

## Editorial

Rodney Westerlaken, Editor-in-Chief

Hotel Management School, NHL Stenden University of Applied Science, Leeuwarden, The Netherlands  
Correspondence: [erwin.losekoot@nhlstenden.com](mailto:erwin.losekoot@nhlstenden.com)

Dear Readers,

It is my pleasure to introduce *Research in Hospitality Management* 14(2). This issue brings together a diverse collection of research that explores some of the most pressing challenges and innovative developments shaping the future of hospitality. From the transformative potential of artificial intelligence, to the complexities of sustainability and employee retention, the articles in this issue highlight our field's dynamic and evolving nature.

A key theme that emerges across several articles is the growing impact of technology, particularly artificial intelligence, on hospitality operations and guest experiences. The study by Ibrahim and Islam on AI service robots in hotels provides fascinating insights into how these technologies are being perceived and adopted. Their findings on the differences between business and leisure travellers' reactions to AI-enabled services highlight the need for nuanced implementation strategies. Meanwhile, the review by El Hajal of a webinar on "The Future of AI in Hospitality and Tourism" offers a thought-provoking look at how AI may reshape strategic planning, sustainability efforts, and economic models in our industry.

Yet, even as we embrace technological innovation, this issue reminds us of the critical importance of the human element in hospitality. Van der Hulst and Zwaal's study on employee motivation and retention in food service emphasises the ongoing need to understand and meet the needs of our workforce. Their findings on the relative importance of extrinsic versus intrinsic motivational factors provide valuable guidance for managers seeking to boost employee engagement and longevity.

Sustainability continues to be a pressing concern for our industry, as evidenced by several contributions to this issue. The case study by Iddawala et al. on sustainability practices in Sri Lankan hotels offers important insights into the challenges of implementing sustainable operations in developing markets. Their work highlights the need for context-specific approaches that balance environmental, social, and economic considerations.

Building on this theme, the paper "Assessment of Regenerative Hospitality" represents a significant step forward in our understanding of sustainability in the hospitality sector. This study moves beyond traditional sustainability frameworks to explore the concept of regenerative hospitality. This approach aims to minimise negative impacts and actively enhance the environments and communities in which hotels operate. The authors' development of an assessment tool for regenerative practices provides both a theoretical contribution to the field and a practical resource for hotel managers. Their identification of key drivers, such as regenerative mindset, interconnectedness, and place integration, offers a nuanced framework for understanding and implementing regenerative approaches. This work aligns closely with growing industry interest in more holistic and impactful sustainability strategies.

I am particularly pleased to see the inclusion of research addressing emerging trends and niche markets within hospitality. The article by Moraes on the impact of support and service animals on travel experiences sheds light on an often-overlooked aspect of accessibility and inclusion in tourism. Similarly, the study by Wung and Nanfosso on tipping behaviours in African beauty salons expands our understanding of hospitality beyond traditional settings.

As we look to the future of hospitality education and research, the contributions to data utilisation among SMEs and cruise industry onboarding practices highlight the importance of bridging academic insights with practical industry applications. These studies demonstrate the value of close collaboration between researchers and practitioners in addressing real-world challenges.

In conclusion, the diverse range of topics and methodologies represented in this issue reflects hospitality research's vibrant and multifaceted nature. As our industry continues to navigate complex global challenges, from technological disruption to sustainability imperatives, rigorous and relevant research will be more important than ever. I hope that the insights presented in these pages will inspire further inquiry, informed debate, and innovative solutions to the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

I want to express my gratitude to all the authors, reviewers, and editorial team members who have contributed to this issue. Your dedication to advancing knowledge in hospitality management is truly commendable. To our readers, I invite you to engage deeply with these articles and consider how the findings might inform your work and research. Together, we can continue pushing the boundaries of hospitality scholarship and practice, shaping our industry's more resilient, sustainable, and inclusive future.