

RRR

ROSEN RESEARCH REVIEW

WINTER 2020

THROUGH THESE GATES PASS

THE FUTURE LEADERS

THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY



**Rosen College of
Hospitality Management**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

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At the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, we use applied research to tackle industry challenges and develop hands-on leadership-development programs. Industry partners benefit from access to dozens of researchers at a dedicated research institute that has been solving hospitality and tourism concerns for more than 40 years. Learn more at hospitality.ucf.edu.



**Rosen College of
Hospitality Management**

UNIVERSITY OF CENTRAL FLORIDA

A message from Dean Youcheng Wang

There is so much to unpack about 2020, but we charge on!

It has been a challenging year for us all, especially for those of us immersed in hospitality, travel and tourism. Despite the challenges, and there are many, we are continuing to move forward and persevere.

We invite you to read the fall 2020 issue of the Rosen Research Review. With the downturn in the industry, research outcomes have become even more important for the future of those whose livelihoods rely on airlines, cruises, events, entertainment, lodging, restaurants, and travel. The coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic pushed us into a virtual existence, but did not deter our world-renowned faculty from continuing to conduct important research. This dedication to exploring knowledge resulted in UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management rising in the ShanghaiRankings. Rosen College was named the nation's best, and number two in the world in the ShanghaiRankings, a listing of 500 top universities in the world, and a mark of excellence in the field of research. Rosen College has consistently moved up in the ShanghaiRankings survey over the last three years, starting with a world ranking of No. 20 and a national ranking of No. 7 in 2017; in just three short years we are at the top of the list and continue to share our research for the good of all.

As with the first two issues of the Rosen Research Review, we feature 10 articles, derived from research conducted by our faculty, collaborating with global academic partners, and sometimes our graduate degree-seeking students. We also include an interview with Dr. Abraham Pizam, founding dean of Rosen College. He is this issue's thought leader – an example of those in the field who put into practice each day what we teach in our curriculum to the future leaders of the hospitality industry. Dr. Pizam



is celebrating the 50th anniversary of achieving his Ph.D. He began overseeing UCF's hospitality program in 1983, was appointed Dean when the stand-alone college was built 17 years ago, and stepped down in 2018 to return to a faculty position at the college. He has conducted research projects, lectured, and served as a consultant in more than 30 countries, held various academic positions in the United States, the U.K., France, Austria, and Australia. Dr. Pizam is truly an icon of research in the industry and we are proud to share his thoughts in this Winter 2020 issue of the Rosen Research Review.

The research presented in this magazine was conducted before and during the pandemic. It looks at forecasts for the hospitality industry, trends for the future, and ideas that can enhance the business outlook for our partners and friends. COVID-19 gave us time to think, reflect, research and learn. It gave us time to put together a great new issue of the Rosen Research Review for our readers.

Whether you read the Rosen Research Review online or in hardcopy, we hope that you enjoy the magazine and share each new issue with your colleagues.

Dean and William C. Peeper Preeminent Professor in Destination Marketing



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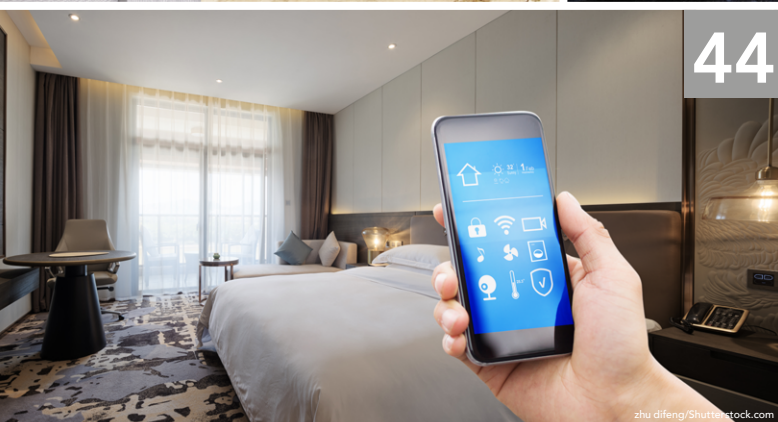


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THE ROLE OF THE "GREEN CHAMPION" IN INFLUENCING GREEN TECHNOLOGY USE IN HOSPITALITY

Historically, the hospitality industry has been slow to adopt green innovations and technologies. However, as the marketability and cost-saving benefits of green technology become ever more apparent, organizations are now more motivated to investigate ways to speedily and affordably implement sustainable tech. Dr. Cynthia Mejia from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management looked at the primary mechanisms that influence the implementation and use of green technologies in the hospitality industry.

As the second highest emitter of greenhouse gases (GHG) in the tourism sector, the hospitality industry has been widely criticized for a lack of willingness to adopt more sustainable practices and reduce its carbon footprint. However, a recent increase in consumer awareness of environmental issues, coupled with more stringent government regulations, has made the industry rethink their historically tentative approach to sustainability and adopt more green initiatives.

In recent years, the evident advantages in marketability and long-term cost savings have been key drivers in the hospitality industry for adopting green technologies. Yet, the burden of introducing these technologies into the industry falls primarily on facilities managers. Facilities managers are responsible for the purchase, implementation, and maintenance of green technologies and are therefore critical to the application and continued use of sustainable innovations. Dr. Cynthia Mejia, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, looked at which behaviors within an organization drive the adoption

and use of green technologies. Her research employed semi-structured interviews with multi-level, highly experienced facilities managers of hotels, resorts, and convention centers predominantly in Florida, but also in other regions around the United States. The interviews were conducted to ascertain the experiences of facilities managers implementing green technologies, and any perceived drivers or barriers they encountered.

The theoretical background of Dr. Mejia's research was underpinned by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT). The four constructs of this theory – performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and facilitating conditions – were used as a framework for the questions asked of facilities managers. Using an interview research method allowed for an in-depth determination of the likelihood of green technology adoption and the primary drivers for implementation.

Although there is an abundance of consumer-targeted sustainability research in hospitality, there are fewer studies with a focus on the operational side of

sustainability within the field. Dr. Mejia's study examined the mechanisms beneath green technology adoption and use, with the following primary objectives:

- Gain insight into the acceptance of green technologies in hospitality from a facilities manager point of view.
- Determine the extent to which other factors helped or hindered the adoption and continued use of green technologies within an organization.

GREEN IDENTITY, CULTURE AND INNOVATION

In previous sustainability studies, the levels of green identity and green culture were seen as strong indicators of whether an organization will adopt green initiatives and technologies. Green organizational identity is the public facing side of a company, i.e., a company with a green identity will market their green credentials to their customers; whereas a company that has a green culture is one that promotes environmentalism within the internal structure of the organization. Companies with a green organizational structure are more likely to offer environmental training





Changing heating or ventilation system can require substantial upfront investment.



Air conditioning can make up a large part of a hotel's environmental impact.

and have more environmentally aware staff. Green culture is linked to the proactive use of green technologies and general positive environmental outcomes.

Innovations in green technologies are becoming a source of competitive advantage, as firms attempt to be greener than their rivals. Green organizational innovations tend to fall into two categories:

customers – these are not formulated in advance. However, reactive innovations do also still help to cut costs and achieve environmental goals.

GREEN TECHNOLOGY

The umbrella term, green technology, refers to any innovation or technology that conserves or protects the resources of the environment. In the hospitality context,

– such as placing window tints or insulation on south-facing walls – but they are less effective than the more expensive long-term solutions previously mentioned.

In Dr. Mejia's study, multiple participants remarked on how their organization's approach to the application of green technologies was piecemeal and reactive, owing to the high capital costs involved. However, one facilities manager did successfully show how green technologies can pay for themselves through energy savings, with the example of changing all the resort's incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescents and LED bulbs. Costing \$15,000 to implement, the company received a \$14,000 rebate check from the power company – almost the full cost of the project.

However, the long-term cost-saving benefits of green technologies did not help some facilities managers in the study to successfully convince corporate stakeholders to invest in quality, green technologies. One respondent, for example, described how his organization opted for a much cheaper HVAC system than the one he advised,

THE BEAUTY OF A GREEN CHAMPION IS THAT THEY CAN EXIST AT EVERY LEVEL WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION.

proactive and reactive. Proactive green innovations are the more favorable method of innovation, allowing for more rapid adoption of new green technologies and additionally improving the green identity, and therefore the overall brand of a company. Proactive green innovations are closely linked to organizations that have a strong green culture within them. Reactive innovations, in comparison, are driven by pressure from regulation or

the most well-known green technologies include: energy-saving lighting systems, such as LED bulbs; energy-efficient heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems (HVAC); and electronic green waste and water systems. The primary barrier to the implementation of these technologies is the high capital costs of new energy-efficient HVAC systems or LED lighting. More cost-effective green technologies can be used in the short term

Staff training is key to engage the workforce.



Green champions can exist in any department.



Green leaders drive green technology adoption.

resulting in the organization having a less effective and faulty system. Although the purchase of less expensive equipment is currently encouraged, organizations should aim to proactively source the best applicable equipment they can afford, which would over the long-term result in both the best environmental and cost-saving outcomes. The use of green technologies is highly dependent on the green facilitating conditions within an organization. Green

the ability to engage with staff across the organization. Furthermore, green leaders and facilities managers are not always present to educate all staff; to combat this barrier, informal green champions could assume the role of stewarding a green organizational culture through passion and belief in sustainable and green initiatives. The beauty of a green champion is that they can exist at every level and in any department within an organization,

technologies are implemented or considered. Building on previous research, she gives further evidence of how green facilitating conditions – such as organizational green culture and formal green leaders – are the primary drivers to green technology adoption. Additionally, the study also significantly contributes to the field with the discovery of how effective informal green champions can be in supporting the adoption and use of green technologies. The study creates a more complete, nuanced picture of what influences green technology implementation, and uncovers previously unconsidered factors.

This research by Dr. Mejia reveals how green technologies can be better implemented in the future, with the important findings applicable for influencing future organizational green technology adoption strategies. The study may encourage further research on the extent to which informal green leaders could be used to inspire the adoption and use of green technologies in hospitality organizations. Dr. Mejia's research brings clarity to how the hospitality industry can be more sustainable, demonstrating that when organizations cultivate a strong green culture and appoint green leaders, informal green champions will reveal themselves and drive the sustainable ethos throughout the industry – with environmental and financial benefits.

GREEN FACILITATING CONDITIONS – SUCH AS ORGANIZATIONAL GREEN CULTURE AND FORMAL GREEN LEADERS – ARE THE PRIMARY DRIVERS TO GREEN TECHNOLOGY ADOPTION.

leadership, coupled with a strong green culture within the organization, is essential – when either is weak, conflict and poor environmental and financial results follow.

THE “GREEN CHAMPION”

Many of the facilities managers who took part in the study indicated that a green organizational leader is critical to the implementation of green technologies. However, one facilities manager recognized the limitations of a formal green leader – they must have

for instance amongst housekeeping staff, reception assistants, and middle management. Green champions disseminate environmental awareness and education throughout an organization, promoting the use of green technologies and sustainable systems, and engaging staff members in all departments.

IMPLICATIONS

Dr. Mejia's novel study brings a unique insight into the perceptions and experiences of hospitality facilities managers when green

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Cynthia Mejia gathers insight into the acceptance of green technologies in hospitality from a facilities manager point of view.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Why do organizations with a robust green culture and proactive green technology implementation have a competitive advantage?

// Hospitality organizations with a robust green culture and a proactive green technology implementation strategy enjoy first-mover advantage, which translates into a source of competitive advantage as firms strive to gain market share. Successful early adoption of green innovations and technologies satisfies both the regulatory 'push' factors and the consumer demand 'pull' factors. //

Dr. Cynthia Mejia



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Colleagues can act as green champions and encourage each other to commit to actions such as recycling.

DIET APPS

Why do we use them?



Several apps have been designed to assist with healthy eating and food choices.



Many Americans enjoy dining out, but nutritional information is not always easily accessible or available in restaurants. Smartphone apps could be a convenient and innovative way to access nutritional information about restaurant products. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management researchers Dr. Bendegul Okumus and Dr. Ahmet Bulent Ozturk, investigated what psychological factors influence our intentions to use smartphone diet apps. Their research showed that social influence has the most significant influence on intentions to use diet apps, followed by several other important psychological factors. The findings of Dr. Okumus and Dr. Ozturk have practical implications to inform diet app development to increase users' access to nutritional information.

The average American spends 46% of their weekly food budget on dining out in restaurants. This may be good news for the food service industry, but it is concerning for public health.

Large portion sizes and unhealthy dishes, which are often available to us when dining out, are associated with a number of serious health conditions, including obesity and diabetes. Obesity in particular is a major cause of mortality in the United States, accounting for a staggering 18% of all deaths. Following a healthy diet and lifestyle is therefore crucial to reduce the risk of chronic illness. Having access to our food's nutritional information when dining out is now more important than ever.

As well as maintaining a healthy diet, many Americans have specific dietary requirements. Around 30% of Americans have specific dietary preferences, 20%

have food sensitivities, and 5% have food allergies. Dining out can be challenging for people with dietary requirements as appropriate dietary information may not always be readily available.

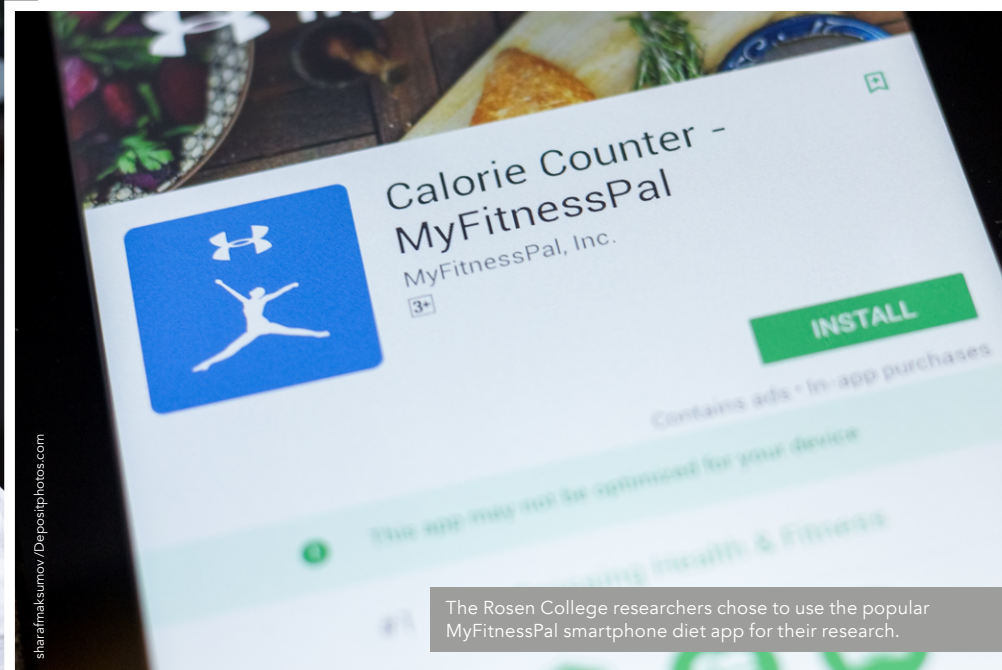
Smartphone diet apps can offer an appropriate, convenient, and cost-effective means for displaying nutritional information and weight-control interventions. These apps can assist customers to make more informed decisions when ordering food or selecting a restaurant by providing accurate nutritional information.

Several apps have been designed to assist with healthy eating and food choices, including Fooducate, Restaurant Nutrition, Zestar, MyFitnessPal, and HealthyOut.

There has been a lot of research focusing on new and innovative technologies to develop nutritional smartphone apps, yet there has been a comparative lack of research



Smartphone diet apps can assist customers to make more informed decisions when ordering food by providing accurate nutritional information.



The Rosen College researchers chose to use the popular MyFitnessPal smartphone diet app for their research.

investigating how users' beliefs and attitudes towards smartphone diet apps affect their food selection and consumption.

PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS AFFECTING DIET APP USAGE

Bridging this gap, Rosen College researchers, Dr. Bendegul Okumus and Dr. Ahmet Bulent Ozturk, have conducted a study to investigate psychological factors that influence users' acceptance of smartphone diet apps when ordering food and beverages in restaurants.

This study builds upon some of their previous research by using a more up-to-

date and integrated theoretical foundation, called the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT).

Using this UTAUT theoretical foundation, the Rosen College researchers proposed four initial determinants of mobile diet app usage: **Performance expectancy**, how much the user believes that the smartphone diet app will actually improve their diet; **effort expectancy**, how effort-free the user believes the app will be; **social influence**, the extent to which the user perceives that the relevant people believe they should use the app; **facilitating conditions**, the extent to which the user believes there exists an appropriate technical infrastructure to support the use of the system, e.g., to install and configure the app. The researchers also propose a fifth and final determinant in users' acceptance of smartphone diet apps – personal innovativeness, the extent to which the user is receptive to new ideas and makes innovative decisions.

The Rosen College researchers chose to use the popular MyFitnessPal smartphone diet app to investigate individual determinants of app usage, and they asked participants to fill out questionnaires to measure performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, facilitating conditions, and personal innovativeness.

Using advanced statistical techniques, Dr. Okumus and Dr. Ozturk's research showed that performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence, and personal innovativeness were all determinants of smartphone diet app use. Therefore, the results of the study suggest that users will have positive intentions to adopt smartphone diet apps if they are perceived as easy to use and able to improve their dieting, especially if there is influence from users' social circles or if a user has an innovative personality.

Although Dr. Okumus and Dr. Ozturk thought that facilitating conditions would also determine intention to use smartphone diet apps, this did not in fact prove to be the case. The researchers suggest that this may be because of recent increases in smartphone use that took place when this study began in 2015, leading to people feeling more familiar with smartphone apps and less concerned about facilitating conditions.

AMERICANS ARE BECOMING MORE HEALTH CONSCIOUS, AND WITH THIS COMES HIGHER DEMAND FOR HEALTHY EATING ENVIRONMENTS.



A large proportion of older people use technology regularly.

Deeper investigations into the results of the research revealed that social influence was the highest predictor of intentions to use smartphone diet apps when ordering food at restaurants. This suggests that social influence should be a key factor to be taken into consideration by diet app developers. For instance, apps can be designed to allow users to compare their diet and health progress with friends and family members.

After social influence, performance expectancy was the next most significant

there were any differences in the use of smartphone diet apps between males and females, and younger (18–34 years old) and older people (35+ years old).

They found that there were no differences in effort expectancy and personal innovativeness between males and females, but they did find that the effects of performance expectancy and social influence were far stronger for males than females. The researchers suggest that this may be due to males perceiving smartphone diet apps as

SOCIAL INFLUENCE SHOULD BE A KEY FACTOR TO BE TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION FOR DIET APP DEVELOPERS.

predictor, followed by personal innovativeness, and effort expectancy. In relation to app development, this suggests that diet apps should be carefully designed to ensure easy navigation and understanding, and to avoid user confusion and exhaustion. Promotion and communication campaigns can also be highly effective in increasing the adoption rate of diet apps by innovative users.

AGE AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

Furthering their investigations, the researchers also investigated whether

more useful and valuable in managing their diet, than females.

In contrast, the researchers found there were no differences in intentions to use smartphone diet apps between older and younger people. The researchers suggest that these findings are not surprising. They argue that, although there is a stereotype that older people do not adopt technology as quickly as younger people, research suggests this is not the case and that a large proportion of older people use technology regularly.

WHY IS THIS RESEARCH IMPORTANT?

Americans are becoming more health conscious, and with this comes higher demand for healthy eating environments. Customers are often more willing to visit and have a more favorable attitude towards healthy eating restaurants if they are provided with nutritional information. Therefore, the knowledge of which factors determine usage of smartphone diet apps uncovered by Dr. Okumus and Dr. Ozturk's research could inform the development of diet apps, thereby improving their usability, leading to greater customer engagement with nutritional information and potentially healthier eating behaviours.

Understanding the psychological factors that shape users' intentions for diet apps is crucial to inspire individuals to use nutritional information in their dietary choices.

Hospitality and foodservice businesses already use certain smartphone apps, such as Event, One Table, Airline Apps, and Uber. However, none of these mobile apps provide detailed nutrition, health and/or food information for users. Dr. Okumus and Dr. Ozturk's research could be used to inform the development of a user-focused diet app, based on the psychological factors which determine its use.

The development of user-focused apps could be adopted by restaurant businesses to increase custom and customer satisfaction. Smart apps could inform their patrons about composition of ingredients, such as organic, non-GMO, vegan, vegetarian, pork free, gluten free, or other special diets. Such mobile apps can provide quick and detailed information to the user even before visiting foodservice businesses. They are also a cost-effective marketing tool for the products and services of the business.

Most critically, US restaurants are not required by law to provide nutritional labeling of their products. Therefore, people with specific dietary requirements or following a healthy lifestyle, may not be able to access the necessary information about their food. Diet apps, with a focus on performance expectancy, could provide the necessary information for the user's specific dietary needs.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Rosen College researchers, Dr. Bendegul Okumus and Dr. Ahmet Bulent Ozturk, investigate psychological factors underpinning intentions to use diet apps.

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Key Paper

Okumus, B., Ali, F., Bilgihan, A., & Ozturk, A. B. (2018). Psychological factors influencing customers' acceptance of smartphone diet apps when ordering food at restaurants. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 72, 67-77.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Your research shows that there is no difference in determinants of diet app use between people aged 18-34 years, and people aged 35+. Do you think there might be differences in determinants of diet app use in older age groups (e.g., people aged 60+ years)?

/// We cannot statistically say that since our study examined only two age groups including younger (18-34) and older (35+). Future studies, which may investigate the differences in users' intention to use diet apps based on different age groups might provide different results. ///



Diet apps should be carefully designed to ensure ease of use.

Dr. Bendegul Okumus



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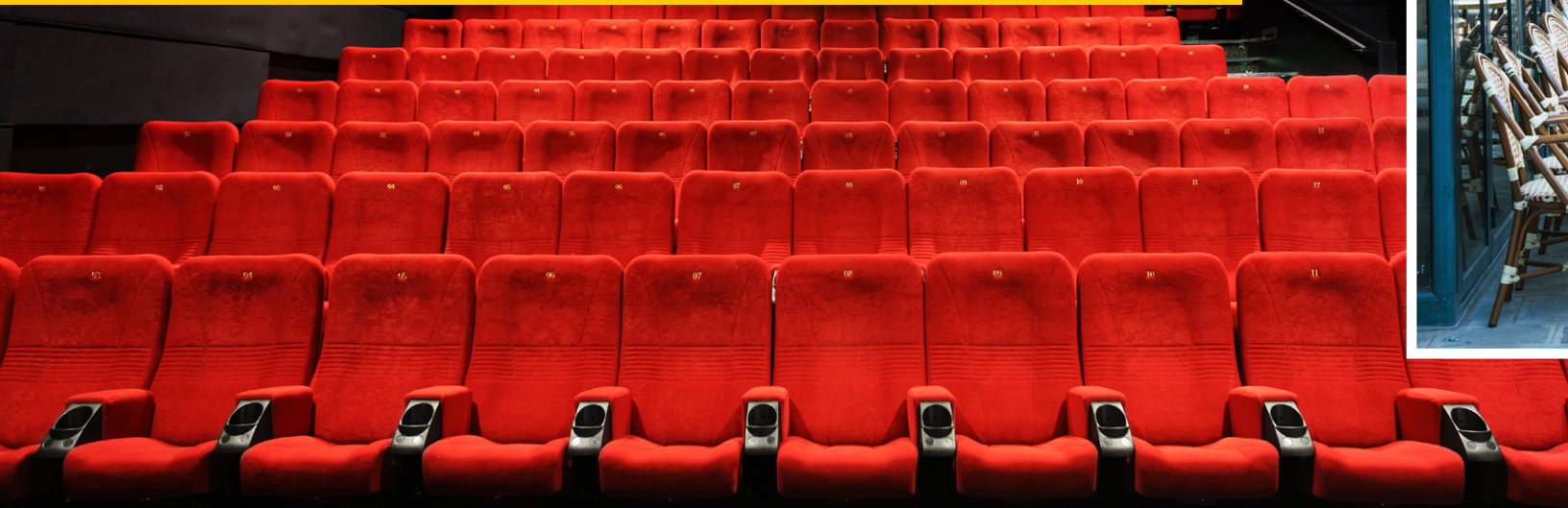
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Males may perceive apps as more useful and valuable.

RESEARCH RESURGENCE AMID THE PANDEMIC



The hospitality, event, entertainment, restaurant, sports, tourism and travel industries have all been affected by the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic.

The year 2020 turned out to be a pivotal annum for the hospitality, event, entertainment, restaurant, sports, tourism and travel industries, and for UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management as well. The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic brought these industries to a halt, and at the same time boosted the demand for research in these fields. Predictive analytics and forecasts for the future are current topics of conversation for those who saw revenues dip and furloughs and layoffs increase.

In June of 2020, UCF Rosen College received news that the ShanghaiRanking, a highly respected ranking for 500 research universities and colleges, had placed it at the top of the ranking in the United States and number two in the world. The new ShanghaiRanking brought a renewed interest in the hospitality realm, particularly in light of the grim outlook for the industry with planes grounded, hotels and restaurants closed or at reduced capacity, theme parks limiting access, conventions and conferences cancelled, and cruises docked portside. Home to the editors of

four top-reviewed research journals in the field of tourism, travel and hospitality, UCF Rosen College is known among its academic peers, through its individual research projects contracted with destination management agencies, and its collaborative studies with esteemed partners around the globe. With the advent of the pandemic, stakeholders in the industry turned to the college's experts for insights.

The need to know what would happen in the weeks, months, and even years to come, pushed the researchers at UCF Rosen College into high gear. Sometimes research can take years to prove or disprove a hypothesis. With COVID-19, answers were needed almost overnight in some cases. The Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies, established in 1979 at UCF Rosen College, mobilized all its

resources to present webinars to answer key questions that were on the minds of industry leaders who had seen spectacular growth in recent years come to a screeching halt. From May to August 2020, the Institute produced five webinars, titled: Research, Recovery, Rescaling. The webinars provided results of research produced in the early months of the pandemic, relaying a gauge of how, when and by what means travelers would venture forth. The webinars delivered insights into small lodgings' capabilities to manage the pandemic and also provided a forecast of the future. Each webinar was recorded and is available on the [Rosen College YouTube Channel](#) and the [Rosen College website](#).

The research delivery system from the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies continues in the fall with Rosen College

*WITH THE ADVENT OF THE PANDEMIC,
STAKEHOLDERS IN THE INDUSTRY
TURNED TO ROSEN COLLEGE'S EXPERTS
FOR INSIGHTS.*



Monthly Rosen College Research Colloquiums look at global issues affecting the hospitality industry.

Research Colloquiums. These usually academic-driven gatherings are now open to all who find their minds turning to thoughts of getting out on the road, reintroducing travel into their lives, and who want to know what they can expect. The monthly colloquiums look at global issues affecting the hospitality industry.

The Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies is also producing a special series over the next seven months, the Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series. To honor Dr. Abraham Pizam, founding dean of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management on the 50th anniversary of his achieving his Ph.D., the Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series takes a look at the evolution of the hospitality and tourism industry through the eyes of some of the pioneers in this field of education. Academic offerings for the hospitality industry have changed dramatically in the last half century. With the economies of several regions of the globe dependent on tourism, what the scholars have learned and how their research has evolved and is being used today, matters to the sustainability of many islands, cities and countries.

The college's research focus has also looked at the people in the hospitality industry. Throughout the summer and fall, the Research Recovery and Reskill webinars provided insight into gearing up for the world to

come, the psychology of managing to live and work, or be unemployed in isolation, the benefits of education while unemployed and more. Originally launched as a professional development tool for the 11,000+ Rosen College alumni, the Research Recovery and Reskill webinars gained popularity among industry partners, and current students, the future leaders of the hospitality industry.

The Research Recovery Rescaling webinars, the Research Colloquiums, the Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series and the Research Recovery and Reskill webinars have been compiled on one page on the Rosen College website for ease of accessibility to this profound research resource: <https://hospitality.ucf.edu/rosen-college-webinars/>.

Continuing the efforts to educate and enhance the skills of industry professionals, UCF Rosen College will soon be launching professional development courses that will tackle emerging focuses of the hospitality industry, such as tourism technology and analytics. The college already offers some graduate degree certificates in destination marketing and event management, which of

course are disciplines that will look different in and after the pandemic, with more virtual aspects to all facets of the hospitality industry.

While ResearchGate is a fine repository of hospitality research, the treasure trove of UCF Rosen College research can be found on STARS, UCF's Showcase of Text, Archives, Research & Scholarship. STARS is administered by UCF Libraries and exists to host and promote research, to publicize, disseminate, and provide ready access to works by, for, and about the University of Central Florida, of which Rosen College is one of its 12 colleges. Stars is accessible digitally from anywhere around the world: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/rosencollege/>.

UCF Rosen College and the Rosen Research Review are here to share knowledge to enhance the world of hospitality.



Susan Vernon-Devlin
Manager of Communications and Marketing, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Orlando, FL



The COVID-19 pandemic brought industries to a halt, and boosted demand for relevant research.

HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM

Delving deeper into diversity management

'We're in the people business.' Long established as the mantra of hospitality and tourism, the sector has substantial expertise in sharpening customer care skills to gain a marketing edge. But customers are only half the equation. Less studied is the expertise of companies in managing their workforce – the employees who, more than in any other industry, are customer-facing. New research led by Dr. Fevzi Okumus, UCF Rosen College's Professor of Hospitality Services, and his collaborator, a former Ph.D. student from Rosen College, looks at an increasingly important aspect of the sector's employment practice: diversity management.

Around 17 million people, or 11% of the US working population, are employed in the domestic hospitality and leisure industry, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics for 2019. Millions more are employed overseas by American hospitality and leisure companies internationally, including globally recognised brands such as Hilton Worldwide and Marriott International.

SUCCESS IN DIVERSITY

The sector leads the way in terms of employing a diverse workforce. Compared to other industries, hospitality and tourism are particularly attractive to – and dependent on – employees from different heritage backgrounds and migrant workers. The sector traditionally employs more women than men and is increasingly recruiting more people with disabilities, as well as people who can find it hard to find employment, such as veterans.

Diversity is therefore a dominant industry theme, with diversity management vital to commercial success. But what can the wider business community learn from leading tourism and hospitality companies about corporate

diversity and diversity best practices? That's the question asked by Dr. Fevzi Okumus, Professor of Hospitality Management at UCF Rosen College. Dr. Okumus and his collaborator, a former Ph.D. student from Rosen College, report their findings in research published in the *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*: 'Diversity management: what are the leading hospitality and tourism companies reporting?'

LITERATURE REVIEW: MIND THE GAP

This study reviews current academic literature on diversity management in the field. Research in the general business field has tended to concentrate on the evolution of diversity management, the challenges that may arise in this practice, and the impact of diversity management on team performance and global perspectives. Other studies have identified best practices, such as: leadership commitment, incorporating diversity management into overall business strategy, and establishing quantitative and qualitative measures of diversity. In addition, broad business research has looked at how to ensure leaders are accountable for achieving diversity initiatives, how to attract a diverse talent pool when recruiting, and

educating management and staff about the benefits of diversity. These areas are all great groundwork for further research.

Yet there has been a lot less specific research into diversity in hospitality and tourism. Existing studies have looked at the business case for disability inclusion, ethnic minority diversity, gender diversity and language diversity. However, what has been missing is an investigation into the foundations of a theoretical framework for diversity management in the sector. Dr. Okumus' work fills in these gaps, focusing on the analysis of diversity management practices adopted by companies considered to be field leaders.

DIVERSITY HIGHFLYERS

The companies selected for this study were all recognised at the annual awards of DiversityInc. DiversityInc's Top 50 award assesses companies' diversity performance in four key areas: talent pipeline, equitable talent development, CEO/leadership commitment, and supplier diversity. Taking his sample from the Top 50 list for 2017, this study focused his research on hospitality companies Sodexo and Aramark; hotel chains Marriott International,





Marriott International has a strong record in female employment, with 45% more women in senior leadership roles than the Top 50 average.

Following the initial research, this study proposes that these top 10 measures could form the basis of a template for best practice in diversity management.

AND THE RESULTS ARE IN...

Leading the pack is hospitality company Sodexo – the only company out of the seven reviewed to score on all ten measures. Sodexo was also just one of two companies to have an inter-generational diversity initiative, the other is Comcast NBC Universal. To cement Sodexo's position as trailblazer, the firm is also committed to delivering programs for individuals with disabilities by 2025. According to DiversityInc, Sodexo employs 75% more African Americans in management positions than any other company in their Top 50 list. "Diversity and inclusion continue to play a significant role in our organizational success," says Sodexo Global Chief Diversity Officer Rohini Anand. "Evolving and sustaining an inclusive culture that supports the diversity of those we serve is a strategic business priority and ongoing commitment of Sodexo worldwide." The report confirms the firm's commitment to best diversity management practice.

Close front-runner, media and entertainment company Comcast NBC Universal, scored in nine of the ten measures reviewed, with the exception of diversity training. The company employs 34% more Latinos in management positions than the other Top 50 companies, according to DiversityInc. Chief Diversity Officer David Cohen outlines the company's ethos: "The results from embracing important values that respect and include different experiences, thoughts and

Wyndham Worldwide and Hilton Worldwide; and media and entertainment companies Comcast NBC Universal and The Walt Disney Company. Together, these seven companies employ around 1.5 million people worldwide.

TOP 10 TEMPLATE

What did the study involve? Using content analysis technique, the researchers looked at the companies' websites and published reports, pulling information on corporate and social responsibility policies and practices, as well as diversity management. Content about best practices, noted on DiversityInc's website as part of their annual ranking process, was also considered. The companies' data was then coded against a framework of 10 measures.

Seven of the measures emerged in the literature review. For instance, whether or not companies had corporate diversity councils, or programs in diversity training and cultural awareness. Other measures include whether or not companies were committed to supplier diversity, employee mentoring and networking, and whether companies offered support for women, LGBT programs, and same-sex benefits. All the above are considered to be important diversity policies and practices.

However, as a result of the widening definition of diversity in society, this study also included three additional areas of diversity management. Namely, measures to support inter-generational, disabled and veteran employees.

CONSIDERING DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT POLICIES AND PRACTICES, THE RESEARCH SHOWS THAT HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM COMPANIES ARE PERFORMING BETTER THAN EVER BEFORE.



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Dr. Okumus suggests future studies could use information collected from staff surveys and interviews.

philosophies directly benefit our customers, our communities and the thousands of people we employ.” He will no doubt be pleased by the recognition of Comcast NBC Universal’s diversity achievements.

Another highflyer, hotel group Hilton Worldwide, also scored for nine of the 10 measures, and Marriott International and Wyndham Worldwide both scored in eight. However, all three failed to score against inter-generational programs – and Marriott International and Wyndham Worldwide both lacked programs targeted towards supporting disabled employees. Amongst the hotel groups’ achievements noted in the report, Marriott International has a strong record in female employment, with 45% more women in senior leadership roles than the Top 50 average. Also, Hilton Worldwide has 48% more Black, Latino and Asian employees in management roles than the Top 50 average. And Wyndham Worldwide has double the supplier diversity than the Top 50 average.

At the bottom of the league sit entertainment giant, The Walt Disney Company, and hospitality company Aramark, who both scored for only five of the measures reviewed. These firms failed to score for diversity training, employee networking and mentoring, inter-generational programs and disability programs. Yet on the plus side, The Walt Disney Company offers promotions to Latinos at a 75% higher

rate than the Top 50, and Aramark has 42% more Asians on their board of directors than the Top 50 list average. So, while they show some positive signs of progress in diversity – there is still room for improvement.

WHERE COULD THIS LEAD?

Although the 10 measures used in the study provide a valuable template for diversity management, this study reveals more work needs to be done. And not least because the study relies on information about diversity management practices provided on companies’ own websites. To combat questions of data reliability, Dr. Okumus suggests future studies could use information collected from staff surveys and interviews. This would be useful for looking at how diversity management practices are implemented throughout organisations, and investigating the grassroots effect of such diversity policies. Interestingly, this study also proposes that companies could be comprehensively analysed as individual case studies, and diversity research strands could be expanded further to include themes such as religious awareness and global diversity initiatives.

TAILORED APPROACH TO SUCCESS

For the first time, this study brings together best practices as reported by leaders of diversity management performance in the hospitality and tourism industry. Additionally, because information about companies’

practices was gathered from self-published content, the work also assesses companies’ corporate communications performance. Considering diversity management policies and practices, the research shows that hospitality and tourism companies are performing better than ever before.

However, this study argues that the inclusion of three additional measures in the study – to support inter-generational, disabled and veteran employees – supports the need for a broader and more inclusive definition of diversity. “The uniqueness of each program highlights the importance of customizing diversity management policies and practices to the individual needs of the companies, instead of following a ‘one size fits all’ approach”, argues the study lead.

This important research confirms that diversity management practices are not only important measures of how inclusive organisations are as employers. Instead, the report details how some of the world’s leading companies regard best diversity management practice as vital to their overall strategic and corporate success.

“With rising awareness regarding diversity management in the hospitality and tourism field,” this study concludes, “it is important for companies to assess the impact of their diversity management efforts on their overall business and corporate strategies and performance.”

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Fevzi Okumus and his collaborator, a former PhD student from UCF Rosen College, analyze what the leading hospitality and tourism companies report in terms of diversity management practice.

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Key Paper

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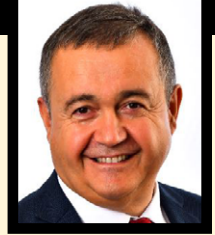
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PERSONAL RESPONSE

The 10 measures identified as benchmarks of best practice in diversity management provide a useful template for other companies in the sector to follow. Which measures do you feel companies should particularly concentrate upon to improve their diversity practice?

Companies should ideally concentrate on all 10 of those measures. However, depending on their vision, mission, values, specific goals, as well as the current challenges they and their stakeholders are facing, they may concentrate on certain specific measures to address and help their and their stakeholders' immediate problems and concerns. It is not a one-size-fits-all approach.

Dr. Fevzi Okumus



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EVOLVING AND SUSTAINING AN
INCLUSIVE CULTURE THAT SUPPORTS
THE DIVERSITY OF THOSE WE SERVE
IS A STRATEGIC BUSINESS PRIORITY.



TIMESHARE

A wise investment for companies in the hospitality industry?

Timeshare became a vacation growth phenomenon during the 1970s and continues to thrive to this day. Many of the largest hospitality brands widened their horizons from traditional lodging and rose to the challenge of satisfying the demand for 'vacation ownership'. Has it all been a happy holiday for those companies? Dr. Amy M. Gregory from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and her collaborators have provided a robust insight into this particular diversification.

Timeshare, also referred to as 'vacation ownership', started to emerge in Europe in the 1960s, perhaps reflecting the growing confidence of building international relationships and commitments in the post-WW2 era.

Typically starting as a few families purchasing and having pre-agreed shared access to a holiday property, the concept rapidly blossomed and, in the process, began to evolve into a well-structured and legally defined form.

Instead of necessarily owning a percentage of the property, the 'vacation owner' would, instead, own a number of weeks of access to the property. Typically, a developer would build the resort or facility and then sell blocks, usually of two weeks, to individual buyers. In most cases, 50 weeks of the year would be sold, with two weeks reserved for maintenance and repair.

While in the early days, the timeshare owner would be restricted to their purchased weeks at the original resort, a change in the law regarding the status of their purchase meant that owners were now able to trade or exchange their share with others. In practice, this meant that the perceived benefit of 'ownership' no longer meant the owner had to go back to the same resort every year but could actually vary their vacation destination through this mechanism.

The timeshare concept, with this additional flexibility, led to a dramatic period of growth, especially in the United States during the early 1970s. That growth has been sustained and, with the very high earning potential evident in the early days, has attracted many of the world's largest hospitality companies to enter the market. Brands such as Disney, Marriott, Hilton, Four Seasons, Hyatt and Westin have all made significant investment. The entry of these major brands also brought some credibility back to the segment. A number of unscrupulous independent operators had started to give timeshares a reputation for the extreme 'hard sell'.

PERFECTLY COMPATIBLE?

Intuitively, there would seem to be strong parallels between the hotel and leisure industry – whether firms with origins in lodging, such as Marriott or Hilton, or those with origins in entertainment-based vacations, such as Disney – and the timeshare sector; all are targeting the vacation dollar as a substantial source of revenue.

So, by entering the timeshare market, are those major lodging brands simply recapturing those vacationers who now value the opportunity to own their vacation destination?

In part, but there are other factors to consider. There is, of course, no parallel or compatibility between business-related lodging and timeshare, and business accommodation and



Today, timeshares combine the perceived benefits of 'ownership' with variety.

facilities are a large revenue source for most major hotel brands.

A second factor is that the original dramatic growth of the timeshare industry happened in a pre-internet era; today, the online virtual marketplace has spawned the likes of Airbnb, offering yet another alternative to the leisure traveler and vacationer. With the market increasingly populated by 'digital-savvy' customers, and supported by ever more secure payment systems and robust quality assurance, will the attraction of vacation ownership continue to provide quality returns to the developers and managers of the resorts?

Ultimately, the question of compatibility between lodging and timeshare will be determined by the return on those investments a firm achieves.

SEGMENT REPORTING

An important change in accounting practice, introduced in 1997, has begun to

cast some light on the value of timeshare investment for businesses (like those already mentioned), whose major presence is in the lodging industry.

Prior to 1997, public companies were required to report their financial data on an *industry* basis; however, an industry can contain a variety of segments, each potentially having a similarly variable profile of risk and return. The lack of transparency and available data led to many investors being wary of highly segmented product portfolios.

The 'new' 1997 accounting standard, *SFAS No. 131 - Disclosure about Segments of an Enterprise and Related Information*, at last forced public companies to produce financial data that actually reflected how the business was managed.

Because timeshare is a significantly different beast to lodging, and managed separately, it falls very clearly into the definition of a separate segment and must be reported as such.

ULTIMATELY, THE QUESTION OF
COMPATIBILITY BETWEEN LODGING
AND TIMESHARE WILL BE DETERMINED
BY THE RETURN ON THOSE INVESTMENTS
THAT A FIRM ACHIEVES.

Many of the world's largest hospitality companies have entered the timeshare market.



SEIZING NEW RESEARCH OPPORTUNITY

The availability of this audited segmental data has allowed Dr. Gregory and her collaborators to research and explore the relationship between a company's commitment to the timeshare segment, and any measurable correlation with the company's overall financial performance – specifically accounting profit and firm value (the latter measured by the statistical tool, Tobin's Q, which considers future investments and expected cashflows).

The second is EXPt (timeshare operational experience), which considers how the number of years of segment experience – in this case timeshare – may impact on performance. Factors such as availability of economies of scale, or high start-up costs, for example, may have specific performance implications.

A final additional factor is the degree of franchising (DOF), a business growth model that has become increasingly common in business and a common strategy in the lodging

INCREASING TIMESHARE INVESTMENT, AS AGAINST OVERALL LODGING INVESTMENT, MAY NOT BE PERCEIVED BY EXISTING AND POTENTIAL STOCKHOLDERS AS WISE INVESTMENT.

Previous studies had attempted to extrapolate contribution from the proportion of timeshare revenue to total revenue. But such a simplistic approach ignores a number of potentially significant variables.

To support a more rigorous research methodology, Dr. Gregory identified several additional factors likely to yield much more subtle insights.

The first variable is DIV (dividend payout), but with a control factor moderating the effect of dividend payout on perceptions of future value.

industry. DOF can have both positive and negative impacts on firm performance and Dr. Gregory has, therefore, introduced control measures for this factor as well.

THE BIG QUESTION

The researchers posed the question: *does an increase in the percentage of timeshare business affect firm value and accounting profitability?*

Dr. Gregory and her team hypothesized that there would be an inverted U-shaped relationship (also known as the Yerkes and

Dodson law), between the variables; this is where there is an area of maximum benefit, preceded by an area of increasing benefit, but followed by diminishing benefits.

The percentage of timeshare business was compared to: firm value (as measured by Tobin's Q); accounting profitability (as measured by ROA – return on assets); and accounting profitability (as measured by ROE – return on stockholder equity).

ROS, or return on sales, was not used due to the influence of management performance rather than nature of investment.

U-SHAPED IMPACT OF INVESTMENT

The results supported the inverted U-shape relationship suggested in the hypothesis. In the case of the impact of investment in timeshare, relative to the overall performance of the firm's investment, the data identified an initially increasing positive impact, then a period of sustained maximum impact, followed by a lessening of impact in spite of continued investment in the segment.

According to Dr. Gregory, this supports the findings of current literature and studies in the field, which suggest that increasing timeshare investment, as against overall lodging investment, may not be perceived by existing and potential stockholders as wise investment – they might consider the firm to be 'becoming ill-diversified'.

In fact, the study shows that any publicly quoted hospitality firm entering the timeshare segment may experience adverse impact right from the beginning; this leads to an expectation that lodging firms with timeshare commitments will divest them, or spin them out as a separate and dedicated timeshare venture, and those without will be unlikely to enter the segment at all.

Dr. Gregory recognizes that there was a limited sample available to the study, together with the fact that some major timeshare segments are owned by private companies (not required to report the segment separately), or independent developers. The conclusions of the study can only, therefore, be generalized to public companies required to report timeshare segment financial detail. However, the study paves the way for broader research into the field in the future.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Amy M. Gregory and her team investigate whether investing in timeshare offers financial dividends or negatively impacts hospitality companies.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How can a company, using normal business metrics, anticipate when the upper boundary of benefit will be reached, therefore avoiding further investment in timeshare that would produce an inferior contribution?

Companies should consider their individual positions and expectations of their stakeholders when determining an appropriate business strategy. This article is based on academic research and provides a limited view into publicly available data without input or advice from industry.

Dr. Amy M. Gregory



Dr. Amy M. Gregory, from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, has more than 25 years of international sales, marketing and business development experience in the lodging and services industries. Her research focuses on consumer behavior in the lodging context, and is recognized with various awards for research excellence.

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Existing and potential stockholders may not perceive timeshare as wise investment.

SUCCESS FACTORS IN RESTAURANT CROWDFUNDING

According to the US Department of Agriculture, Americans now spend more on food away from home than at home. Perhaps unsurprisingly, therefore, more and more would-be food entrepreneurs want to enter the restaurant market. Raising finance can be a problem but crowdfunding provides a new route for people to realize their dreams. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management's Assistant Professors of Hospitality Services Mehmet Altin and Dipendra Singh, and Ph.D. candidate Gabriela Lelo de Larrea, are among the first to conduct empirical research to discover what determines crowdfunding success in start-up restaurants.

Whether it's fast service or full service, crowdfunding provides a new route for would-be food entrepreneurs to realize their dreams of opening a restaurant. The model allows people to fund a new venture by launching their project on the internet and inviting many people to support it with small financial contributions, in exchange for rewards if the business gets off the ground.

In an industry that generates more than \$188 billion a year, it's easy to see the attraction of opening an independent restaurant. But restaurants are also inherently risky, and any small venture can find it hard to raise capital from traditional sources. Crowdfunding is therefore a good fit for small, agile, millennial businesses. So, what determines crowdfunding success?

A new study from Rosen College of Hospitality Management is one of the first pieces of empirical research to look at crowdfunding in the restaurant sector. Assistant Professors of Hospitality Services Drs. Mehmet Altin and Dipendra Singh, and Ph.D. candidate Gabriela Lelo de Larrea, focused their attention on the online, rewards-based crowdfunding platform

Kickstarter. Their research is published in the *International Journal of Hospitality Management* (2019).

Launched in 2009 with a mission "to help bring creative projects to life", Kickstarter has to date attracted 19 million people from across the globe to back new business ventures. More than \$5 billion of funding has been pledged to support a wide variety of businesses, and 191,341 projects have been successfully funded.

ESTABLISHING THE ESSENTIALS

Dr. Altin, Dr. Singh, and Ms. Lelo de Larrea began their research with a review of the academic literature to develop the hypotheses they wanted to test.

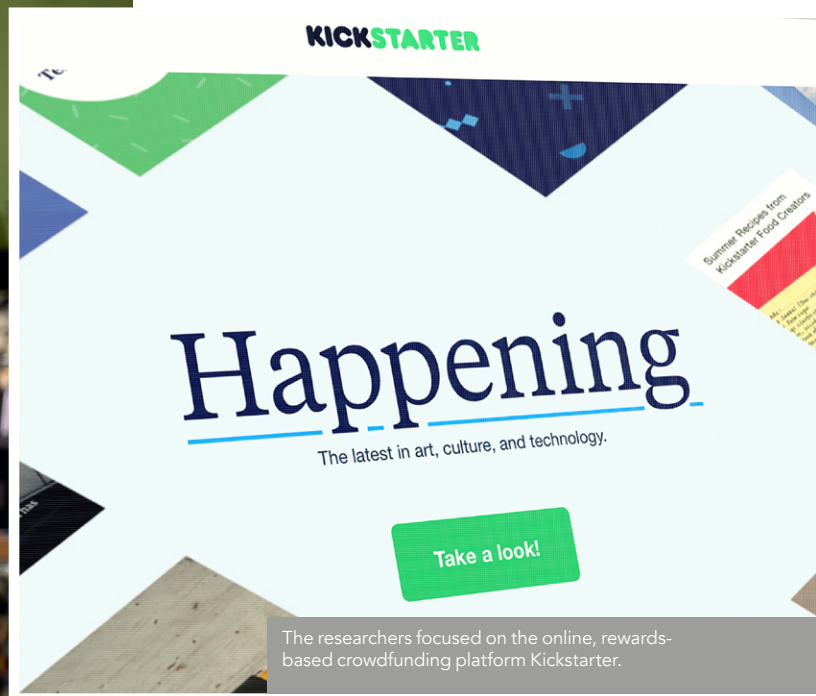
The literature review revealed that the most important thing that entrepreneurs must communicate to potential investors is the concept of their project. Unlike venture capitalists who carry out due diligence on funding opportunities, crowdfunders have a different decision-making approach and want all the details upfront. This includes such things as the proposed menu, service philosophy, service system, restaurant atmosphere, and pricing. Such information can be presented in words, images, and

videos. The researchers wanted to find out which are most effective.

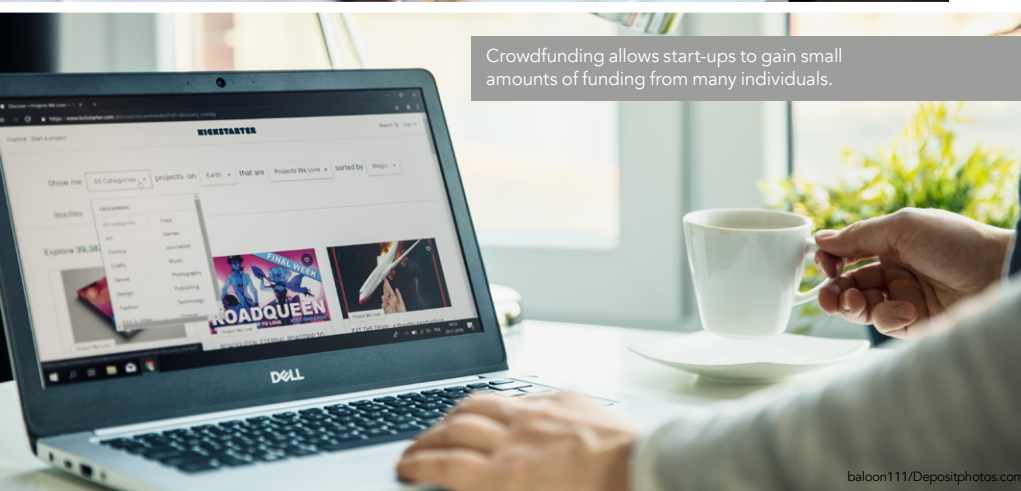
The literature also covered social identity theory and the restaurant's community orientation. Restaurants are often the hub of local neighborhoods and they can help to support the survival of other businesses. Restaurants seeking crowdfunding have a two-way community focus: not only can they support their locality, they can also be crowdfunded by people who come from that locality. The researchers therefore included a crowdfunding campaign's community orientation as a measure of its potential success.

Effective marketing and customer relationship building is essential to any business start-up, and featured highly in the existing academic research. However, this study particularly wanted to look at communication frequency and how restaurants begin relationships with customers, and keep momentum by staying in touch, for example updating customers on the project's progress and status. The researchers chose to measure this by looking at the number of updates provided by the





The researchers focused on the online, rewards-based crowdfunding platform Kickstarter.



Crowdfunding allows start-ups to gain small amounts of funding from many individuals.

RESTAURANTS THAT STRIVE TO IMPROVE THE COMMUNITY WHERE THEY OPERATE IN ADDITION TO THEIR OWN FINANCIAL BENEFIT ARE MORE SUCCESSFUL IN CROWDFUNDING.

entrepreneurs on their funding web pages, as well as the number of comments left by potential funders.

The fourth area identified by the literature as ripe for research looked at the menu of rewards offered to potential investors.

Some crowdfunding campaigns offer a highly structured rewards system, with tiers of rewards – from vouchers to menu items – depending on the amount of money pledged. However, the literature also revealed that choice overload, for example in menu planning, can leave customers feeling

overwhelmed. Rosen's researchers therefore wanted to know whether offering multiple choices within each tier of rewards had a negative impact on crowdfunding success and whether having limited, more exclusive rewards had a positive impact.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study conducted by Dr. Altin, Dr. Singh and Ms. Lelo de Larrea focused on 1,567 US-based restaurant projects listed on the Kickstarter website and concluded between May 2013 and January 2018. The projects included in the research had a status as 'concluded' and were all rewards-based. The restaurants studied sought to raise between \$1,000 and \$100,000 each from crowdfunding. It was felt that restaurants with a higher financial target were not suited to crowdfunding as a source of finance.

The information about the restaurant projects listed on Kickstarter was gathered with the help of a web-crawler service which browsed all the listings automatically in an identical, methodical manner to provide the research data. The results were then analyzed using hierarchical multiple regression techniques to provide a framework for comparison.

SCALE OF SUCCESS

A key finding of the research was the low success rate of the restaurant projects



Regular updates are vital to crowdfunding success.

studied. From the 1,567 restaurant projects analyzed, just 362 succeeded in achieving 100% or more of the total funding required, while 360 projects received nothing at all. Success and total failure were therefore evenly matched.

The majority of projects achieved some support from potential funders. However, the number of people interested was insufficient

researchers argue that the findings suggest that, “Kickstarter is moving to fewer but, but more attractive restaurant projects, which entice people to make bigger contributions.”

Let’s think back to the hypotheses tested by the research. The evidence suggests that in creating crowdfunding campaigns, images rather than videos or text are more influential in presenting restaurant concepts to potential

FROM THE 1,567 RESTAURANT PROJECTS STUDIED, JUST 362 SUCCEEDED IN ACHIEVING 100% OR MORE OF THE TOTAL FUNDING REQUIRED.

to make the projects viable under Kickstarter’s ‘all or nothing’ rules. These state that potential investors’ money must be returned if the total project goal is not achieved.

Looking at restaurant projects over more than four years allowed the study to look at trends in crowdfunding practice over time. Between the start and end of the period studied, the number of restaurant projects listed fell, but the success rate of campaigns increased, and the average pledge amount changed. The

funders. The researchers suggest that still images are more beneficial than moving ones because projects are at the creation stage: videos cannot show the finished product and they therefore concentrate on filming interviews with entrepreneurs, which are less persuasive.

The researchers found that the community orientation of the restaurant is a key factor in crowdfunding success: “Restaurants that strive to improve the community where

they operate, in addition to their own financial benefit are more successful in crowdfunding.” Communication frequency was also confirmed as an important indicator of success. The researchers found that updates and comments on their crowdfunding webpages are a form of public relations and that the number of updates posted is vital to crowdfunding success.

Regarding the final area of inquiry – rewards structure – the results suggest that neither having multiple reward choices in each pledge tier nor the scarcity of reward were significant predictors of success.

THE WAY AHEAD

Dr. Altin, Dr. Singh, and Ms. Lelo de Larrea believe that theirs is a “pioneering study” in the academic literature on the growing field of restaurant crowdfunding in the United States. It is also one of the first to provide insights based on a statistically significant sample. In this way, it also offers a guide to help future restaurant crowdfunders maximize their success. Above all it helps them avoid wasting time and money in developing a campaign by highlighting which activities are likely to provide the best value.

The researchers acknowledge that more work needs to be done to assess the value of crowdfunding to the restaurant sector. In addition to seeing if their results hold true for take-away food businesses, they argue that a longitudinal study of crowdfunded restaurants would also be helpful, following up the short-, medium- and long-term effects that the crowdfunding initiative had on restaurant viability. They also hope that their work will encourage other researchers to conduct a qualitative crowdfunding study which is specific to the tourism and hospitality industry.

Meanwhile, their findings about entrepreneurship in the restaurant sector are clear. Dr. Altin, Dr. Singh and Ms. Lelo de Larrea conclude: “Restaurant entrepreneurs who show that their project benefits the community where they operate, communicate their restaurant concept through images, provide constant updates that maintain project interest and are responsive to funders’ comments are more likely to succeed in reward-based crowdfunding.”

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The researchers set out to explore the determinants of restaurant crowdfunding success.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Restaurant businesses have been badly affected by the global pandemic, but at the same time more people are losing mainstream jobs and are thinking about starting their own business. Following your research, where do you think opportunities lie?

“ Crowdfunding welcomes a wide variety of projects giving opportunities to entrepreneurs thinking of opening a food-related business. This is also true for existing businesses. For example, since before the pandemic, off-site consumption has been on the rise with growing interest. Current and would-be entrepreneurs may create a crowdfunding campaign to launch delivery services or to adapt existing spaces. We are also seeing a trend of outdoor dining; some crowdfunding campaigns have raised funds to build structures to support outdoor dining. In addition, crowdfunding may also be used to fund more flexible projects like pop-ups and food-trucks. ”

Your research noted that Kickstarter is moving to fewer, but more attractive, restaurant projects, which entice people to make bigger contributions. What was the average donation made to the successful start-up restaurants in your sample, and how many people pledged?

“ On average, successful projects raised \$22,500 and had 169 backers who pledged \$133 each. ”

Dr. Mehmet Altin



Dr. Mehmet Altin is an Assistant Professor at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. He earned his Ph.D. and Master's in Hospitality and Tourism Management in Pamplin Business College at the Virginia Tech. His teaching areas include strategic management, revenue management, and information technology, and his research focuses on performance analytics, revenue management, entrepreneurship, and strategic management.

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Founding father

Dr. Abraham Pizam in conversation with Dr. Robertico Croes and Dr. Alan Fyall



Fifty years ago, Dr. Abraham Pizam, founding Dean of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, defended his dissertation entitled "Bringing something new into existence or use, through an industrial suggestion system." To honor Dr. Abraham Pizam, the Rosen College Dean's Distinguished Lecture Series centers on examining the evolution of the hospitality and tourism industry through the eyes of some of the pioneers in this field of education. We took advantage of this occasion to talk to Dean Pizam about his evolution as a scholar.

YOU DEFENDED YOUR DISSERTATION FIFTY YEARS AGO. YOU ARE ONE OF THE PIONEERS IN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH. CAN YOU TAKE US FIFTY YEARS BACK AND SHARE WITH US HOW TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH WAS THEN? WHAT WERE THE TOPICS OF INTEREST?

Fifty years ago, tourism research was in its infancy and in hospitality management empirical research was practically non-existent. In the tourism domain, most empirical research was done by economists who were using quantitative methods to estimate the contribution of tourism to the economy and suggesting that tourism

was a "gold mine", while sociologists or anthropologists studied it with qualitative methods and concluded that it was a sort of "devil incarnate", whose costs outweighed its benefits.

Books like *The Golden Hordes* by Turner and Ash and *Tourism: Blessing or Blight* by George Young started attracting the attentions of novice researchers from other disciplines. Many of the sociological studies conducted in those years were of a descriptive nature rather than inferential and dealt mainly with the negative impacts of tourism on communities. The few studies that were conducted in the hospitality domain were mostly case studies in the



Rosen College has developed and grown since its founding.



Dr. Abraham Pizam, founding Dean of Rosen College.

hotel industry. Data analyses in all fields of study – not just tourism or hospitality – were conducted on large mainframe computers that were the size of an average bedroom. Data input and programming was done on 80-column IBM punch cards. To be able to communicate with the mainframe computer, one had to learn a computer language such as Fortran IV, the long-forgotten one that I learned.

During my dissertation work, I spent many nights in the computer center that was open 24-7 because of the high demand for its services during daytime. None of the faculty members or graduate students that I met in the computer center were from the Cornell School of Hotel Administration. When inquiring about this strange phenomenon, I was told by my Business School professors and Ph.D. student-colleagues, that faculty members in the hotel school were mostly ex-hotel executives who retired into teaching and were not interested in conducting empirical research.



Dr. Pizam is a fierce supporter of collaborative research.

HAVE CLEARLY BEEN ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO YOU OVER THE YEARS. HOW HAS SCHOLARSHIP EVOLVED OVER THE PAST 30-40 YEARS IN THESE AREAS AND WHAT LESSONS HAVE THE ACADEMIC AND INDUSTRY COMMUNITIES LEARNED? IN LIGHT OF COVID-19 AND THE CURRENT CHALLENGES FACING THE GLOBAL INDUSTRY, HOW HAS SCHOLARSHIP CONTRIBUTED TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT(S) ON TOURISM GLOBALLY?

When I started doing research in this field of study, there were only a handful of tourism scholars interested in the topic. Having spent my childhood and early adulthood in Israel and experienced frequent acts of terrorism, I realized the importance of security to tourist destinations. Therefore, my interest was driven by personal experience rather than a fear that this might happen in other places such as USA or Europe. However, the academic interest in tourism security drastically changed after 9/11 when terrorism became a major global threat.

At present, there are hundreds of articles and books written about issues of security. There are also a number of scholars who devote their entire academic careers to this subject. Unfortunately, the same evolution occurred in the field of safety and especially

LET'S JUMP FIFTY YEARS INTO THE FUTURE TO COME BACK TO THE PRESENT. WHAT HAVE YOU LEARNED OVER THE LAST FIFTY YEARS?

WOW!!! How can I put this into a simple and succinct answer? To me, it is not just a matter of time, but also a matter of space. I feel like I am on a different planet. Professionally, everything has changed for me, my field of study, career path, culture, country and especially my zest for discovery. When I completed my Ph.D. degree, I thought that research was something that an academic MUST do to be able to be tenured and promoted. One had to do it but not necessarily love it.

Today, I know better and strongly believe that to be successful in research one has to love it and, most importantly, have a potful of curiosity supplemented by creativity and hard work. I also learned that successful academics cannot rest on their laurels and keep doing the same things, again and again. One has to grow and advance in knowledge, skills and values.

The cumulative knowledge that I possess today was not only acquired from my teachers, but mostly from my colleagues and students. Thus, the ancient quote from the Talmud, "I learned much from my teachers, more from my colleagues and the most from my students" is my living testament to what I am today. I also learned the value of collaboration and understood that one cannot do everything by him/herself. Collaboration with multiple colleagues from various disciplines does not dilute or minimize one's scientific contributions but opens one's eyes to new vistas and ultimately enriches the contribution to knowledge.

SOME OF YOUR EARLY STUDIES FOCUSED ON THE SOCIAL COSTS OF TOURISM TO COMMUNITIES RESIDING IN TOURIST DESTINATIONS. WITH THE PHENOMENON OF "OVERTOURISM" IN MORE RECENT YEARS, WHAT LESSONS, IF ANY, HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT THE SOCIAL COSTS OF TOURISM AND THE MEANS BY WHICH DESTINATIONS CAN BE MANAGED MORE SUSTAINABLY TO THE BENEFIT OF BOTH TOURISTS AND RESIDENTS?

I learned that the world is not dichotomous and that things are not either right or wrong. In many cases, the truth lies in between. That means that tourism by its nature is neither always good nor bad for local communities and their residents. I also learned that there is no universal equation for computing the "carrying capacity" of a destination. What

Today, I strongly believe that to be successful in research one has to love it and, most importantly, have a potful of curiosity supplemented by creativity and hard work.

might be "overtourism" for one destination may be "good and desirable" for another destination of the same size and capacity. What makes the difference is how tourism is managed within the destination and the "say" that local residents have in its planning and development.

SECURITY AND SAFETY AND THEIR VARYING IMPACTS ON TOURISM AND TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

health-related safety and its impacts on the hospitality and tourism industries. The SARS pandemic was the first global health-related incident that ignited a keen interest in conducting research on this topic. This was followed by a few studies on the Ebola epidemic and the foot and mouth outbreak. However, the interest in this topic diminished after those diseases were conquered and very few – if any – studies were conducted on this topic.

Thought Leader

This situation drastically changed with the appearance of the COVID-19 virus and the devastating effects it had on tourism and hospitality industries worldwide. I am currently serving as a guest editor of a special issue on "The Impacts of COVID-19 on the Global Hospitality Industry" that will be published by the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*. This issue has received over 600 manuscripts, the majority of which were empirical studies conducted throughout the world. This shows that the interest in health-related safety issues and their impacts on the tourism and hospitality industries has catapulted almost overnight.

SOME PEOPLE SAY THAT WE AS RESEARCHERS SHOULD BE CONVEYORS OF KNOWLEDGE. DO YOU AGREE? WHAT DO YOU THINK OUR ROLE IS AS RESEARCHERS IN THIS FIELD?



COVID-19 has had a profound global impact.

I believe that researchers have multiple roles. They are, first and foremost, generators of knowledge: they are the ones who design and conduct research that ultimately leads to the expansion of knowledge. Second, they are also conveyors of knowledge since they have the responsibility of communicating the results of their studies to other researchers and the public at large. Last, but not least, I also believe that in some cases, researchers should not only study, analyze and draw conclusions but also, when appropriate, take necessary action. This is what in social science is called "action research."

YOU HAVE ALWAYS HAD AN INTEREST IN CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES AND CROSS-CULTURAL TOURIST BEHAVIOR. WHO WOULD YOU IDENTIFY AS YOUR MAJOR ACADEMIC INFLUENCES AND HOW HAVE THEIR STUDIES SHAPED YOUR THINKING?

The scholar who influenced my view of cross-cultural behavior is Geert Hofstede who developed the Cultural Dimensions Theory. His theory stood the test of time and was used in thousands of studies in all fields of



Dr. Pizam highlights how interest in health-related safety issues "has catapulted almost overnight" as a result.

social science and business administration. But I was also influenced by Henry A. Murray and Clyde Kluckhohn who suggested that "Every man is in certain respects like all men, like some men and like no other man." This saying, in my opinion, captures the scientific essence of anatomy, biology, sociology and psychology. But most importantly, it can be applied to tourism and hospitality by substituting the words "men" and "man" with "tourists" and "tourist," respectively.

THEORY DEVELOPMENT IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM HAS ALWAYS BEEN A THORN OF CONTENTION AMONG THE ACADEMIC COMMUNITY. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN THE GROWTH OF THEORY DEVELOPMENT IN HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM OVER THE PAST FEW DECADES AND HOW DO YOU ENVISION IT DEVELOPING IN THE LONGER TERM?

I think that the fields of hospitality and tourism have matured in the last few decades and reached the stage of development of theories that are applicable to other fields of study, such as service management and healthcare. The proof of this is in the numerous multi-disciplinary studies that are currently conducted by hospitality and tourism researchers with physicians, engineers, sociologists, psychologists, arts and humanities specialists, etc. This would have never happened fifty years ago.

ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS, WE HAVE HEARD YOU SAY THAT WE ARE NOT RESPECTED AS RESEARCHERS. WHY DO YOU HAVE THAT OPINION? DOES THAT OPINION PUT US IN A CONFIDENCE TRAP?

That was then but now it is no longer the case. We used to be the Rodney Dangerfield [a Hollywood actor whose main shtick was "I got no respect"] of the academic community. Now we are the Aretha Franklin whose main song is Respect. Was I hurt and offended when I realized what other academics were thinking and saying about us? You bet I was, but instead of protesting in a loud voice, I and my colleagues "took the high road" and continued to do research and publications to prove to the others that we were as good as them.

ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS WE HAVE HEARD YOU TALKING ABOUT THE ROLE OF HOSPITALITY EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP AS CENTERED ON JOB CREATION. IS THAT NOT A NARROW VIEW OF OUR ROLE AS RESEARCHERS AND TEACHERS? DOES TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY HAVE A LARGER ROLE IN SOCIETY? WHAT IS THAT ROLE?

As hospitality and tourism faculty members, we have multiple roles. As teachers, we have the role of preparing our students for successful managerial careers in the hospitality and tourism industries. As scholars, we have the role of generating and diffusing new knowledge. Last, but not least, as academic members of the hospitality and tourism industries and community citizens, we have the role of contributing to the betterment of life for the industry's employees and citizens in our communities. I would dare to say that we are doing a good job in fulfilling our roles as teachers and scholars. We are also doing a decent job in contributing to the betterment of our practitioner colleagues in the hospitality and tourism industries. However, when it comes to fulfilling our role as citizens in our communities and society, I believe that we can do much better.

THE MAIN CRITICISM IN THE PAST FEW YEARS ABOUT OUR RESEARCH IS THAT IT IS DIVORCED FROM PRACTICAL UTILITY. THAT TENSION BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE IS GROWING. DO YOU THINK THAT THIS TENSION IS GOOD OR BAD FOR OUR FIELD?

I do not share the opinion that theoretical research has no practical applications. I constantly share with my Ph.D. students Kurt Lewin's (the father of Social Psychology) famous quote: "There's nothing so practical as good theory" because good theory guides effective action by turning knowledge into wisdom. Therefore, our problem is not that we study the wrong things, but that we fail to communicate the results of our studies to industry professionals in plain English and without using academic jargon. That needs to change, and I am delighted to see that this publication is doing it.

YOUR PASSION FOR EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP SERVED AS

THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE BIRTH AND EARLY-YEARS DEVELOPMENT AND SUCCESS OF THE ROSEN COLLEGE. NOW THAT THE COLLEGE IS IN ITS "TEENAGE" YEARS AND FAST APPROACHING EARLY ADULTHOOD, WHERE DO YOU SEE THE ACADEMIC FUTURE OF THE COLLEGE AND ITS CONTRIBUTION, LOCALLY, NATIONALLY AND MAYBE INTERNATIONALLY TO ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY?

I believe that the lyrics of the classic Virginia Slims cigarettes commercial – "You've come a long way baby" – are applicable to the status of Rosen College today. Though our chronological age puts us in the category of "teenagers," our intellectual, psychological and social age, place us in the category of "adults." As I have said numerous times during the last few years, we at Rosen College are not sitting on our glorified

We at Rosen College are not ... waiting for the future to arrive. We are creating the future, right here, right now.

behinds and waiting for the future to arrive. We are creating the future, right here, right now. This future is the exportation of our hospitality culture to all other industries that have a service component. That, in my opinion, will be the new and sought after "Good Hospitality Seal of Approval."

FINALLY, HOW DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD REACH OUT TO THE INDUSTRY AND SOCIETY AT LARGE? WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THE INCENTIVES THAT GUIDE OUR RESEARCHERS' BEHAVIOR? HOW SHOULD WE COMMUNICATE OUR RESEARCH?

It is my strong opinion that like corporations, academic institutions must have a social responsibility component. This component called ASR (Academic Social Responsibility) should not only be taught in our classes but practiced through the daily life of our faculty. The answer to the question of "why isn't this happening?" lies in the incentive system that diminishes the contribution of faculty members to ASR to a maximum of 10% in the annual faculty



Dr. Abraham Pizam

Linda Chapin Eminent Scholar Chair in Tourism Management

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assessment. This sends the message to everyone that contribution to the college or university ASR is not that important.

Interview conducted by Dr. Robertico Croes, Associate Dean, Research & Administration at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management & Director, Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies, and Dr. Alan Fyall, Associate Dean, Academic Affairs at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management & Visit Orlando Endowed Chair of Tourism Marketing.



Dr. Robertico Croes



Dr. Alan Fyall

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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 2005, DPI has secured over \$1.4 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: <https://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 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 five undergraduate degrees, a master's degree and a Ph.D. program in hospitality management.


 Rosen Research Focus | Dr. Murat Hancer

BRAND IMAGE AND "OTHER CUSTOMERS"

A new approach to fine dining

Dr. Murat Hancer, Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and his collaborator investigate the relationship between brand image and customer satisfaction for fine dining establishments in a new study. Their findings will help restaurant companies to achieve overall commercial success, within a fiercely competitive industry, through tailored approaches to attracting new clients and establishing brand preference over rivals. The research reveals for the first time the significant effect of "other customers" on brand image, and how they can help to get diners through the door.

What makes a person visit a particular restaurant? A good place to start is brand image. Branding is how a company markets itself to potential and existing customers. In the fine dining industry, brand image is the customer's perception of a restaurant company. It is based on their experiences and interactions with the brand and can evolve over time. Ultimately, brand image helps determine the extent to which one restaurant is preferred over its competition, with the associated attitudes and emotions of a fine dining experience powerfully contributing to customers' interactions with a company. With a collaborator, Dr. Hancer, Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, investigates the role that perceived trustworthiness of a brand plays in a person's willingness to visit a restaurant, and the resulting enjoyment of their experience.

Finding gaps in the existing research landscape for the role of brand image, Dr. Hancer and

his collaborator's new paper – "Building brand relationship for restaurants: an examination of other customers, brand image, trust, and restaurant attributes" – analyzes new data to reveal important findings on this so-far-overlooked area of research. Prior studies previously focused primarily on customer satisfaction. However, for the first time the important role that "other customers" (i.e. customers dining at the same restaurant as the focal customer, but who the focal diner is unacquainted with) play in shaping brand image to build brand preference, has been discovered. The important research throws new variables into the mix for consideration, when thinking about how to help a restaurant succeed in a fiercely competitive industry.

SUCCESS: ATTRACTING NEW CUSTOMERS

The restaurant industry offers an intangible service. Whilst you might be able to look up photos of the meals or interior décor beforehand, there's no concrete way to judge what the service you receive will be like before

actually visiting. As a result, going to a new restaurant poses a risk to customers who may be reluctant to spend a lot of time and money for a potentially disappointing experience. Brand image is crucial for quelling any doubts potential new customers may have at this stage. Researchers and restaurants alike are therefore very invested to find out what creates a strong brand image that inspires diners to choose one particular unknown restaurant over another.

Up until this study, research on brand image in the field of fine dining focused on how the atmospherics, food quality and service contribute to customer behavior after eating at a restaurant. For instance, would a customer leave a review or recommend the place to a friend? However, a crucial component of restaurant success is overlooked in such investigations: how to get customers through the door in the first place. Dr. Hancer's team contends that attracting new clientele is dependent upon brand image. His study uses the integration of "other customers" into a



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Restaurant managers need to look beyond just food quality to build a strong brand image.



Iakov Filimonov/Shutterstock.com

Both service quality and "other customers" were found to have a significant effect on brand image.

conceptual model of fine dining to explore the relationship between brand image, customer satisfaction, trust levels, and brand preference.

CUSTOMER BEHAVIOR

In the fine dining industry, considerable attention has been paid to how aspects of a restaurant experience impact on customer behavior. For instance, a positive dining experience has been shown to increase customer satisfaction and loyalty, whilst also helping to build a positive, trustworthy brand image. Examining prior research, Dr. Hancer found that the most important things impacting customer behavior are: atmospherics, food quality and quality of the service. Atmospherics act as a physical first impression that, if done well, suggests a pleasant evening ahead. Dr. Hancer hypothesizes that atmospherics will positively impact both brand image and customer satisfaction. However, it is food quality – according to Dr. Hancer's research – that is the single greatest factor in determining how satisfied a customer will be. Whilst customers will place different values on, say, tastiness versus nutritional content, all will agree that food quality matters. As a result, Dr. Hancer predicts food quality positively impacts both brand image and customer satisfaction. The quality of the service is the most intangible aspect of fine dining, dependent on a positive interaction between the staff and customer. Diners, especially at high-end restaurants, value

BOTH SERVICE QUALITY AND "OTHER CUSTOMERS" WERE FOUND TO HAVE A SIGNIFICANT EFFECT ON BRAND IMAGE.

waiting staff who are empathetic, responsive and reliable. Dr. Hancer suggests that high service quality will also positively affect the perception of a restaurant's brand image and the number of happy diners.

"OTHER CUSTOMERS"

There's one more aspect of fine dining that impacts brand image and customer satisfaction: "other customers". Dr. Hancer argues that the other customers, dining in the same restaurant as a focal customer but who are also unacquainted with the customer in focus, will impact the focal customer's level of satisfaction. The opinions of a diner can be affected by how many other customers there are, what they look like and how they behave. For instance, customers feel more positive when surrounded by people who look like themselves because this boosts self-esteem. Dr. Hancer contends that other customers could positively affect both brand image and customer satisfaction. Arguing that

customer satisfaction positively impacts brand trust and that brand trust positively impacts brand preference, Dr. Hancer's study creates a conceptual model to test these hypotheses. The research aimed to understand the extent to which all these factors determine a customer's preferred brand of restaurant.

QUIZZICAL ANALYSIS

Dr. Hancer and his collaborator carried out their research using a questionnaire, comprised of six sections. The first five sections contained questions to be answered using a number between 1 and 5. Selecting "1" equated to answering "strongly disagree" and "5" meant "strongly agree". Section one focused on customer perceptions of restaurant attributes, including: atmospherics, food quality, service quality and "other customers". Section two of the questionnaire measured satisfaction, section three assessed brand image, section four examined a customer's level of brand trust, and section five consisted

Customers often share their feedback with other potential customers.



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Restaurants should tailor brand image according to the clientele they wish to attract.

of demographic questions. Data was collected from restaurants in Istanbul. The criteria for selection – fine dining restaurants – meant that the establishments were required to offer a luxury experience with high prices in order to be chosen. Guests who visited five of the selected restaurants, between February 2015 and April 2015, were invited to take part in the study. Customer responses were subsequently recorded both on-site and online. The researchers removed any responses that could have been influenced by other factors, leaving only the most reliable responses. Univariate analysis, a way to find patterns in collected information, was used for each of the observables measured and then a statistical package processed the data.

WHAT DID THEY FIND?

For the 324 responses used in the analysis, 45.1% were male and 54.9% were female. Around half of the respondents were aged between 36-45 years old, and almost 30% were 26-35 years old; the two groups made up the vast majority of the sample. The sample was largely well educated, with 72.1% possessing a bachelor's degree, and relatively well-off, with 82.4% earning over \$1500 a month. Both service quality and "other customers" were found to have a significant effect on brand image. However, rather surprisingly, the effect of food quality and atmospherics on brand image was not significant. Also, whilst atmospherics, food quality, and service quality did all play a significant role in overall satisfaction, it was not impacted by "other customers". The results suggest that brand image does positively affect customer satisfaction, and both brand image and customer satisfaction were shown to positively impact brand trust.

When combined, brand image and customer satisfaction accounted for 30% of the brand trust that customers have for restaurants. Finally, 31% of a customer's brand preference is determined by this level of brand trust.

BRAND PREFERENCE: IMPLICATIONS

As other studies have suggested, Dr. Hancer's study confirms the theory that atmospherics, food quality and service quality affect customer satisfaction. However, the research goes further than previous investigations in the field, highlighting the role of "other customers"

to attract. Brand preference occurs when the brand image fits with the personal values of customers. If the brand image appeals to customers who share the values promoted, then these customers will respond positively. As a result, potential customers gain a more positive brand image of the restaurant in question, creating a positive experience that begins before a customer even sets foot inside the restaurant. Cultivating a strong brand image acts as the foundation for customer satisfaction – and therefore ultimately success in the fine dining industry.

BRAND PREFERENCE OCCURS WHEN THE BRAND IMAGE FITS WITH THE PERSONAL VALUES OF CUSTOMERS.

in creating a positive brand image for a restaurant. Also, the research did not show a positive correlation between food quality and atmospherics and brand image, contradicting findings of earlier studies. Dr. Hancer questions whether this inconsistency stems from the geographical location of the restaurants studied – Turkey. As a collectivist culture, diners in Istanbul are more likely to put value on the group experience of eating out, when compared to people from individualist cultures, like the USA. Brand preference, therefore, occurs when the brand image fits with the personal values of customers.

What the results of Dr Hancer's research tell us is that restaurants looking to succeed should consider brand image carefully, and tailor it according to the clientele they wish



RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Hancer and his collaborator investigate a new area of research: the relationship between brand image, “other customers” and customer satisfaction in fine dining restaurants.

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Key Paper

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How will your research affect the focus on brand image by restaurants looking to capitalize on your results?

// As indicated in the article, restaurants’ successful brand image depends on different attributes but we particularly wanted to emphasize the importance of other customers’ role in forming restaurants’ brand image. Aiming only at service and/or food quality or atmospherics does not give restaurant operators a way to create an effective brand image. However, taking all the attributes from both customers’ and employees’ perspectives into consideration gives restaurant operators a competitive advantage. //

Dr. Murat Hancer



Dr. Hancer is a Professor at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, UCF. His research areas are hospitality information technology and hospitality human resources management. Known nationally and internationally for his research, his scholarly record includes more than 100 referenced publications, papers and presentations.

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Good food and service are integral to the fine-dining experience.

A SPORTING CHANCE

Do the Olympic Games always have a positive impact on the host country?

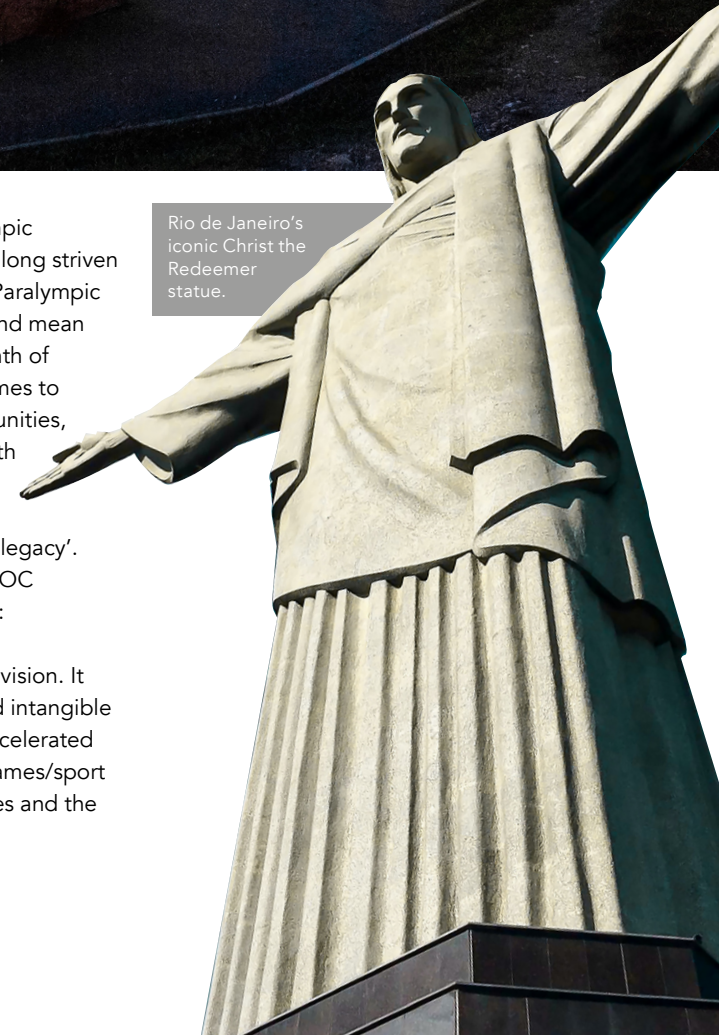


This UK sculpture celebrates the Portland and Weymouth sailing events of the 2012 London Summer Olympics.

Mega sporting events, such as the Olympic Games, are commonly believed to have a universally positive impact on their host cities and countries as a result of economic growth, job creation, increased patriotism, and significant press coverage. Colleagues from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Dr. Asli D. A. Tasci, Dr. Jeannie Hahm and Dr. Deborah Breiter Terry, investigate how the country image and destination image of the host country Brazil and the perceived image of the Olympics changed after the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. The researchers report that not all is as we might expect.

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has long striven for the Olympic and Paralympic Games to be more, and mean more, than just a month of sport. The IOC's goal, for the games to have a positive impact on communities, culture and whole countries – both preceding, during and long after the events have ended – is epitomized in the term 'Olympic legacy'. Explaining the concept in 2017, IOC released the following statement:

'Olympic legacy is the result of a vision. It encompasses all the tangible and intangible long-term benefits initiated or accelerated by the hosting of the Olympic Games/sport events for people, cities/territories and the Olympic Movement.'



Rio de Janeiro's iconic Christ the Redeemer statue.



boroughs surrounding the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park (the central venue for the events), a rate of growth that was significantly higher than in the city as a whole.

But is the Olympic legacy always constructive? Dr. Asli Tasci, Dr. Jeannie Hahm and Dr. Deborah Breiter Terry from Rosen College, University of Central Florida, investigate the impact of the 2016 Summer Olympics on Brazil, with a specific emphasis on how hosting the mega-event has changed the country's image.

RIO 2016

Previous research has confirmed that mega-events have the potential to positively change the image of a place, mainly due to the massive media coverage which accompanies such occasions. However, the resultant development of local infrastructure and products, heightened awareness of a place, increasing tourism demand and enhancement of local pride also contribute to a bolstered domestic and international identity. As a result, there is high demand amongst tourism and destination marketers for mega-events that may greatly improve, strengthen or change a place's image. Unsurprisingly, the chance to host the Olympics is therefore

monitor the stability of image change caused by these mega-events. With destination image as a valuable tool for destination marketers, a better understanding of the pattern of changes caused by mega-events is critical, allowing for better stabilization of destination image after an event. To do this, first of all we need to get a firm grasp on the idea of 'image' itself.

AN IMAGE OF SUCCESS

Drs. Tasci, Hahm and Breiter Terry researched the changing image of Brazil, before and after the 2016 Olympics, by assessing three different types of image. 'Country image' is the general perception or image of a country based on variables such as its history, economy, culture and politics; whereas 'destination image' is the perception of a particular place, area or city as a tourist 'destination' (this may differ greatly from the overall country image). Making this distinction is important, especially for destination marketers. The final area researched was the 'Olympics image', i.e., the public perception of the mega-event and impact on the Olympic brand image.

The researchers hypothesized that the pattern of the changing image will be

THE RESEARCHERS POINT OUT THAT 'DESTINATION IMAGE' IS IN REALITY A DYNAMIC CONCEPT.

AN OLYMPIC LEGACY

The tangible benefits of the IOC's vision include the potential for economic growth and improvement – particularly in terms of tourism revenue and job creation – whilst less tangible benefits include: the promotion of the host country, national pride, prestige, and enhanced destination image, as well as positive visitor attitude and behavior.

A decade after the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver, Canada, the Aboriginal Youth Sport Legacy Fund still supports amateur athletes of indigenous origin. The fund continues to empower and improve the quality of life of First Nations peoples, maintaining the focus on inclusion that began with the Games. In the five years following the 2012 Summer Olympics in London, around 110,000 jobs were created in the six

always hotly contested. In October 2009, Brazil beat rival bids from Japan, Spain and the USA to host the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. For Brazil, this was incredibly significant: a chance to show the world that the country was more than an ongoing political and economic crisis – and that the country's capital, Rio de Janeiro, was safer than the 'most violent city in the world' tag notoriously suggested. Hosting the games was seen as an opportunity to 'hasten the transformation of Rio de Janeiro into an even greater global city' (International Olympic Committee, 2016). Understanding whether this vision was successful or not is a complex issue.

The researchers point out that 'destination image' is in reality a dynamic concept, and there are very few longitudinal studies that

as follows: there is a difference between country image before and after the Olympics; there is a difference between destination image before and after the Olympics; there is a difference between the Olympics image before and after the Olympics.

THE STUDY AND ITS FINDINGS

To test their hypotheses, the authors of the study employed the use of an online platform to carry out a survey designed to investigate country image, destination image and Olympics image before and after the 2016 Summer Olympics in Brazil. The survey also collected sociodemographic and other data that has previously been shown to have an effect on image formation (e.g., gender). In order to effectively assess change in image over time, the survey was



Rio de Janeiro is keen to rid itself of a reputation as 'the world's most dangerous city'.

repeated in different groups at the following intervals: one month before the Olympics, one month after the Olympics, five months after the Olympics, and 13 months after the Olympics. The data were then analyzed.

Interestingly, in contrast to most other research on the topic (although very little other research has taken such a rigorous longitudinal approach), the results here showed no significant difference between the first and final timepoints, in terms of

country or destination image. In brief, the Olympic Games mega-event had not resulted in any stable or long-lasting image change for Brazil, a complete contradiction to the long-held belief in that intangible element of Olympic legacy – the improvement of the rest of the world's view of the host country.

The researchers suggest that hosting a mega-event can, in fact, have a negative impact on destination image. Drs. Tasci,

Hahm and Breiter Terry note that, in the case of Brazil, the increased media coverage in the lead up to the Games only highlighted the economic, social and political issues that remained rife in the country. In fact, 70% of Brazil's Olympic coverage was focused on negative issues, with almost weekly news stories suggesting Brazil was not suitable to host the mega sporting event. In addition, although the International Olympic Committee reported that they hoped the Olympics would lead to renewed patriotism and pride amongst host country residents, in this case there were many reports of local resentment towards the 2016 Summer Games. Finally, the 2015 Zika virus outbreak generated high levels of anxiety, particularly among those who were due to travel to the country to either compete in or watch the games. The Brazilian government's decision not to postpone the games, despite suggestions that the event risked spreading the virus to countries with less resources to cope with it also led to negative press. Considering all of these negative socioeconomic and political factors, and the dearth of positive press surrounding the games, the three colleagues suggest that, in Brazil's case, we might actually consider the fact that the data show no image change a positive outcome!

The data also showed that the country image was less stable than the destination and Olympic image, with a dip in image occurring five months after the games. As previously suggested by literature in this area, strong image attributes can overcome negative ones; Brazilian destination marketers could thus think about sharing positive images to turn this trend around (e.g., scenic beauty and beaches). The consistency of the Olympics image in this research is testament to the resilience of the Olympic brand and vision – but this study also shows that the strength of the Olympics image and its ability to positively impact host country image cannot be taken for granted. If the improvement of a country and destination image as a result of a mega-event is only temporary, or is in fact negligible, then governments, tourism boards and destination marketers need to consider whether the financial, social and environmental costs of such an event are worth it at all.

THE STRENGTH OF THE OLYMPICS IMAGE AND ITS ABILITY TO POSITIVELY IMPACT HOST COUNTRY IMAGE CANNOT BE TAKEN FOR GRANTED.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The Rosen researchers investigated the impact of the Olympic Games on the host country.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How can the IOC use your findings to ensure that the 'Olympic Legacy' is beneficial for, rather than detrimental to, the image of future host countries?

// The study provides important marketing intelligence for both the IOC and destination marketing organizations (DMOs) of countries wishing to attract the Games. The IOC and DMOs need to collaborate in proactive and strategic promotional activities to achieve the expected legacy outcomes. They cannot rely on the works of the media, which may indeed betray their expectations. In fact, the IOC has to take a leadership role, especially when partnering with developing or underdeveloped nations, to initiate a positive image change and keep the momentum even after the Games. The Olympics' image is solid; the IOC needs to help nations to receive some spillover on to theirs. //

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Dr. Deborah Breiter Terry



Dr. Breiter Terry recently retired after serving at UCF for 20 years. She was awarded Emerita status in recognition of her contributions in the areas of teaching, research, and service. She has published in top tier journals throughout her career and been recognized by industry for her contributions to education.

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THE RELEVANCE OF THE VACATION HOME RENTAL INDUSTRY TO FLORIDA'S ECONOMY AND THE COVID-19 HANGOVER



Florida's vacation rental home sector is an important component of the lodging industry.

Mark Winfrey/Shutterstock.com

The University of Central Florida's Rosen College of Hospitality Management documented the economic footprint of Florida's vacation rental home industry in excess of \$27 billion. The study commissioned by Florida Realtors and conducted in partnership with the Florida Vacation Rental Management Association, took place in summer and fall of 2019 and was completed in early spring of 2020. The research team consisted of Robertico Croes, Ph.D., Manuel Rivera, Ph.D., Kelly Semrad, Ph.D., Valeriya Shapoval, Ph.D., Jorge Ridderstaat, Ph.D., and Mehmet Altin, Ph.D.

When many people think of vacation destinations, Florida is top of the list. According to VISIT FLORIDA statistics, in 2017 more than 116 million tourists travelled to Florida. The lodging industry provides these Florida tourists with accommodation. As of February 2019, the state of Florida had approximately 439,277 available hotel and motel rooms that were spread over 4,583 properties (VISIT FLORIDA, 2018). The 2018 statewide average hotel/motel occupancy rate was approximately 68% (STR, 2018). This occupancy rate reveals that there is discrepancy between the number of tourists that Florida receives (127 million) and the number of tourists that stay in hotel

rooms (annual average occupancy rate 68%). The discrepancy implies that tourists are seeking alternative forms of accommodation when staying in Florida. One alternative accommodation type that some tourists look for is vacation rental homes. Vacation rental homes may be defined as short-term vacation rentals that are rented more than three times a year for less than 30 days at a time (SB356, 2014).

Florida's vacation rental home industry has experienced rapid expansion mainly due to the introduction of the "sharing economy" that is bolstered by online resources such as Airbnb and Vrbo. Currently, there are approximately 124,777 registered vacation rental homes listed within the 25 Florida counties that were assessed. The total amount of vacation rental homes registered in the state is 139,629. Florida's vacation rental home sector is an important component of the lodging industry that contributes to the overall tourist experience as well as the economic contribution that the tourism industry is able to make to the state of Florida.

Working with Rosen College on a 2020 economic impact study to determine Florida's vacation rental home industry ripple effect throughout the state, provided a clear picture of this hospitality sector's contributions, job growth and revenues. The team at Rosen College successfully drilled down through layers of data to provide a comprehensive study on this growing lodging sector's impact on our economy and the livelihood of many Floridians.

Denis Hanks – Executive Director, Florida VRMA, The Largest Vacation Rental Association in the USA



139,629 vacation rental homes are registered in Florida.

THE REPORT

The report took an in-depth look at the economic impact of the Florida vacation rental home industry and its ripple effects across the state. It includes an estimate of the magnitude of the industry's impact on Florida's economy as well as profiles of the main stakeholders who generate this impact.

The report focused on 25 Florida counties: Bay, Brevard, Broward, Charlotte, Collier, Duval, Escambia, Flagler, Franklin, Gulf, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Nassau, Okaloosa, Orange, Osceola, Palm Beach, Pinellas, Santa Rosa, Sarasota, Volusia and Walton. The research shows that when combined, these 25 counties include 89.3 percent of the total amount of registered vacation rental homes like Airbnbs and condos in the state of Florida. The economic analysis assessed 8,131 surveys, distributed across 6,240 tourists and visitors that stayed in a Florida vacation rental home within the last 12 months, 1,748 vacation rental homeowners, and 143 vacation rental home management companies. The survey data was then triangulated with data from Key Data, the Survey Research Center of the Bureau of Economic and Business Research, Airbnb, the Florida Tourist Development Tax Association,

Florida Realtors® needed hospitality experts to pull together a first-of-its-kind report on Florida's vacation rental industry and Dr. Croes and his team delivered in a big way. The report was top-notch and laid things out in an easy-to-understand way. We would not hesitate to go back to them again should we need additional research done related to Florida's hospitality or tourism industries. **Tom Butler – Florida Realtors**

multiple county tax collectors' offices and the Florida Department of Revenue.

The report noted several other key findings:

- The 2018 economic impact of Florida's vacation rental home industry represents \$16.6 billion in direct spending and \$10.8 billion in indirect spending, totaling \$27.4 billion.
- The direct spending amounts to nearly \$46 million a day and approximately \$1.9 million every hour.
- The direct spending supports roughly 115,000 jobs with one job created for every \$144,181 spent.
- In 2018, the total amount of tourists staying in vacation rental homes in Florida was 14,233,274, which equates to 11.2 percent of the total 127 million tourists that came to Florida in 2018.

The report identified three tourist types who rent vacation homes in Florida: out-of-state tourists, in-state tourists and overnight visitors. Each profile revealed a different spending behavior and level. For a copy of the full report visit: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/dickpope-pubs/80/>.

COVID-19 HANGOVER

A follow-up study by Dr. Robertico Croes and Dr. Manuel Rivera assessed the COVID-19 economic impact at the end of May 2020. The study compared five regions in the state of Florida – Central Florida, the Panhandle, South Florida, West Tampa and North Florida – and found that the vacation rental home industry experienced a dramatic drop in tourists, occupancy and revenues. The full brunt of COVID-19 was felt in the Central Florida and the Panhandle areas where occupancy decreased by nearly 40%. The occupancy plunge in the state triggered estimated losses of nearly \$4.5 billion in revenues and nearly \$32 million in bed tax. The study concluded that recovery is likely to be prolonged and painful for the vacation rental home industry in the state.

For the complete study see Croes, R. & Rivera, M. (2020) The Impact of COVID-19 on the vacation home industry in Florida [Webinar]. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. <https://hospitality.ucf.edu/research-recovery-re-scaling/>.



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WHY HOTEL GUESTS GO MOBILE

Hoteliers appreciate that mobile technology is critical to the success of their businesses.



Many hotels are catering for mobile-centric travelers by offering technologies such as mobile apps, virtual reality, social media, and online communities. Dr. Tingting Zhang, Assistant Professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and her collaborators break new ground with their investigation into the attitudes and behavioral intentions of business travelers versus leisure travelers, when adopting mobile technologies for hotel services. The researchers have extended the technology acceptance model (TAM) to provide a framework for understanding consumers' adoption behaviors of mobile technology for the hospitality industry.

The rapid development of mobile technology presents a boom in business opportunities for competitive marketing tools offering services and online transactions to users of mobile devices. Businesses investing in mobile commerce recognize that it contributes to their competitiveness, increasing both their revenues and efficiency, as well as boosting both customer satisfaction and loyalty. Hoteliers appreciate that mobile technology is critical to the success of their businesses. Many hotels are catering for mobile-centric travelers offering technologies such as mobile apps, virtual reality, social media, and online communities.

The hotel industry has to provide for the diverse needs of its clientele. The innovative features of hotel mobile apps enable hoteliers to differentiate among their clients, in order to deliver a more personalized experience for their guests.

Business travelers and leisure visitors are two such different types of guests that behave differently during their stay. Research has shown that business travelers consider location to be most important in their choice of hotels, while leisure travelers are more sensitive to price. Business travelers are more likely to become loyal guests of hotels, whereas leisure travelers tend to shop around and consider online reviews and recommendations. This diversity suggests that business and leisure travelers have different motives in terms of their attitudes and behavioral intentions when choosing hotel mobile apps.

Understanding customer engagement in the hospitality and tourism industries – particularly their technology usage and adoption – is the focus of research being carried out by Dr. Tingting Zhang, Assistant Professor at Rosen College of Hospitality Management, UCF. Dr. Zhang and her collaborators are breaking

new ground with their investigation into the attitudes and behavioral intentions of business travelers versus those of leisure travelers, when adopting mobile technologies for hotel services.

THE TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE MODEL (TAM)

This is the first time the behaviors of two primary hotel industry market segments, when adopting hotel mobile technology, have been studied and the research is underpinned by the technology acceptance model (TAM). TAM is one of the most significant models for examining the driving forces behind an individual's intention to use new technology. The model proposes two primary factors that influence users' decisions about how and when they will use new technology: perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use.

FACTORS INVOLVED IN TAM

Perceived usefulness is essential if a hotel's technology is to be adopted. The belief being that users will adopt technologies that they perceive to be useful for what they want to do. Perceived ease of use is the degree of effort that the user believes is required to operate a system. If a technology is difficult to use, customers may choose to avoid it. In the context of hospitality management, it has been shown that, in addition to increasing user convenience, mobile systems can provide many benefits for hospitality



Some hotel mobile apps are highly innovative, offering their customers brand-new experiences.

BUSINESS AND LEISURE TRAVELERS HAVE DIFFERENT MOTIVES IN TERMS OF THEIR ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORAL INTENTIONS WHEN CHOOSING HOTEL MOBILE APPS.

customers; indeed, the technology's ease of use plays a pivotal role in users' adoption behavior. Moreover, TAM suggests that positive attitudes towards technology increase intentions to use the technology.

EXTENDING TAM

Researchers have claimed that the two factors used in the conventional TAM model are not enough to explain technology adoption in industries including hospitality. Bearing in mind this vulnerability, Dr. Zhang and her collaborators have extended the model, building an extensive framework that captures the effects of mobile technology adoption in the hospitality industry. They have added constructs such as trust, innovativeness, enjoyment, privacy, and reliability, in order to mold the model to accommodate the particular requirements of mobile technology within the hotel industry.

ADDITIONAL FACTORS

Previous research has demonstrated that the initial interaction between customers and hotels, via mobile technology such as room booking, has a considerable influence on the development of the customer's trust in the hotel. Perceived privacy reflects how private information is collected and used. Loss of disclosure of their private data is a top concern for customers, and influences their willingness to use mobile technology to purchase services. Furthermore, a

reliable online system that protects customers' privacy will have a positive effect on customers' trust. Perceived enjoyment describes the extent to which the customer enjoys using the technology, while consumer innovation portrays the extent that customers are willing to experiment with new products. The latter two constructs convey the fun aspects of technological advancement.

EXPANDING TAM HYPOTHESES

The original TAM model hypothesizes that both perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use are positively associated with customers' attitudes towards adopting mobile technology. It was also considered that a positive correlation exists between customers' attitudes and their intentions towards adoption of mobile technology.

The additional constructs of the extended TAM model enable Dr. Zhang and the research team to expand the model assumptions and hypothesize that customers' trust in a hotel is positively related to their attitudes towards adopting mobile technology that facilitates that particular hotel's services. They also postulated that both customers' perceived privacy and the reliability of using mobile devices would be positively related to their trust in the hotel, and their attitudes towards adopting mobile devices to facilitate hotel services. In addition, they

have suggested that both the customers' perceived enjoyment of using mobile technology and their innovativeness would be positively related to their attitudes towards adoption.

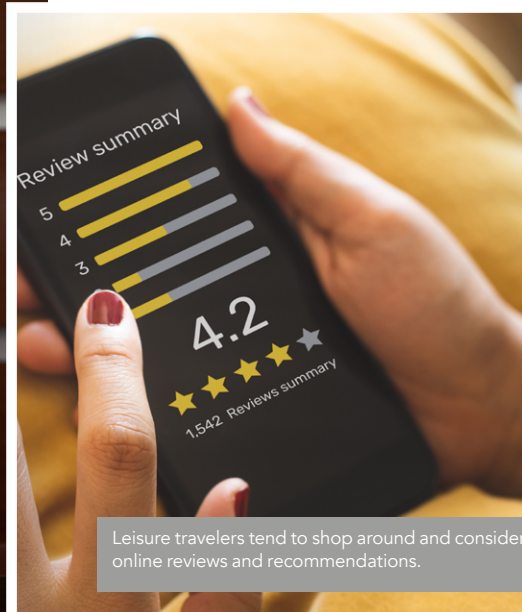
Research has shown that business and leisure travelers make different decisions with regards to their hotel selections. This prompted the researchers to consider whether the actual relationship between the factors and intentions of using hotel mobile technology is moderated by traveler type. They suggest that this relationship is significantly different between business travelers and leisure travelers.

LIKERT QUESTIONNAIRE

A sample of 683 adult hotel consumers, who had experienced a hotel stay within the previous three months, completed online questionnaires. Most of the respondents (70%) were aged between 25 and 45 years and 55% of participants were female. Most of the participants (75%) traveled once or twice a year. Many of the travelers taking part in the study (65%) had used mobile hotel apps three to five times, but only 5% had used them more than five times. Of the 683 participants, 330 were categorized as business travelers and the remaining 353 were leisure travelers.

The questionnaires employed a seven-point Likert scale, with '1' denoting 'strongly

Business travelers are more strongly influenced by trust, reliability and privacy factors.



Leisure travelers tend to shop around and consider online reviews and recommendations.

services. In particular, the moderating effect of traveler type on customers' attitudes and intentions towards adopting mobile technology for hotel services is supported.

The traditional TAM factors, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, were identified as influencing both business and leisure travelers in their adoption of mobile technology in their hotel stays.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN LEISURE AND BUSINESS TRAVELERS

Business travelers are more strongly influenced by trust, reliability and privacy

BROADER IMPLICATIONS

What does this mean for the hotel industry and wider business community? The study supports the robustness of the extended TAM model, incorporating factors relating to beliefs, risks, personal characteristics and emotions. It reveals the different motives of two groups of hotel guests using mobile technology to facilitate hotel services during their stay at a hotel. This research provides a useful theoretical basis for understanding consumer adoption behaviors of mobile technology for the hospitality industry, which can be extended to other topical spheres.

Dr. Zhang explains how this research can provide practical guidelines for hospitality marketing practitioners, which can be

Leisure travelers are more influenced by perceived 'fun' features of mobile apps for hotel services.

disagree' and '7' denoting 'strongly agree'. Once the scale had been checked for reliability, the researchers tested the proposed relationships between constructs, performing both single group and multi-group structural equation modeling to carry out the hypothesis testing.

THE RESEARCHERS WERE RIGHT

The study's findings revealed support for all eleven of Dr. Zhang's hypotheses, as well as validating the extended TAM model. The results indicated that both the original factors and the new constructs are important elements for consideration when determining customer adoption behaviors in relation to mobile technologies for hotel

factors than their leisure counterparts, when choosing to use mobile hotel apps. On the other hand, leisure travelers are more influenced by perceived 'fun' features of mobile apps for hotel services, i.e., the enjoyment and ease of use of the mobile technology and if they are innovative in nature.

THE MODERATING EFFECT OF TRAVELER TYPE ON CUSTOMERS' ATTITUDES AND INTENTIONS TOWARDS ADOPTING MOBILE TECHNOLOGY FOR HOTEL SERVICES IS SUPPORTED.

used to design advertisements targeting customers' confidence and tailored to the particular hotel choices and preferences of various customer segments. These strategies will help hoteliers enhance the effectiveness of their advertising and increase their customers' mobile technology adoption, consequently boosting revenues.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Tingting Zhang and her collaborators investigate the attitudes and behavioral intentions of business travelers versus leisure travelers, when adopting mobile technologies for hotel services.

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Key Paper

Tingting Zhang, Soobin Seo & Jee Ahe Ahn (2019). Why hotel guests go mobile? Examining motives of business and leisure travelers, *Journal of Hospitality Marketing & Management*, 28(5), 621-644. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.1080/19368623.2019.1539936> [Accessed 3rd November 2020].

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What are your plans for further research into the use of mobile technology in the hospitality industry?

// In the future, I would like to continue the research into consumers' adoption of mobile technologies in the hospitality industry by incorporating more recent advancements, such as live streaming, and virtual agents that are either programmed or a real human being to answer questions/inquiries online. With the young generations (Generation Z) becoming independent customers, the market demand has changed. More instant responses and interactions are desired by the consuming segment to drive purchases and to increase satisfaction. Mobile technologies should serve as an optimal tool for facilitating such prompt interactions and communications between consumers and service providers. //

Dr. Tingting Zhang



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Mobile technologies should improve the customer experience.

Rides were found to be the most important factor contributing to the increased probability of having a satisfying overall experience.



Rosen Research Focus | Dr. Torres, Dr. Wei & Dr. Hua

THEME PARK EXPERIENCES AND CUSTOMER EMOTIONS

Theme parks are places of great excitement, anticipated joy, intense emotions and lasting memories. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management researchers Dr. Edwin N. Torres, Dr. Wei Wei, Dr. Nan Hua and a collaborator report on the service aspects of theme parks that impact positively or negatively on customers' emotions. Customers' first impressions of the theme park, their experiences of the rides, and dining and retail offerings were all found to impact on the positive and negative emotions and memories that customers formed of their theme park experience.

Customer emotions have received a great deal of research attention in recent years, as these emotions – positive and negative – vary in response to services received. Much of this attention has focused on the events that precede a specific emotion and then also the consequences of different customer emotions. Having a positive or negative service encounter can impact customer satisfaction and loyalty, and even go so far as to contaminate other customers' experiences of a service, when customers exchange emotions. It is thus critical to understand customer emotions at an intricate level in order to be able to manage these and achieve high levels of customer satisfaction.

WHAT ARE CUSTOMER EMOTIONS?

Emotions are universal to human beings and have different facets and dimensions, ranging from positive emotions, such as joy, happiness

and excitement to more negative emotions such as frustration and disappointment. Emotions while primarily mental or psychological states of feeling, can also induce strong physiological responses for people. Emotions may thus be expressed verbally and non-verbally through body language. Emotions can vary over time especially within settings where customers spend an extended amount of time, such as on vacation or within theme parks.

Theme parks by their very nature elicit a mix of emotions, some intense, some less so, ranging from excitement and delight, to the thrill of fear. For this reason, theme parks offer an important setting for studying emotions which occur in service settings over several hours. While there has been a great deal of scientific research focused on analyzing customer emotions, gaps are still evident in understanding customer emotions in hedonic service settings – those intended to inspire

pleasure. In addition, empirical scientific research is still needed to understand the intricacies that elicit a customer's emotions and the role which each customer service encounter plays in emotional appraisals and memories. For this reason, Rosen College researchers Dr. Edwin N. Torres, Dr. Wei Wei and Dr. Nan Hua, along with a collaborator, conducted an empirical study of customers' emotional experiences of theme parks; the service setting and the impact of the service setting on customer emotions; the impact of interactions with service providers and other customers on emotional experiences; and the impact of customer emotions on their experiences. Specific hypotheses linked to the objectives of the research were set out for testing.

MEASURING CUSTOMER EMOTIONS: PANAS SCALE

To assess emotions within this study, the researchers selected the PANAS scale of



Positive dining experiences are likely to improve satisfaction.

positive and negative affect. The PANAS is a robust scientific assessment tool with good validity and reliability for assessing emotions. The PANAS lists 10 positive and 10 negative descriptors of emotions. The positive list includes being attentive, active, alert, excited, enthusiastic, determined, inspired, proud, interested, and strong. On the negative emotional spectrum, items assess feeling hostile, irritable, ashamed, guilty, distressed, upset, scared, afraid, jittery, and nervous. The PANAS has been used to study emotions across a variety of different service settings.

The PANAS was administered via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online crowdsourcing web service which researchers pay Amazon to use. Amazon then compensates research participants for their participation in the surveys. A total of 252

surveys were completed for this study and out of these 194 met the criteria for usable data analysis. To reduce potential response biases that could potentially impact the results, various controls including rigorous sampling methods were built into the survey design. The final data sample comprised slightly more men (54.64%) than women (45.36%), with the largest age group of respondents between 30 and 39 years old (43.08%); the second largest group was 18 to 29 years old (34.87%). Nearly two thirds (63.21%) of respondents were parents, 54.64% of the sample were single and 39.69% married. Most of the sample had stayed at the theme park between one and three days.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS, THEME PARK RIDES, AND SHOWS

The researchers hypothesized that the first impressions of the theme park upon arrival

for visitors would impact positively on their emotions. Along with this, it was hypothesized that the enjoyment of rides and watching shows in the theme park would also impact positively on emotions. The data confirmed that first impressions on arrival are of great importance in a customer's theme park experience. Rides were found to be the most important factor contributing to the increased probability of having a satisfying overall experience. Interestingly, shows were not found to be a key determinant of positive customer experience.

CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PRICING

Waiting in line for access to a service can have a significant impact on people's emotions, as can the price of a service. The researchers hypothesized that shorter waiting times



Exhilarating rides might boost emotional outlook.

would have a positive impact on customers' emotions. The results of the study indicated that the factor which was most critical to a positive experience while waiting in line was the experience of positive emotions during this time. Effective queue design, with diversions that are entertaining and interactive, can create a sense of movement within the queue and enhance positive emotions of anticipation and fun during the queuing process. From a pricing perspective, the researchers had hypothesized that purchasing tickets would have a negative impact on customer emotions, but the data did not support this.

CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS

Theme parks provide opportunities to interact with other customers while using the theme park attractions and people may influence others through their displays of positive

IN A THEME PARK SETTING, POSITIVE EMOTIONS ARE MORE EASILY STIMULATED THAN NEGATIVE EMOTIONS GIVEN THAT EXPERIENCES AT THEME PARKS ARE HIGHLY HEDONIC DRIVEN.



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Waiting in line for access to a service can have a significant impact on people's emotions.

emotions. This was assessed in the study and the results indicated that when interactions with other customers were emotionally intense, there was a heightened probability of a more positive theme park experience. Dr. Torres adds that the research findings clearly indicated that, "interactions with other guests and family members can impact a guest's emotional state at the theme park."

DINING AND RETAIL

The dining experience was also found to impact significantly and positively on

DESIGNING POSITIVE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

There are clearly specific design and management practices which produce positive emotional experiences. Effective queue design and management, which evoke a sense of fun and anticipation, can result in very intense positive emotions as was evident in this study. Ensuring a positive arrival experience in relation to ticketing, information, checkpoints and sufficient employees is likely to enable customer satisfaction at these points of interaction.

THE RIDES AND SHOWS ARE THE CORE PRODUCTS AND SERVICES OF A THEME PARK AND REASONS WHY PEOPLE VISIT. NOVELTY AND CREATIVITY PLAY A LARGE ROLE IN CUSTOMER EXPECTATIONS AND SATISFACTION.

customers' emotional experiences. The retail experience (buying souvenirs and necessities such as hats, ponchos and drinks) was, however, a source of some guest dissatisfaction; this research thus supports prior literature indicating that experiential purchases surpass material purchases in enhancing positive customer emotions.

From a retail experience perspective, creating a more experiential interaction through audio-visual design elements such as interactive displays and music, could enhance the customer retail experience by focusing less on the material purchase which can be a source of dissatisfaction. Positive dining experiences with enhanced food



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Positive interactions with other visitors can enhance a person's experience.

offerings, exceptional service and innovative restaurant themes are also likely to enhance customer satisfaction.

Dr. Torres says that another important finding was that emotions evoked at a specific touchpoint of service or "moment of truth" can permeate through to other experiences and continue as the guest moves through the theme park. So a positive experience while waiting in a queue might impact the emotional mood of a guest waiting for a ride. Similarly, an exhilarating ride could result in a guest entering a dining or retail venue with a more positive emotional outlook. Recognizing the impact of one experience on another means that each of the unique service touchpoints within a theme park needs focus to ensure an overall positive guest experience.

Interestingly, most of the theme park visitors in this study reported very positive overall emotional experiences of the theme park, with the data indicating notably high levels of satisfaction with the theme park visit. Dr. Torres says that this is in itself an important finding given that, "anecdotally we know theme park operators (and other service industries managers) get complaints and face upset or outraged customers." Perceptual bias may explain the recall of positive experiences by guests, as these impressions may have been more vividly stored in people's memories and thus more clearly recalled upon reflection of the experience. It may also be though that people are more inclined to recall positive memories rather than negative memories within hedonic environments, such as a theme park.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This study examines the impact of theme park experiences on customer emotions.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What advice would you give Theme Park Managers to minimize any potential negative emotions evoked by additional retail purchases customers feel obliged to make, once they have entered the theme park?

// Theme park managers have a great opportunity to make the retail experience more experiential. While some of the newer stores at popular attractions have made purchases more interactive and customized, many retail stores at theme parks still embrace a more traditional model. Specialty and seasonal merchandise can also help attract enthusiasm among theme park visitors. In some of my studies, I've found that ticket pricing at theme parks is a major source of customer outrage. Nevertheless, theme parks have sustained attendance at the higher price points and retail purchases are an important source of profits for operators. Therefore, it is important to change value perceptions in a positive direction by improving the quality of merchandise, offering packages or bundles of items, providing more options for customization, and making the retail experience more interactive and experiential. //

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Dr. Edwin N. Torres



Dr. Edwin N. Torres is an Associate Professor at the University of Central Florida (UCF). Prior to joining UCF, he obtained a Ph.D. in Hospitality Management from Purdue University. He has several years of experience in the hotel, restaurant, and financial industries. His research focuses on the areas of consumer and organizational behavior.

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CAN DINING DECISIONS BE PREDICTED FROM RESTAURANT REVIEW WEBSITES?

Restaurant review websites have mushroomed in popularity – and proliferated – as people increasingly go online to share and gather information about what they can expect of a dining experience at a particular restaurant. However, the extent to which potential diners are likely to accept information posted on these review websites, when making dining decisions, has not yet been fully explored. Dr. Juhee Kang reports a predictive model, designed with a collaborator to establish the influence of various factors on a review website user's attitude and intention to dine at a restaurant.

To dine or not to dine: or in this case – where? Before the advent of digital technology, people traditionally relied on recommendations from friends and family to help select the restaurants and hotels worthy of their patronage. Now, however, the plugged-in generation of the internet can turn to online review websites, with access to recommendations from a much wider group of people with different experiences and opinions of featured restaurants, hotels, and destinations. Dining recommendations from a potential client's social circle still impact that person's subsequent restaurant choices. However, where a hungry punter picks to eat is also increasingly influenced by online review platforms.

Technology has enabled an abundance of easily accessible information for the all-important decision of where to book a table, but it's still not clear which factors influence the specific choice of review

websites used for dining decisions. Prior research studies have examined factors such as the motivation of people writing reviews and the kinds of platforms where people prefer to submit reviews. There has been a distinct lack of scientific study into reader attributes and perspectives for restaurant review websites, and the extent to which people adopt specific websites (such as Yelp or Zomato) when deciding which restaurants to visit and establishments to avoid.

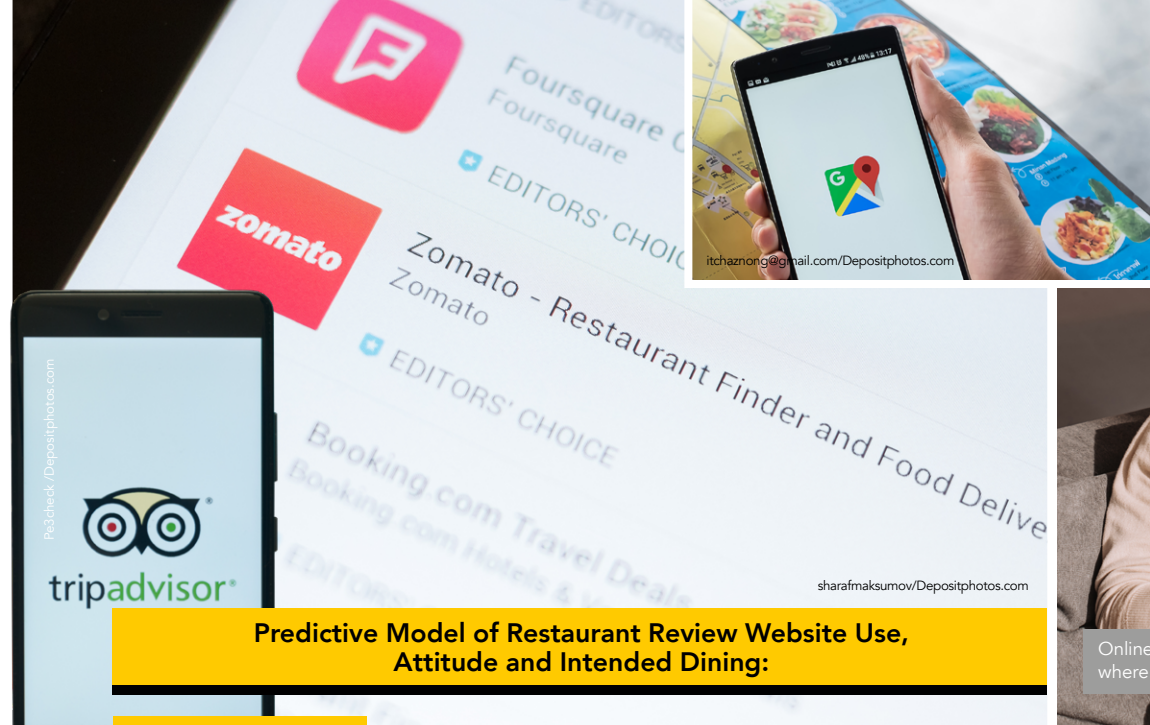
PREDICTING INTENTIONS TO VISIT RESTAURANTS

Research from UCF Rosen College is set to change this dearth of insight into restaurant review websites. Dr. Juhee Kang and her collaborator designed a predictive model that has a practical application for the hospitality industry. The model was used to better understand the factors and relationships influencing a customer's attitude towards a restaurant review website, and the impact of the selected website on subsequent dining choices. The team used

the well-established technology acceptance model (TAM) as the theoretical foundation for their research. Extending the TAM model, they incorporated a number of additional factors that could offer greater explanatory power regarding factors that influence a user's process of accepting a restaurant review website. Specifically, the research collaborators were interested in finding out the extent to which social circle (subjective norm) and website experience would influence a user's acceptance of a specific technology, and whether this in turn would impact the user's intention to visit a restaurant. An additional objective for the research was to understand whether there might be differences in the proposed relationships within the model, for users of different restaurant review websites. Following a review of prior research of the factors impacting a user's acceptance of a review website, the research team incorporated four predictors and three consumer behavior constructs into a structural model.

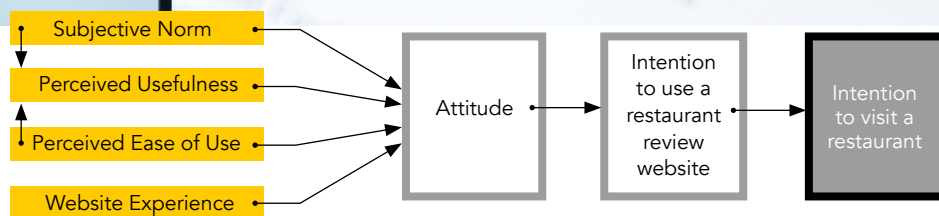


Choosing which restaurant to dine at can be a difficult decision.



Online review websites increasingly help us decide where to eat.

Predictive Model of Restaurant Review Website Use, Attitude and Intended Dining:



Moderator: Yelp versus Other Restaurant Review Websites

In addition to identifying the seven constructs in the model, the research team also set out to test expected relationships between these factors based on the following hypotheses:

- Trusted opinions of a customer's social circle – valued friends, colleagues, or family members – the 'subjective norm' in the model, would influence whether a customer perceived a specific website to be useful.
- The opinion of the customer's social circle was further expected to influence a customer's attitude towards a restaurant review website.
- A customer was expected to have a more positive attitude towards a restaurant review website if it was perceived to be useful.
- A review website with perceived ease of use was proposed to be viewed as more useful.
- The customer's attitude was also hypothesized to be positively influenced by the overall experience of using a restaurant review website.
- A customer's positive attitude towards a restaurant review website positively influences a customer's intention to use that specific restaurant review website.
- The user's intention to use a restaurant review website positively influences the user's intention to visit the restaurant listed on the review site.

THE RESEARCH TEAM CONCLUDED THAT WHEN CUSTOMERS HAVE A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS A PARTICULAR REVIEW WEBSITE, THE RESTAURANT REPRESENTED ON THAT WEBSITE CAN BENEFIT.

NOVEL METHODS

Using Qualtrics, an online questionnaire software, Dr. Kang and her collaborator developed a questionnaire to assess the constructs of their model. The questionnaire was hosted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (M-Turk), an online platform that can be used to collect data from research participants. M-Turk data has been shown to produce high-quality results that are as reliable as those gathered from data collection using traditional methods.

The target group of participants were people from the United States who use restaurant review websites to make dining decisions. Out of a total of 419 questionnaires completed on M-Turk, 364 met the criteria for inclusion in the final data analysis. Out of this group, most of the respondents (56.5%) were female, with the predominant age group of respondents being 25-34 years old (39.3% of the group), and Caucasian (78.3%). Close to half of the group (45.6%) had a university degree. The majority of research participants (69.8%) who completed the questionnaires indicated that they used Yelp for their restaurant search.

PREDICTING CUSTOMER CHOICE

Once the researchers had the information collected – what did they do? First of all, the researchers were interested in testing their model for Yelp versus other restaurant review websites, and so the respondents were split into two groups accordingly.



The data was analyzed using statistical analysis and structural equation modelling software packages to test the model's reliability. Using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the researchers tested whether the data collected fitted with the model they had developed. Were the relationships described in the model borne out by the data itself? A complex data analysis of the relationships between the different factors was undertaken, and the results revealed many subtle influences that are useful to understand when marketing a restaurant through a restaurant review website. Nearly all the hypotheses for the factors and

not confirmed. Ease of use did, however, have a significant indirect effect on attitude for Yelp users but not for users of other review websites. Additionally, perceived usefulness mediated ease of use in that the more user-friendly the website was, the more useful a user found it, which in turn influenced attitude. Perceived usefulness was the most important predictor of a user's attitude to a restaurant review website.

WHICH PLATFORM?

Restaurants can clearly benefit when customers have a positive attitude towards a particular review website on which the

towards that website. Additionally, the relevant opinions of a customer's social circle also influence attitude towards a review website; the social circle impact is further enhanced if the website is popular and well known, as is the case with Yelp. The study did show subtle differences between acceptance of Yelp and other restaurant review websites. For example, Yelp users seem to be more forgiving of some of the issues experienced when using the website because their social circle has a high opinion of Yelp. Given the popularity of Yelp, other restaurant review websites would need to design a user-friendly website experience, to overcome the other influences propelling customers towards Yelp.

In the final analysis, all these predictors influencing whether a customer intends to use a website (i.e., attitude, usefulness, subjective norm, and online review website experience) ultimately impact whether a customer will visit a restaurant. Well-established websites with strong images and brands, that are well-regarded in a customer's mind, play an important part in enticing customers towards a dining experience at a restaurant. Dr. Kang and her collaborators have demonstrated that in an increasingly digital world, restaurants and diners alike benefit from well-designed restaurant review websites.

WELL-ESTABLISHED WEBSITES WITH STRONG IMAGES AND BRANDS, THAT ARE WELL-REGARDED IN A CUSTOMER'S MIND, PLAY AN IMPORTANT PART IN ENTICING CUSTOMERS TOWARDS A DINING EXPERIENCE AT A RESTAURANT.

proposed relationships within the model were found to be statistically significant, meaning that these relationships did not occur by chance. The only exceptions were the hypotheses for ease of use affecting a customer's attitude towards and intention to use a restaurant review website, which was

restaurant is represented. The relevance of these findings for the hospitality industry is that it's important for restaurants to carefully choose the correct platform to engage with customers. A review website which is perceived to be useful is likely to strongly influence the customer's attitude

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Juhee Kang and her collaborator aimed to understand what factors of a restaurant review website influence a customer's intention to dine at a specific restaurant.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How should restaurants engage with review websites, to influence customers' positive attitudes most effectively towards their restaurants?

Restaurants should carefully select review websites in which they need to pay close attention to customer feedback. Those websites are a kind of online community which connects restaurants and their target and frequent patrons. In general, those platforms are full of customer reviews, both positive and negative, but no restaurants' responses to those comments, which should deliver sincere gratitude to positive reviews while exhibiting sincere sympathy and apology to negative reviews. This practice is the foundation of building trust and showing authenticity in service quality.

Dr. Juhee Kang



Dr. Juhee Kang joined the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at UCF in 2012. Dr. Kang teaches Hospitality and Tourism Marketing and Brand Management. Her research interests have focused on social media marketing, consumer behavior, brand image, and brand experience. Many of her research papers have been published in top-tier journals.

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Recommendations from friends play an important role in deciding which restaurant to eat at – and which review website to use.

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