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Special Issue: Developments in the Field of Tourism Economics

Introduction

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This special issue is the latest in the series on ‘Developments in the Field of Tourism Economics’, which were presented at the 5th Conference of the International Association for Tourism Economics (IATE) held in Hong Kong SAR, China from June 30th to July 3rd, 2015. The conference was hosted by The Hong Kong Polytechnic University together with Leeds Beckett University, and was sponsored by the *Tourism Economics* journal and the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). The bi-annual conference follows on from Ljubljana, Slovenia (2013), Bournemouth, UK (2011), Chang Mai, Thailand (2009) and Palma de Majorca, Spain (2007). It was a great opportunity for scholars and practitioners to present their latest research, re-acquaint with old friends and make new ones.

The Conference hosted a total of 84 presentations, including 23 full papers. 93 delegates representing 25 different countries attended IATE 2015. Delegates presented on a range of tourism economic themes throughout the Conference. The main themes were Tourism Demand, Tourism Competitiveness, Tourism Forecasting, the Economics of Hotels and

Pricing issues. Conference delegates were stimulated by three keynote speakers: Dr Oliver Herrmann, Director of Statistics and Tourism Satellite Account Programme, the UNWTO delivered a talk on “*A Brief History of Tourism Statistics: From the “Visitor” to “Gross Travel Propensity” or... Are Tourism Statistics Crazy or Users Lazy?*” Professor Egon Smeral, at MODUL University Vienna, Austria presented his latest research entitled “*Questioning the Stability of Tourism Income Elasticities: A Critical Perspective*” and Professor Stephen Wanhill, Editor of *Tourism Economics*, entertained conference delegates with his talk “*What Tourism Economists Do. Your Contribution to Understanding Tourism.*”

This special issue includes nine papers and one research note exploring a wide range of cutting-edge themes in the field of tourism economics, using various innovative approaches and covering different countries/regions and sectors. All selected papers underwent a rigorous double-blind review process before final revision and acceptance.

Kim, Song & Pyun, in “The relationship among tourism competitiveness, poverty, and economic growth in developing countries: A panel data regression analysis”, discover heterogeneous effects of tourism on the poverty ratio. This paper won the Best Paper Award at the IATE 2015 conference. Using panel data from 69 developing countries, this paper argues that the tourism industry only benefits the least developed countries (an income per capita below \$3,400) through reducing poverty ratios.

The first runner-up of paper award was Divisekera with his paper “Interdependencies of demand for international air transportation and international tourism”. This is the first study to model transport and tourism demand simultaneously. This paper reveals that tourism demand is more expenditure and price-elastic than transport demand. There are some improvements made to the Almost Ideal Demand System, such as the development of TPIs and uses of tourists’ actual airfares.

In “There is no fuzziness when it comes to measuring service quality in national parks”, Saayman, Martin and Rorman collect 28,641 questionnaires and apply a fuzzy-multi-criteria-decision-making model to evaluate the service quality in the South African National Parks. The findings show that the level of service quality varies along with the time of the year to visit the park. Service quality is also examined in the research note “Service quality improving effects and recreational benefits for sports tourism”. Using Sun-Moon Lake Swimming Carnival Event as the case study, Yeh, Hua and Huang find in this research note that NT\$85.76 million of consumer surplus can be obtained from improving the service quality of sports programme and another NT\$72.90 million through the facility improvement.

Three of the seven remaining papers focus on the tourism economics issues in Asia. Meng, Zou, Li, Ren and Zhang, in “International tourism hub: function assessment and application”, apply Analytic Hierarchy Process to develop an assessment index with 49 indicators, which are used to measure the tourism hub functions. They find stronger functions on gathering and distributing, and management and services in Beijing, and stronger transferring function in Shanghai, China. Using dynamic panel data models in “Attraction agglomeration and destination appeal”, Zhou, Qu and Li examine the impact of different types of attraction agglomeration on the destination appeal in domestic and international tourism markets in

China. One of the key results implies that the agglomeration of cultural attractions produced the largest impacts in both markets. In “Efficiency analysis of Japanese Ryokans”, Ohe and Peypoch assess the productivity and efficiency of Japanese Ryokans using a Window Data Envelopment Analysis approach. They conclude that as one of the oldest traditional accommodation forms in Japan, the larger Ryokans operate more efficient than smaller ones.

The remaining three papers apply tourism economics to the issues of international trade, environment, and wellbeing. Saayman, Figini and Cassella apply the gravity model to examine “The influence of formal trade agreements and informal economic cooperation on international tourism flows”. This article enriches the existing literature through expanding the number of countries and types of agreements in the model. Cai evaluates the effects of tourist consumed goods and services on CO2 emission using a multiregional input-output framework in the paper “Greenhouse gas emission from tourist activities in South Tyrol”. The results show that the production of the tourist goods in South Tyrol, a small region in the North of Italy was responsible for the emission of 1,092 kt CO₂e of greenhouse gases in 2010. Tokarchuk, Gabreile and Maurer analyse “Tourism intensity impact on satisfaction with life of German residents” divided into different groups, employed, unemployed and retired individuals. Using a representative socio-economic panel of German households from 2000 to 2011, this paper finds a nonlinear relationship between tourism intensity and resident’s wellbeing for both employed and unemployed groups, and an insignificant relationship in the retired group.

As with all papers accepted in *Tourism Economics*, the selection of papers for this special issue was based on their quality and contribution to the field of tourism economics. The Sixth Conference of the International Association for Tourism Economics will be held from 21-23 June 2017 at the University of Bologna in Rimini, Italy. We encourage all scholars and practitioners to attend and share their research and discover the latest developments in the field of tourism economics.