fully shut down. In contrast, COVID-19 caused abrupt and widespread closures, leading to massive revenue losses, especially in the U.S. hospitality and restaurant sectors.

During the pandemic, hospitality firms had to adapt to entirely new ways of operating, with many adopting contactless check-ins, enhanced cleaning protocols, and other safety measures to address consumer concerns. The lasting impact of these changes is still unfolding, but it's clear that COVID-19 will have a more enduring influence on how the hospitality industry operates moving forward.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGERS AND POLICYMAKERS

One of the most important takeaways from this Rosen College study is the practical implications for hospitality industry managers, investors, and policymakers. The findings suggest that managers should focus on building resilience by carefully managing firm-specific characteristics, such as maintaining healthy cash reserves and being mindful of their firm's leverage. Business strategies, such as franchising and internationalization, also play a role but must be approached with an understanding of their limitations during different types of crises.

For policymakers, the research offers interesting insights into how different crises impact the hospitality industry and highlights the importance of targeted government support. Whether through financial relief programs or policies designed to stimulate demand, governments have a critical role to play in helping the hospitality industry recover from crises.

COVID-19 WILL HAVE A MORE ENDURING INFLUENCE ON HOW THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY OPERATES MOVING FORWARD.

an insignificant impact during the 2008 FC. That is, companies with high capital intensity faced greater difficulties in reducing costs, making them more vulnerable to operational downturns during COVID-19, likely due to lockdowns and restrictions. However, the capital intensity positively affected financial market valuation (Tobin's q) during COVID-19 but not during the 2008 FC, suggesting that higher capital intensity was perceived as financial strength during COVID-19.

franchising and internationalization, in building resilience.

Franchising enhanced both ROA and Tobin's q during COVID-19 by providing stable franchise fees and risk distribution, while it was less effective during the 2008 FC. Expanding franchising should be a strategic focus for risk-sharing, particularly when facing crises that directly affect operations like COVID-19.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Hyoungju Song's research aims to compare how firm-specific financial characteristics and business strategies contribute to resilience in the hospitality industry during crises.

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LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

While Dr. Hyoungju Song's analysis provides valuable insights, it also has limitations. The findings are largely based on data from U.S. firms, and further research is needed to explore the external validity of these results in other regions. Additionally, future studies could examine a wider range of firm-specific characteristics and strategies, as well as look at different sectors within the hospitality industry to provide a more comprehensive understanding of resilience.

This Rosen College research offers a compelling look at how firm-specific characteristics and business strategies contribute to resilience in the hospitality industry during crises. By comparing the 2008 financial crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, this highlights both the vulnerabilities and strengths within the industry, providing practical insights for managers and policymakers alike. As the hospitality industry continues to recover from the pandemic, the lessons learned from this study will be invaluable in building a more resilient future.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What inspired you to explore the resilience of hospitality firms during crises like the 2008 financial crisis and COVID-19, and how has this research shaped your perspective on the future of the industry in navigating unforeseen challenges?

“ The inspiration to explore the resilience of hospitality firms during two different crises came from the industry's acute vulnerability to diverse external shocks. Resilience is crucial in the hospitality industry because it is highly susceptible to external shocks, which can severely disrupt operations and financial performance. Given the hospitality sector's dependence on travel, tourism, and consumer spending, the ability to adapt quickly to unforeseen challenges ensures business continuity, protects jobs, and maintains customer trust. This research's findings have shaped our perspective on the importance of proactive, crisis-specific strategies to ensure the industry's sustained growth amid future uncertainties. ”

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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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Norovirus outbreaks and coronavirus risk in hospitality

Globally, norovirus and coronaviruses pose a significant public health challenge. In the case of norovirus, food service environments are often at the core of outbreaks. In a first-of-its-kind study, Dr. Bendegul Okumus evaluated both the epidemiology and transmission routes of virus outbreaks and the risks in different settings. This brings much-needed attention to the field and calls for collaborations between healthcare, hospitality, and business management to conduct high-quality research to better understand risk patterns for outbreaks.



Flying the flag for food service and hospitality management scholars is UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Dr. Bendegul Okumus. Dr. Okumus is one of the few academics in this field to bring together scholarly articles about the well-known norovirus and the lesser known (at the time of publishing) 'novel Coronavirus 2019' and their risks in hospitality. By doing so, she highlights the scarcity of literature on this topic produced by food service scholars—a perplexing finding considering norovirus is commonly spread in food service industries, with restaurants and hotels being high-risk environments for outbreaks. To address this gap in our knowledge, Dr. Okumus systematically reviewed published academic articles and other sources of data such as government reports and webpages, focusing on the risks of transmission and outbreaks in different settings and the role of food service settings in this transmission.

Her resultant publication shines a light on the epidemiology of these viruses and sets out areas of focus for future research.

CURBING THE SPREAD

Worldwide, the highly contagious norovirus causes almost 12% of hospitalizations and has an estimated healthcare productivity cost of 60 billion USD. This 'stomach bug' spreads through fecal-oral routes. Food and irrigation water make those who consume it acutely ill with intestinal symptoms within 12–48 hours. It is estimated that up to 25% of norovirus transmission is through food, although data from developing countries is less clear.

Able to survive at both room temperature and even in frozen foods, norovirus is commonly transmitted through items like salads, sandwiches, and food types not thoroughly cooked or heated before eating. Most people recover within 1–3 days but those most at risk of severe illness are the very young, elderly,

and immunocompromised. In the USA, over 90% of outbreaks occur in hospitals, nursing homes, cruise ships, childcare facilities, and restaurants. Considering the public health and financial implications of norovirus outbreaks, better surveillance and diagnostics are needed to curb the spread.

The review also looks at coronaviruses' risks in different settings. It is important to note that Dr. Okumus's research was conducted in 2020, a time when little was known about the 'novel Coronavirus 2019.' However, her paper discusses what was known about it at the time as well as touching on other coronaviruses such as the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and SARS—a coronavirus causing severe acute respiratory syndrome. Human coronavirus spread through close contact causes respiratory symptoms which for some can be fatal. SARS is transmitted through feces and water whereas MERS has been found in camels' milk and contaminated



It is estimated that up to 25% of norovirus transmission is through food.

vegetables such as lettuce. However, at the time of the review, the food transmission route of the 'novel Coronavirus 2019' was unknown and the review emphasized the need to research the risk of transmission through food and drink.

UNDERSTANDING THE SOURCE

Restaurants and hotels carry the highest norovirus outbreak risk, and the handling of food without using gloves is considered a major source of infection. However, food preparation is not the only source of contamination. One study detected norovirus in the ground water of a hotel. Another study described how 800 people were infected at a resort within just over two weeks, demonstrating how quickly this virus spreads and how many people it can harm. Considering food handlers are frequently a source of contamination, it is surprising to learn that the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) food code allows for food service employers with intestinal symptoms to still work on the condition they avoid handling food, utensils, and linen. Worryingly, one in five food service workers with intestinal symptoms continue to work, possibly because of staff shortages and/or they feel the need to secure their jobs. Considering how contagious norovirus is and the public health challenge and financial burden it presents, there are calls

from experts in the field, food industry officials, regulators, and consumers for the FDA to change this regulation. Regarding coronavirus transmission in restaurants, there are reports of infected restaurant workers in China who handled wild animals—a culinary item that is part of the food culture in this part of the world.

Cruise ships, where hundreds if not thousands of people live in close contact, can be plagued by norovirus, with an estimated 27 outbreaks per year. Sources of contamination are food and person-to-person transmission due to the close living quarters. For coronaviruses, flights and ground transportation are identified as high-risk sources. At the time, little was known about its spread on cruise ships—probably because this transportation mode had been stopped during lockdowns.

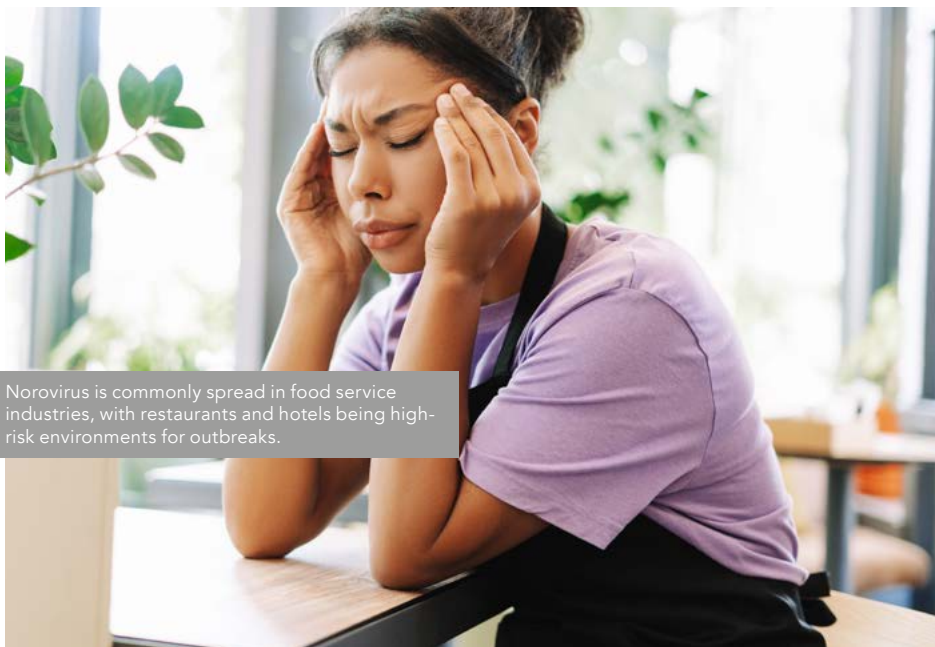
Norovirus outbreaks also occur in schools which, in the USA, are the main setting of food-related illnesses. Easily spread through toys, desks, and other surfaces, children under five years old are particularly susceptible to severe illness. The review also describes an outbreak linked to contaminated computer equipment and another related to children playing outdoors in a contaminated water fountain. Other education settings such as colleges have also been affected by norovirus outbreaks in the USA and in some cases, this has been linked to ill food workers. Another setting where food service was involved in the spread of norovirus is the military, with Dr. Okumus' research reporting studies of outbreaks in an army, a navy ship, and an air force unit.

Healthcare setting outbreaks of norovirus are of particular concern because of the vulnerability and higher risk of the people in hospital and nursing homes. The close living quarters and nature of care means frequent contact enables easy spread of the virus. In the USA, norovirus is the number one cause of infectious disease in hospitals and can lead to ward closures and significant operational challenges.

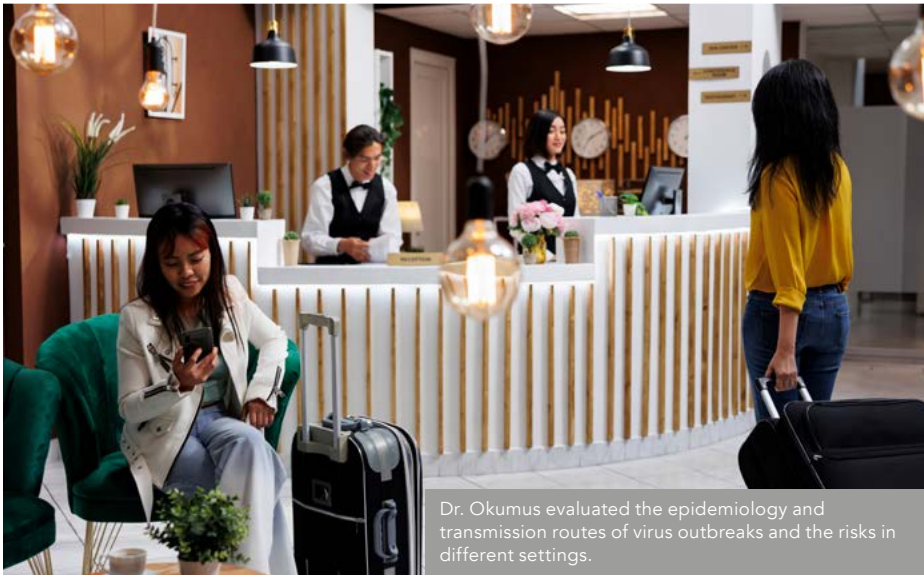
TIGHTENING REGULATIONS

The FDA provides guidelines for food preparation such as washing hands, wearing gloves when handling food, and rules for staff showing symptoms of norovirus. However, this food code is not compulsory and different states may adopt different variations, leaving

WORLDWIDE, THE HIGHLY CONTAGIOUS NOROVIRUS CAUSES ALMOST 12% OF HOSPITALIZATIONS AND HAS AN ESTIMATED HEALTHCARE PRODUCTIVITY COST OF 60 BILLION USD.



Norovirus is commonly spread in food service industries, with restaurants and hotels being high-risk environments for outbreaks.



Dr. Okumus evaluated the epidemiology and transmission routes of virus outbreaks and the risks in different settings.

CONSIDERING THE PUBLIC HEALTH AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF NOROVIRUS AND CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAKS, BETTER SURVEILLANCE AND DIAGNOSTICS ARE NEEDED TO CURB THE SPREAD.

the door open for violations and foodborne illness outbreaks. When contaminated food is found to be the source of an outbreak, health departments will work with food regulatory agencies providing clean-up procedures and guidelines to follow to minimize the spread.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) use reporting systems and surveillance networks to understand and predict outbreak trends. The importance of training to improve food handlers' awareness of outbreaks is one way to increase safety and there is a call for

more training, workshops, and even social media initiatives in this area.

The review highlights the significant burden of these viruses. With outbreak statistics believed to be underreported, the true global prevalence may well be higher than we know. There is no vaccine or treatment for norovirus, so efforts must be focussed on preventing the spread, disinfection, and containment.

But what are the risk patterns for norovirus outbreaks? Future research should focus on understanding these risks and more studies are needed at each stage of the norovirus infection transmission cycle to understand this process better and identify where it can be interrupted with control measures.

Research is also needed into how outbreaks affect consumer behavior and their eating choices, hygiene practices, and level of safety risk reporting and to determine the true financial burden of these outbreaks to the hospitality sector. Overall, the quality of research in this area needs improving, and this could be achieved through collaborative working across sectors like healthcare, business, and hospitality management. Perhaps now is the time for food service and hospitality scholars to make their mark on an illness that their sector is intrinsically linked to.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Bendegul Okumus reviewed scholarly articles about the norovirus and coronavirus and their risks in hospitality. Her work brings much-needed attention to the field and calls for collaborations between healthcare, hospitality, and business management to conduct high-quality research to better understand risk patterns for outbreaks.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What advice would you give a young researcher who is interested in getting started in your field?

Foundation in Food Science: Pursue education in food safety and microbiology. Practical Experience: Seek internships to develop hands-on skills. Industry Standards: Understand regulations from organizations like the FDA, NRA, and FRLA in the United States. Networking: Connect with professionals at industry events. Continuous Learning: Stay updated on research and technology. Each researcher can connect with organizations in their respective regions.

Dr. Bendegul Okumus



Dr. Bendegul Okumus worked for the Florida Department of Health in Orange County's WIC program, a federally funded nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children.

She also has work experience in the hospitality industry, particularly in food preparation, food services, and event management. Her primary teaching areas include Nutrition Concepts and Issues in Food Services, International Cuisine and Culture, Sanitation in the Food Service Industry, and Health and Wellness in Hospitality and Tourism. Her research focuses on food safety, eating behavior and habits, food and culinary tourism, food waste, health & and wellness, and disability in hospitality and tourism.

Dr. Okumus has worked in multidisciplinary research teams and secured and completed research grants. She has also authored/co-authored numerous academic journal articles, conference presentations, and books and book chapters. Her recent publications and citations can be seen at Google Scholar.

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WINE SNOB AND WINE SNOBBERY AS SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS

The terms 'wine snob' or 'wine snobbery' have been used in tourism and hospitality literature despite not being measured or well-defined concepts. In response, Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci and Dr. Robin M. Back of UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management have developed a concise wine snobbery scale. The six-item scale has been designed to help researchers measure wine snobbery uniformly in various contexts and across a broad range of study populations.

The word 'snob' and phrases such as 'wine snob' and 'wine snobbery' have featured in tourism and hospitality literature and have also been used in some empirical research as a measured concept. However, so far there has been no clear definition and scale of what wine snobbery or a wine snob is. This has prompted the suggestion that using the term 'snobs' is 'unnecessarily derogatory' in the context of academic journals. Considering this perspective, a clear scientific definition and the operationalization of wine snob and wine snobbery are needed for researchers to be able to reflect the meaning and significance of these terms fully. For this reason, Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci and Dr. Robin M. Back of UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management have proposed a succinct definition of wine snobbery as well as a scale to measure the concept.

THE DEFINITIONS OF SNOBBERY

Dictionary definitions of snob indicate attitudes towards other people and/or objects based on personal perception. Merriam-Webster, for example, defines a snob as 'one who has an offensive air of superiority in matters of knowledge or taste'.

This definition indicates that a person labeled a snob may have a positive attitude towards themselves and consider themselves to be superior in comparison to others. It also suggests that a 'snob' might have a negative

attitude towards objects and people in specific contexts. These indications mean that snob and snobbery often have negative connotations in day-to-day life.

SNOBBERY IN WINE

Although snob and snobbery have mostly negative connotations in daily language use, the terms can be viewed in both a positive and negative light when looked at in the context of wine, winery, and wine tourism literature. Researchers have described wine snobs as 'attentive in wine quality and fine taste' but have also identified consumer snobbery as a significant challenge faced by some producers and varietals. Notably, even when the meaning of snob or snobbery is discussed, no empirical definition or measurable observation of the concept is provided.

EXISTING MEASUREMENTS OF WINE SNOBBERY

Some studies have featured empirical measurements of wine snobbery, but no clear definition has been given. One study developed a wine consumer typology that was based on an objective and subjective wine knowledge matrix. Snobs made up the second largest group in the study and were identified as having 'high subjective knowledge but low objective knowledge' and 'overestimated what they really know about wine'.

This method of measuring wine snobbery suggests negative connotations, yet the

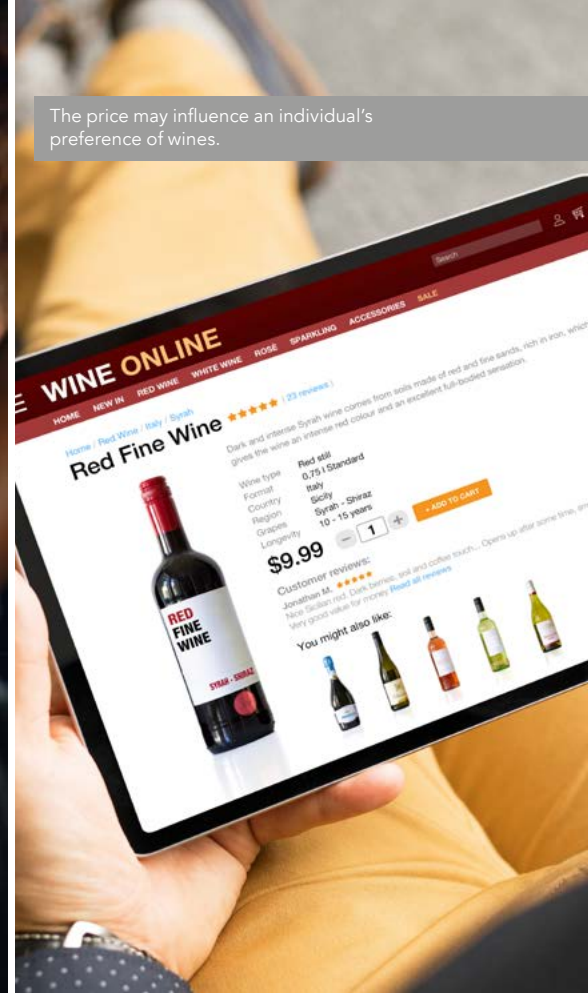
research also identified this group as having potentially positive attributes such as being open to exploring new products. Benchmarking this study, further research surveyed Italian wine consumers to explore whether social media usage influences online wine purchasing decisions. This validated the theory that 'snobs' have 'high subjective but low objective knowledge'.

A CONCISE WINE SNOB SCALE

These existing operationalizations of wine snob and wine snobbery are lacking. This is because they don't provide a detailed definition or consider individual attributes in the context of the level of self-comparison to others, education and taste in wine, and criteria in preferences.

Conversely, Dr. Tasci and Dr. Back suggest that 'wine snobbery is the character of perceiving oneself as superior to others in the level of experience, knowledge, and taste of wine'. This stance may influence an individual's preference of wines based on several factors including price, awards, and vintage. Using this definition, the researchers conducted a study to test a succinct wine snobbery scale.





The price may influence an individual's preference of wines.



SCALE DEVELOPMENT

The study was based on a cross-sectional survey that was designed to gain access to and gather responses from a large dataset from the general population in the United States. The wine snobbery scale was designed using keywords from the dictionary definition of general snob and snobbery, and keywords from online content related to snob/snobbery and wine snob/wine snobbery. The researchers also considered references to wine snob and wine snobbery in wine, winery, and wine tourism literature.

The scale consists of six items, each with a 7-point rating ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (7). The six items are as follows:

- I pick wines according to vintage
- I have superior knowledge of wines compared to most people
- I select wines by the reputation of the growing region
- I select wines by the reputation of the producer
- I drink only expensive wines
- I select wines according to expert reviewers

This scale was designed to reflect a superior perception of oneself when compared to others in the matter of knowledge, experience, and taste, as well as wine preferences based

on criteria that reflect social status. The survey also featured wine consumption and sociodemographic questions to illustrate the sample characteristics.

SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN NO CLEAR DEFINITION AND SCALE OF WHAT WINE SNOBBERY OR A WINE SNOB IS.

One study identified that 'snobs' have 'high subjective but low objective knowledge' of wine.



The wine snobbery scale can be used by wine-related businesses to better understand their customers.



SAMPLE SIZE AND MEASUREMENT

229 usable surveys were collected for the study. Data were checked and analyzed with methods including frequencies, descriptives, Principal Component Analysis (PCA), and Pearson regression analysis. The study used PCA to check the grouping tendencies of scale items and Cronbach's alpha metric for the internal reliability of scale items. Cronbach's alpha score of 0.70 is considered

In terms of wine-drinking behavior, 49% of respondents drink 1–3 bottles per week and 36% drink 4–6 bottles. 7% drink less than one bottle, 7% drink 6–9 bottles, and 1.7% drink 10 or more bottles per week.

MODERATE WINE SNOBS

All six scale items from the survey were collated into a factor in order to analyze their internal reliability—in other words, whether the scale

to avoid misinterpretation by providing a measure and an empirical conceptualization of wine snobbery.

The 6-item wine snobbery scale may help researchers gain a consistent understanding of wine snobbery. The goal is to be able to measure it in various study populations and different contexts to create a common capture of wine snobbery.

The scale also has commercial applications. It can be used by wineries, wine producers, and other wine-related businesses such as bars and restaurants to better understand the wine snobbery tendencies that their customers may have.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This research revealed the restrained nature and narrow focus of the existing wine snobbery concept. Dr. Tasci and Dr. Back demonstrated that wine snobbery can be explored as a multi-dimensional concept with each angle revealing a different characteristic relating to wine preference criteria, experience, knowledge, and self-comparison to others.

Future studies may develop a more comprehensive version of the wine snobbery scale using qualitative and quantitative data. These studies may also delve into discriminatory approaches to wine snobbery compared to other wine-related concepts such as geekiness and knowledge.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF WINE SNOBBERY

Empirical research may also seek to include the positive and negative aspects of wine snobbery and further explore psychographic and sociodemographic wine snobbery characteristics. Studies might also consider the perceptions of both wine industry stakeholders such as producers and the wine consumers themselves.

Future research and additional scale development will build on the existing academic literature about wine snobbery as a scientific concept. This will provide theoretical and managerial implications that could help wineries and other related businesses to better identify and market their products to consumers who might be considered wine snobs by themselves or others.

THE 6-ITEM WINE SNOBBERY SCALE MAY HELP RESEARCHERS GAIN A CONSISTENT UNDERSTANDING OF WINE SNOBBERY.

substantially stable or that a factor (a group of variables, or in this case, the six scale items) has substantially high internal consistency. Items with loadings lower than 0.5 were insignificant and were removed as a result.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND BEHAVIOR

Respondents were 61% male, 39% female, and 36 years old on average. 61% had a Bachelor's degree and 28% had a Master's or PhD degree. The majority of respondents were married or cohabiting, Caucasian/White, with an annual income over \$50,000, and from California, Indiana, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois.

items were all being measured in a similar way to one another. The reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, which reflects a high internal reliability.

The Factor Grand Mean for the sample was 5.39, which is a little above the middle point (4) on the 7-point scale. This indicates the sample's propensity to be a 'moderate wine snob'.

APPLICATIONS FOR THE WINE SNOBBERY SCALE

Researchers need to be able to use precise definitions and consistent measures of concepts, including terms that may be seen by some as derogatory. In response to this need, Dr. Tasci and Dr. Back's study aimed

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci and Dr. Robin M. Back define and measure wine snobbery as an empirical concept for use in academic literature and commercial settings.

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Tasci, A.D.A., & Back, R.M., (2023). Definition and measurement of wine snobbery as an empirical concept. *Journal of Wine Research*, 34, 291–297. doi.org/10.1080/09571264.2023.2276267

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Could a snobbery scale of this kind be applied to other aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry?

Wine is a potentially luxury product but it is accessible to all walks of life at different price points, thus introducing snobbery as a self-assessment for social differentiation. The scale can be applied to other similar consumption contexts with different price points, such as cruises, spas, airlines, hotels, and even restaurants. A food snob may miss out on the unique tastes of corner shacks while seeking the social status that comes from dining at upscale restaurants, even if the taste is lacking—as experienced by the authors.

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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.

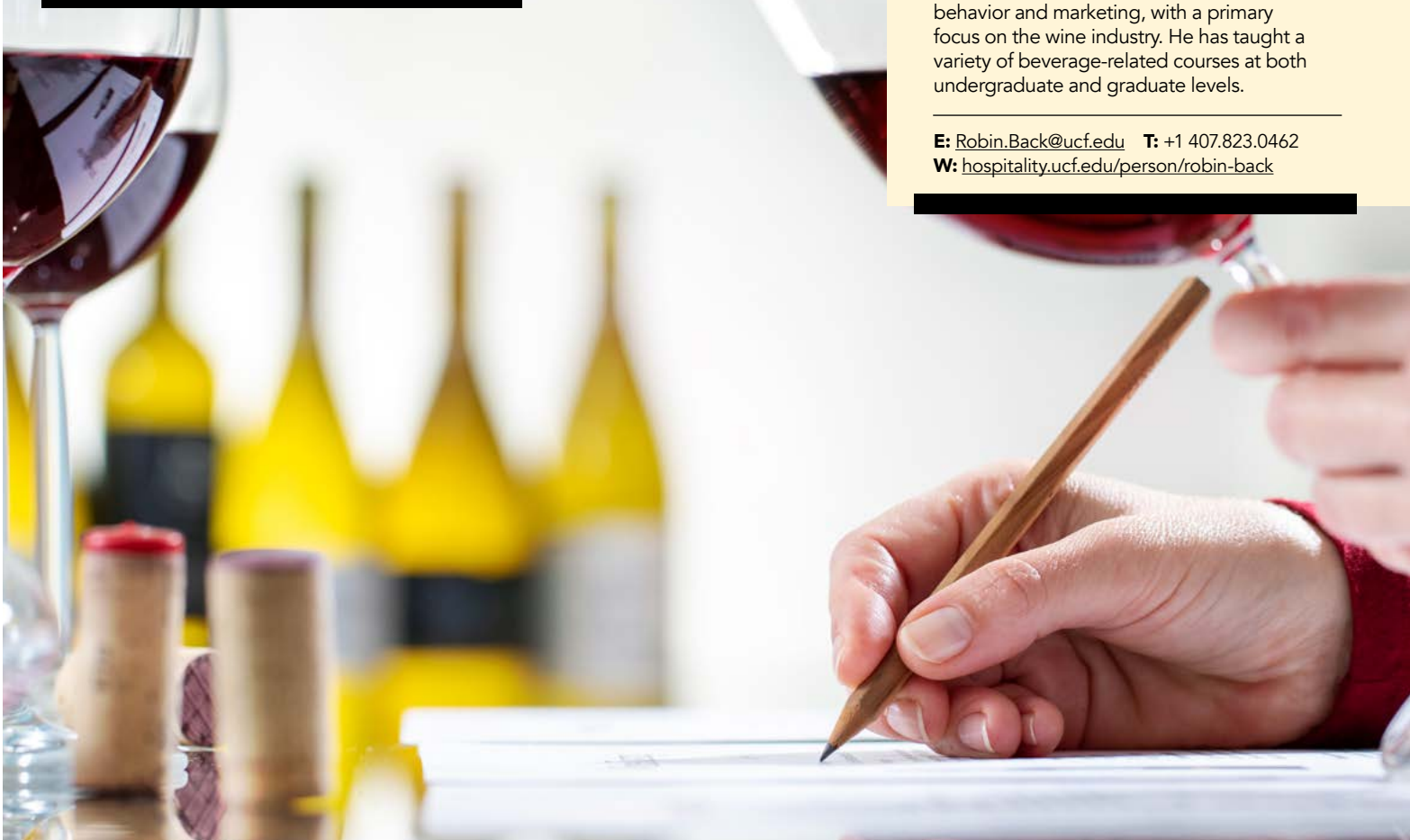
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Dr Robin M. Back is an Associate Professor with over 35 years of experience in academia and the travel and tourism and food and beverage industries on three continents. His research is mainly focused on consumer behavior and marketing, with a primary focus on the wine industry. He has taught a variety of beverage-related courses at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

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