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## EDITORIAL

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This issue of *Research in Hospitality Management* is special in two ways: it is the first issue of *Research in Hospitality Management* to be published in open access, and it is entirely dedicated to sustainability.

The choice for open access has been dictated by the desire of the editorial team to reach a wider public and initiate the process of ranking of the journal. Stenden Hotel Management School fully supports this strategic choice.

Sustainability is a highly topical subject and has been for over twenty years. The same is true of “responsible tourism” and “sustainable hospitality” – concepts which have been discussed and explored by the industry and scientific communities alike. A key issue in these discussions relates to ethics. The term “ethics” goes back to ancient Greek philosophy. However, rather than concluding that this is a tired old theme, it is important to consider the new and continuing challenges which are currently affecting the planet and its populations. This includes economic, political, environmental, and social crises, the impact of which will only increase in years to come. Although the terminology linked to describing and tackling these challenges is not very new, its application to practical situations has become not only interesting, but also absolutely essential. Sustainable approaches to development and management of all industries are no longer an option but a necessity. This special issue recognises that this is also true for the hospitality industry and it therefore makes Sustainable Hospitality its main focus.

This special issue is designed to examine the relationship between sustainability and hospitality that has led to the development of the emerging field of Sustainable Hospitality Studies. In line with the editorial approach of *Research in Hospitality Management*, this special issue features both papers that explore current theoretical approaches, foundations of and critical issues in the study of sustainability in the hospitality industry (study of hospitality) and papers that address specific managerial challenges (study for hospitality).

A prime example of the first category is the paper by **Lashley** that offers the basis for a discussion on the role of ethics as a foundation for sustainability in general and sustainability in hospitality in particular.

The paper by **Buijtdijk** is an eminent example of the study for hospitality. It critically examines the impact of tourism on the socio-economic and environmental system of Myanmar. By framing the study as a value chain analysis and by assuming a stakeholders’ perspective, Buijtdijk offers an example of the interdisciplinary approach that in the view of the editors of this special issue is needed to properly study sustainability issues.

The paper by **Hensens** investigates the integration of environmental management practices in hotel classification systems. The eight systems analysed vary greatly in how and to what extent they integrate environmental management practices. Interestingly, in fast developing new destinations such as Dubai and Qatar, ignoring environmental management practices may lead to a lower rating or no rating at all of an hotel. Harmonisation and further integration of environmental practices into classification systems is in the eyes of the author wishful to help the industry develop in a more sustainable manner.

Being often small businesses, restaurants have not attracted the attention of researchers as much as hotels. Therefore the approach to sustainability in restaurants is still rather unstructured and lacking scientific evidence. The paper by **Jacobs and Klosse** addresses this gap by systematically exploring three distinct fields that may support or impede a restaurant in developing a sustainable offer: owner, demand and product.

The paper by **Depke, Lück, Peters, Wellmer and Seidel** explores the nexus between product, demand and sustainable value creation in the case of the German region Altes Land. The authors conclude that the promotion of the apple fruit for which this region is famous, as cultural heritage, creates values economically by commanding a higher price, environmentally, through low emissions from transport, and socially, not only thanks to the creation of jobs but also by inspiring a sense of pride in the unique cultural heritage.

While the paper by Seidel et al. focuses on sustainable value creation through cultural heritage, **Folmer, Revier and Cupido** examine whether the “World Heritage” status obtained by the Dutch Wadden Sea encourages tourists to approach this natural site differently by choosing to visit it during off-season. Their answer is a qualified no: foreign tourists seem not to opt for an off-season visit while domestic tourist are attracted by the natural beauty of the region but not specially by it having a World Heritage status.

**De Brito and Terzieva**’s paper focuses on events. This growing industry more and more recognises that, notwithstanding their short-lived nature, the impacts of events on the environmental and social dimension of sustainability are long lasting. De Brito and Terzieva recognise the industry’s need for a more sustainable approach and on the basis of three case studies of European music festivals propose six key components for designing sustainable strategies for events.

There are few theoretical studies covering sustainable Human Resource Management and even fewer looking into rewards and challenges of applying sustainable HRM in practice. Therefore we are particularly grateful for the paper by **Gehrels and Suleri** and the paper by Casey and Sieber because they both address this theme. In their theoretical paper, **Casey and Sieber** propose an employee-focused process model that can be applied by companies in the hospitality sector to involve employees in sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) issues. The authors expect that this involvement will lead employees to perceive their jobs as being meaningful and thus contribute to their engagement with the company's aims. Gehrels and Suleri reflect on diversity and inclusion as indicators of sustainable HRM in a case study on an international hotel chain. The authors conclude that, though some steps have been taken, the hotel policy on diversity and inclusivity is still implicit and should be better aligned with the hotel vision and strategy.

The paper by **Van Rheede and Dekker** critically examines the current host-guest paradigm in the light of the sustainable challenges facing the hospitality industry. They argue that the current paradigm where the host is pre-eminently preoccupied with pampering and indulging the guest is one of the forces holding hospitality back from a true and fuller engagement with sustainability. They therefore propose to replace the current paradigm with the idea of the "host as a shepherd", a paradigm emphasising that hosts are not only responsible for the present guest, but also for future guests, the local community and ultimately the Earth as a whole.

Van Rheede and Dekker's paper can be considered a perfect introduction to the section of this special issue dedicated to papers presented during the conference organised by the Research Group Sustainability in Hospitality & Tourism of Stenden Academy of International Hospitality Research (Stenden, 24-25 November 2015). During this conference, entitled "Guests on Earth", researchers, students and practitioners met to share their thoughts around the conference theme: the hospitality industry is not only a host but also a Guest on Earth. We are glad to be able to publish contributions from representatives of each of the main stakeholders involved in the discussion.

The paper by **Fermani, Crespi and Stara** represents the academic contribution to the congress and considers the role of gender in the choice for a sustainable tourism offer. Interestingly and in contradiction with previous literature, the authors conclude that males are less apathetic towards the environment than females and that in Italy the link between being a citizen and environmental awareness has yet to be built. **Peichl** and Duursma are both professionally engaged in the industry, respectively as manager at Hilton (Tallinn, Estonia), and owner of de Pleats (a restaurant and party centre in the North of the Netherlands). Peichl shows how theoretical insights can be used to design interventions aimed at inspiring a more pro-environmental attitudes in employees. **Duursma**, in her paper co-authored by **Vrengoer and Kobus**, illustrates the challenges of addressing the issue of food waste at her operations.

Finally, the paper by **Driel, Verkade and Vrengoer** is based on a third-year research project by Stenden Hotel Management School students. It describes the design, creation and test of non-alcoholic cocktails as a way to address social responsibility in a restaurant. This section is closed by a paper by **Mac Con Iomaire** reporting on "Food on the Edge", a symposium initiated by chef, restaurateur, and food columnist J. P. McMahon. The aim of Food on the Edge is to create a benchmark for best practice, in terms of food, its culture, and the people who produce it. In his contribution, Mac Con Iomaire provides an overview of the 39 presentations made over the two days where key themes were identified using content analysis. Though Food on the Edge was not branded as a sustainability forum, an overwhelming 85% of the presented papers dwelt on sustainability issues. There is, in the editors' view, no better proof that sustainability has conquered the attention of the hospitality and tourism industry.

Concluding, we wish to thank the editorial team of Research in Hospitality Management for hosting this special issue and thus contributing to the understanding and managing of the hospitality industry in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable way.

#### **Guest Editors**

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