

Special issue on service experience innovation in hospitality and tourism

Welcome to *IJCHM*'s special issue on Service Experience Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism. I would like to specially thank our guest editors Alessandra Marasco, Marcella De Martino, Alfonso Morvillo and Cihan Cobanoglu for putting together this very strong, important and timely special issue. The articles included in this special issue should be well received by scholars, students and practicing managers in our field.

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The service experience is at the core of any service offering and service design (Zomerdijsk and Voss, 2010) and encompasses the customer's cognitive, emotional and behavioral responses during the service encounter (Helkkula, 2011). Enhancing and innovating the service experience represents a key priority for contemporary service research and practice (Ostrom *et al.*, 2015), and there is a call for more research on the linkages among services, experiences and innovation (Scupola and Fuglsang, 2018). In hospitality and tourism, an experience perspective to service innovation and design is increasingly emphasized for exploring how to design and implement innovations that support firms' and destinations' sustainable competitive advantage through customer-centric experiences (Jernsand *et al.*, 2015; Stare and Krizaj, 2018; Tussyadiah, 2014; Zach and Krizaj, 2017; Bilgihan and Nejad, 2015). However, this is a nascent area of research and more studies are needed to understand how to improve and innovate tourism and hospitality services from an experience perspective in the contemporary context, where customers are playing a greater role in creating their experiences and information communication technology is a central infrastructure for delivery and innovation of services and experiences.

In this direction, this special issue sought studies that apply wider theoretical lenses and rigor methodologies to improve our understanding of this theme and foster theoretical and empirical development in hospitality and tourism. Our special issue comprises ten papers and addresses service experience innovation in relation to diverse contexts, including hotel industry, heritage sites, museums, sports entertainment, travel agencies and hostels, through a variety of qualitative and quantitative methods and a global geographical coverage. It encompasses a range of topics related to service experience innovation, reflecting the complexity of this theme and the variety of theoretical perspectives from which it is approached. In particular, the special issue contributes to shed light on the understanding of experiences as a basis for service improvement and innovation. In their paper, Minwoo Lee, Seonjeong Lee and Yoon Koh explore the critical role of sensory marketing on hotel guest experience in the context of hotel customer experience and service innovation, using big data and business intelligence techniques. Their study results demonstrate that customers' multisensory experiences enhance the effects of positive affect, negative affect and cognitive effort on customer satisfaction. Furthermore, this study sheds light on how big data and business intelligence techniques can be used to understand hotel guest experience and conducting theoretically grounded confirmatory research.

Medéia Veríssimo and Carlos Costa unveil the factors that contribute to a positive hostel experience from a customer perspective by examining 500 positive reviews posted online by guests of five top-rated hostels in Europe and Latin America through a netnographic explorative approach. As little is known about hostels and their peculiarities in terms of service experience, their study contributes to fill a gap showing that a hostel stay is



positively enhanced by ten key features, namely, staff, supplementary services (e.g. social activities), facilities, location, atmosphere, guests' interactions, cleanliness, design and decoration, value for money and safety. In the examined context, the features that play a crucial social and affective role are predominant, with social interactions during the hostel experience being more relevant over the economic appeal. Considering the importance of human resources' commitment in shaping visitors' service experience and innovation, Sara Lombardi, Sara Sassetti and Vincenzo Cavaliere examine employees' customer orientation in museums through an analysis of 165 service workers, showing that employees' affective commitment positively influences employees' customer orientation via the full mediating effect of knowledge sharing. Szu-Hsin Wu and Yuhui Gao explore emotional customer experience (ECX), its sources and co-creation behavior that enhance positive customer experience in luxury hotels. Building on appraisal theory and using a netnographic approach for the analysis of online customer reviews, they identify different emotions and prominent sources of ECX during service interactions. An ECX co-creation framework is developed by the authors, which integrates various emotion triggers and constructors and subsequent customer co-creation behaviors.

The interplay between service experience innovation and value co-creation processes is addressed by Niclas Erhardt, Carlos Martin-Rios and Elisa Chan in relation to sport entertainment. The authors used a qualitative case-based approach. This study unpacks the dynamics of shared and competing interests in the process of co-creating value between sports organizations and their customers (i.e. fans) and offers insights into how deploying strategies to balance tensions in value co-creation can help foster stronger links between customers and sports organizations, which are essential to facilitate creativity and innovation. Linda Hollebeek and Raouf Ahmad Rather examine the effect of service innovativeness on customer co-creation, satisfaction, advocacy and behavioral loyalty intent in the travel agency context. Using structural equation modeling on a sample of 340 travel agency customers, the study empirically demonstrates the importance of service innovation to maintain or improve the customer experience through their journey and, thus, firm performance.

The theme of this special issue is also addressed in relation to the design of service experience. Monica Cerdan Chiscano and Esther Binkhorst examine the effect of including customers with special needs in the service design process of heritage routes. Based on the qualitative analysis of the "Heritage Sites Design Project" in Barcelona, their study proves how cultural heritage experiences improve when customers are involved as co-producers and co-innovators, as the early stage of the service designing process. Based on S-D logic and sociomateriality, Sut Ieng Lei, Dan Wang and Rob Law investigate how mobile technologies are used to shape services that allow customers to create their unique and personalize experiences in the hospitality context. The study delineates hoteliers' understanding of mobile technologies as a means to co-create value, their strategic considerations and the forms in which value is expected to be co-created. It provides a contribution to the area of information technology enabled innovation of customer's service experience by explaining the structure and design of co-created experiences facilitated by mobile-based services.

Another group of papers in the special issue contributes to advance knowledge and practice in the field from the perspective of open innovation. Lidija Lalicic and Astrid Dickinger analyze an online participation tool designed and facilitated by Destination Management Organizations to harvest valuable users' ideas for enhancing tourism firms' value creation and innovation processes. By focusing on 489-ideas contest design, the study shows that dimensions such as novelty, feasibility, relevance and elaboration influence the

overall quality of the submissions while the age of the user proved to be the most distinguishable factor in harvesting high quality ideas. Fernando E. García-Muiña, Laura Fuentes-Moraleda, Trinidad Vacas-Guerrero and Juan José Rienda-Gómez propose an open innovation model for publicly owned small- and medium-sized museums for improving visitors' experience. The four main dimensions of the model (relations, organization, technology and experience) are tested through a focus group with destination stakeholders and in-depth interviews with museum managers. Trust, commitment and the emphasis on improving the whole visitor experience are key determinants of open and responsible innovation.

We are very grateful to the authors and the reviewers for their contribution to this issue and hope that it will stimulate further interest in this emerging research area.

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