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WINTER 2022

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A message from Dean Youcheng Wang

As we move towards a new year, with new beginnings, goals and fresh ideas, our thoughts turn to resolutions.

The University of Central Florida is embracing a new strategic plan. The key ideas focus on unleashing the potential within every individual, enriching the human experience through inclusion, discovery, and innovation, and propelling broad-based prosperity for the many communities we serve. That is exactly what we all intend to do in 2023 through our research and our teaching.

After three years of dealing with the COVID-19 crisis, now endemic across the globe, we are approaching research with a modified vision through new discovery and innovations. This seventh issue of the **Rosen Research Review** magazine finds us looking at research that is focused forward.

The ten articles in the winter 2022 **Rosen Research Review**, are available as always digitally and in hardcopy. This issue has an article that looks at research conducted in the lodging industry, how servant leadership impacts the behavior of the rank and file. We also look at retirement communities and resident satisfaction, a new frontier for hospitality and its service model. This is not your great-grandmother's old-age home. There is an article focused on climate change and hurricanes. Each year the forecast calls for more storms and more severe-category weather events. Coastal communities that depend on tourism are feeling the impact and looking for mitigation efforts. We look at that through our research for the communities we serve. And speaking of those we serve, how do members of the LGBTQ+ community choose where they travel? Our researchers deliver answers.

This issue's thought leader article focuses on Robert Valle, CIO of Mazda North American Operations. Rosen College of Hospitality Management is working with Mazda on consumer relations research, a company which *Consumer Reports* rates as a Best Overall Auto Brand in its annual reliability survey.
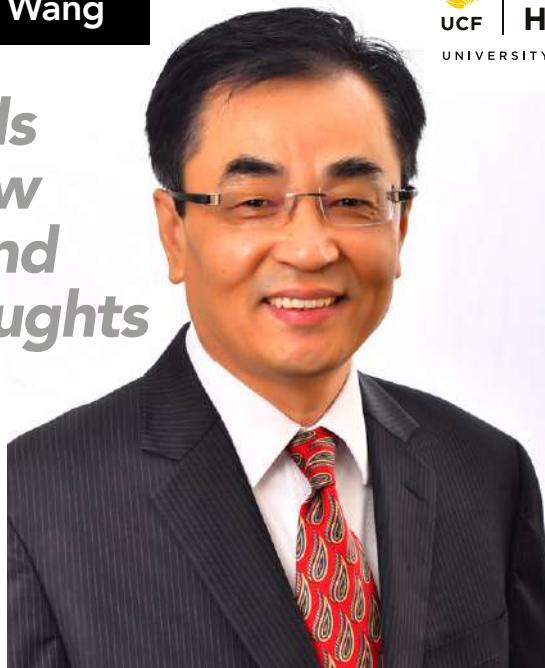
The **Rosen Research Review**, produced by UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management in collaboration with Research Features, has been providing important research directly to the leaders and managers of the hospitality industry since 2019. We continue to contribute to the knowledge base of the hospitality industry, as well as peripheral industries who value guest services. Our researchers provide information that can be used by managers, owners, and entrepreneurs, as well as destination marketing firms, to help us all be better business partners. Through our commitment to life-long learning we continue to educate the future leaders of the hospitality industry, at the college the 2022 Shanghai Rankings placed #1 in the nation for hospitality research and education.

The **Rosen Research Review** winter 2022 issue is ready for you, on your desktop, laptop, mobile device or tablet. Take it with you on your winter travels. It makes great reading as you navigate through airports and explore new destinations or familiar haunts. The magazine will enrich the human experience through inclusion, discovery, and innovation for the year ahead, 2023.

Youcheng Wang, Ph.D.
Dean and William C. Peeper Preeminent Professor in Destination Marketing

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VULNERABILITY AND RESILIENCE IN A TOURISM DESTINATION

In an industry that is critically vulnerable to hazards, some destinations are hit harder than others by the same or similar events. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management researchers, Dr. Sergio Alvarez and Dr. Alan Fyall, have developed a conceptual model that sees the destination's vulnerability as the sum of its physical, social-cultural, economic, ecological/environmental, and institutional vulnerabilities, nestled within its level of exposure to different hazards. Their framework offers to better equip destination management organizations (DMOs) by identifying vulnerabilities and facilitating more effective planning and decision making.

The COVID-19 pandemic, long predicted by experts but an unexpected thunderbolt to most, had profound impacts on all facets of life. There were degrees of devastation. For the tourism and hospitality industry, variations in the impacts cut across geographical, social, and economic fault lines. Within an industry that is critically vulnerable to hazards, some destinations were hit harder than others, offering lessons about vulnerability (the degree of exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity to a hazard) and resilience (the ability to recover in a timely manner after a hazard occurs), and how they vary among tourism destinations.

While crisis management planning is not a new concept for the industry, past work has not fully explored the concept of 'destination vulnerability'. Two UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management researchers are aiming to change this. Dr. Sergio Alvarez, a natural-resource economist, and Dr. Alan Fyall, Associate Dean Academic Affairs, and expert on tourism sustainability and resilience, have forged an interdisciplinary bridge to link models for vulnerability in the tourism and hospitality industry with existing frameworks developed within the field of hazards. They offer a conceptual model to better equip destination management organizations (DMOs)—organizations responsible for developing and promoting tourism in a given region, including tourist boards, visitor bureaus, and others)—in identifying vulnerabilities and facilitating more effective planning and decision making. Central to their work is the identification of the types of hazards most likely to impact a destination and the types of vulnerability inherent in that place.

HAZARD BUFFET

Hazards can largely be grouped into natural, human, or compound/cascading categories. Among these, the most widely recognized tend to be geophysical events such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, which can cause widespread damage and loss of life. The impacts of such events can continue for long periods of time. Even once infrastructure is repaired, visitors may remain wary of visiting for fear of a repeat event. However, the devil is in the detail, and

The most widely recognized hazards tend to be geophysical events such as earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, which can cause widespread damage and loss of life.

the same hazard can have vastly different impacts depending on the destination. The 2019 White Island eruption in New Zealand saw the death of 22 guides and tourists and subsequent collapse of the tourist trade. In contrast, the 2021 Geldingadalur eruption in Iceland bought droves of visitors to the island in the hopes of witnessing the spectacle.

Other natural hazards include those of biological nature, with COVID-19 and Zika being recent examples of note. Hydrometeorological hazards are involved in atmospheric phenomena and the movement of water, which often occur together (e.g., the massive flooding in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, which decimated the city, and by extension its tourism industry). Hydrometeorological hazards are not always shock events (i.e., short-lived, such as hurricanes); they can also extend over the medium term (e.g., unseasonably high- or low-temperature conditions) or be long-term

stressors. For example, the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO) changes climate conditions around the Pacific, and can even cause global damage (in 1998, an ENSO event caused global coral bleaching). The impacts of hydrometeorological events can be localized and short-lived (e.g., Caribbean Islands suffer tourism setbacks during and after large hurricanes but have historically recovered relatively quickly) or may cause long-term changes (e.g., shifting of tourist seasons in response to changing climate).

Human hazards are those with a direct link to human activity. Heightened risk of terrorism is a clear deterrent for tourists, while targeted terrorist attacks can completely close the industry within whole countries or regions (e.g., the 2015 mass shooting at a resort in Tunisia, after which tour operators withdrew from the country entirely). Armed conflict and socio-economic collapse both impact on tourism, with recent examples including

> *WITHIN AN INDUSTRY THAT IS CRITICALLY VULNERABLE TO HAZARDS, SOME DESTINATIONS ARE HIT HARDER THAN OTHERS.*


Some man-made disasters may attract visitors such as the site of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster.

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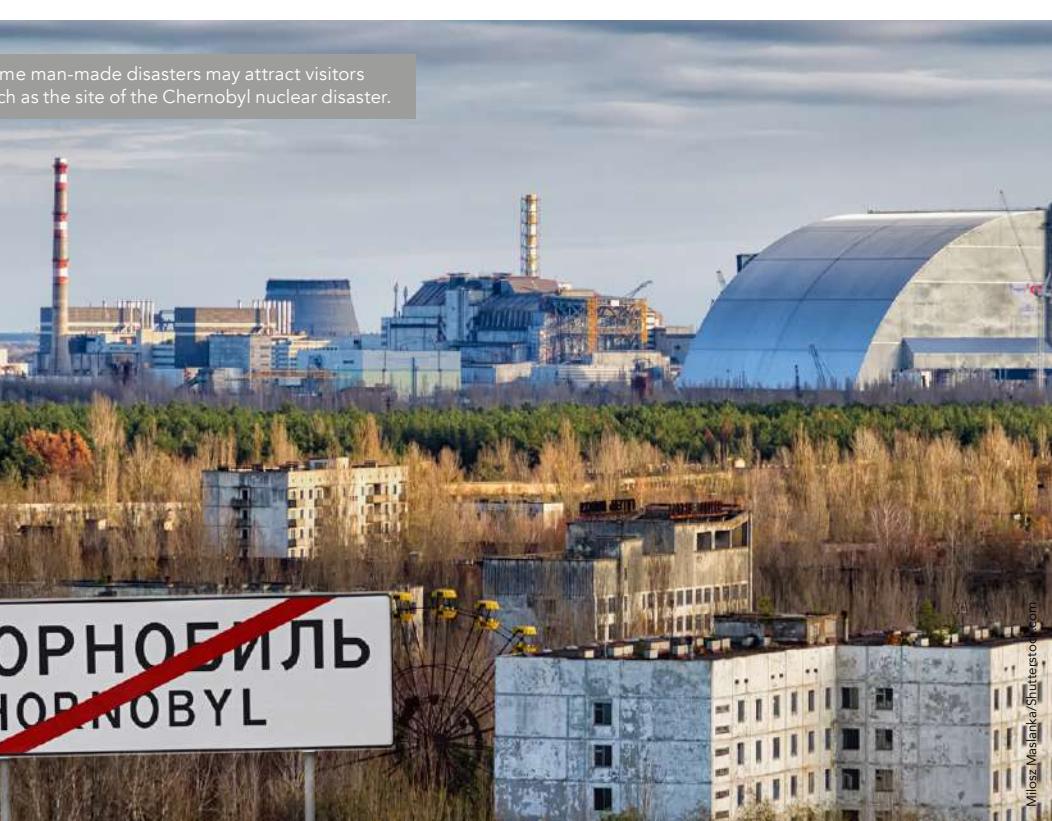
widespread civil unrest in Thailand and Hong Kong. Environmental crises can damage the natural environments upon which tourist revenue depends, as happened along coastal regions of Alaska following the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster. Conversely, some man-made disasters ultimately become a magnet for visitors, prompting the rise of so-called 'dark tourism' (e.g., the site of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster).

Sometimes hazards are a combination of human and natural factors; the COVID-19 pandemic likely arose because deforestation and the degradation of natural habitats have increased contact between humans and wild animals. Other examples include extreme weather phenomena made more common by human-driven climate change. In the short-term, 'last-chance tourism' may encourage visits to destinations that may not exist in the future (e.g., rainforests, coral reefs, glaciers), but ultimately these 'attractions' will cease to exist in their present form. Finally, hazards may come in compound or cascading form,

Ecological/environmental vulnerability is relevant to those destinations reliant on the natural environment to support the tourist industry.

glaciers and a reliable supply of snow. In some cases, development of tourist infrastructure itself causes irreparable damage to critical environmental assets and even so-called low-impact activities (e.g., hiking, biking, scuba diving) can do harm. Moreover, tourists can also be carriers of pathogens that are introduced into new environments.

Finally, institutional vulnerability is linked to the adaptive capacity of local, regional, national, and global institutions, which in turn depend on the socio-economic/political factors at each level. Specific elements include effective governance and processes for accountability, regulatory structures, political and social stability, and financial transparency (or lack thereof), among others.

FROM FRAGILE TO ANTIFRAGILE
Given the range of complexities and confounding factors, understanding why some destinations suffer more acutely than others in the aftermath of the same or a similar hazard remains a challenge. However, assessing vulnerability at a destination level offers a good starting point. The framework proposed by Alvarez and Fyall sees the destination as the sum of its physical, social-cultural, economic, ecological/environmental, and institutional vulnerabilities, nestled within the context of its level of exposure, sensitivity, and adaptative capacity with regards to the different types of hazard. With so many moving parts, the vulnerability of any given destination, even to the same event, will differ from that of others.

By using their framework to asses vulnerability and resilience, Alvarez and Fyall hope to give DMOs the tools needed to become antifragile destinations; that is, destinations that can not only withstand shocks and stressors, but even reap new benefits by becoming stronger and more resilient after experiencing a hazard event. The scope for DMO intervention is endless, from strengthening the taxation of tourist income to allow for better local investment, to strengthening the socio-economic/political power of marginalized groups working within the industry, to promoting environmental protection. Regardless of the approach needed, with a fuller, more open perspective over nuanced local conditions, DMOs will have more scope to develop low-cost adaption strategies that are tailored to local stakeholders and conditions and are adaptive in the face of future change.

where multiple hazards occur together or subsequent to each other (e.g., landslides during and after earthquakes).

TYPES OF TOURISM VULNERABILITY
The forms of vulnerability experienced by different destinations also vary widely, and broadly speaking can be classified as physical, social-cultural, economic, ecological/environmental, or institutional. Physical vulnerability is perhaps the most intuitive and encompasses the level of direct exposure to the hazard. For example, higher vulnerability occurs along fault lines or on volcanoes and along coastal margins impacted by hurricanes and sea-level rise.

cultural authenticity; when heritage or culture is curated or 'tweaked' to appeal to tourists, its very existence comes under threat.

Economic vulnerability primarily involves the degree of dependence on the 'tourist dollar'. In short, destinations with greater economic diversity are better shielded from crises. Critically, many destinations may, at first glance, appear to be benefiting economically from tourism, when in reality only a small part of tourist spending actually stays within the community. The international cruise industry is particularly guilty in this regard; it may bring large numbers of tourists to many destinations, but most of the money spent on

UNDERSTANDING WHY SOME DESTINATIONS SUFFER MORE ACUTELY THAN OTHERS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE SAME OR A SIMILAR HAZARD REMAINS A CHALLENGE.

Social-cultural vulnerability reflects the social, economic, demographic, and political environment. Where the community involved in the industry is strong (socially, economically, demographically, and politically), their capacity to adapt is high. However, tourism often relies on a workforce made up of marginalized communities, including those on low wages, children, women, and migrants. Another facet of social-cultural vulnerability is the degree of

food, accommodation, and experiences flows directly to the cruise company.

Ecological/environmental vulnerability is relevant to those destinations reliant on the natural environment to support the tourist industry (estimated to account for around 20% of global tourism). Sub-Saharan African countries reliant on wildlife tourists are entirely at the mercy of healthy ecosystems; mountain and ski resorts are dependent on healthy

RESEARCHERS
IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Why do some destinations suffer more acute impacts in the same or similar crises than other destinations? Dr. Sergio Alvarez and Dr. Alan Fyall explore this question and put forward a framework to identify a destination's vulnerability to hazards.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Has this framework been put to the test in real-world settings yet? If not, where will it be tested first?

❚❚ Although yet to be tested, the ideas and framework advanced in this study come at a time when destinations the world over are beginning to view tourism in a different light. The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has offered a pause for reflection among many DMOs as to the best way forward. The recently published *Opportunities for Transforming Coastal and Marine Tourism: Towards Sustainability, Regeneration and Resilience* is just one of many recent calls for change in the industry, advocating the need to reasses and reset tourism, and for destinations to be more transparent in how they assess and mitigate hazards, the vulnerabilities inherent in their destinations, and how they manage them. ❚❚

Dr. Sergio Alvarez

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

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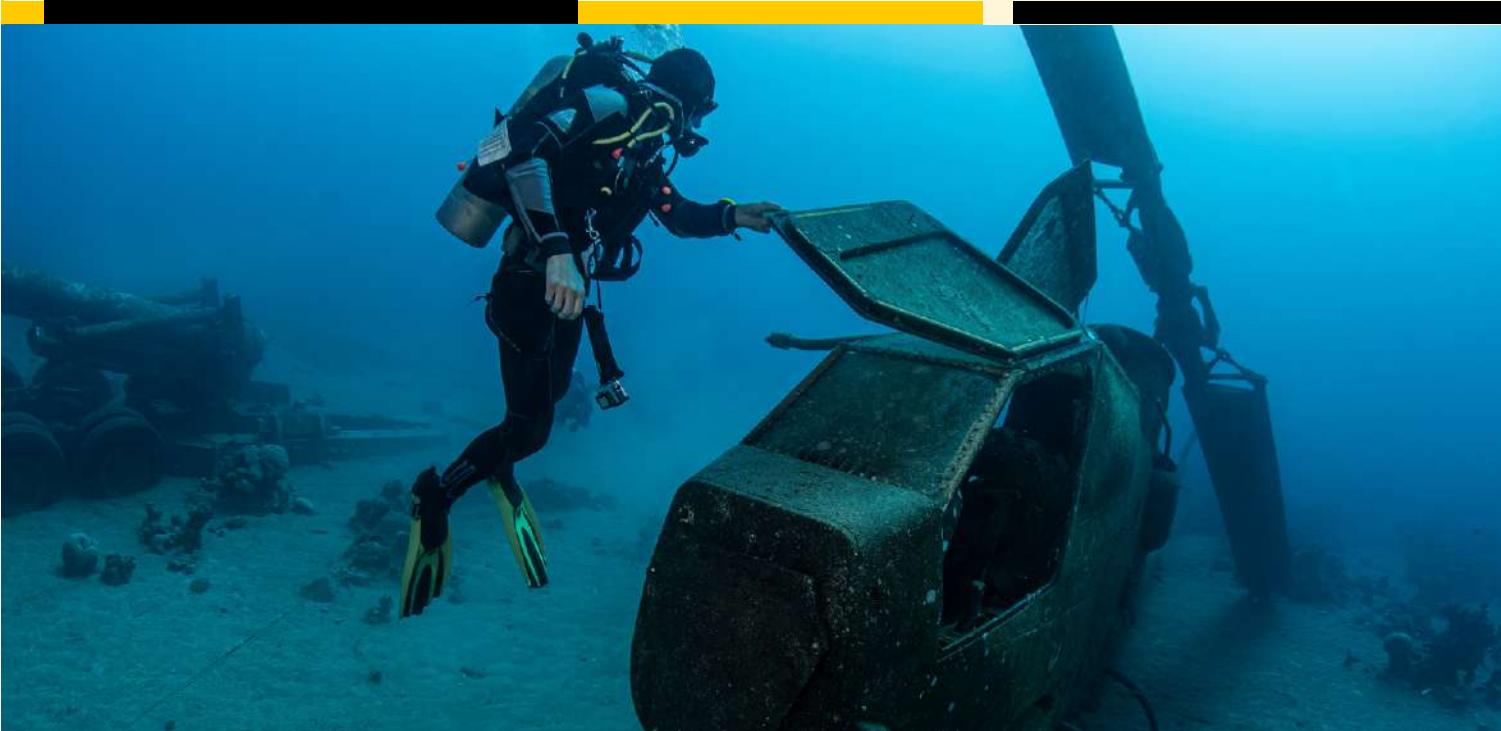
HOW HURRICANES IMPACT FLORIDA'S TOURISM INDUSTRY

Almost every year, hurricanes bear down upon the state of Florida. The storms appear to be growing in occurrence and severity. While the media cover the damage and death toll, the impacts on the state's critical tourism sector remain largely anecdotal. The full story lies buried in data. Dr. Arthur Huang from UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management has investigated different data sets to understand the impact of hurricanes on the tourism industry. What has been uncovered has significance not only for Florida but for tourism sectors elsewhere affected by these giant storms.

Florida is a beacon to millions of tourists every year, but it is also attracting the unwelcome attention of an increasing number of powerful hurricanes. Research published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in 2020 suggests that whereas it's almost 25% more probable than 40 years ago that tropical storms worldwide will reach a major intensity, in the vast swath of warm water nicknamed 'Hurricane Alley', in the North Atlantic, that figure is more than double. At the western edge of that alley, in the path of the hurricanes that will emerge, sits the Sunshine State. What could that mean for Florida's tourism sector? Dr. Arthur Huang of the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and Ph.D. student Marcos Madeiros have combined three high-frequency data sets to answer that question. What they've discovered has significant implications for tourism resilience management, not only for Florida but also worldwide.

Every time a hurricane rips through communities, the media covers the immediate physical destruction and its impact on human lives. Cameras show wrecked seafronts, destroyed homes, and flooded cities, but little is known about the effects on tourism, especially in the longer term. The tourism sector is especially susceptible to such extreme weather events; not only does it rely on the physical infrastructure and visual appeal of destinations but also on perceptions of safety. Most tourists hope for pleasant weather when vacationing and continue with their plans if the weather is poor, but it's a different story if that comes with significant risks.

Florida is apt for studying tourism. In 2019, the year before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Florida tourism sector accounted for nearly 6% of real state GDP and 14% of total employment. Furthermore, 15% of state sales tax collection came from tourism. To get an idea of the potential long-term effects of hurricanes on the state's tourism leading up to that year, Huang turned to high-frequency data sets. The first was the monthly tax revenue of 94 types of businesses in the state's tourism sector for the period 2002 to 2018. Of particular interest was the annual percentage changes in sales tax revenues over that period in four subsectors within Florida tourism: admissions, hotel and lodging, restaurants and bars, and transportation. The researchers examined those figures against a second data set covering the state's historical hurricane records; they were particularly interested in storm intensity, when the hurricanes struck, and where. They compared this against a third data set that classified all Florida's counties as urban or rural and coastal or inland. The hypothesis was that geographic location mattered in how tourism recovered after a hurricane effect.

TRACKING THE HURRICANE TRAIL

The researchers believed that by comparing the data for July to October—the so-called 'hurricane season'—and the traditional U.S. busy August-to-September holiday season they could track the financial impacts of hurricanes on different tourism subsectors at different parts of the state over a period of 16 years. They employed Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon tests to examine pairwise statistical differences across the variables.

The data showed that, overall, tourism businesses in counties affected directly by hurricanes ('with hurricanes') are associated with lower tax growth rates than those in counties largely unaffected by hurricanes ('without hurricanes'). However, the negative effect was not equal across the state; rural counties seem to bear the brunt of it. Whether or not a county was along the state's coastline mattered too. Coastal counties with hurricanes had lower tourism sales tax rates than coastal counties without hurricanes.

The data became particularly interesting when the Rosen researchers compared the various subsectors. While all tax growth rates in subsectors affected by hurricanes showed yearly dips and jumps associated with differing hurricane seasonal intensity over the period 2002 to 2018, in the hotel and lodging and restaurants and bars subsectors, there was little overall statistical difference compared to the more stable rates of those without hurricanes. The same was not true for the admissions subsector, which showed a distinct decline in sales taxes in those businesses impacted by hurricanes over the 16-year study period. Over the same time, those businesses within the admissions subsector in areas not affected by hurricanes enjoyed positive growth.

Fascinated by this anomaly, the researchers did a deep dive into the data sets to focus on one particularly powerful storm. Hurricane Irma, which struck Florida in 2017, caused considerable damage, becoming the most expensive storm in the state's history. The data showed that the storm's impact on businesses in the admissions subsector was felt for several months after the event; those in the rural counties in the north-west of the state recovered the slowest.

MOST TOURISTS HOPE FOR PLEASANT WEATHER WHEN VACATIONING AND CONTINUE WITH THEIR PLANS IF THE WEATHER IS POOR, BUT IT'S A DIFFERENT STORY IF THAT COMES WITH SIGNIFICANT RISKS.

What is significant about this research is that its insights have international relevance. Hurricanes might be differently-named elsewhere—cyclones in the Indian Ocean and typhoons in the north-west Pacific—but their physical effects are similar. Also, because they primarily affect coastal regions of the tropics and sub-tropics, they are the one extreme weather event that has an inordinate impact on popular tourist destinations. Thousands of tropical and sub-tropical coastal resorts are

IMPLICATIONS FOR TOURISM

The Rosen researchers set out to understand the differential impacts hurricanes have on Florida's tourism subsectors and subregions, and identify those subsectors seemingly most at risk. They also wanted to develop insights into how the tourism sector can best prepare and adapt to what seems likely to become an increasing challenge.

Firstly, because rural counties affected by hurricanes experience more significant impacts and recover the slowest, they should

Coastal subregions are more at risk than those inland to the impacts of hurricanes.

> FASCINATED BY THIS ANOMALY, THE ROSEN RESEARCHERS DID A DEEP DIVE INTO THE DATA SETS TO FOCUS ON HOW HURRICANES AFFECT DIFFERENT TOURIST AREAS IN FLORIDA.

be paid special attention to facilitate a timely recovery. Secondly, coastal subregions are more at risk than those inland to the impacts of hurricanes. These regions experience not only the effects of a hurricane's strong winds but also elevated sea levels, known as storm surges, extensive shoreline erosion and other geologic effects that contribute to the loss of property and life. This research suggests that state authorities and tourism businesses in Florida's coastal subregions should focus on active disaster planning, management, and recovery strategies.

Thirdly, the admissions subsector seems particularly vulnerable to the effects of hurricanes. This is important because the health

of the sector as a whole relies on the seamless integration between its constituent parts. Vulnerability in one subsector is a weakness tourism cannot afford, especially in a state so reliant on it. Therefore, tourism should investigate ways to develop specific resilience in the admissions subsector. One thing is clear: a one-size-fits-all approach in the sector as a whole will not work.

threatened by such storms. And unlike, say, earthquakes, hurricanes are seasonal, and their size and impact are likely to increase; they are, therefore, to a degree, predictable. This is important for a sector that relies heavily on people planning according to popular perceptions of attractiveness and risk. Tourism businesses in areas prone to hurricanes should, therefore, not only prepare for how to deal with their likely outcomes but also the challenges of assuaging public fears.

This research has theoretical and practical implications for tourism resilience management and should encourage further studies to develop upon it. According to the Rosen researchers, future work could include other economic indicators at a more microscopic level, such as tourism organizational structures, operational activities, and tourist spending, to provide additional insight. It would also be interesting to compare those outcomes with similar research from other countries. Shared wisdom on a global level will be necessary for a sector in the shadow of one of Mother Nature's most destructive beasts.

RESEARCHERS
IN FOCUS

Dr. Arthur Huang

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

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Arthur Huang aims to understand how hurricanes impact different tourism subsectors and destination subregions.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What is the most urgent priority for Florida's tourism sector to address the growing threat from hurricanes?

❚❚ The urgent priority is to develop public–private partnerships to enhance socioeconomic and environmental resilience among tourism communities. This might involve taking precautions to reduce the impact of hurricanes, allocating designated funds for disaster relief, and provide training to support workers' upskilling and reskilling in these communities. ❚❚

RESETTING COASTAL AND MARINE TOURISM IN A POST-COVID WORLD

Marine and coastal zones have long been exploited for tourism revenue, and the health of many coastal and marine environments has declined. The near-global shutdown of tourism due to the COVID-19 pandemic has offered a unique opportunity to rebuild the tourism industry using a new model. Researchers from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management joined a team of international researchers to present a framework for such change at the 2022 United Nations (UN) Ocean Conference in Lisbon.

In June 2022, delegates from around the world came together in Lisbon, Portugal, for the United Nations (UN) Ocean Conference. Jointly hosted by the governments of Kenya and Portugal, the conference focused on innovative science-based solutions to protect our oceans. Among the delegates were researchers from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, including Dr. Alan Fyall, Dr. Sergio Alvarez, Dr. Robertico Croes, Dr. Jorge Ridderstaat, and Dr. Maksim Godovykh. Together, they presented a new report on opportunities for post-COVID-19 transformation of coastal and marine tourism via sustainability, regeneration, and resilience initiatives.

THE CHANCE TO START ANEW?

For coastal and island economies, marine and coastal zones have long underpinned economic security and have been exploited for tourism revenue. Over time, ever-increasing visitor numbers and oftentimes poor oversight and regulation have seen the health of many coastal and marine environments decline. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, tourism was a major growth industry that supported the livelihoods of millions of people and countless communities around the world. The near-global shutdown of tourism underlined the fragility of the industry. However, as we emerge on the other side, one positive aspect is the potential to rebuild the tourism industry using a new model.

In monetary value, coastal and marine tourism accounts for approximately 50% of global tourism (~US$ 4.6 trillion per year, or 5.2% of global GDP); half of all global tourists visit coastal or marine areas. For most small island nations and many coastal regions, tourism is the single largest economic sector; in some small island nations, tourism accounts for up to 90% of total exports. However, the prevailing industry model is unsustainable on a number of fronts. Tourism contributes 8–11% of global greenhouse gas emissions, with this number projected to increase. Tourism revenue is largely siphoned off by large corporations and foreign companies; in the Maldives and Caribbean, estimates suggest that 95% of tourism revenue leaves host countries. As the desirability of coastal destinations increases, higher property prices and costs of living cannot be met by local populations. Moreover, the industry is largely staffed by marginalized communities (including low-wage workers, women, children, and migrant workers), who have little agency and are highly vulnerable to shocks and stressors. Last, but certainly not least, the development of tourism infrastructure damages coastal and marine environments, leaving them more vulnerable to crises. For example, the creation of sandy beaches to support beach-front resorts is

often at the expense of natural habitats such as sand dunes and mangroves. When intact, these habitats not only house significant biodiversity but also protect coastlines from storm damage and rising sea levels.

FINDING THE WAY FORWARD

Addressing these issues will not be easy, but the team from Rosen College joined an international team of researchers to compile a blueprint to guide the way forward. First and foremost, the industry will need to recognize the underlying causes of current vulnerabilities and be willing to phase out practices that are no longer fit for purpose and/or that are at odds with social and environmental justice, account for growing demand for travel from an expanding global middle class, and identify new, more sustainable practices and business models at all levels of the tourism value chain.

Around the world, many individual communities already offer examples of best-practice. The Pacific island of Palau is moving towards carbon neutrality through local food production, carbon offset schemes, and mangrove restoration. Hotels from Las Vegas to Bangkok have saved millions of liters of water and thousands of dollars in energy by upgrading their laundry processes and facilities. Beach clean-up initiatives in the United States have contributed millions of dollars in added economic value. In South Africa, local artisans have received business advice to ensure that their products are competitive. However, such changes need to be scaled up to an industry level, which will require a paradigm shift in policy and regulatory cultures within governments, the business models of private enterprises, and in the behavior of end users. Tourists themselves have a critical role to play, and the traveling public must demand more sustainable approaches and proactively practice reduced consumption.

A FRAMEWORK FOR CHANGE

The proposed framework has three principal aims:
1) reduce impact,
2) regenerate, and
3) build resilience in the environmental, economic, and socio-cultural spheres.

From an environmental standpoint, avenues to address negative impacts include carbon-neutral initiatives, investment in energy- and water-efficient infrastructure, minimizing single-use plastics, and more integrated coastal zone management. Reducing negative economic impacts could involve the promotion of locally owned businesses, improved working conditions and workers' rights, and increased rates of local employment. Reducing negative socio-cultural impacts could include clear cultural guidelines for visitors, more inclusive and locally driven management structures, and the protection of human rights.

In terms of regeneration, the environment could be served by the development of green infrastructure to benefit both tourism and local communities (for example, renewable electricity generation, rainwater collection, composting facilities) and the designation of reserves to protect ecosystems and biodiversity. Local economies could be regenerated by introducing visitor fees, career paths for local workers, microfinancing for local enterprises, and locally sourced goods and services. Regeneration of socio-cultural factors could include investment of tourism revenue into local education, promotion of locally owned business (particularly those owned by Indigenous communities), restoration of cultural sites, and better use of local knowledge and language.

The final pillar in the framework, building resilience, will allow coastal communities to not only weather future crises but become stronger as a result. Building environmental resilience primarily involves protecting and strengthening local ecosystems, for example, protecting coastlines from flooding and erosion through the use of mangroves and reef development. Economic resilience will rely on diversification of the tourism industry, promotion of domestic tourism, creation of trust funds to ensure safe streams of funding, and ensuring local hiring at all staff levels. Socio-cultural resilience is served by implementing strong management plans for local cultural sites and by the involvement of local communities in management schemes.

ACHIEVING GOALS

One of the first steps on this road is establishing baselines and criteria for measuring impact. Taking water use as an example, metrics could include water use per tourist per day, water savings over time, percentage of tourism facilities treating water to international standards, and cases of water-borne diseases. Ultimately, a bold rethink of global tourism offers significant opportunities to contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Among others, direct contributions could range from improved gender equality, protecting marine ecosystems, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Indirectly, coastal communities would benefit from reduced poverty and hunger, and improvements in health, education, clean energy, and clean water.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES IN THE POST-PANDEMIC CONTEXT

Consumer perceptions regarding social sustainability practices within the hospitality industry are ever more important for hospitality businesses. Consumers are increasingly conscious of whether a business pursues sustainable practices, both in its treatment of employees and in supply chain purchases. Consumers' views on how well a business performs on these indicators can impact on consumer decisions and business viability. UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management researcher Dr. Cynthia Mejia and collaborators have undertaken a study to understand how much importance restaurant consumers attach to specific social sustainability actions, and the way in which consumers perceive restaurants to be performing in the areas most important to them.

Social sustainability has become increasingly important for businesses in recent years, including those within the hospitality industry. In essence, social sustainability addresses social justice and fairness, and the way in which societies direct their efforts to creating greater equitability. In 2015, the UN proclaimed 17 sustainable development goals to address issues such as climate change, social inequalities, racial injustices, and discriminatory employment practices, including how well businesses treat their employees. The U.S. National Restaurant Association has identified sustainability as a key menu trend in recent years, and restaurant initiatives include efforts to ensure sustainable supply chains and reduce food and consumer waste, to support planet and environmental targets.

Increasingly, the public expects businesses to address social problems and implement social sustainability initiatives to uphold social justice. Many businesses, including those within the hospitality industry, are impacted by the perceptions consumers hold regarding how businesses behave on matters of social sustainability. Dr. Cynthia Mejia explains, 'the hospitality industry in particular is a "high touch" business in terms of the contact between hospitality employees and customers.' The nature of work carried out by employees within the hospitality industry is perceived by the public as physically

To understand consumer behavior, participants were asked which restaurants they frequented during the pandemic.

Increasingly, the public expects businesses to address social problems and implement social sustainability initiatives to uphold social justice.

demanding and low-paid. Workers within the hospitality industry were particularly hard-hit with the closure of businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic; millions of restaurant workers lost their jobs and over 100,000 restaurants were forced to close, some of them permanently. During the pandemic, issues of social justice were prominent in the wider social discourse. Dr. Mejia and colleagues were interested in understanding consumers' perceptions around social justice within the U.S. restaurant industry as it re-opened, particularly as many consumers have themselves faced economic challenges. To this end, the researchers designed a study to find out the importance that consumers placed on social sustainability within this quasi-post-pandemic period, and whether consumers felt that restaurants were performing well on those measures of social sustainability.

MANY BUSINESSES, INCLUDING THOSE WITHIN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY, ARE IMPACTED BY THE PERCEPTIONS CONSUMERS HOLD REGARDING HOW THE BUSINESS BEHAVES ON MATTERS OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY.

RESTAURANT CONSUMERS AND SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The researchers defined the quasi-post-pandemic phase as the point at which operating restrictions were lifted or eased for restaurant businesses in the U.S. One unique aspect of their study was the use of importance performance analysis (IPA) methodology, enabling them to understand how consumers perceived and assessed the performance of restaurants on sustainability measures. In this way, customers' assessments of organizational performance were evaluated and included marketing programs and organizational–environmental sustainability.

The study included 19 key social sustainability items linked to the triple bottom line model of sustainability, specifically environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Examples include 'The restaurant ensures all staff are paid fairly and accurately;' and 'The restaurant is a socially inclusive recruiter.' An initial survey was pilot tested and then refined. The final survey was comprised of 45 items rated on a five-point Likert scale (to represent people's attitudes to a topic), with possible responses ranging from 'not important' to 'very important' to assess how important a particular dimension was to the consumer; and 'very poor performance' to 'very good performance' to assess how the consumers perceived the performance of the restaurants. The survey also included demographic questions.

Data were collected from research participants using Amazon Mechanical Turk (mTurk), to include individuals representative of the U.S. population in terms of their gender, race/ethnicity, and income.

A total of 290 valid responses were extracted. The majority of participants were between 30 and 39 years old (42%), and men made up 58% of the research sample. White/Caucasians were predominant (78%), followed by Black or African Americans (10%) and a smaller number of Asian participants. Close to half of the participants held a four-year college degree and the majority of participants were in full-time employment. Regionally, the top U.S.-based regions of survey respondents were from Florida (11%), California (10%), Texas (7%), and New York State (5%). Annual household income ranged

Consumer perceptions regarding social sustainability practices within the hospitality industry are ever more important for hospitality businesses.

SIGNIFICANTLY, THIS HAS IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR RESTAURANT MANAGERS AND OFFERS GUIDANCE ON AREAS WHERE SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES SHOULD BE FOCUSED IN THE POST-PANDEMIC PERIOD.

from U.S. $50,000 to U.S. $74,999. Popular restaurants frequented included mostly fast food outlets, such as McDonald's, Chipotle, Burger King, and Domino's Pizza.

CONSUMER RATINGS OF IMPORTANCE AND PERFORMANCE OF SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES

To understand consumer behavior, Mejia and her collaborators asked participants which restaurants they frequented during the pandemic. Most participants (66%) described themselves as patronizing environmentally friendly restaurants, and financially responsible restaurants (51%), with fewer (44%) saying they had patronized socially conscious restaurants. The data analysis revealed that the top three factors considered to be important to consumers were fair pay for staff, accessibility for people with disabilities, and embeddedness of the restaurant in the local community. Consumers were more neutral in how importantly they viewed other factors such as staff feeding programs, adherence to grievance policies, inclusive recruitment practices, and use of sustainable suppliers.

Least important to consumers were restaurant practices such as educating the public on sustainability, cutting employee hours equally, and raising money for charity.

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO BUSINESS GUIDELINES

This is the first study to specifically apply IPA methodology to understand how consumers perceived social sustainability practices within U.S. restaurants and can be directly translated into business guidelines. Drawing from the study's performance and importance ratings, Dr. Mejia and collaborators created indicators regarding the sustainability practices that were most important to consumers. Significantly, this has important implications for restaurant managers and offers guidance on areas where sustainability practices should be focused in the post-pandemic period.

First, the study highlights that restaurants should concentrate their efforts on promoting healthy eating. Although this was considered important to customers, they felt that this was an area where restaurants were not performing as well. Second, it is recommended that restaurants continue to perform well in areas consumers considered to be important and in which restaurants scored highly. These included disability access, fair staff pay, and local community embeddedness. Actions, such as promoting sustainability and sponsoring local events, were considered low priority for consumers (i.e., lesser importance and lower performance rating). It is possible that consumers might have been quite discerning in the priority they assigned to specific social sustainability practices within this quasi-post-pandemic phase. Given economic considerations impacting household income, there could potentially be a shift in the emphasis consumers might place on specific sustainability practices when making purchasing decisions within the hospitality industry.
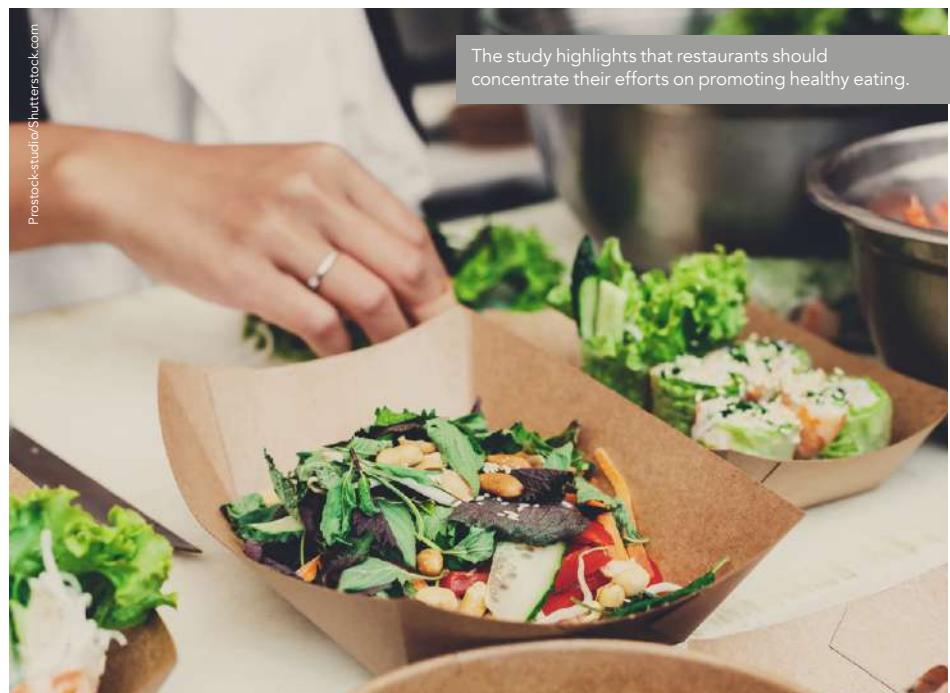
The study highlights that restaurants should concentrate their efforts on promoting healthy eating.

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RESEARCHERS
IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research evaluates consumer perceptions of restaurant sustainability behaviors in the quasi-post-pandemic context, following heightened social justice discourse emergent during the pandemic.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

What were your greatest surprises when you looked at consumers' ratings of the importance that they attached to specific sustainability practices?

❚❚ Our greatest surprise was how 'promotes healthy eating' was viewed as highly important, given that most restaurants frequented in this study were in the quick service and fast-casual industry segments. This finding reveals that consumers view the promotion of healthy eating choices as a responsibility connected to corporate social sustainability. ❚❚

Should the hospitality industry undertake ongoing research to understand shifting sustainability priorities for consumers in their purchasing decisions?

❚❚ As this study was conducted during the quasi-post-pandemic context when some furloughs and layoffs were still in effect in the U.S. restaurant industry, a longitudinal data-collection approach is planned to assess the shifting sustainability priorities of consumers while the restaurant and foodservice industry returns to normalcy. ❚❚

Dr. Cynthia Mejia

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

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TRAVEL AND LIFE – A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Fu's research illustrates the inter-connectedness of travel and life, and how the function and meaning of travel vary enormously at different life stages.

Whether we travel to discover the unknown or to simply take a break from our daily routine, it's often said that travel broadens the mind. But how exactly does travel impact life, and how does the relationship between travel and life change at different life stages? In new research, Associate Professor Xiaoxiao Fu at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and her collaborators take a developmental perspective on tourism consumption and look at how travel and life inform and shape each other, from childhood to maturity.

Childhood family holidays, honeymoons, post-retirement adventures … travel experiences are often landmark events in people's lives.

In important new research from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Associate Professor Xiaoxiao Fu and her collaborators look at how consumption of travel changes with age and how travel fulfils different functions in different life stages. Published in the prestigious journal *Tourism Management*, the study illustrates, as Dr. Fu and the research team explain, 'how travel is made sense of in the context of life, and how life is made sense of in travel.'

The background to the research is the theory of psychosocial development proposed by Erik Erikson in the 1950s. Influenced by Sigmund Freud, Erikson identified eight stages of human development from infancy to late adulthood. According to his theory, each stage of human development involves a psychological crisis and presents an individual with an existential dilemma. For example, while adolescence is a time when an individual is fundamentally concerned with establishing their identity, middle adulthood is a time when people begin to think about the next generation.

Academic literature to date has, for the most part, studied travel experiences as single, isolated incidents in people's lives. Some studies have looked at such things as the impact of gender/age/marital status on tourism, or how societal forces affect travel patterns, as well as how travel is affected by, for example, advancing age and diminishing health and/or mobility. Others have looked at the transformative nature of travel, such as traveling overseas in a post-college 'rite of passage.'

Dr. Fu and her collaborators argue that we need a 'more nuanced understanding' of the relationship between travel experience and human life. Their research suggests that people's travel experiences evolve alongside their life stages and that travel and life are interlocked and intertwine, each having a strong impact on the other. The study offers important insights into consumer behavior, and its findings have particular implications for the development and marketing of travel and tourism destinations, facilities, and products.

TIME TO TALK TRAVEL
While the design of the researchers' study follows Erikson's theory of psychosocial

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experiences in the same chronological order. Interviewees were then asked to talk about their travel experiences. This included giving details of what motivated individual trips, their destination and duration, who accompanied them, what prompted the vacations, what they meant to them, and whether the trips impacted their life.

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. They were then analyzed and coded according to Erikson's stages of development. As memories of infancy and early childhood were less reliable, the study concentrated on school age, adolescence, young adulthood, adulthood, and maturity.

TRIPS DOWN MEMORY LANE
At school age—the age at which Erikson identifies an individual's psychological crisis as industry versus inferiority—most interviewees remembered their travel experience as family holidays which created happy memories of being involved in family life. Some reported that financial constraints limited travel to local trips or visiting friends and relatives. The overall experience was associated with gaining competence and agency: for example, one interviewee described the satisfaction of having traveled with her sister, unaccompanied by parents, to stay with their grandmother.

Interviewees reported adolescence as the time they began to take trips without their family, either independently or with friends, reinforcing Erikson's theory that the dilemma at this life stage is the development of self-identity versus role confusion. Travel became associated with learning and the exploration of new places and situations, as well as awareness of their own individuality. One participant, for example, described the transformative experience of a fine arts summer camp where, for the first time, she met people who shared her passion for music.

According to Erikson, young adulthood presents the challenge of balancing intimacy with isolation, and forming romantic relationships. Participants reported this as an important time of their lives and one in which travel featured prominently, for example relocating for work or traveling abroad for the first time and feeling connected to the wider world. But while one interviewee described

development, its methodology is based on the sociological theory of social constructionism. Popularized in the 1960s by sociologists such as Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, strong constructivism holds that an individual constructs meaning through social interaction, while weak constructivism assumes that individuals construct meaning according to objective facts. As the researchers explain, this study is informed by weak constructivism according to which 'the facts of the physical world are acknowledged as objective, while the facts of social reality are deemed to be subjectively constructed.'

Taking a longitudinal, biographical approach, participants were asked to look back over their life experience of

travel and attribute meaning to their travel consumption at different stages of their lives. In-depth interviews were conducted with 25 participants living in a large metropolitan area in the south-east United States. Interviewees were selected for balance in terms of gender, race, and marital and socio-economic status. The selected age range was people born between 1950 and 1975 to ensure that participants had significant life experience. To minimize the risk of cultural background influencing travel behavior, interviewees were all resident in the United States.

Data were collected by asking participants to draw a timeline of their life history, including important life events such as graduation, marriage, and retirement. They were asked to draw a second line recording their travel

THE RESEARCH ILLUSTRATES HOW TRAVEL IS MADE SENSE OF IN THE CONTEXT OF LIFE AND HOW LIFE IS MADE SENSE OF IN TRAVEL.

Exactly how does travel impact life, and how does the relationship between travel and life change at different life stages?

a trip with a partner as a 'symbol of love and union' and another talked about travel as facilitating intimacy, one participant said that travel highlighted differences between him and his partner in terms of their outlooks on finances.

Interviewees' comments about travel experiences in adulthood showed awareness of their responsibility to the next generation—what Erikson called the dilemma of generativity versus stagnation. Children and grandchildren featured prominently in participants' stories, with one speaking about traveling with his children to visit 'meaningful places' linked to his family history. Relationship breakdown led to other

> ## THE TEAM'S RESEARCH ILLUSTRATES THE INTER-CONNECTEDNESS OF TRAVEL AND LIFE AND HOW THE FUNCTION AND MEANING OF TRAVEL VARY ENORMOUSLY AT DIFFERENT AGES.

interviewees talking about traveling to try to rekindle their marriage or causing them to rethink what they wanted from life.
In line with Erikson's view that maturity presents people with the psychological crisis

of ego integrity versus despair, participants' travel experiences at this life stage were associated with reflections on their own life, with its limitations and losses. Some spoke about taking adventurous trips 'to feel young again', and one interviewee described taking a cruise in tribute to his late son in order to help him cope with 'the dead end' of his own life. Another interviewee said that maturity was the time she could 'finally travel', which economic hardship had prevented in her earlier life.

TOURISM PROVIDERS: TAKING LIFE STAGES INTO ACCOUNT
By taking a developmental perspective and looking at travel consumption in the context of consumers' life stages, the team's research illustrates the inter-connectedness of travel and life, and how the function and meaning of travel vary enormously at different life stages. The study has important implications for the

development and marketing of travel and tourism destinations, facilities, and products.

Providing insights into what participants found meaningful about travel at different times should enable tourism providers to develop products and experiences that are tailored towards each age group's desires and potential life dilemmas. The research is equally helpful for marketing professionals, who could refine messages for existing products, highlighting benefits to attract consumers at specific life stages.

At the level of wider society, participants' comments about the psychological impact of not being able to travel due to economic hardship, and of traveling after losing loved ones in later life, support arguments that leisure travel could be regarded as a public health resource.

Dr. Fu and her collaborators conclude: 'This study provides viable suggestions for the tourism industry. The navigation of life stages makes it necessary to design tourism experiences to help resolve stage-specific life dilemmas. The industry should recognize these patterns and changes at various life stages as opportunities for offering resonating experiences, and thus contributing to tourists' lives beyond a specific trip.'

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research seeks to understand how travel and life inform and shape each other during the course of an individual's life.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

After considering research participants' responses, what in your opinion is the most significant gap in the travel experience market for any one life stage?

❞ In our research, we discovered the most significant gaps in travel for almost all life stages. It is important to understand the significant role of tourism at each stage of a person's life. However, tourism experiences usually lack the strategies and skills to address stage-specific life dilemmas, which would make businesses and destinations more able to provide offerings for addressing travelers' life dilemmas. A few examples can be illustrated. First, very few tourism experience managers and marketers show concern in helping younger tourists address the issues of personal boundaries and independence, which are the major benefits of travel during adolescence. Second, marriage and divorce not only influence travel patterns, but also contribute to different life situations through touristic experiences, as independence changes to inter-dependence, and vice-versa. The industry so far has not recognized these patterns as opportunities to offer experiences that connect and contribute to tourists' lives beyond a specific trip. Last but not least, generativity—a sense of being at peace with one's accomplishments—represents the major theme of the maturity stage. However, marketers are not currently utilizing related feelings (e.g., using tourism/hospitality experience as a space to reflect on one's life or express one's creativity) for marketing communication. Marketing communication should use the themes more effectively, and as such, build deeper connections with customers. ❞

Dr. Xiaoxiao Fu

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

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Fostering a culture of hospitality in the auto industry

An interview with Robert Valle, CIO of Mazda North American Operations, by Manuel Rivera, Ph.D.

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Robert Valle has been the CIO of Mazda North American Operations since 2017. In an interview with Dr. Manuel Rivera, Rob tells us about the benefits of adopting a hospitality culture in the auto industry, and how research into this field can have a transformative impact on business.

HOW CAN PRACTICING A HOSPITALITY ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN NON-HOSPITALITY ORGANIZATIONS RESULT IN HIGHER CUSTOMER SATISFACTION, LOYALTY, AND IMPROVED OUTCOMES?

I believe real success in business can only come when we listen to and serve our customers, and it applies to any industry. Every interaction with our customers is important, and we need to be careful not to operate in silos. I can't stress this point enough: too many companies operate in silos when interacting with their customers. Eliminating or preventing siloed operations is a critical first step. Next, we must foster a hospitality culture by providing our employees the proper data and tools. We must collect/refine customer data and then leverage that data across the business to drive improved interactions across all touch points. For Mazda, this includes the sale of a vehicle at a dealership or online, providing service for that vehicle, addressing concerns via our Customer Experience Center, driving safety campaigns, providing useful information via our mobile app and managing how our customers interact with us on our website. Customers want to be recognized and appreciated—and they certainly don't want to continuously re-establish a relationship with the same company. Technology helps us do this with systems such as a CRM (Customer Relationship Management)—but their value isn't fully realized without supporting processes. In summary, you need a culture, processes, and data/tools that work synergistically. Focus those three elements on your customer (as taught by hospitality) and you will increase your company's success through loyalty and growth.

WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL BENEFITS FROM ADOPTING A HOSPITALITY CULTURE IN YOUR INDUSTRY?

Benefits start with taking better care of the customers we've already gained. Adopting a hospitality culture will lead to a rise in customer loyalty and, of course, that will lead to greater business success. At Mazda, we often use the Japanese term 'omotenashi' to describe our goal to truly serve our customers in a way that extends beyond a transaction. Our goal is to generate a positive emotional response—as a company we strive to make a customer feel connected to, appreciated, inspired by, and trusting of Mazda. This is consistent with a hospitality culture.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE ROLE OF HOSPITALITY RESEARCH IN TRANSFORMING OTHER

BUSINESS SETTINGS SUCH AS THE AUTO INDUSTRY?

At Mazda, we are heavily focused on business process reengineering. Our goals include the common reengineering aspirations of driving efficiencies and eliminating waste, but also on using reengineering to apply our strategy of improving every customer touchpoint and personalizing the experience. Many lessons here come from our research into and understanding of hospitality. We are guided by a comprehensive 'customer journey map' which identifies every possible customer interaction. Technology plays a large role in supporting this goal. CRM tools have been with us for many years and are as important as ever. But we must ensure our CRM is properly maintained, and that it is connected and leveraged across company processes. CDPs (Customer Data Platforms) continue to be popular in the world of marketing

At Mazda, we often use the Japanese term 'omotenashi' to describe our goal to truly serve our customers in a way that extends beyond a transaction.

The Huntsville manufacturing site (a joint venture between Mazda and Toyota) during construction.
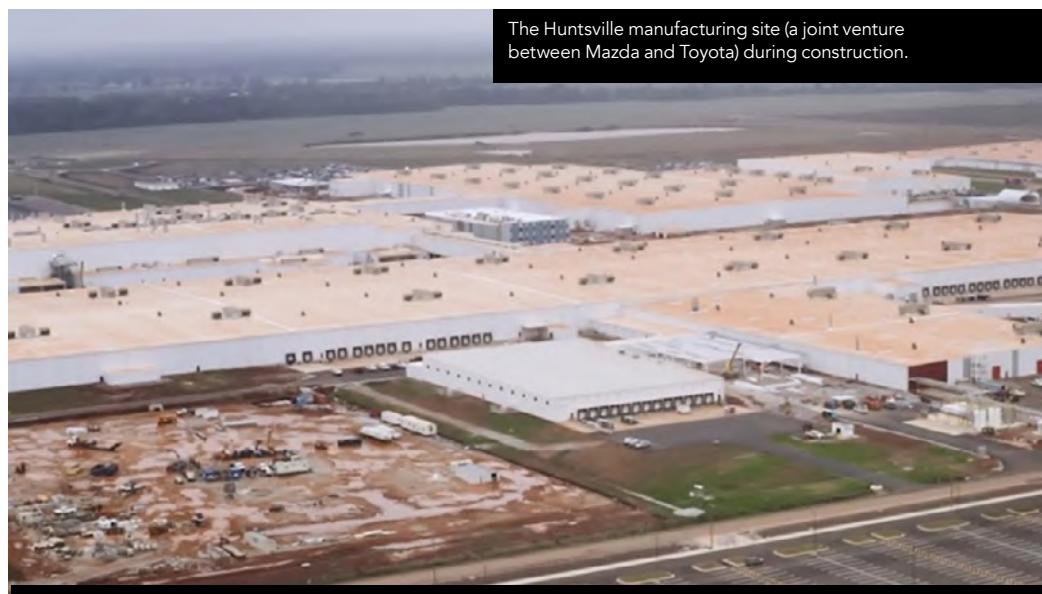
The off-road capable Mazda CX-50, built in Huntsville.

We've already touched on the importance of the CRM and how a CDP can improve marketing, though I must stress, they must be supported by proper data governance. But now consider how you are leveraging these tools, along with additional data stored in data warehouses, data lakes, etc. We need to work across our employees and processes to make this data accessible and meaningful. And with employee turnover, we need tools that are intuitive. A key lesson learned from our engagement with the Rosen College was to reduce our dependency on training, and instead build that training into our technology. Let the technology suggest the customer action based on the wealth of data that's been captured. That data goes far beyond any single employee and can sometimes represent decades of experience with a particular customer. An employee can't quickly absorb and apply that information to maximize a customer experience without the help of technology. I would also say that for our employees, being part of an organization that truly values and serves its customers is very rewarding.

technology, and help us drive more meaningful, personalized messages. Personalizing the experience is key and supporting such an interaction in a hospitality culture is made possible by applying data and technology. Speaking of personalization, it's also important to implement a strong DAM (Digital Asset Manager). When assets are properly tagged, they can feed into a personalization communications process. Across these tools are our processes, and hospitality research has helped us refine those processes to maximize the customer experience.

EXAMPLE: PERSONALIZED MESSAGING AROUND THE MAZDA CX-50 MERIDIAN EDITION

Plan to launch the CX-50 with special Meridian outdoor trim →

Design a campaign which targets outdoor enthusiasts →

Identify ideal customers based on their interests, etc. using CDP →

Select assets from the DAM whose tags map to interests →

Send personalized messages via marketing automation

The progression from planning a new product launch through the delivery of personalized messages—made possible by data and technology.

Find the best media to match individual customers (for example, a winter image for a skier, a forest image with trailer for a camper, rocky terrain for a mountain climber, etc.)

Send a personalized message with images selected for them via the customer's preferred channel

A key lesson learned from our engagement with the Rosen College was to reduce our dependency on training, and instead build that training into our technology.

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We knew Rosen College was a leader in hospitality, and we looked to their experts to help us reassess how we could better leverage our data.

Interview conducted by **Dr. Manuel Rivera,** Assistant Dean; Associate Professor, Rosen College of Hospitality Management; Editor in Chief *International Journal of Hospitality Management.*

HOW CAN A CULTURE OF HOSPITALITY EXPAND TO OTHER INDUSTRIES TO SPIRIT VERY POSITIVE OUTCOMES?

The principles I discussed above and the ways we are applying technology are pretty much universal. Consider the platforms I mentioned above—CRM, CDP, and DAM—they apply to pretty much any industry. It's fine to collect and refine customer data, but the hospitality industry teaches us how to better leverage that data to improve customer service, create an emotional connection, and ultimately grow brand loyalty. Also, let's get away from Mazda's external customers and talk about my role as a CIO and my own internal customers. The same principles apply here too. I strive to really understand the teams I support—both the people and their processes—and I treat them as my customers. I hope to make every interaction positive and consider myself successful only if I can make them successful. The principles of hospitality work here too, and the adoption of these principles leads to better customer interactions and ultimately, to improved loyalty and business growth.

HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE YOUR COLLABORATION WITH THE ROSEN COLLEGE?

In one word—inspiring! Our goal was to improve our customer interactions, and we were sure that better leveraging our wealth of customer data through technology across our employees was a key component. We considered the hospitality industry and the classic example of a hotel guest being greeted upon check-in and how their loyalty is recognized. This doesn't happen because the individual receptionist knows that particular customer, but because the interaction is supported by data, technology, and a process geared to drive a positive interaction. We knew that Rosen College was a leader in hospitality, and we looked to their experts to help us reassess how we could better leverage our data. We literally gained insights in our first conversation with Rosen. It only got better when we were introduced to a team of experts that included deep experience not only in hospitality, but in data and analytics as well. The end result of our project was a professional, thoughtful, and impactful study

that is being actively used to guide further development. Candidly, I serve as a reference for very few companies or institutions—UCF Rosen is one of those few.

EXPLORING RESIDENT EMPOWERMENT WITHIN TOURISM

Despite the key role empowerment plays, it remains largely unexplored within the tourism sector.

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Despite the importance of involving residents in local tourism, few research studies have investigated the concept of empowerment. A novel study conducted by UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management researchers Dr. Kayode D. Aleshinloye and Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci and their collaborators explores the drivers of empowerment within tourism and, in turn, the factors that empowerment influences. Their research highlights the potential benefits for residents, such as improved quality of life and attachment to their surroundings, and has important practical implications for tourism planners and policymakers.

Tourism has a profound impact on residents within local communities. Prior research highlights the benefits of residents being able to engage with tourism. A key aspect of this positive involvement is empowerment, whereby local communities have the authority to gather resources, make decisions, and act on issues they define as important. Resident empowerment has become an integral element of sustainable tourism, following its success within the sectors of political science, education, health, and general equality. Despite the key role empowerment plays, it remains largely unexplored within the tourism sector. Studies tend to focus on the economic benefits experienced by residents, such as greater employment opportunities and wealth retention within the community. Aside from financial benefits, research has revealed that empowerment and attachment are the two main constructs that can help explain residents' attitudes towards tourism. Dr. Kayode D. Aleshinloye and Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and their collaborators have undertaken research to bridge the knowledge gap in empowerment within tourism, exploring what drives this concept and how it benefits residents. Their study focuses on assessing how factors such as involvement and economic benefit may help to foster empowerment. They believe that having a better understanding of this concept can enable practitioners to focus on increasing

Tourism has a profound impact upon residents within local communities.

THE RESEARCH IS NOVEL IN ITS APPROACH, ADDRESSING BOTH THE DRIVERS AND OUTCOMES OF RESIDENTS' EMPOWERMENT IN RELATION TO TOURISM.

empowerment among residents. The research also highlights the potential benefits that empowerment may bring to residents, such as strengthening their attachment to the local area and improving quality of life.

FACTORS INFLUENCING EMPOWERMENT
Within the tourism literature the importance of involving residents as stakeholders is well documented. These individuals have vital opinions about the impact of tourism within their community, making it imperative they have a voice that is listened to. Involving residents in a meaningful way helps to foster trust with the tourism industry. This is especially important when issues arise, and support is needed from the local community. If practitioners do not take the time to involve residents, feelings of exclusion may develop, as well as a lack of support which may prevent tourism from advancing. Research in rural Texas revealed that greater local knowledge about tourism had a positive impact upon residents' perceptions around empowerment. Based on the literature, the researchers hypothesized that the important first step towards empowerment is ensuring that residents have knowledge relating to tourism which would have a positive

impact on their psychological, social, and political empowerment.

BENEFITS OF EMPOWERMENT
The research team were particularly keen to understand how increasing residents' empowerment may generate positive outcomes beyond tourism. A key benefit highlighted within the literature is place attachment which relates to residents developing a strong bond with their surroundings. Dependence attachment can also occur when residents feel their local area enables them to undertake activities which meet their life goals. There are opposing

views of the relational influence between empowerment and attachment. One view is that residents who are more attached to their local community have an increased sense of empowerment. However, the researchers believe there is stronger evidence to suggest that empowerment is a precursor to influencing residents' attachment. Therefore, their research focuses on exploring whether residents who felt more empowered were also more likely to develop a sense of attachment. Aleshinloye and Tasci also investigated if residents' quality of life improved when empowerment was present. Literature around this can be contentious: quality of life is subjective and therefore difficult to measure. Despite few studies in this area the researchers felt it was logical to expect that residents' empowerment would positively impact upon their quality of life, which in turn would increase their place and dependence attachments.

MEASURING ATTITUDES OF ORLANDO RESIDENTS
The researchers chose to conduct their research within the top U.S. tourist destination of Orlando, Florida. In 2019, VisitOrlando stated that a staggering 68.55 million domestic and 6.48 million international visitors were attracted to the region. Despite visitor spending reaching $45 billion, 19% of Orlando residents live in poverty. This is greater than the average percentage of people living in poverty within Florida state. The researchers felt this juxtaposition between tourism wealth and resident poverty necessitated the need to further investigate the attitudes of these residents. Using census data, the researchers randomly selected a number of households within the region to take part in the research. Four hundred and twenty-five residents completed a pen-and-paper questionnaire asking about their involvement and attitudes
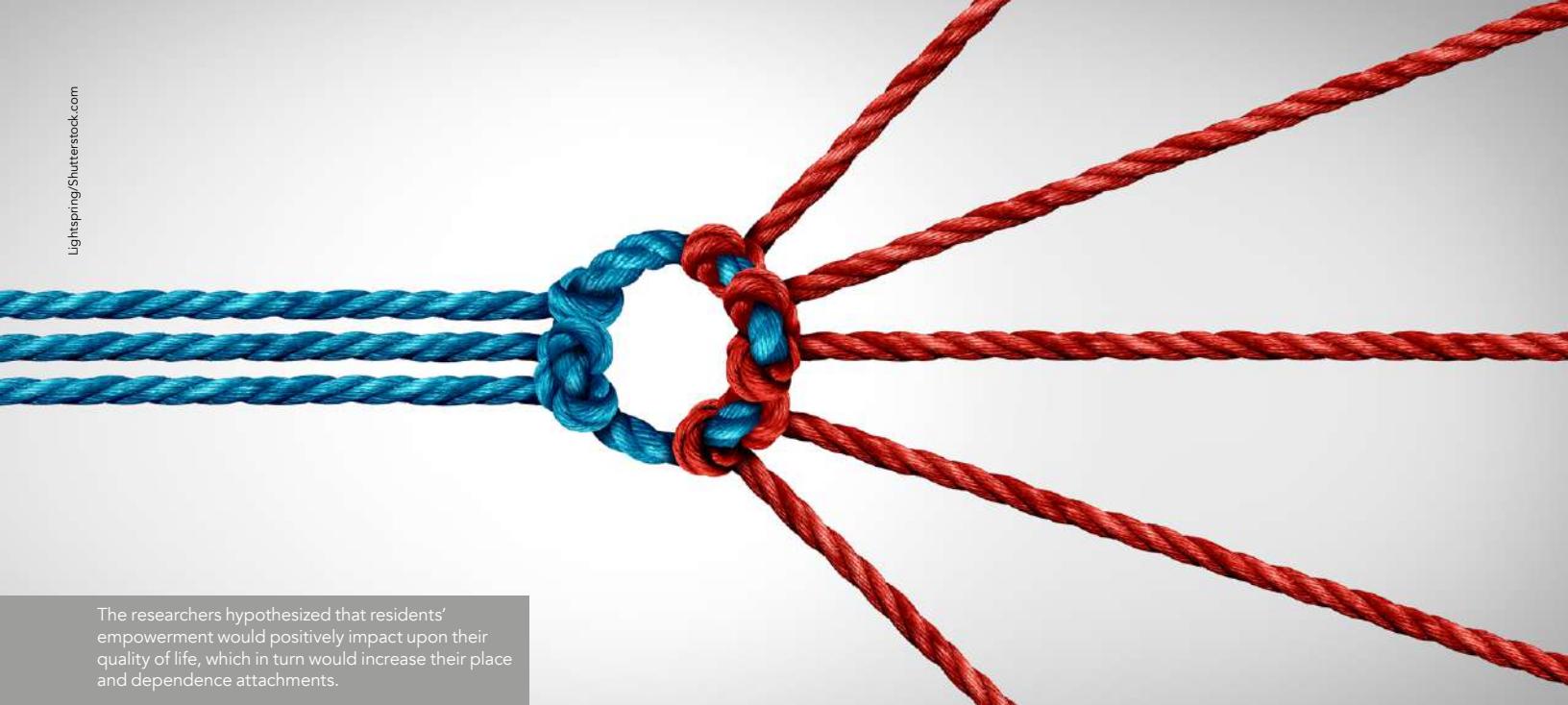
The researchers hypothesized that residents' empowerment would positively impact upon their quality of life, which in turn would increase their place and dependence attachments.

towards tourism. Their responses were analysed to assess residents' psychological, social, and political empowerment in relation to tourism, quality of life and attachment.

KEY STUDY FINDINGS

Results from the study revealed that Orlando residents perceive themselves as having low involvement in local tourism and receive little economic benefit from it. Interestingly, they demonstrated lower social and political empowerment than psychological empowerment. The research team believe this discrepancy could be due to residents' lack of knowledge in relation to tourism within their local area. Prior research has shown that having the correct information and involvement can lead to greater support from residents, as well as giving rise to entrepreneurial attitudes. The researchers did acknowledge that it was difficult to determine whether this shortage of knowledge was due to lack of interest or low engagement from those in positions of power. Interestingly, the study revealed that residents' quality of life was high, despite their lack of engagement

with tourism. Aleshinloye and Tasci believe that although residents may not be playing an active role within the tourism sector it may be indirectly influencing their quality of life.

A key element within the research was investigating the impact economic benefits have upon empowerment. Often these positive financial influences may be indirect, such as increased employment opportunities or additional funds for local governments. Interestingly, the research found that economic benefits may have a greater impact on residents' attachment to the area, compared to their overall quality of life. Despite its impact on place attachment, the study found that residents' involvement with local tourism had a much greater impact than economic benefits upon residents' psychological, social, and political empowerment.

In terms of attachment, the research demonstrated that psychological empowerment had the most significant impact on place attachment and identity.

The study highlights how important it is to generate this type of attachment, as it can change the appearance and meaning of tourist destinations, benefiting both residents and tourists. Findings also revealed that place-dependence could be predicted by all three types of empowerment. This indicates that residents who identify with an area and feel it services their personal goals are much more likely to support local tourism. Although the research revealed empowerment is a stronger predictor of attachment than quality of life, these findings provide compelling evidence for the role of place attachment when measuring residents' attitudes.

IMPLICATIONS FOR TOURISM

Aleshinloye, Tasci, and their collaborators believe their findings will be of interest to a range of industry professionals including tourism practitioners and scholars. Their study is novel in its approach and addresses both the drivers and outcomes of residents' empowerment in relation to tourism. It bridges an important gap in knowledge surrounding the concept of empowerment within tourism. The study reinforces the importance of recognising residents' needs as well as encouraging their involvement as vital stakeholders. The researchers feel it is particularly important that destination marketers launch campaigns that communicate how feelings of empowerment through tourism can have a positive impact on the lives of residents, which will undoubtedly improve the experience of tourists in these regions.

THE STUDY REINFORCES THE IMPORTANCE OF RECOGNISING RESIDENTS' NEEDS AS WELL AS ENCOURAGING THEIR INVOLVEMENT AS VITAL STAKEHOLDERS.

RESEARCHERS
IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Kayode D. Aleshinloye and Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci investigate the concept of resident empowerment within tourism.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Based on your research findings, what are the most effective actions tourism professionals can take to improve empowerment among residents?

❝ Tourism policymakers and destination marketers should engage with residents by getting them involved in decision-making on tourism matters since they live with both the positive and negative impacts. The resident involvement in tourism issues in their locality is a form of empowerment and the more they feel involved, the more they are empowered on matters affecting their quality of life. ❞

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Dr. Kayode D. Aleshinloye

Dr. Kayode D. Aleshinloye is an assistant professor of tourism and event management at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. He received his doctoral degree in recreation, park, & tourism sciences at Texas A&M University in 2015 and his master's degree in hospitality and tourism management at Eastern Mediterranean University, Cyprus, in 2009. His research interests include cultural and event management, sustainable tourism and pro-poor-tourism, residents and tourist interactions, and social and economic tourism impact studies. His work has appeared in top tourism journals and he has presented at numerous national and international conferences. His is presently an associate editor for *Event Management* journal.

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MEASURING TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCES IN TOURISM

What makes a tourist's experience transformational? It's an important question given the growth of the types of tourism that seek to secure meaningful experiences. For decades, researchers have offered different definitions to guide practitioners. Drs. Asli Tasci and Maksim Godovykh of the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management have gone a step further and developed an empirical model for measuring whether experiences are transformational. The research has produced more than a few surprises.

By its very definition, tourism requires something of an extraordinary experience—an element of travel away from home for recreation, relaxation, pleasure, or novel exploits for the purposes of learning. However, some tourist experiences may be more 'extraordinary' than others; the term 'transformative' comes to mind. It's an intoxicating term and especially *en vogue* in marketing destinations within specific growing forms of tourism, such as sustainable, eco- and volunteer tourism. However, 'transformation' in tourism is not a new concept—it has been in academic rhetoric for about twenty years. With a shifting focus towards the wellness of individuals and society in tourism, researchers have struggled to define the term 'transformative tourism experience.' Undaunted, two researchers have gone one step further and measured it. Developing such a quantitative scale of transformation is not only a significant advance in transformational theory but also has significant value for practitioners with an eye on providing something more than an extraordinary tourism experience.

At the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Dr. Asli Tasci and Dr. Maksim Godovykh are particularly interested in tourism in multicultural settings and its impact on those settings. As such, they are drawn to the broad concept of transformative experiences in tourism that can profoundly affect individuals and the communities they visit. The Rosen researchers are well acquainted with the diversity of qualitative opinion about transformative experiences within academic literature, on its definition and what triggers it, and therefore the challenges of providing an authoritative quantitative method of evaluating it. Nevertheless, they embarked on a three-part study that generated significant data and provided a seismic shift in our understanding of what makes a tourism experience truly 'transformative.'

THE CHALLENGE OF QUANTIFICATION

Before this Rosen study, it was not fully understood what makes tourism a 'transformational' experience. The term conjures up ideas of wellbeing, happiness, and deep personal reflection leading to a significant change in outlook—imagine a young backpacker from Brooklyn spending two weeks in an ashram in India. But the term is far broader than that. It invokes considerations of personal enrichment; physical, psychological, and spiritual transformations; changes in identity and character; critical awareness of self and condition; and enrichment that is more desirable and of more lasting value than the experience itself. Importantly, because tourism requires a physical departure from the customary, and exposure to novel surroundings, it is well-qualified to trigger
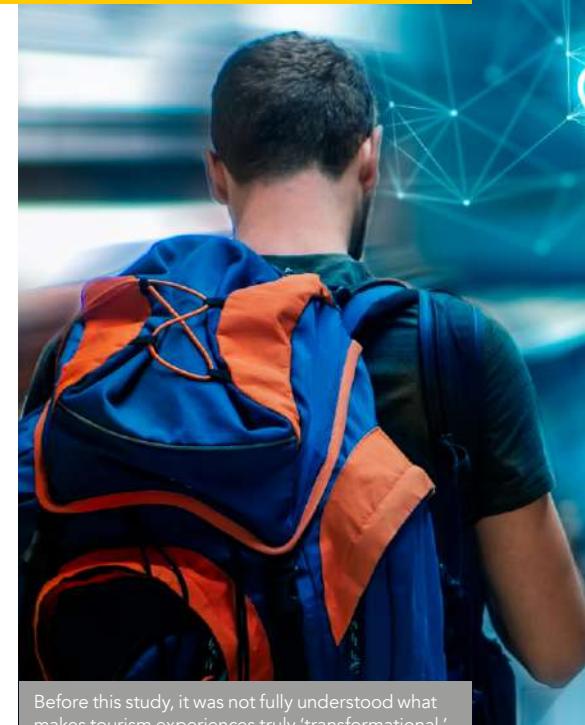
Before this study, it was not fully understood what makes tourism experiences truly 'transformational.'

significant experiences. The challenge has always been to quantify those experiences.

The Rosen researchers knew that the first step to measuring transformation was a qualitative study of its definition. To do this, they turned to current literature and performed a comprehensive and critical review; uncovering not only the various meanings of transformation but also what it comprised, its dimensions, and what triggers it. They also interviewed experienced travelers to get their interpretations. A vital clarification for quantifying transformation emerged: experiences didn't need to be positive to be considered transformational, although the essence of self-change elicited by the experience was invariably positive.

While there was diversity in what the researchers uncovered, concepts around

The results showed that transformative trip experiences could be either positive or negative.


transformation broadly fitted a tri-component model that divides consumer attitudes into three components: cognitive, affective (or emotional), and conative (or behavioral). From this, the researchers collated what they considered to be a comprehensive definition of transformation: 'a process of change in an individual's self (self-confidence, personality, outlook on life and others) and actions (conation), triggered by cognitive and affective stimulation from a significant experience. Cognition being opinions, thoughts, and beliefs on self and the environment, affect being emotional reactions to self and the environment, and conation being behavioral intentions about self and the environment.' They also arrived at a list of 101 unique terms relevant to transformative trip experiences, cognitive and affective stimulations, and self-change and behavioral change. The next step was to quantify and validate their concept.

> IN ESSENCE, THEY HAD A DETAILED DATA SET THAT SHOWED A BIGGER PICTURE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL EXPERIENCES, AND IT CAME WITH A FEW SURPRISES.

THE DIMENSIONS OF TRANSFORMATION
Using an online survey of 328 experienced travelers based in the U.S. and employing principal component analysis to summarise information from the data, the Rosen researchers reduced the list to 70 key items of the most meaningful through the lenses of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral stimulation. The results showed that the transformative trip experiences could indeed be either positive—such as uniting with nature or engaging in self-improvement activities—or negative—such as facing personal problems or witnessing tragedies (for example visiting a Holocaust museum). The cognitive components of the experiences were broadly affirming—such as sensations of freedom,

The conceptual model of the study.

COGNITIVE STIMULATION

TRANSFORMATIVE TRIP EXPERIENCE

SELF-CHANGE

BEHAVIORAL (CONATIVE) CHANGE

AFFECTIVE STIMULATION

THE ALTERNATIVE MODEL TESTED THIS ADDITIONAL RELATIONSHIP
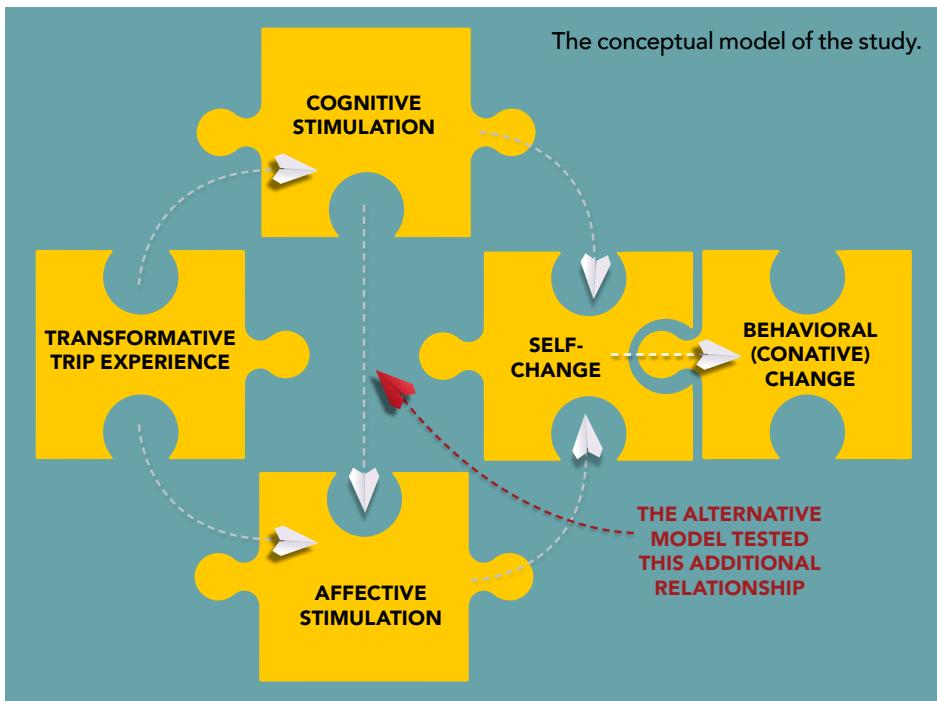
confidence, and inspiration—or challenging—usually associated with confusion, uncertainty, or disorientation. Cognitive stimulation elements also included an opening to others, such as compassion and sympathy.

In terms of emotional stimulation within the respondents, the researchers identified two broad dimensions: euphoria (such as happiness, joy and love) and distress (such as guilt, anger and fear). There were four dimensions to self-change, which they called propelled inner power, personality change, change in outlook on life, and change in outlook on others. Finally, the study identified three dimensions to behavioral change: those conducive to happiness; those associated with a regression to basics, such as retiring and socializing less; and those related to gregarious tendencies, such as socializing more and trying new hobbies.

From their study, the Rosen researchers not only had a clearer picture of transformational experiences in tourism and how to break them down into various categories but also how they could be ranked. Using another survey, they conducted a third study with 552 respondents—again, all people based in the U.S. who had traveled before—asking how they ranked each dimension variable within a transformative experience. By employing partial least squares-structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM), the researchers could

examine the relationships across multiple variables, such as what positive events were broadly affirming (cognitive) and led to increased gregarious tendencies. In essence, they had a detailed data set that showed a bigger picture of transformational experiences, and it came with a few surprises.

A FEW SURPRISES

Among the more interesting insights is that transformational experiences are not necessarily more likely among first-time

travelers who are a little overwhelmed by their circumstances. In fact, a significant number of their respondents were seasoned travelers, suggesting the cumulative impact of repeated traveling culminating in a transformational experience. There is not necessarily a single momentous event. Another thing that the research team learned that came as something of a surprise is that an experience doesn't necessarily need to be foreign or exotic to be transformational—domestic trips within the U.S. can also deliver transformational

experiences. Also, not everyone expects to be—or wants to be—'transformed' when they go on holiday.

Perhaps the biggest challenge to preconceptions the tourism industry may have about such experiences is that they are not destination or purpose-specific—people don't need to go to a particular place with the objective of self-improvement or spiritual transformation to have a transformational experience; it can happen anywhere, at any time.

This doesn't necessarily mean that destination-marketing-organizations hoping to offer transformational tourism experiences should throw their arms up in despair. This Rosen research has produced a wealth of information that can help guide organizations toward designing experiences known to trigger the most significant cognitive, emotional, and behavioral shifts in people. That doesn't have to be alone at the top of a mountain; it could be in a thronging nightclub or a rural village reaching out to help someone in need. Knowing that such experiences aren't limited to specific destinations or conditions should be seen as an opportunity. Transformational experiences are among the most memorable for tourists, and an industry that strives to create memorable experiences should put more effort into how to make them transformational.

KNOWING THAT SUCH EXPERIENCES AREN'T LIMITED TO SPECIFIC DESTINATIONS OR CONDITIONS SHOULD BE SEEN AS AN OPPORTUNITY.

RESEARCHERS
IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study aimed to develop a scale of transformation that can be used in future studies to advance transformation theory and as a managerial tool for practitioners.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Your research has opened up our understanding of transformative experiences in tourism; how would you like to see other researchers contribute to it?

❚❚ Transformation is a long-term process that might lead to positive changes in people's feelings, thoughts, attitudes, and behavior. Therefore, we hope that other researchers will be able to conduct longitudinal studies to help us understand the future dynamics of tourists' transformation over time after transformative travel experiences. ❚❚

TIME FOR TRANSFORMATION

Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci

Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci is a professor in the field of tourism and hospitality marketing at Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. Her research interests are in the main area of tourism and hospitality marketing, specifically consumer behavior, image and branding, and tourism and culture.

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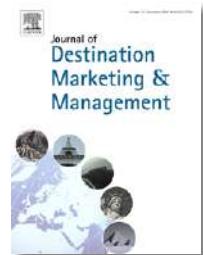
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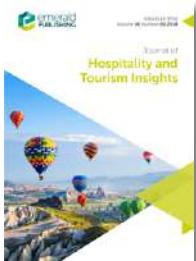
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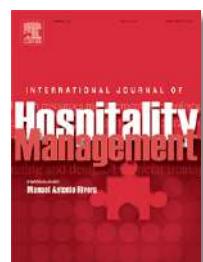
DICK POPE SR. INSTITUTE FOR TOURISM STUDIES

The Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies is based at 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.

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IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TOURISM
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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.

Thanks to increasing life expectancy, the senior living industry is big business and growing fast.

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RESIDENT SATISFACTION IN CONTINUING CARE RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES

The senior living industry is big business and growing fast, thanks to increasing life expectancy. According to the U.S. Census, there were 53 million Americans aged over 65 in 2019. That figure is set to rise by 55% to 82 million—one in five of the population—by 2050. More and more seniors are already attracted to continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs). But what impacts resident satisfaction in this increasingly competitive market? New research led by Dr. Suja Chaulagain and Dr. Abraham Pizam at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management finds that above all, it's the social environment.

Feeling at home. It's what every senior hopes for when moving into residential care. Seniors have traditionally had to choose between an age-restricted community, independent living facility, assisted living scheme, or a nursing home. However, a new model of residential care provides elements of all—the continuing care retirement community (CCRC).

CCRCs allow residents to stay in one place and receive different levels of support and care over time. Seniors can start by living independently and move to an assisted living or nursing care plan later, according to their developing needs. Part of the appeal of CCRCs is their focus on lifestyle, with many offering services more commonly associated with luxury hotels. With fitness suites, swimming pools, different dining options, and beauty salons, as well as laundry, medical, and personal care services, CCRCs have developed as a hybrid of hospitality and healthcare.

It should therefore come as no surprise that leading hotel chains like Marriott International

More and more seniors are attracted to continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs).

What impacts resident satisfaction in the CCRC market?

have stepped into the market, not least as that market is shaping its offer to attract the baby-boomer generation now coming of senior age. With different expectations from their parents, baby-boomers are more affluent, better educated, and fitter, as well as more discerning and demanding. Many are looking for exactly the kind of package that CCRCs provide.

Newly published research into CCRCs from researchers at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management is therefore timely. Exploring resident satisfaction, the study is the first of its kind and was led by Dr. Suja Chaulagain and Dr. Abraham Pizam. The research looks at the factors that impact resident satisfaction and quantifies their relative levels of importance. In addition, it explores whether resident satisfaction leads retirees to make word-of-mouth recommendations—the most valuable form of marketing—and whether resident satisfaction affect residents' overall satisfaction with life.

WHAT MATTERS
The research team began by reviewing the academic literature and holding informal discussions with CCRC residents and senior living experts to identify what affects resident satisfaction.

They found ten categories of CCRC attributes that matter. These comprised facility-based factors such as management and staff, rooms, food and beverage services, location and design, as well as cost. Other categories included the availability of activities, sociopsychological factors such as opportunities to socialize, spiritual environment, for example whether religious activities were arranged, and the medical services offered.

The research findings were based on a 2021 survey involving 332 CCRC residents in the

U.S. aged 65 and over. Participants were evenly split across gender and had varying levels of educational achievement. Their income ranged from less than $15,000 a year to more than $251,000, with the largest group—22%—earning between $50,000 and $75,000. Almost half of the interviewees were married, and 71% were white. Additionally, around half lived independently within their CCRC, 46% had lived there for a year or less, 33% for between one and five years, and 20% for more than five years.

Residents were asked to complete a questionnaire and give satisfaction ratings for statements about their CCRC's facility-based attributes on a seven-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. In addition, they were asked to give ratings of 'yes', 'no', or 'unsure' for whether they would recommend their CCRC by word-of-mouth, and for whether satisfaction with their CCRC affected their overall satisfaction with life.

The research team analyzed the questionnaire data using a rigorous statistical technique based on exploratory factor analysis (EFA), confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and structural equation modeling (SEM). This allowed them to investigate the factors that impact resident satisfaction and the

relationship between them, and to quantify their relative levels of importance.

WHAT MATTERS MOST
The results confirmed that resident satisfaction was affected by all categories of CCRC attributes tested. Sociopsychological factors had the greatest influence, followed by cost, medical services, and the availability of activities.

Dr. Chaulagain, Dr. Pizam and their colleague argue that the high value placed on social environment suggests that, above all, residents appreciate the sense of belonging to a community and opportunities to socialize. This brings home the striking

> *SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITIES HAVE PROGRESSIVELY SHIFTED FROM PROVIDING HEALTH-CARE SERVICES TO PROVIDING HEAVILY RESIDENT CENTERED SERVICES.*

alternative to the potential loneliness of ageing alone in their own homes.

The high rating for cost and value was more surprising. CCRC fees are significant, due to the cost of providing high-end services, but this was not a barrier to resident satisfaction. The study finds that 'the high investment may significantly increase residents' value expectations for the service they receive from CCRCs.'

The importance of medical services for resident satisfaction was expected to be high, as the need for medical care is a major reason for seniors to move into CCRCs. Given that residents valued the social environment most of all, the high value placed on recreational activities could also be anticipated. Both of these suppositions were borne out in the study's results.

The next most important factors affecting resident satisfaction were facility-based attributes associated with residents' physical environment. In priority order these were: food and beverage services, design, rooms, management and staff, and location.

As the research team explain, these attributes have a direct impact on residents' daily lives. Healthy and nutritious food is especially
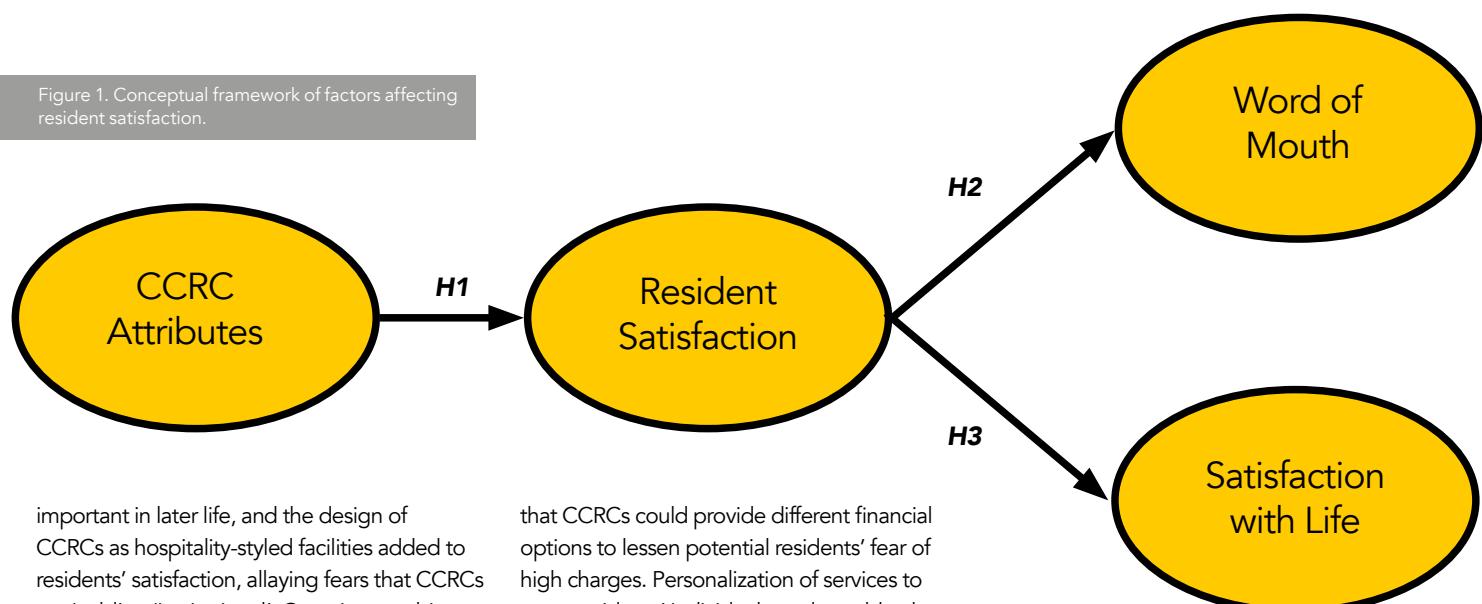
important in later life, and the design of CCRCs as hospitality-styled facilities added to residents' satisfaction, allaying fears that CCRCs are 'cold' or 'institutional'. Questions probing the importance of management and staff included service-delivery-constructs, and the results confirmed residents' appreciation of the customer-service-skills associated with high-end hospitality venues. Location also mattered, for example, being in a 'good neighborhood' and close to leisure facilities.

Spiritual environment positively impacted resident satisfaction but was the least important attribute.

The findings confirmed that resident satisfaction does lead to word-of-mouth recommendation and that it positively affects overall satisfaction with life (Figure 1).

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CCRC OWNERS AND OPERATORS
The research has important implications for CCRC owners, not least in the importance of

HIGH INVESTMENT MAY SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE RESIDENTS' VALUE EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SERVICE THEY RECEIVE FROM CCRCS.

social environment for resident satisfaction. The researchers suggest that owners could create more opportunities for residents to get to know one another, and for management and staff to get to know residents. They could also provide more activities to combat loneliness and ensure that activities include something for everyone.

In response to the high rating that residents attributed to cost and value, the report suggests

that CCRCs could provide different financial options to lessen potential residents' fear of high charges. Personalization of services to meet residents' individual needs could enhance value perceptions, and medical costs could be reduced by building stronger relationships with local hospitals and clinics and inviting them to deliver some services in CCRCs.

The report finds that the importance for resident satisfaction of facilities-based factors such as food and beverages demonstrates how different baby-boomers are from their parents' generation. Suggestions for CCRC owners include providing more diverse menus and different dining venues. The design of buildings could also focus on features that enhance wellness, facilitate engagement with other residents, and create a sense of comfort and belonging.

The study emphasizes the importance for CCRCs of the people and service-delivery skills found in high-end hospitality settings. Dr. Chaulagain, Dr. Pizam and their colleague suggest that staff from traditional healthcare backgrounds might benefit from additional training in customer management and care, and that standards should be monitored regularly.

Confirmation of the importance of resident satisfaction for word-of-mouth recommendation is particularly helpful for CCRC marketing teams. Seniors contemplating moving into a senior living

facility may not be aware of the benefits of CCRCs, and recommendations from existing residents could help their decision making. The report suggests that residents could, for example, be encouraged to provide feedback on social media platforms.

WIDER BENEFITS
The pioneering study led by Dr. Chaulagain, Dr. Pizam and their fellow researcher provides a comprehensive insight into resident satisfaction in CCRCs. It goes further than previous academic studies by analyzing the relative impact of multiple categories of attributes on resident satisfaction, and by confirming that resident satisfaction impacts word-of-mouth recommendation and residents' overall satisfaction with life.

The research team find that 'senior living communities have progressively shifted from providing healthcare services to providing heavily resident centered services.' It follows that, in a burgeoning market, paying greater attention to resident satisfaction can help CCRCs to enhance their competitiveness.

The benefits go even further. As the report concludes, 'Residents who are not satisfied with CCRCs are more likely to have low levels of life satisfaction, which will affect their health negatively and may increase their healthcare costs ... To increase residents' life satisfaction, and to reduce their level of depression and other negative health outcomes, CCRC operators should make sure that seniors who reside in their CCRCs are happy with the services and care provided in their communities.'

RESEARCHERS
IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The study explores the attributes that affect resident satisfaction in continuing care retirement communities (CCRCs) and quantifies their relative levels of importance.

CO-AUTHORS

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

Your study is one of the first to look at how residents' satisfaction with their living environment affects their overall satisfaction with life. Were you surprised that there was such a strong correlation and what leads you to your conclusion?

We expected a high correlation between residents' satisfaction with their living environment and their overall satisfaction with life. However, we were surprised by our study finding that sociopsychological factors had the highest impact on resident satisfaction. Since CCRCs have more control over the facilities and services they provide but have limited influence over the residents' sociopsychological status, CCRC owners and operators should take action to create a favorable social environment by focusing on the commonalilty among their residents.

Dr. Suja Chaulagain

Dr. Suja Chaulagain is an assistant professor at Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. Her research foci are the areas of the integration of hospitality and healthcare, elderly consumer behavior in the hospitality and healthcare industries, senior housing and relocation, and medical and wellness tourism.

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Dr. Abraham Pizam

Dr. Abraham Pizam is the founding dean (2000–2018) of the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. Currently, he serves as Professor and Linda Chapin Eminent Scholar Chair in Tourism Management. Professor Pizam is widely known in the field of hospitality and tourism management and has conducted research projects, lectured, and served as a consultant in more than 30 countries.

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The study emphasizes the importance for CCRCs of the people and service-delivery skills found in high-end hospitality settings.

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EXPECTATION DISCONFIRMATION— THE HIDDEN MENACE OF POSITIVE AIRBNB REVIEWS

The integrity of the peer-to-peer accommodation industry relies on peer assessment and the assumption that positive reviews are more likely to guide towards positive outcomes. But problems can occur when hosts go out of their way to accommodate their guests, hoping to score positive reviews. Dr. Wei Wei from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and fellow researchers have found that such reviews create an online trail that encourages expectation, which is not necessarily a good thing.
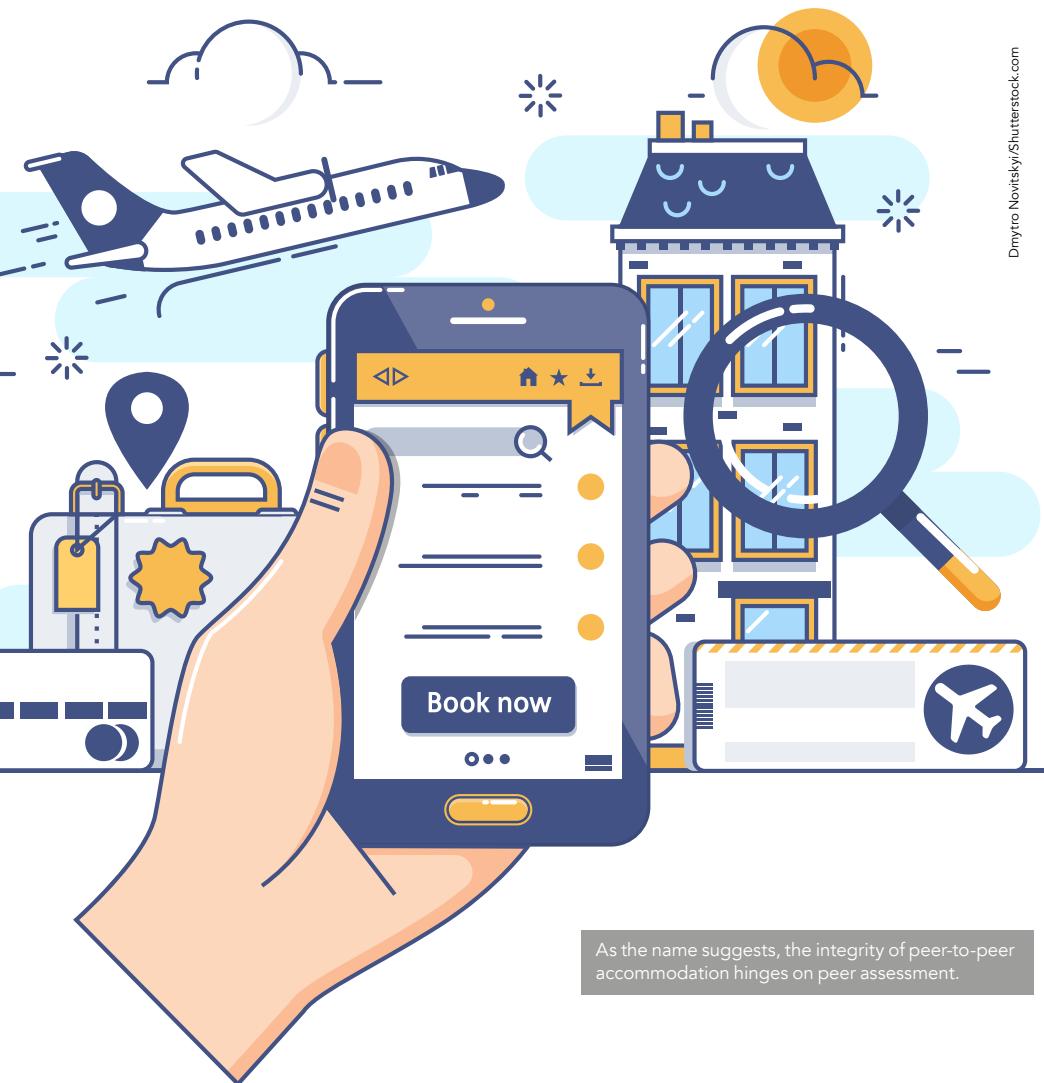
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As the name suggests, the integrity of peer-to-peer accommodation hinges on peer assessment.

To a large degree, success in the accommodation sector in hospitality relies on managing expectations. In the professional sector, expectations are managed by proper marketing, training, and management operating within the commensurate regulations and demands of accountability. The nonprofessional sector is a little more cavalier. However, that doesn't mean it's not susceptible to the vagaries of customer expectations, especially around consistency. Dr. Wei Wei from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and fellow researchers have shown that positive reviews—a significant driver of the peer-to-peer accommodation industry—can sometimes backfire.

When someone books a hotel room within the professional accommodation sector, they have expectations based on previous experiences or, if it's their first visit, perceptions of what the brand offers. Importantly, they have fair expectations of professionalism and consistency across the brand. When someone books accommodation via providers within the sharing economy, such as Airbnb, they have two frames of reference for what to expect: the images and description of the accommodation and reviews by previous visitors. But what happens when expectations of extraordinary service by an Airbnb host, as suggested by reviews, are not met? And does the degree that reviewers agree matter? This is what Wei and her colleagues set out to uncover.

THE VALUE OF REVIEWS

As the name suggests, the integrity of peer-to-peer accommodation hinges on peer assessment. When someone looks for somewhere to stay on Airbnb, they can check the star rating for a quick evaluation. A five-star rating is a sure sign they can expect all boxes ticked in terms of cleanliness, communication, check-in, location, value for money, and accuracy compared to the description. The real value for the consumer sits within the reviews, and it is here where they may find suggestions of extraordinary service, generally by the host, that'll prompt them to book. This could be, say, a bottle of red wine or freshly-cut flowers upon arrival, or a lift to or from the airport. A host may provide such ancillary products or services on the fair assumption they will encourage positive reviews. However, if they do, they will also come with a caveat: expectations. If a reviewer mentions that a host went out

Success in the accommodation sector in hospitality heavily relies on managing expectations.

of their way to secure transportation to the airport, a potential guest may think it is fair to expect the same. If they don't receive it, they experience what is known as expectation disconfirmation.

Professionals within hospitality know this. If a restaurateur offers a table of diners a complimentary bottle of wine, nearby diners within earshot won't celebrate the gesture; they'll wonder where theirs is. Hotel brands rely on expectation consistency across their brands to secure customer loyalty. If a particular hotel doesn't measure up to customers' expectations of its brand, those customers may shift allegiance. However, the effects of expectation disconfirmation are largely unexplored within the sharing economy. Wei and her colleagues wondered what would happen when Airbnb consumers saw positive reviews of a property that mentioned an ancillary service only to find their expectations challenged, and whether the consistency of reviews made any difference. They were also interested if the outcome would differ from when a property description referred to an ancillary service that later failed to materialize. Theoretically, in that scenario, consumers should place the blame squarely on the host.

TAKING THINGS PERSONALLY
The researchers selected people who had used Airbnb in the past year and presented them with one of two scenarios: they find a property on Airbnb at which, according either to the property description or to the reviews, the host provides free rides to the airport. Respondents reacted positively in both cases, suggesting they valued the ancillary service. Those who were told about the reviews were then

HOTEL BRANDS RELY ON EXPECTATION CONSISTENCY ACROSS THEIR BRANDS TO SECURE CUSTOMER LOYALTY.

Positive reviews encourage expectation, and when that expectation isn't met, the impact can be damaging.

informed that either the average score of 211 reviewers was 4.3 (out of five) and that the reviews were reasonably consistent or that the average score of 211 reviewers was 4.3 (out of five) but that the reviews were inconsistent—some reviews were highly positive, but there were also some very negative ones.

The respondents were then told that after booking and arriving at the property, they

> *IF THERE WAS A HIGH LEVEL OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN REVIEWERS, RESPONDENTS REACTED MORE NEGATIVELY WHEN EXPERIENCING EXPECTATION DISCONFIRMATION—THEY TOOK IT PERSONALLY.*

asked for a ride to the airport in three days, but the host said they would be too busy on that day and unable to do so. The respondents were then asked how likely they would recommend the property and use Airbnb again.

As hypothesized, respondents reacted negatively when a property description on Airbnb told them the host offered a lift to the airport only to find the host couldn't when one was needed. They considered it akin to misleading advertising. But for those guided by reviewers, Wei and her colleagues discovered that the consistency between reviewers mattered. If there was a high level of agreement between reviewers, respondents reacted more negatively when experiencing expectation disconfirmation—they took it personally. If, however, there was a disagreement between reviewers, respondents were more likely to rationalize their expectation disconfirmation, thereby slightly mitigating their negativity towards the

property and Airbnb. Importantly, their overall experience was still negative.

THE NEED FOR CONSISTENCY

This research provides enlightening considerations for accommodation hosts within the sharing economy. One of the most important is that consistency is critical. It is impossible to satisfy everyone's expectations to the point they will provide a glowing review. Research shows that even inclement weather—beyond any host's scope of influence—can trigger unfavorable reviews. However, when a host overtly offers ancillary services in the hope of securing bookings, it creates expectations, and when a host doesn't deliver, it can carry significant costs. And the offer doesn't have to be overt—if it is made to guests to garner positive reviews, that creates an online trail of expectation.

However, considerations also extend to companies such as Airbnb, VRBO, and Homeaway that provide these services. Expectation disconfirmation impacts them too. Wei and her colleagues showed that regardless of whether property descriptions or reviews shaped consumers' expectations, if what they experienced differed significantly it contributed to an overall negative experience with the service. In the researchers' study, Airbnb didn't escape negative feedback. These companies should therefore ensure they have policies and communications in place to guarantee that hosts provide the services they describe and that they are aware that, should they offer ancillary gifts or services to guests, they should prepare for the expectations that may follow.

The professional hospitality sector can draw on experience, the training it generates, and the discipline from good management to provide the services guests expect. It must be tempting for nonprofessional hosts to go out of their way to ensure that guests enjoy their stay and perhaps leave a positive review online to guide someone else's decision. However, Wei and her colleagues have shown that expectations carry costs. For this reason, their research has value beyond the sharing economy. The whole hospitality industry relies on making guests feel welcome, and excellent service can be rewarded when those guests have a voice online. However, positive reviews encourage expectation, and when that expectation isn't met, the impact can be damaging.

RESEARCHERS
IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Wei aimed to provide a more holistic understanding of how consumers of peer-to-peer accommodations respond to a negative expectation disconfirmation experience.

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How can the peer-to-peer accommodation industry realistically minimize the negative effects of expectation disconfirmation?

❚❚ The peer-to-peer accommodation industry needs to ensure that policies pertaining to service provision should indicate that a service advertised by a host must be provided (with penalties for a failure to do so). Additionally, policies on 'surprise' (and possibly inconsistent) services should be written in such a way as to set realistic expectations for consumers who may or may not receive the amenity or service. The peer-to-peer accommodation industry should also take more proactive steps to educate homeowners and encourage them to provide consistent offerings to their target market. ❚❚

Dr. Wei Wei

Dr. Wei Wei is an associate professor at the Rosen College. Her research focuses on hospitality and tourism consumers' experience, psychology, and behaviors at innovative service encounters. Dr. Wei serves as an associate editor for the *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research* and sits on the editorial board for five journals.

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Wei and her colleagues discovered that consistency between reviewers mattered.

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TIME + TALENT + TREASURES = PARTNERSHIPS FOR SUCCESS

By Susan Vernon-Devlin, Manager, Communications and Marketing, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and Marcela DeFaria, Director for Advancement, UCF Foundation

The tools for philanthropy and successful development do not come in a box with instructions. Instead, they are crafted through building positive relationships over time, which unleashes potential in like-minded individuals, enriches the human experience, and propels broad-based prosperity for the many communities positively impacted by the outcomes. At UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, we are working to make a difference and transform lives.

The perfect formula for successful development is constantly evolving. The art of conversation and relationship building are certainly ingredients that can enhance the outcome. However, finding individuals with the interest and intent to give their time, talent, and treasures to an academic institution takes a secret sauce of its own. The tools for philanthropy and successful development do not come in a box or with instructions. They are instead crafted through positive relationship building over time, which unleashes potential in like-minded individuals, enriches the human experience, and propels broad-based prosperity for the many communities positively impacted by the outcomes. At UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, we are working to make a difference and transform lives with the assistance of friends and industry partners. Each year the college distributes more than $200,000 in scholarships to deserving students. These awards are based on academic criteria as well as any combination of financial need, campus and/or community activities, leadership positions, and work experience for new and/or incoming and current students, who are pursuing their undergraduate or graduate degrees, even including Ph.D. degrees. Awards are given to both domestic and international students. These scholarships are the gifts made to the college by alumni, faculty, staff, parents, and industry partners. They are an investment in the hospitality industry and its future leaders.

Entertainment Technology Partners (ETP), the parent company to a global collection of exceptional independent brands in the events and entertainment industry, is one partner that has made significant gifts of time, talent, and treasure to UCF Rosen College. The college works with ETP to tailor the curriculum for the entertainment management undergraduate degree, so that when students leave the classroom and go into the workplace, they are prepared to take on the challenges and rewards of employment. In turn, ETP has benefited from a healthy supply of qualified candidates completing internships to learn the ropes at the company, with many going on to become part of the full-time workforce.

'By partnering with the local business community, UCF Rosen College raises engagement on so many levels,' explains Dave John, Chief Operating Officer of Orlando, FL-based ETP. 'We have seen their commitment to ensuring that what is being taught in the classroom is in step with what's happening in business today. Our scholarships and donations have been a way to quickly help students and instructors access tools and relevant resources. The university outreach is very welcoming of local businesses that see education as a community investment. It really is win-win-win.'

John is an adjunct instructor at the college. He, along with Lauren Sigmund, also an ETP team member who holds a Master's degree (M.S.) in hospitality and tourism management from Rosen College, teach more than 200 students each semester. Sigmund works with all levels of the production teams at ETP, from creative directors and producers to technicians and talent throughout ETP's offices in the U.S. and the U.K. She will be leading a UCF *Study Abroad to London* in summer 2023, taking 16 students to the National Film and Television School and other London entertainment landmarks for an international perspective on their chosen industry.

'Students benefit from learning academic perspective in the classroom and relevant

Right: founding Dean Dr. Abraham Pizam and Rosen College namesake and donor Harris Rosen.

practical industry application,' John adds. 'The university benefits from the collaboration of research opportunities and additional resources. And local businesses win from investing in their communities and having better prepared candidates join their organizations.'

In 2022, ETP scholarships, gifts, and in-kind technology donations to the university will surpass half a million dollars. The company has provided technology gifts that include thermal scanners, LED display technology, theatrical lighting equipment, and video streaming packages.

A long-standing scholarship relationship that has proved fruitful for Rosen College students is the Toni A. Wisne Scholarship. The scholarship was created in honor of Rosen College alumna, Toni A. Wisne '91, to celebrate her memory and her philanthropic commitment to helping others pursue their dreams through education. Wisne was the president and founder of the Epoch Hospitality Group, with business interests in Florida and Michigan, and was responsible for some of the top restaurants in her home state of Michigan. Through the Toni A. Wisne Foundation, a philanthropic organization established by Wisne in 2006, the Wisne family has partnered with Rosen College to

support hospitality students. The scholarships support incoming freshmen and students who need financial aid and provide funding for international study opportunities.

Gifts from alumni to their alma mater—whether gifts of time, talent, or treasure—are an important part of philanthropic practice for the college. Gifts honoring alumni from families and private foundations like the Toni A. Wisne Foundation are reflective of the many Rosen College alumni who direct their philanthropy towards the college. Some serve on college advisory boards sharing real-life industry data and information for curriculum updates and offering training through internships at their companies. Alumni also provide mentorship to current students, helping guide their journeys through college. Other alumni and industry partners work with the college on research projects that provide insights related to the hospitality, events, entertainment, lodging, restaurants, senior living management sectors, and other areas that are positively influenced by the culture of hospitality.

The philanthropic spirit that bolsters UCF Rosen College was evident from the very beginnings of the college. The idea of building a stand-alone academic institution of higher education was the brainchild of Harris Rosen, local hotelier and philanthropist.

Rosen donated the land and the initial $18 million dollars to build the college where it stands today in the heart of Orlando, near Florida's theme parks, attractions, and thousands of hotel rooms and restaurants. Orlando is one of the most-visited cities in the U.S., with more than 60 million visitors—both leisure and business travelers—coming to Central Florida in 2021. That number is expected to increase in 2022. Today, Rosen continues to support the college with scholarships for deserving students each year. A self-made man, Harris Rosen's generosity provides scholarships for first-time-in-college students, and students who have been working year after year towards their four-year degree. In the years since he began providing scholarships, more than 1,500 students have been the recipient of a Harris Rosen scholarship.

Rosen College was born from philanthropy and continues to thrive in its 18th year thanks to the generosity of many who embrace the philosophy of transforming lives. If you would like to make a gift to support UCF Rosen College, please visit Rosen College's donation page on the UCF Foundation website. Time, talent, and treasures equal partnerships for success.

Susan Vernon-Devlin
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THE IMPACT OF LGBT FRIENDLINESS ON SEXUAL MINORITY TRAVELERS' PERCEPTIONS

There is a rise in niche travel for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community. However, few studies have investigated how the hotel industry can best appeal to these customers. At UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, Dr. Heejung Ro has undertaken the first study focusing on how LGBT friendliness and the attitudes of service employees may impact upon LGBT customers' perceptions and future intentions. While the findings revealed these two factors are regarded independently, it is important that hotels signal LGBT friendliness, as well as ensuring these travelers are treated respectfully.

A s the pink economy continues to rise, tourism has become one of the fastest developing niches in the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community. In response to this growth, hospitality companies are beginning to position themselves as LGBT friendly, hoping to appeal to sexual minority customers. Many major hotel chains have launched specific LGBT marketing campaigns and promotions, and online holiday booking sites have developed functions that highlight LGBT-friendly accommodation within specific tourist destinations. Many of these changes have been driven by the LGBT community, with sexual minority travelers searching for hotel brands that are welcoming. LGBT friendliness is vital for hospitality companies to build brand loyalty within this niche area of tourism. Marketing research has revealed that 71% of lesbian and gay consumers will remain loyal to a brand, despite greater cost or inconvenience, if a company demonstrates support for LGBT rights and issues.

Although demand for LGBT tourism is rapidly rising, limited research has been conducted in relation to this topic. Recent marketing research studies have focused upon testing LGBT customer perceptions towards specific advertising campaigns and have neglected to take a more integrated approach. Few studies have explored overall perceptions relating to corporate LGBT friendliness and the importance of these activities. Dr. Heejung Ro from UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and collaborator Ms. Marryam Khan aimed to bridge this knowledge gap by examining the impact of LGBT friendliness upon customers within this community. The researchers undertook a study to investigate whether hospitality employment attitudes and behaviors may influence LGBT customers' future intentions regarding repeat business. The research highlights that activities such as checking into a hotel could be highly sensitive for LGBT tourists, as expressing their choice of bedroom arrangements might reveal their sexual orientation identity, leaving them open to possible negative reactions from employees. As a result, their study specifically evaluates how the behaviors of hospitality employees might impact upon LGBT guests' perceptions of a hotel in terms of its LGBT friendliness. Prior to conducting the research, the researchers hypothesized that greater LGBT friendliness from institutions and their service employees would positively influence the perceptions and future purchase intentions of LGBT customers.

This research provides valuable insights for the tourism industry regarding the needs and perceptions of LGBT tourists.

STUDY AIMS AND DESIGN
This is the first study to consider how customer service interactions, in addition to overall LGBT friendliness, could impact upon LGBT tourists' perceptions of hospitality institutions. The findings can help businesses within the tourist industry gain a greater understanding of what it truly means to be LGBT friendly. The study specifically focuses on how these activities and behaviors will be perceived by their sexual minority customers. Ro emphasises that this research is not just about gaining competitive advantage but encouraging companies in the hospitality industry to demonstrate their values relating to LGBT issues in society.

To develop a theoretical framework that underpins the study, the research team looked to both signaling theory and social identity theory. Both theories support the idea that LGBT customers will perceive hospitality companies more positively if they exhibit LGBT friendliness, while also demonstrating values which align with LGBT customers' own social

Tourism has become one of the fastest developing niches within the LGBT community.

identities. This study is also unique in that it is the first to investigate LGBT friendliness in the hospitality industry using an experimental research design. It is scenario based, exploring two main experimental variables. In contrast, previous studies have taken a more exploratory qualitative approach.

LGBT FRIENDLINESS

The first variable was LGBT friendliness, simulated within the research by showing participants' descriptions of differing LGBT policies and practices relating to a fictional hotel chain. This included information regarding the hotels support for gay causes and rights, as well as marketing partnerships and campaigns within mainstream and gay media outlets. The second variable manipulated within the study design was the behavior and attitudes of service employees. Participants were shown different scenarios where the hotel employee was either acting in a positive or negative manner. In the positive scenario the staff member was friendly and helpful while providing additional information relating to the customers' stay. In the negative scenario, staff were unengaging and rude, and did not participate in small talk or give eye contact. The research participants were recruited from an annual LGBT event in Florida which attracts over 180,000 visitors from all over the world. One hundred and seventy-seven participants were recruited to take part who all identified as a sexual minority. They were each presented with one of four research scenarios. Participants completed a questionnaire measuring their attitudes and perceptions towards the hospitality and service described within the scenario.

This study makes a positive contribution to LGBT literature concerning hospitality and tourism. Previously there has been little evidence to support claims of customer service having an impact upon the perceptions and behaviors of LGBT tourists. This research demonstrates that if hospitality companies show genuine LGBT friendliness, it will signal to members of this community that the brand cares about their issues. In turn, this will increase positive perceptions and the likelihood of future return business. While these findings are in line with the outcomes of previous research, this is the first study to take an experimental scenario-based approach using controlled variables. It also

> *LGBT CUSTOMERS ARE DISCERNING AND CAN IDENTIFY IF BRANDS ARE PLEDGING GENUINE SUPPORT OR SIMPLY LOOKING TO INCREASE THEIR PROFITS.*

This study is unique in that it is the first to investigate LGBT friendliness in the hospitality industry using an experimental research design.

pioneers the relevance of signaling theory and social identity theory in relation to LGBT friendliness in the tourism industry. Signaling theory suggests that if a hospitality brand demonstrates LGBT activities, it may serve as a signal of its values to members of that community and the public. The social identity theory anticipates that if LGBT friendliness aligns with the social identity of its customers this can have a positive impact upon their perceptions of the brand or establishment. Ro believes the study demonstrates that both these theories have relevance in this context.

LGBT FRIENDLINESS AND EMPLOYEE SERVICE

A main aim of the study was to investigate the relationship between LGBT friendliness and employee service. The researchers were surprised to learn that members of the LGBT community view these as two distinct factors. The findings revealed that while employee attitudes impact upon LGBT customers' future intentions, it did not impact on their opinions around LGBT friendliness. Based on these findings Ro has inferred that LGBT customers do not relate the level of service they receive from individual employees to the overall LGBT friendliness of the establishment. This was an unexpected finding, as prior research suggests that aligning employee attitudes with brand values can strengthen customer perceptions. Ro theorizes that because the service encounters were specifically LGBT related this may have reduced the link between employee behavior and LGBT friendliness.

LGBT friendliness is vital for hospitality companies to build brand loyalty in this niche area of tourism.

This study can support the hotel industry to cater for LGBT customers in a way that is relevant and authentic.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

This research provides valuable insights for the tourism industry regarding the needs and perceptions of LGBT tourists. It is a very timely study, given the increase in awareness of LGBT rights, as well as the rise in this tourism niche. The findings indicate that it is important for hotels and other tourist establishments to demonstrate how welcoming and supportive they are towards the LGBT community, as this has a major impact on sexual minority customer perceptions and their intention to return. To achieve LGBT friendliness, hotel companies must develop tailored marketing strategies and engage in activities which support this community. These activities may include advertising LGBT-friendly personnel policies or making donations to relevant charities. These actions will not only be perceived positively by members of the LGBT community and their loved ones but also customers who want to be socially responsible.

Ro emphasizes that care must be taken for these LGBT activities not to appear superficial. For example, hanging a rainbow flag outside the hotel and expecting the brand to be perceived as LGBT friendly.

> *TO ACHIEVE LGBT FRIENDLINESS HOTEL COMPANIES MUST DEVELOP A TAILORED MARKETING STRATEGY WHILE ENGAGING IN ACTIVITIES WHICH SUPPORT THIS COMMUNITY.*
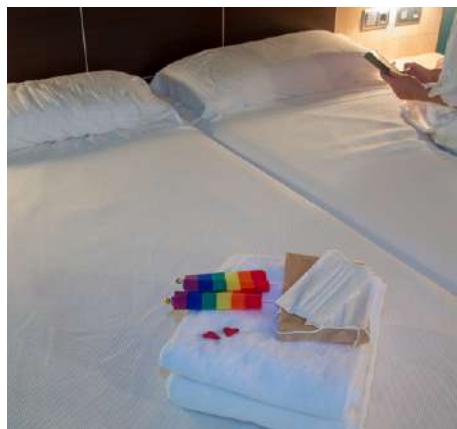
Businesses need to ensure that they have taken substantive activity to back up their claims of support for this community; if not this could have a negative impact on the perceptions of their brand. LGBT customers are discerning and can identify if brands are pledging genuine support or simply looking to increase their profits.

By identifying many actionable insights, this study can support the hotel industry to cater for LGBT customers in a way that is relevant and authentic. Ro believes that acting upon these research findings will improve customer loyalty and ensure hotels are signaling genuine support for the LGBT community.

RESEARCHERS
IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Investigating the impact of LGBT friendliness and employee attitudes upon the perceptions of LGBT customers and their future intentions.

REFERENCES

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CO-AUTHORS

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How important is it that this study takes an experimental approach?

❞ Our study used a scenario-based experiment by recruiting LGBT participants from a large LGBT event. Our method allowed us to test the cause-and-effect relationships empirically and therefore the research findings provide hospitality practitioners with evidence-based insight on the identified issue. ❞

Dr. Heejung Ro

Dr. Heejung (Cheyenne) Ro, is associate professor at UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management. Her research focuses on the evaluation of service encounters that involve customer behaviors and frontline employee interactions with customers. Her specific research interests include customer complaining behaviors, service recovery, emotions, and LGBTQ+ customers' perceptions of hospitality services.

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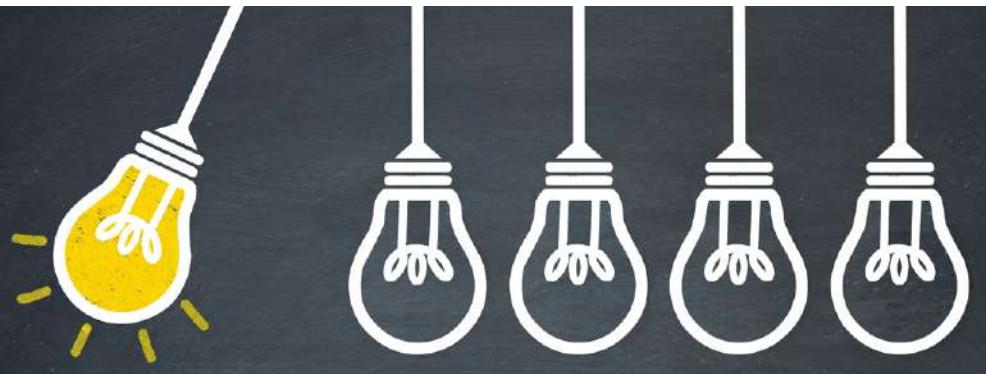
This is the first study to consider how customer service interactions, in addition to overall LGBT friendliness, could impact upon LGBT tourists' perceptions of hospitality institutions.

MOTIVATING EMPLOYEES THROUGH SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Leadership style is a critical ingredient in establishing a work environment most conducive to positive customer–employee engagement.

Meeting customer expectations is critical for success within the hospitality industry and frontline employees play a key role in delivering customer satisfaction. Leaders who display a servant leadership style put the interests of employees and the organization above their own. To investigate how this leadership style influences employee motivation and behavior, Dr. Fevzi Okumus, UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management, and his collaborators have put forward and evaluated a model of the interrelationships between servant leadership and employee engagement, job satisfaction, and absenteeism. They found that leaders evidencing this style positively impacted work engagement and absenteeism. Their findings offer important insights for hospitality management practices.

Creating a positive experience for customers within the hospitality industry requires frontline employees to perform their roles with enthusiasm and commitment. Positioning frontline employees to behave in a way that meets customers' expectations requires managers to motivate and inspire their employees, who are often contending with multiple demands and stresses in the work environment. So how can managers encourage and support this behavior? Dr. Fevzi Okumus at the UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management and his co-authors put forward the idea that leadership style is a critical ingredient in establishing a work environment most conducive to positive customer–employee engagement. Specifically,

servant leadership has been shown to have a beneficial impact on employee performance and work behavior.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Servant leadership places the interest of the employees and the organization above the interests of the leader. It emphasizes meeting the expectations and commitments of the organization. A leadership style such as this makes employees feel that they are prioritized in terms of their interests and growth, and often results in a heightened work ethic and enhanced work engagement among employees. Servant leaders place ethics and honesty at the forefront of their behavior, and exhibit role-model behaviors (such as integrity and following through on

their promises), which employees can then emulate in the work environment. Research shows that this leadership style has many benefits for employees and the organization, including enhanced employee dedication, role performance, and role satisfaction. Importantly, servant leadership can also influence employees to go above and beyond what is required within their roles (for example, discretionary effort). Their study explains that servant leadership benefits the organization by improving employee morale and customer relationships and is thus a leadership style well aligned with the hospitality industry.

THE INTERPLAY OF FACTORS IMPACTED BY SERVANT LEADERSHIP

Many mediators influence the direct impact of servant leadership on employee behavior. Distinguishing and understanding the complexity of these interrelationships is important to obtain a clear picture of the significance and range of interacting relationships within the work environment that can influence employee performance. To this end, Okumus and his collaborators designed

engagement would display high job satisfaction, in-role performance, extra-role performance and lower absenteeism. Thirdly, that employees with high levels of job satisfaction would show high levels of in-role performance, extra-role performance and low absenteeism. The research team set a number of hypotheses to understand the mediating influence and interrelationships between work engagement and job satisfaction on absenteeism and performance, within a context of servant leadership.

HYPOTHESES

The first hypothesis was that servant leadership would have a more positive impact on work engagement than on job satisfaction. Secondly, that work engagement would mediate the effect of servant leadership on job satisfaction, meaning that servant leadership activates work engagement which in turn results in higher job satisfaction. The third hypothesis, linked to social exchange theory, proposed that employees with high levels of job satisfaction would show high levels of in-role performance, extra-role performance,

a study to understand how employees' emotional responses to servant leadership influenced their performance outcomes, and the extent to which work engagement versus job satisfaction mediated this outcome. The study was thus designed to answer some of these complex questions that previous studies have not yet elucidated.

SERVANT LEADERSHIP, WORK ENGAGEMENT, AND JOB SATISFACTION

A conceptual model was designed to determine the impact of different factors on the relationship between servant leadership, and the impact of servant leadership on work performance. The model was based on an examination of existing literature and theory and included the following factors: servant leadership; employee engagement; absenteeism; job satisfaction; in-role performance; and extra-role performance. Firstly, the model proposed that servant leadership enhances work engagement, job satisfaction, in-role performance, and extra-role performance, and reduces employee absenteeism. Secondly, it proposed that employees with high levels of work

Highly engaged workers led by people displaying a servant leadership style reciprocate positively back into the organization through devoting energy to their work, taking pride in their work, and evidencing reduced absenteeism.

THIS RESEARCH HAS IMPORTANT IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY, NOTABLY THE POSITIVE IMPACT OF SERVANT LEADERSHIP IN BOOSTING WORK ENGAGEMENT AMONG FRONTLINE HOTEL EMPLOYEES.

When employees feel that there is a relationship built on trust and that their interests are taken into consideration, they tend to reciprocate with higher levels of work engagement.

and low absenteeism. Social exchange theory proposes that there are rules of exchange between employers and employees, and that employees respond to employers by reciprocating behaviors. Their study explains that when employees feel that they are receiving socio-emotional benefits from their employers, such as career opportunities and growth, they tend to reciprocate by demonstrating positive emotions and behaviors towards their employers.

Next, the team used the theory of job-demands resources which considers the positive impact of supportive resources in the work environment on employee motivation. The team hypothesized that work engagement would have a more positive impact on in-role performance and extra-role performance than would job satisfaction. In terms of the mediating impacts on absenteeism, a research hypothesis was posed that the mediating influence of work engagement on the relationships between servant leadership and absenteeism would be stronger than the mediating impact of job satisfaction on this relationship. The researchers developed a final hypothesis, that the mediating impact of work engagement on the relationships between servant leadership and job performance (both in-role and extra-role) would be stronger than the mediating impact of job satisfaction.

DATA COLLECTION
To test the model and the hypotheses, frontline employees with two set criteria were selected for participation. These were that the employees experienced intense interactions with customers and were full time in their

Servant leaders place ethics and honesty at the forefront of their behavior.

roles. The participants were recruited from three international 4-star and 5-star hotels and they completed the research surveys anonymously and voluntarily. The surveys were conducted in three research waves with a time lag of one week, starting with the servant leader survey, followed by the work engagement items, and finally the job satisfaction and absenteeism items. Supervisor ratings were obtained for in-role performance and extra-role performance. Confirmatory factor analysis was employed to determine the psychometric properties of the surveys and structural equation modeling was used to evaluate the relationships within the model.

The findings confirmed a good fit between the model and the data and supported all hypotheses, confirming that the positive impact of servant leadership on work engagement was greater than the impact on job satisfaction. Similarly, the hypothesis that work engagement would have a greater impact on absenteeism than job satisfaction was also supported. This finding is important in confirming that while work engagement significantly influences absenteeism, job satisfaction does not have an impact on absenteeism. There was also evidence that work engagement influenced in-role performance and extra-role performance more than job satisfaction. In addition, the findings revealed that female employees and those with the longest tenure tended to display higher levels of work engagement.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY
This research has important implications for the hospitality industry, notably the positive impact of servant leadership in boosting work engagement among frontline hotel employees. When employees feel that there is a relationship built on trust and that their interests are taken into consideration, they tend to reciprocate with higher levels of work engagement. Job satisfaction also benefits from servant leadership both directly

SERVANT LEADERSHIP PLACES THE INTEREST OF THE EMPLOYEES AND THE ORGANIZATION ABOVE THE INTERESTS OF THE LEADER.

and indirectly through the impact on work engagement. Importantly, highly engaged workers led by people displaying a servant leadership style reciprocate positively back into the organization through devoting energy to their work, taking pride in their work and evidencing reduced absenteeism. The findings thus support social exchange theory, as well as the theory of job-demands resources. This study concludes by observing that hotel employees with high levels of work engagement are goal-oriented and have the energy required to perform positively within their roles to meet and exceed the expectations of customers.

RESEARCHERS
IN FOCUS

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Dr. Fevzi Okumus is the CFHLA Preeminent Chair Professor within the Hospitality Services Department at UCF's Rosen College of Hospitality Management. His main teaching and research areas include strategic management, leadership, hospitality management, and lodging. He has over 300 academic publications. According to GoogleScholar, his publications received over 17,600 citations and he has an h-index of 63. He is the Editor-in-Chief of the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management* (IF: 9.321) and the *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights*. He is a frequent speaker at international conferences and has received numerous prestigious research awards and recognitions.

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RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Fevzi Okumus and his collaborators investigated the effect of servant leadership on hotel employees' behavioral consequences.

REFERENCES

Ozturk, A., Karatepe, O.M., & Okumus, F. (2021). The effect of servant leadership on hotel employees' behavioral consequences: Work engagement versus job satisfaction. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 97 (102994). doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102994

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PERSONAL RESPONSE

How can hospitality managers apply these findings to motivate their employees?

❝ Hospitality managers at all levels should follow and practice servant leadership principles and practices in their day-to-day operations and show that they really care for and support their team members. Many hospitality employees quit their jobs because of their immediate supervisors or managers. Supervisors and managers are one of the reasons that hospitality employees are disengaged and leave their jobs. Therefore, servant leadership is crucial to engage, develop, motivate, and keep hard-working and loyal employees in the hospitality industry. ❞

How can hotel management support the development of a servant leadership ethos?

❝ Hospitality businesses should train and incentivize their supervisors and managers not only about servant leadership principles but also implementing servant leadership principles and practices in their day-to-day operations. ❞

SERVANT LEADERSHIP

LOADING...

ROSEN COLLEGE RESEARCH DISTRIBUTION MAP AND RESEARCH

Below are statistics for the Rosen College of Hospitality Management's faculty research. These statistics include Rosen Faculty Scholarship and Creative Works, Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies, and the Rosen Research Review.

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ABSTRACT VIEWS

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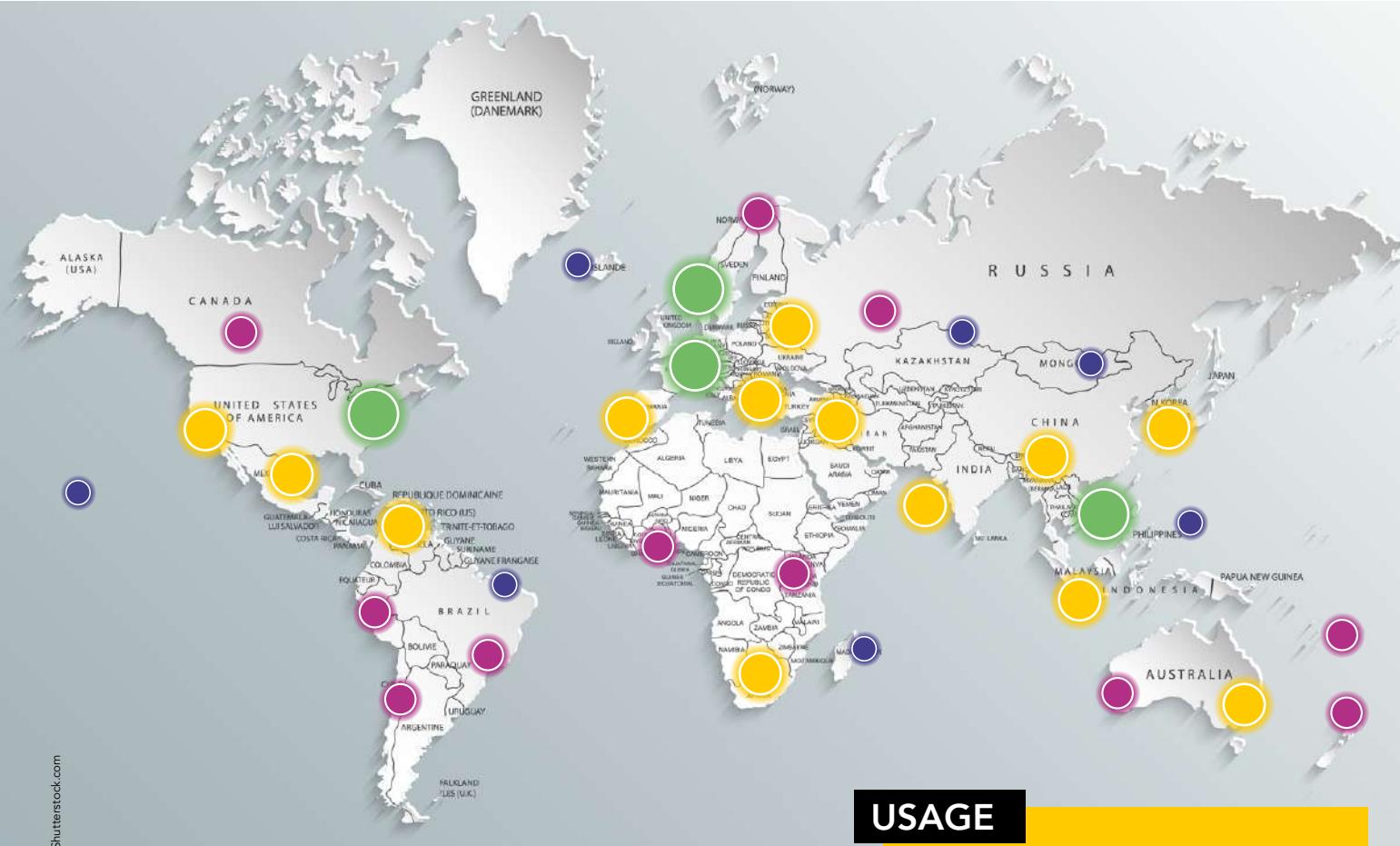
PlumX SNAPSHOT

PlumX gathers and brings together appropriate research metrics for all types of scholarly research output. These metrics show users how people are interacting with their research. These statistics are from 2015 to the present.