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EDITORIAL

Emerging topics in niche tourism, the hospitality industry, and online consumer behaviour

The papers for this special issue have been selected from the tourism and hospitality track of the Second International Conference on Emerging Research Paradigms in Business and Social Sciences (ERPBS), hosted by Middlesex University Dubai (United Arab Emirates) from 26 to 28 November 2013. Building upon the success of the First ERPBS conference in 2011, this unique multidisciplinary event provided a platform for 180 academics from over 100 institutions around the world representing a range of different fields to discuss new concepts, progressive methodologies, and innovative practices. In addition to the track on tourism and hospitality, the ERPBS 2013 conference included tracks on education, training and development, business management, economics, contemporary psychology, global social science, information and communication technology, and media, journalism, and communication. Two prominent academics were invited to keynote the conference. Professor Mark Saunders (Professor in Business Research Methods, University of Surrey, UK) presented “The (re)emergence of mixed methods research: Researching sensitively without sensitizing”. Professor Louise Morley (Professor of Education, University of Sussex, UK) presented “Researching the future: Towards an inclusive global knowledge economy”.

The tourism and hospitality track of ERPBS 2013 provided a forum for the evaluation of emerging paradigms and discussion of pioneering practices within the broader tourism and hospitality field. In this track, both conceptual and/or empirical-based papers were presented that examined the structural and systematic changes to the nature of the tourism and hospitality industries. The track attempted to foster progressive approaches within tourism and hospitality studies, rather than to simply replicate well-rehearsed empirical models and conceptual applications.

All papers included in this special issue of *Anatolia* were originally submitted and presented at the ERPBS conference, and were accepted after undergoing peer review. Following the conference, authors were encouraged to revise and develop their papers based upon comments and feedback received during the conference. All papers submitted to the special issue were then subjected to further academic blind peer review aligned with the journal’s formal processes. This issue provides a mixture of conceptually and empirically informed papers on a range of emerging topics related to niche tourism, the hospitality industry, and online consumer behaviour. The papers also represent a range of geographic areas including Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom, and Australia. In total, this special issue includes six papers and one research note.

Ulaş and Anadol provide a case study for medical tourism in Turkey in which they investigate country-specific environmental factors for a private hospital to consider when entering the medical tourism market. Their insights were derived using a strategic marketing road map and qualitative data collected through interviews with key professionals at a case study hospital. Their results suggest that government support, infrastructure, economic factors including cost, capacity, and human resources coordination are the key factors for the development of medical tourism for a private hospital. In another exploration of niche tourism, Powell and Iankova investigated the characteristics of the supply of dark tourism in London. Their analysis suggests that the tourist experience at many of

the identified “dark sites” in London are focused more on entertainment than accurate historical or authentic experiences. Another form of niche tourism was the focus of the research note included in this special issue; Allan provides the first exploration into the potential for geotourism development in the United Arab Emirates.

Sutton examined the emergence and growth of event tourism in the United Arab Emirates. Based on an exploratory case study and a narrative of the growth event tourism in Dubai, he examines how the UAE has emerged as a world-class events destination and provides a conceptual framework that can guide future research. Lee, Sardeshmukh, and Hallak study the sources of information and barriers to innovation for restaurants. Based on qualitative data collected through interviews with small independently owned restaurants in Australia, their study offers hospitality scholars and practitioners new insights into innovation practices and applications.

Butler and Paris examined the responses of the online community to media reports of the decline of *Lonely Planet* guidebooks after the sale of Lonely Planet by BBC Worldwide in 2013 due to the impact of the new owner’s strategy of moving from printed to online content. Their findings add new perspectives to a growing body of literature that has sought to question and scrutinize the influential role of arguably the strongest brand in independent travel literature and the increasing impact of technology on published guidebooks. Amaro and Duarte also provided further insights into the impact of technology on travel purchasing behaviour by proposing and testing a new model grounded upon the Theory of Planned Behaviour. Their model suggests that attitude, perceived risk, and perceived behavioural control all have significant effects on the intention to purchase travel online, while trust and the influence of others appear to not directly affect this intention.

Consequently, the papers in this special issue explore emerging topics related to niche tourism, innovation, and technology offering an examination of current tourist behaviour and sentiment as well as conceptual trajectories. This special issue is indebted to those that helped it come to fruition including the ERPBSS 2013 organizers and participants, the editorial team of *Anatolia*, and indeed the authors. We are also very grateful to the reviewers both of the conference papers and journal submissions who took the time to provide constructive and relevant feedback to the authors.

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