SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

Designing Meaningful Encounters with Talent and Technology

Edited by Huub Ruël
and Angelique Lombarts

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SUSTAINABLE HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT: DESIGNING MEANINGFUL ENCOUNTERS WITH TALENT AND TECHNOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

This edited book is the result of Hotelschool The Hague's first international research symposium, which was held in April 2019. Hotelschool The Hague celebrated its 90th anniversary in that particular year, and next to all kinds of festivities, this 90th anniversary provided an excellent opportunity to organize an international research symposium. This 2-day event was a great success in our view, with excellent key notes and research paper presentation sessions. Thank you, all of the participants for joining in and to Hotelschool The Hague's board of directors for their full support.

This introduction chapter to the book aims to 'warm up' the reader for the central theme of the conference *Hospitable futures – Preparing talents and understanding the technology to create meaningful encounters*. This theme summarized and emphasized the three great challenges for the international hospitality industry: talent management, technological innovation and meaningfulness human guest experience encounters in a digitalizing global society and international business environment. We will briefly touch upon these challenges in this chapter.

CORONA CRISIS

However, at the moment of writing this introduction, the world is in the middle of the coronavirus crisis which pushed countries and economies to a standstill. International travel in major markets, such as the Americas, Europe and Asia has almost completely stopped, restaurants are closed and hotels have seen enormous drops in bookings for months to come. The coronavirus crisis has given a truly big 'blow' to the international hospitality industry, and the effects will be felt long after. It may even be a 'game changer' in terms of the way our global economy was organized and the principles upon it was built. International relations are at stake. Hospitality and international solidarity will be the only way to deal with the effects of the corona pandemic. Especially privately owned small- and medium-sized hotels and restaurants will suffer, and unfortunately, quite a number of them may not survive the effects of the crisis. And about 75 million jobs in the global Travel and Tourism industry are at immediate risk due to the corona crisis (WTTC, 25 March 2020). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) called on 'all those in positions of power to help the powerless and enact policies to support and sustain a sector which is a driving force of the global economy and responsible for generating one in five of all new jobs'. (WTTC, 25 March 2020). An economic meltdown may occur with a domino effect for the entire supply chain. The WTTC calls(ed) for significant and swift measures upon the

moment of writing this introduction chapter. It urges governments to implement policies that will directly support the sector across the following three areas, namely[1]:

- Protecting the livelihoods of workers: Financial help must be granted to protect the incomes of the millions of workers in severe difficulty.
- Fiscal support: Government must extend vital, unlimited interest-free loans to global Travel and Tourism companies as well as the millions of small- and medium-sized businesses as a stimulus to prevent them from collapse. Governments' dues and financial demands on the Travel and Tourism sector need to be waived with immediate effect for at least the next 12 months.
- Injecting liquidity and cash: Cash flow assistance to support players big and small of the Travel and Tourism sector is critical as well as to offer targeted support to severely affected industries within the sector.

We, as editors of this book, find it our responsibility to support(ed) this call and also to contribute to in-depth analysis, idea and solution generation for our students, who will be the future managers, leaders and hospitality entrepreneurs, for faculty and for the international hospitality business on how to deal with the effects of the corona pandemic.

A MORE SUSTAINABLE FUTURE?

Perhaps the corona pandemic could offer the opportunity to turn to a more sustainable future? And Europe could lead the way. A recent Booking.com study found that 70% of travellers are more likely to book ecofriendly accommodations (The 2020 Ultimate Guide to the Hospitality Industry[2]). Consumers seem to show a preference for more sustainable business models, that hotels go 'green' which goes beyond encouraging guests to reuse towels for an extra day. But will the corona crisis trigger a speedy adoption of sustainable business models?

Until today, the basic logic for growth in the international hospitality industry was built on two factors, economic growth and tourism expansion (Fig. 1 adopted from Yang et al.,
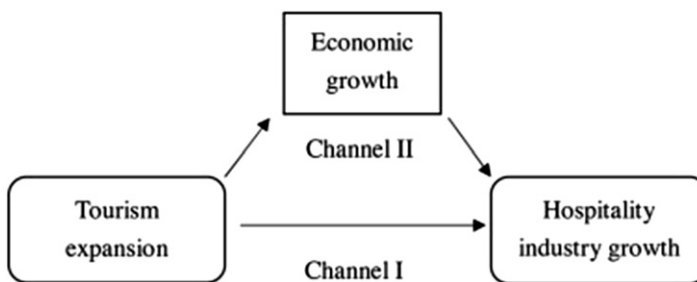

Fig. 1.   Drivers of Hospitality Industry Growth. *Source:* Yang et al. (2020).

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[1]World Travel and Tourism Council, 25 March 2020.
[2]https://hoteltechreport.com/news/hospitality-industry-guide.

2020).[3] Tourism expansion and economic growth are driving the growth of the hospitality industry. A key question is: will this logic hold in the aftermath of the corona crisis? And referring to the sustainability issue raised above, should the same logic be applied to the hospitality industry in the aftermath of the corona crisis?

In China, for example, where the corona crisis hit first, hotel investors felt forced to reconsider their strategic plans, and it put risk management of hotels to the test.[4] The Chinese market is characterized by about 45% of the hotel companies that are state owned and only about 7% foreign owned.[5] The current trend for China's hotel market is *renovating* existing assets, after two decades of rapid growth. China is feeling the results of urbanization and city development, land is becoming scares in cities which brought about a slow-down in new hotel investments, while at the same time, many older properties have become less competitive due to age and outdated facility. Interestingly enough, some regions and cities in China experience an oversupply and heavy competition. This forces investors and owners to be more careful with new projects. There are no signs of concerns about talent management or about implementing more sustainable business model paths, unfortunately. The explanation may be that investors still see it as their major concern to catch up with developed markets in terms of the average service and innovation level rather than to invest in sustainable business models.

A FAST-GROWING INDUSTRY

The international hospitality industry, however, consists of more than only hotels. If defined in a broad sense from lodging to entertainment and from offline only to online entirely, from food and beverages to travel tourism, the hospitality industry contributes more than 10% of the global GDP and provides directly 1 in 10 jobs of the world.[6] Until recently, hospitality companies were competing fiercely for talent due to the high employee turnover and global labour shortage. As a result, until recent, competing for talent and retaining qualified employees had become the most important concern of hospitality managers. And all this in an industry that until the worldwide corona crisis grew impressively the past decade, a growth that was faster than the world economy on average for 8 years in a row.[7] For example, in the United States, the hotel industry grew from 116 billion USD to 185 billion USD between 2009 and 2017 and the airline travel revenues grew in that same period from 155 to 222 billion dollars.[8] Ground transportation, restaurants and cruize business all benefitted from this growth.

MERGERS AND ACQUISITIONS

Over the past two decades, the hospitality industry experienced a mergers and acquisition boom, for example Marriot, a US-based hotel chain became the biggest hotel chain in the

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[3]Yang, Y., Chen, M. H., Su, C. H. J., & Lin, Y. X. (2020). Asymmetric effects of tourist arrivals on the hospitality industry. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, *84*, 102323.
[4]Horwarth HTL, China Hotel Investment & Asset Management Outlook 2020.
[5]Horwarth HTL, China Hotel Investment & Asset Management Outlook 2020.
[6]World Travel and Tourism Council, 25 March 2020.
[7]World Travel and Tourism Council, 25 March 2020.
[8]Deloitte - 2019 US Travel and Hospitality Outlook: https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/us/Documents/consumer-business/us-consumer-2019-us-travel-and-hospitality-outlook.pdf.

world in terms of annual revenues, after its merger with Starwood Hotels and Resorts in 2016. Marriot holds about 30 brands (such as Sheraton) across over 5,700 properties in 110 countries. Its annual revenue in 2019 was about 14.5 billion USD. Second largest hotel chain in 2019 was Hilton, also US based, which covers brands such as Astoria and Double Tree. Hilton holds over 5,000 hotel in about 100 countries. Third largest hotel chain is Accor, a Paris-based corporation which includes brands such as Sofitel, Novotel and All Seasons. Accor has about 3,700 hotels worldwide. Other major hotel chains that cover multiple brands are Best Western Hotels and Wyndham, a US-based chain. Wyndham is the largest chain when it comes to the number of properties worldwide, which count more than 8,000.[9] Despite the fact that small- and medium-sized hotels and restaurants, in most cases family-owned businesses, in terms of numbers are the biggest group segment, the hotel and restaurant industry became an industry consisting of large multinational corporations (MNCs).[10,11]

TRENDS IN THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY

The word hospitality originates from the Latin *hospitalitis*. It is about the relationship between guest and host, the latter coming from the word hospes which means host, guest or visitor. Hospitality is about welcoming a guest genuinely, without expecting a reward. The hospitality industry then turned into a service industry, however with a special flavour – the aim of the service is to provide people with a pleasant temporary stay, provide people with a pleasant entertaining experience and the industry is literally global – it is all around, from the poorest to the world's wealthiest. What then are the challenges and trends that this exiting industry which offers jobs for so many is facing?

As explained earlier, on March 28–29, 2019, Hotelschool The Hague organized its first international research symposium with the central theme: Hospitable futures: preparing talents and understanding the technology to create meaningful encounters. The symposium's aim was to bridge the gap between academic research and the views and experiences of practitioners. As part of the symposium, a panel debate was held. The panel consisted of Dirk Bakker (Chief Executive Officer for Colliers in the Netherlands), Veerle Donders (Concept and Brand Director at Zoku), Bruce Tracey (Cornell University) and Jeroen Oskam (Hotelschool The Hague) discussing the future outlook for the hospitality industry from this combined practitioner and academic perspective. The following statements, submitted by Hotelschool The Hague researchers and external experts, were discussed by the panel:

(1) What does authentic, personalized hospitality look like in a high-tech environment?
(2) The GAFAM (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft) five, not the leading hotel brands, are the real competitive threat.
(3) Technology will supersede human interaction, redefining our industry as a negligible employer.

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[9]Ecole Hotellerie Lausanne: https://blog.ehl.edu/meet-the-biggest-hotel-chains-in-the-world.
[10]Getz, D., & Carlsen, J. (2005). Family business in tourism: State of the art. *Annals of Tourism Research*, *32*(1), 237–258.
[11]Peters, M., Kallmuenzer, A., & Buhalis, D. (2019). Hospitality entrepreneurs managing quality of life and business growth. *Current Issues in Tourism*, *22*(16), 2014–2033.

(4) In 2030, the lodging industry counts only five, predominantly Chinese, global brands.
(5) Our industry must be a forerunner of sustainability to maintain legitimacy in major markets.

General conclusions of the debate were that the panel saw a future that combines human interaction and customer centricity with facilitating technologies. Hospitality expertize is therefore not likely to be replaced by technology. Consolidation and globalization of the market will continue alongside a presence of local innovative brands with specific market intelligence. Sustainable policies have become indispensable, not only as an ethical principle but as a financing requirement. However, given the corona pandemic and its aftermath, it remains to be seen how solid these conclusions are.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK?

The research paper presentations at the international research symposium were categorized in several themes. We bundled these various themes in three comprehensible sections. The first section deals with *hospitality and experience(s)*. The second section dives into *talent(s) and workforces in the hospitality sector*. It is quite disappointing to see that issues that have been around for years still appear to be neglected. At the same time, we also see that new and innovative initiatives are emerging. The same applies to the third section: *technology and sustainability*, an indispensable part of any self-respecting industry. The final section covers a variety of hospitality perspectives.

Although the sections each have their own focus, there are often overlaps. In an industry where the most important elements, i.e. the parties involved and the products and the context in which they are produced and reproduced, is this enormous interdependence undeniable or perhaps even indispensable.

Section I: Hospitality and Experience(s)

Hospitality is an experience par excellence. Hospitality is service plus. Service and hospitality are both characterized by impalpability; heterogeneity; perishability; reciprocity; simultaneity of production and consumption and interactive consumption. It is the hospitable behaviour that makes hospitality an outstanding service, the cherry on the service cake, so to say. The more open and perceptive one is for a hospitable context, the greater the chance one is really appreciating and will be immersed by it thoroughly. Amongst others, the corona pandemic and climate challenges might change our awareness of the context we are actually living in. Meaningful experiences are long-lasting and life-enriching experiences. Moreover, as it takes multiple perspectives in consideration, it builds on a better understanding and reciprocity towards all tangible and intangible stakeholders. In the opening chapter, Van der Heijden and Bondarouk explore which values are created during the co-creating process when making use of AirBnB. Those who use AirBnB, see this as part of creating a meaningful experience. However, AirBnB is a contested subject: people either love it or hate it. This counts for many so-called sharing platform solutions. The users are fond of its' possibilities and choices the platforms usually offer. And of its' transparency: one knows beforehand what it cost, there is a huge range of different offers with varying prices range, and there is an enormous amount of reviews instantly informing a prospective user of the quality and what to expect. The sharing principle of the platforms as AirBnB invites the user to co-create its' experience.

The second chapter is partly inspired by the nuisance caused by users of AirBnB. In recent years, cities are increasingly experiencing tensions between the various groups of stakeholders, such as citizens, entrepreneurs and visitors, who make use of the city. Many cities have to deal with over-tourism, and especially residents as the main stakeholder group continuously complain. As a result, local authorities are forced to take measures to guarantee the quality of life of their inhabitants. However, by favouring one group, the other group is disadvantaged, inter alia, by tourism businesses that earn their living from visitors. Park and Wiegerink are looking into the possibilities of creating a liveable and sympathetic city for all those involved. They combine hardware with software, propose a smart solution that bridges the diverging needs of all stakeholders and support the residents not only to regain control but also to increase the hospitality of the city.

Whereas the first two chapters have a clear link with tourism, this third chapter by Lombarts deals with the experience in a hospital. Initially, hospitals do not immediately evoke a hospitable image, but as the essence of the word hospital says, a hospital essentially offers what hospitality is all about: safety, protection, care in the form of food, drink, a bed and, above all, illness treatment. How hospitable that can be is described in this chapter. By mapping the patient journey from a hospitality point of view, it is revealed what is going well and where there is room for improvement.

Section II: Talent(s) and Workforces in the Hospitality Sector

Teeuwisse and Brannon tackle an important, long-standing issue: why do so few hotelschool students enter the hospitality industry? Recognizing the fact that there are numerous researches studies undertaken in this area, they assert that most of these are of quantitative nature. Hence, they dive into this important question and aim to substantiate the issue with a qualitative response. In order to obtain an understanding of the reasons of withholding entering the hospitality industry, they looked into the impact of students' internships in the hospitality industry. They interviewed students at three key stages of their practical placements, namely, pre, post and during their practical placement resulting in some with notable findings and useful recommendations in this chapter (4).

The previous chapters already made it clear: the hospitality industry is a people business by definition. The success of an organization is therefore largely dependent on the performance of its employees. Here too, reciprocity plays an important role when it comes to employees. Yumuk and Kurgun look at the influence of the organizational culture on the employees. In particular, they look at the staff fit and the organizational culture in the hotel companies. They distinguish between hotels with a clan culture and hotels with a hierarchical culture. Chapter 6 provides valuable insights for recruiting new employees and for retaining existing employees related to the organizational culture of the hotel.

Like Teeuwisse and Brannon, Russell and Hellenschmidt focus on students, more precisely they emphasize the potential of students with disabilities. They compare the requirements that companies set for their employees next to the possibilities for students with disabilities to follow hospitality education. If the hospitality industry is to be an inclusive industry, they say, more innovation combined with technology applications is needed to create access and meaningful encounters with students from all sectors of society. They look at how hospitality education can contribute to the inclusion and participation of talent from all sections of society.

Section III: Technology and Sustainability

Sustainability and technology are two key drivers in the highly competitive field in which the hospitality industry operates. The author of this chapter, Nil SONUÇ, combines both in her search for the requirements and accessibility that guests have. A positive image in this area can offer a competitive advantage. Reason to use qualitative research to explore the commitment and awareness of hotel staff in management positions for accessibility and technological requirements in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) mentioned above.

In the next chapter, the focus will remain on achieving competitive advantage in relation to sustainability. Van Rheede and Lim dive into sustainability in a hospitality business strategy. Although corporate social responsibility (CSR) is embedded in business strategies, they are not always integrated as part of strategic development. In this chapter, they consider the roles of stakeholders and their impact on the sector. And this chapter also looks at the increasingly complex processes and tougher requirements that companies in the hospitality industry are facing.

Hán, Petříček and Chalupa also list factors that affect business processes, such as the level of competition mentioned above, but also more demanding customers, the call for improved results and labour market problems. All these issues call for a more systematic approach to hotel management. Using Business Processes Management (BPM) approaches already used by other industries, they are investigating the possibilities for the hotel industry.

The next chapter of this section gives a clear overview of the knowledge gap with regard to sustainability in the hospitality industry. Alvarez-Risco, Estrada-Merino and Perez-Luyo are following up on the various SDGs relating to the hospitality industry. They look at each of the aspects mentioned by them and indicate where and how more knowledge can and should be obtained about them.

The final chapter deals with the importance of AI in business. Just like the slow adoption of AI in the hospitality industry. Bounatirou and Lim draw attention to this and researches the impact of AI on business processes in the hospitality industry. They foresee not only improvements in business processes and workplace efficiency success but also opportunities to improve returns. However, as said before, we are at the cradle of both research and application of AI in the hospitality industry.

We, the editors of this volume, are very thankful to all the authors for sharing their work. We hope that this volume will contribute to advance the debate on how to create hospitable futures.

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