
EDITORIAL

This issue of *Research in Hospitality Management* follows from the Academy of International Hospitality Research conference held at Stenden University in Leeuwarden, the Netherlands. This conference was organised around one of the key strands of AIHR's research strategy, namely "Innovation in hospitality". It represents one of the three core themes of AIHR along with "hospitality studies" and "sustainability". The annual conference provides a platform for sharing AIRH's research, as well as bringing together national and international researchers in the field.

The "Innovation is hospitality" theme of research is formally headed by Professor Sjoerd Gehrels. The research theme tends towards research issues that are concerned with the study *for* hospitality. In other words, the focus is concerned with research principally related to the hospitality industry's management and practices. Research is aligned with the commercial sector and the preparation of research programmes that investigate management actions in hospitality organisations.

The first half-day of the AIHR conference was devoted to revenue management; a topic highly relevant to all hospitality businesses because services are perishable and unused capacity cannot be stockpiled to be used later. Each day represents a new challenge to ensure that sales fully utilise capacity. These constraints are of particular concerns to hotel managers where bed spaces are fixed and revenue lost on any one night cannot be recouped through sales on another day. Each day is unique. The core of revenue management explores pricing strategies to ensure maximum occupancy and income. **Geherels, Lashley and Cavagnaro** provide a report of the AIRH conference programme and presentations.

The paper by Ran **Zhang** presents insights into the study of team building among hotel workers at a four-star hotel in the Netherlands. The study explored 11 different team-building interventions by management. The results suggest that socialising away from the workplace was the most effective team-building activity. Formal management approaches are seen for what they are, and people bond better when they are in informal, off-work settings. An interesting paper, that has useful insights for team-building practices.

La Rose and Rowson's paper examines the benefits of customer loyalty programmes. Many hotel companies are now looking to introduce customer loyalty schemes as a way of working directly with guests, instead of via booking platforms. It is felt that these loyalty schemes are more beneficial and less costly than booking agencies. The research suggests that to be effective, the loyalty programme has to provide guest with benefits not available to non-programme guests.

Heyes and Lashley's paper examines the supposed relationship between luxury, price and exclusivity. The research examined the tangible and intangible benefits provided for guests in three luxury hotels in London's Mayfair district. While it is assumed that luxury, price and exclusivity work in tandem, this research demonstrates that the benefits of luxury in accommodation and service provision reaches an optimum point, while price and exclusivity are correlated and rise together. In other words, although the comparison of the benefits provided in the three hotels' luxury suites were very similar, prices ranged across £5 000, £15 000 and £22 000 per night. As prices increased, the level of luxury did not increase correspondingly, though the number of guests willing and able to pay the higher prices reduced, thereby increasing exclusivity in line with price.

Fast, de Boer and Rowson's research investigated the factors likely to lead to customer satisfaction in the MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, events) sector. Customer satisfaction is an important consideration for all service providers, because satisfied customers are much more likely to return and actively recommend the provider to friends and colleagues. Meeting and convention users respond most positively to the intangible aspect of their service experience. Friendliness and politeness were ranked highly, but so were other intangibles, such as empathy, reliability, and responsiveness. Tangibles relating to facilities, equipment, and food quality also scored high on importance.

The cost of wine wasted as a result of serving by the glass was the subject of **Koldenhof and Vreengoer's** paper – Wasted Wine. Restaurants offer their guests the option to buy wines by the glass. This is attractive to customers who do not want a whole bottle, or where different guests in the same party wish to drink different wines. The consequence of this wine-by-the-glass policy is that opened bottles of wine go to waste, adding unnecessary operating costs. There is a number of wine-preserving systems that could help preserve wines when opened. The paper suggests several options, but industry practice continues to tolerate the wastage.

Renfors' paper is based upon a presentation made at the AIHR conference. The work explores the possibility of tourism programmes encouraging a more regio-centric approach to tourism in the Baltic. Sanfors is based in Finland and suggests that along with colleagues from Estonia and Latvia programmes could be collectively developed. The curriculum and programme presented could be designed collaboratively and then presented to students, developing the skills specific to tourism in the three countries. The programme would be promoting tourism without borders in that it would consider the region as a whole, rather than a group of individual countries.

Innovation in tourism is the subject of **Genç and Genç's** paper. The paper introduces the innovation types outlined in the current literature. It discusses four impacts of innovations in tourism. These are increasing the existing capacity, the survival of tourism sector itself, overcoming possible negative effects, and opening up saturated markets. Each type of innovation is related to one impact, and they are explored by using real-world examples. In conclusion, the paper, presents a model to measure the impact of innovations on the quality of life (of both tourists and service providers) and revenues received by the stakeholders who participate in the tourism market by investing.

Luxury service in the context of luxury hotels is the subject of **Harkison's** paper. Luxury in the intangibles is an under-researched area. When compared to other hotel settings, luxury hotels provide guests with more employee time. In some cases, a personal valet or housekeeper generate more intense service, but the offer is essentially focusing on the guest experience, and front-line staff performance is crucial to generating these experiences.

The importance of economics in the hospitality management curriculum was the contention of **Haynes and Egan's** contribution to the AIHR conference and paper reproduced in this volume of *RHM*. Economics was a module found in most hospitality management programmes in the past, but the subject lost favour in the last couple of decades. The authors argue that in the contemporary age of "big data", economic literacy is an essential for managers making revenue management decisions. Economics should be returned to the core management programme aimed at the hotel sector in particular.

Given the service characteristics of the hospitality offered to guests, employee performance represents a key intangible element of the experience that customers receive. Even in branded and partially standardised hotel and restaurant brands every guest/host encounter is unique and staff have to be able to perform in the appropriate manner.

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