

Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice
Volume 9

Quality Services and Experiences in Hospitality and Tourism

Series Editors:

Jafar Jafari

Department of Hospitality and Tourism, University of Wisconsin-Stout, Menomonie, WI 54751, USA.

Tel (715) 232 2339; Email: jafari@uwstout.edu

Liping A. Cai

Purdue Tourism and Hospitality Research Center, Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana 47907, USA.

Tel (765) 494 8384; Email: liping@purdue.edu

Recognizing the increasing gap between what is researched in academic community and what is practiced in industry, this series aims to bring together academic and industry leaders in their respective fields to discuss, exchange, and debate issues critical to the advancement of tourism. The book series intends to not only create a platform for academics and practitioners to share theories and practices with each other, but more importantly, to serve as a collaborative venue for meaningful synthesis.

Each volume will feature a distinct theme by focusing on a current or upcoming niche or “hot” topic. It shows how theories and practices inform each other; how both have evolved, advanced, and been applied; and how industry best practices have benefited from, and contributed to, theoretical developments. Volume editors have both strong academic credentials and significant consulting or other industry engagement experiences. Chapter contributors will be identified through professional conferences and trade conventions. In general, the book series seeks a synergy of how concepts can inform actions, and vice versa. The book series will inspire a new generation of researchers who can translate academic discoveries to deliverable results valuable to practitioners.

Bridging Tourism Theory and Practice
Volume 9

Quality Services and Experiences in Hospitality and Tourism

EDITORS

LIPING A. CAI

Purdue University, USA

POOYA ALAEDINI

University of Tehran, Iran



United Kingdom – North America – Japan – India – Malaysia – China

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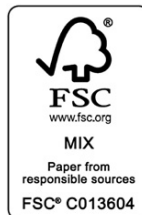
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About the Authors

Pooya Alaedini palaedini@ut.ac.ir is an Associate Professor of Social Planning at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tehran, Iran, where he teaches urban and regional planning, economic development, and tourism studies. He is the coeditor of *Economic Welfare and Inequality in Iran: Developments since the Revolution* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2016) and coauthor of *From Shelter to Regeneration: Slum Upgrading and Housing Policies in I.R. Iran* (UDRO, 2014). His earlier publications include monographs in Persian, peer-reviewed articles in English and Persian, and full-length reports produced for international organizations. He holds a PhD in urban planning and policy development from Rutgers University.

Liping A. Cai liping@purdue.edu is a Professor and Director of Purdue Tourism and Hospitality Research Center in the College of Health and Human Sciences, Purdue University, USA. His research portfolio consists of destination image and branding, emerging markets and rural tourism, consumer behaviors, and experiences. He currently directs China Research Programs and studies the intersections among tourism, intercultural learning, and quality of life. He has served on the Tourism Council of the State of Indiana since 2004. He is a Faculty Scholar of Purdue University, life-time achievement awardee of International Society of Travel & Tourism Educators, and 2013–2014 Fellow of American Council of Education.

Antònia Casellas antonia.casellas@uab.cat is an Associate Professor in the Geography Department, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain. In the past, she held positions at College of Architecture and Planning at the University of Utah (2006–2007) and Departments of Geography and Government at New Mexico State University (2004–2005). She is the author or coauthor of over 50 publications written in several languages on urban and economic development, cultural and political geography, governance, and tourism. She has academic degrees in philosophy, communications, and

city and regional planning and holds a PhD in urban planning and policy development from Rutgers University.

Dordaneh Davari ddavari@purdue.edu is a PhD Student in the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Purdue University, USA. Having worked as a Consultant for a number of industries, including hospitality and tourism, she has more than 15 years of prior experience in strategic management and strategic marketing. Her publications include an award-winning book on strategic management authored in Persian and a number of translations (most recently, Michael Cusumano and David Yoffie's *Strategy Rules*). She has graduate degrees in engineering and planning as well as a Master of Science in Management Studies from MIT's Sloan School of Management.

Chloe Downes c.downes@wlv.ac.uk is a Graduate of the Master program in tourism at the University of Wolverhampton, the United Kingdom. She has worked in the event industry since the completion of her degree in 2016. For her thesis, she conducted research on horseracing events and the impact of social media on attracting visitors to them. Her undergraduate degree in tourism management is also from the University of Wolverhampton. Her areas of interest include social media and the use of big data for analyzing events alongside the relationship between the marketing side of events and customer satisfaction.

Kourosch Esfandiari k.esfandiari@ecu.edu.au is a PhD Candidate in the School of Business and Law at Edith Cowan University, Australia. His research interests include entrepreneurship, safety and security, and heritage and sustainability in the context of hospitality and tourism with the focus on the sociopsychological concept of behavior. He has published peer-reviewed papers in *Journal of Business Research* and the Proceedings of the 28th Annual CAUTHE Conference, Australia. He has written a book titled *English for Iranian Tourist Guides*, which has been adapted as a textbook in Iranian tourism schools and tourist guide training centers since 2014.

Ruiyu Feng 1473514546@qq.com is an Undergraduate Senior, majoring in tourism and hospitality management in the School of Management of Xiamen University in Xiamen, China. Her professional training includes internships in both the Human Resources Department and Food and Beverage Department in Xiamen Vanilla Garden Hotel, China. Her current research interest is in service marketing and management. She has recently presented a study at the 2016 Annual Conference of the International

Society of Travel and Tourism Educators and participated in a project to investigate tea culture and tourism development at Mount Wuyi in Fujian Province, China.

Jon Kepa Gerrikagoitia jkgerrikagoitia@ideko.es is in charge of the information and communication technology (ICT) and automation research group in IK4-Ideko, Spain. His group works to incorporate the latest advances in ICT and data science into manufacturing and business fields within the framework widely known as Industry 4.0. His areas of interest include big data analytics and machine learning, contributing in measurement, modeling, analysis, and visualization. He has worked on revenue management, eMarketing, and eCommerce as well as tourism destination management. He earned his PhD in computer science from Mondragón Unibertsitatea in Spain.

Christophe Guibert christophe.guibert@univ-angers.fr is a Sociologist and a researcher at the University of Angers and at the Espaces et Sociétés Laboratory, France. For the last 15 years, he has worked on the themes of littoral public policies, as well as the social uses of sports, culture, and tourism leisure. He has published several books and numerous scientific articles on these topics. He carries out his research using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies and through fieldworks mainly in China, England, France, and Spain. He is an editorial board member of the multidisciplinary journal *Mondes du tourisme*.

Shiva Hashemi shhashemi4@gmail.com holds a PhD in tourism business and marketing at the School of Housing, Building, and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang, Malaysia. She received her Master's in tourism development from the same institute in Malaysia in 2015. Her research interests include tourism business development which further encompass sustainable tourism and social impact assessment, as well as hospitality, convention tourism, and culinary tourism. Her research accomplishments over the past five years are demonstrated in several articles she has authored or coauthored. They have been published in international journals or presented at international conferences.

Bona Kim bona.kim2@msvu.ca is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Business and Tourism and Hospitality Management, Mount Saint Vincent University in Halifax, Canada. She obtained her PhD in hospitality and tourism management from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. Her research interests include service quality, consumer psychology, tourism experience, and pilgrimage and religious tourism. She

received the “Young Scientist Award” at the International Conference of Tourism 2015 in London, UK, and the “2017 International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management Literati Awards.” She is a Member of Certified Hospitality Educator awarded by the American Hotel and Lodging Educational Institute.

Shaian Kiumarsi kiumarsi78@gmail.com is a Teaching Fellow at the Graduate School of Business, Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang, Malaysia, where he recently earned his PhD. His undergraduate degree was in computer software engineering, while he earned his Master’s in business administration, specializing in service science and management. He has several years of work experience in education as well as in industry. His research interests include business IT, service innovation, marketing, energy, and tourism. He is presently conducting research in the field of innovation-business information technology. He has several journal articles and conference presentations to his record.

Xinran Y. Lehto xinran@purdue.edu is a Professor in the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Purdue University, USA. Prior to her academic appointments, she spent six years working in the tourism industry as a marketing executive. Her research addresses how destinations can effectively market experience-based vacation products to unique segments such as family. Much of her work is concerned with developing an understanding of how tourists interact with a destination through leisure and hospitality experiences; what their motivations and images are; and what personal, interpersonal, and cultural factors contribute to their destination satisfaction.

Anyu Liu anyu.liu@surrey.ac.uk is a Lecturer in Hospitality at the University of Surrey, the United Kingdom. He obtained his PhD degree from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University in 2016 and continued there as a postdoc fellow before the current appointment. His research interests related to tourism include demand modeling and forecasting, impact analysis, the development of satellite account, and tourist satisfaction index. He has been involved in more than 10 consultancy projects funded by the Pacific Asia Tourism Association, Guangdong Tourism Administration of China, Hong Kong Disneyland, and Shanghai Disneyland. He is also the co-investigator of two grants funded by the National Nature Science Foundation of China.

Azizan Marzuki chik72@usm.my is an Associate Professor in the Department of Urban and Regional Planning, School of Housing,

Building, and Planning, Universiti Sains Malaysia in Penang, Malaysia. His areas of research include urban and regional planning, community participation in the decision-making process, convention tourism, hospitality, carrying capacity, and social impact assessment. His articles have appeared in *Tourism Management*, *Asia Pacific Journal of Tourism Research*, *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, *Anatolia*, *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, *Tourism Analysis*, *Tourism Planning and Development*, *Journal of Tourism*, and *Journal of Place Management and Development*. He earned his PhD from Flinders University, Australia.

Gianna Moscardo gianna.moscardo@jcu.edu.au is a Professor in the College of Business, Law and Governance at James Cook University (JCU), Australia. Before joining JCU as an academic in 2002, she worked for the Cooperative Research Centre for the Great Barrier Reef, exploring aspects of tourism and sustainability in this world heritage listed area. Her research interests related to tourism include evaluating sustainable development strategy, understanding behavior and experiences, effectiveness of interpretation, and the role of stories in experiences. She is the current Chair of BEST EN, an international organization committed to the creation and dissemination of knowledge to support sustainable tourism education, research, and practice.

S. Fatemeh Mostafavi Shirazi fatemeh.mostafavi@ltu.se is a Senior Lecturer at the Industrial Marketing Department of Lulea University of Technology, Sweden. Prior to this appointment, she was an Assistant Professor at the KTO Karatay University in Turkey. She has further academic experiences as a lecturer at public and private universities in Iran and as a visiting scholar in other countries. Her research focuses on tourism business and marketing, including relationship marketing and customer relationship management. Her articles have appeared in *International Journal of Management and Marketing*, *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, and *Journal of Global Management*. She gained her PhD in tourism business and marketing from Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Adel Nikjoo a.nikjoo@shandiz.ac.ir is a Lecturer in Tourism Studies at the Shandiz Institute of Higher Education in Mashhad, Iran. He teaches courses on leisure industry, tourist behavior, and tourism economics. He is also affiliated with the ACECR Institute for Tourism Research, also located in Mashhad. In the past, he has been involved in a number of funded research projects, especially concerning sociology of tourism. He holds a Master's degree in tourism planning from Sheikh Bahaei University

of Isfahan, Iran. His areas of interest include tourist behavior, tourist motivation, social media, residents' attitudes toward tourism, well-being, and destination image.

Bill Ryan b.ryan@okstate.edu is a Professor and Director Emeritus at the School of Hotel and Restaurant Administration, Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, USA. His research interests include management and hospitality education. He has received four best research paper awards and is a two-time recipient of the Oklahoma State University Regents Distinguished Teaching Award. He has over 15 years of leadership experience in the hospitality industry and has served on the board of directors for restaurants, hotels, and other professional associations. He works with industry leaders to craft and implement public policy and integrate educational programs into the hospitality profession.

Roya Rahimi roya.rahimi@wlv.ac.uk is a Reader in Tourism, Hospitality, and Event Management at the University of Wolverhampton, United Kingdom. She has published number of papers in top-tier journals and more than 15 book chapters. Her research interests are innovation, big data, customer relationship management, organizational culture, gender equality, and higher education in tourism. She sits on the editorial board of number of leading journals in her field and also acts as the Reviewer. Her paper won the Valene L. Smith Prize at the International Conference on Service Quality in Hospitality and Tourism in 2016. In 2018 two of her papers won the most outstanding paper awards by Emerald Literati Award. In 2017 and 2018 she has been nominated and shortlisted for Vice-Chancellor award at the University of Wolverhampton for her outstanding contribution to research.

Peter Robinson p.robinson@wlv.ac.uk is Principal Lecturer and Head of Department for Marketing, Innovation, Leisure, and Enterprise at the University of Wolverhampton, the United Kingdom. He is also a Trustee of the Carpet Museum in Kidderminster and Elvaston Castle and Gardens Trust. His research explores photography, nostalgia, authenticity, urban exploration, and visitor experiences. He has published widely through trade publications, academic journals, and a number of edited and coauthored books. He has also worked as a business development consultant (mainly within the leisure sector) with a number of high-profile clients across the United Kingdom.

Grant Saff grant.saff@hofstra.edu is Professor and Chair of the Department of Global Studies and Geography at Hofstra University, New York, USA. His publications and research have focused on urban and suburban

development, particularly issues related to urban desegregation and residential exclusion. He has been a visiting faculty member at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, the National Institute for South China Sea Studies, and the University of Cape Town. He has also worked at the Development Bank of Southern Africa. He holds a PhD in urban planning and policy development from Rutgers University.

Ainhoa Serna aserna@mondragon.edu is a Lecturer at Mondragon Unibertsitatea, Spain, and has directed the university's tourism and mobility research area since 2010. Her research interests are related to web engineering, natural language processing, and data science, as well as semantic web with a strong industry orientation. She has led research teams from the university together with the Cooperative Research Center in Tourism (CICtourGUNE) on projects to develop tourism agenda in collaboration with the Basque Network of Science, Technology, and Innovation. She earned her PhD in computer science from Mondragon Unibertsitatea.

Siamak Seyfi siamak.seyfi@malix.uni-paris1.fr is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Geography at the Research Lab of Interdisciplinary Research Group for Tourism Studies, University of Pantheon-Sorbonne, France. He has focused on the relationship between power and the environment in his dissertation. He holds a Master's degree in tourism and sustainable regional development from Montpellier III University in France. His research interests are sustainable tourism, community development, resident attitudes, and social innovation in tourism. He is particularly interested in probing tourism from a political ecology perspective using qualitative and mixed methods. He is currently coediting a book on tourism challenges in Iran.

Narges Shojaie narges.shojaie@gmail.com is a PhD Student in cultural policy at Kharazmi University, Iran. She is also affiliated with the University of Tehran's Center for Tourism Research. She holds a Master's degree in tourism planning from the University of Tehran and a Bachelor degree in tourism management from Allameh Tabataba'i University in Tehran. Her work experience includes 10 years of consulting in the tourism and hospitality sector. She is a member of the Technical Committee for Standardization of Tourism and Related Services-ISIRI/TC 22 in Iran. Her research interests include cultural policy, cultural tourism, sustainability, tourism, and service standards.

Tahir Sufi tahir.sufi@gmail.com is a Professor and Head of Department at the School of Hotel Management, Graphic Era Deemed to be University, Dehradun, India. He holds a PhD in business administration from IKG

Punjab Technical University in India and a Master's degree in hospitality management from Sheffield Hallam University in the United Kingdom. He has significant experience in hotel operations with leading brands such as Le Meridian, Hilton, Best Western, and ISTA Hotels. He also directed several hotel management schools in India over a 10-year period. His research interests include hotel classification systems, strategic management, and sustainability in the hospitality industry.

Mohamad Sharifi-Tehrani msharifit@chmail.ir is a PhD Candidate in Business Management, University of Isfahan, Iran. His research is oriented toward quantitative methodologies, e-consumer behavior, pricing, safety and security, entrepreneurship, and market analysis issues in the field of tourism. He has published peer-reviewed articles in top-ranked international journals, including *Annals of Tourism Research* and *Journal of Business Research*. His research papers have been presented at both international and regional conferences. He has also advised and conducted projects for international and domestic organizations or businesses. With a BA in museum curatorship and MA in tourism management, he enjoys teaching courses related to these subjects.

Amelia Tomašević PhD, amelia.tomasevic13@gmail.com is a Full Professor at Vern University of Applied Sciences, Croatia. She also lectures at several universities in Croatia and abroad. Her area of expertise is service quality and she has worked as a consultant for the hotel industry in a number of destinations. Her publications include manuals and journal articles focusing on service quality in hotels and destinations as well as convention management. She is the recipient of several awards and recognitions from international institutions, industry associations, and the Croatian government.

Saerom Wang wang2379@purdue.edu is a PhD Candidate in the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Purdue University, USA. Her research addresses the management of post-trip experiences of tourists and how they interact with a destination through food and social media. Her research interests include consumer behavior and marketing, particularly regarding food, tourist, and social media. She is especially interested in the utilization of food as a destination marketing medium and how food-related experience could benefit tourists' well-being. Her recent work dissects the psychological processes behind tourists' indigenous food consumptions and their outcomes in relation to eudaimonic well-being.

Yao-Chin Wang yewang@uark.edu is an Assistant Professor in the School of Human Environmental Sciences at University of Arkansas in Fayetteville,

USA. His research interests include strategic brand management, festival and event management, and tourist psychology. His research papers are published in *Tourism Management*, *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, and *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Education*. He is a recipient of best paper awards at the 2015 Graduate Conference in Hospitality and Tourism and the 2017 I-CHRIE annual conference, as well as the 2016 highly commended paper award by the *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.

Yunzi (YaaYaa) Zhang yunzi.zhang@marianas.edu is an Assistant Professor of Hospitality Management at the School of Business of the Northern Marianas College in Saipan, USA. YaaYaa obtained her PhD from the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management of Purdue University in 2017. She studies new consumers in the global travel marketplace and has developed expertise in host–guest relationship at tourism communities. She is also interested in marine tourism in the Micronesia. She is the lead-author of a best paper award at the 2016 Annual Conference of International Travel & Tourism Educators. Her current research examines tourist experiences in the Asia-Pacific region, with a focus on the Chinese outbound market.

Lingxu Zhou lingxu.zhou@zuel.edu.cn is a Lecturer at the Department of Tourism Management, School of Business Administration, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law, Wuhan, China. She has published research articles on the topics of tourism development, destination management, and cross-cultural tourist experiences. She has also been involved in tourism consultancy projects in Central China. Her current research interests related to tourism are mobility and development in less developed areas. She has a PhD in tourism management from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong SAR, China, and an MA in tourism policy and planning from the University of Waterloo, Canada.

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INTRODUCTION

Integrating Experiences in the Study of Service Quality

Liping A. Cai

Purdue University, USA

Pooya Alaedini

University of Tehran, Iran

The initial impetus for this book was inspired by the outcome from the *Isfahan Conference on Service Quality in Hospitality and Tourism: Experiencing Persian Heritage*, which was held in Isfahan, Iran, July 16–17, 2016. A cursory review of the individual presentations at the two-day event suggested that, while some remained within the confinement of the concept of service quality in either the European or the American schools, others were breaking away from it. A closer examination of the conference proceedings revealed that collectively they could not be described simply as an incremental accumulation of knowledge about service quality as applied to hospitality and tourism. Rather, there emerged a pattern of discoveries that was beyond the academic realm of service quality in general, as well as its applications in hospitality and tourism.

Service quality gained popularity as a marketing concept along with the transition from the dichotomy of product vs service to the continuum of product and service that began in the early 1980s and subsequently spread across economic sectors of all kinds. The gaps model of service quality and its measurement scale of SERVQUAL originated by Parasuraman, Berry,

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and Zeithaml (1985, 1988) are considered the foundation on which the studies of service quality have been conducted, including those in the hospitality and tourism literature that adopted or adapted the scale for hotels, restaurants, and retail travel services (Cai, 2010). Although the original model and scale were subsequently revised with various iterations, their initial propositions remain that (1) customers evaluate the quality of service provided by an organization by making a comparison between their expectations and perceptions along the five dimensions of tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy; and (2) the organization should strive to maximize the quality by exceeding customer expectations. About the latter, one of their extended models included a variety of factors, internal to an organization, that affect the level of service quality delivered to the customer (Grapentine, 1998).

To the extent that the 1980s' concept of service quality may still be applicable to a hospitality and tourism organization in the global society of the twenty-first century, its limitation is evident in the rise of the experience economy and from the development of knowledge advanced by the study of consumer experiences and branding. Modifying Pine and Gilmore's (1999) taxonomy of economic progression, Cai and Hobson (2004) illustrated a four-state continuum that progressively consists of the commodity, product, service, and brand in the hotel industry. Transposing the four states on a rational-emotional ladder in the minds of hotel guests, they argued that, as consumers' decisionmaking becomes increasingly emotional, hotel companies should move from the state of service to that of the brand. The nature and key attribute of the brand are being memorable and personal, instead of being intangible and customized in service. The emphasis is thus on personal vs customized. The roles of seller and buyer in the state of the brand are, respectively, host and guest, as compared to those of provider and customer in the state of service. The brand [co-]creates an experience that is revealed over duration instead of a service that is delivering on demand. The proceedings from the 2016 Isfahan Conference offered fresh evidence that today's hospitality and tourism marketplace is characterized more by the state of a brand than that of service. The study of it would benefit from the explicit consideration of both services and experiences and the quality thereof. Such study would be timely as well, thanks to the scarce literature on quality experiences in hospitality and tourism, albeit few outside of the field (Fernandes & Cruz, 2016).

The book draws several of its contributions from the speakers at the Isfahan Conference. The regional focus of the conference is augmented with contributions from scholars elsewhere, resulting in a more diverse and

global context. Apart from the introductory and concluding texts, the book consists of 15 chapters delineated in three parts. Part I, *Destinations in Iran, Hong Kong, and the United States*, is mostly set in Iran and empirically examines the quality of tourism destination services and education for different tourist segments including those defined by cultural uniqueness. Leading this first part is the contribution from Pooya Alaedini and Dordaneh Davari, "Targeting Purposes of Visit: Quality Experience as Demanded." This chapter takes a basic yet strategic approach toward the quality of destination services and tourist experiences based on purposes of visit. From 16 categories of purposes, eight are identified and applied to Iran. Examples of the strategic action plan are provided to illustrate how Iran as a destination can attract potential tourists by responding and fulfilling their wishes associated with each purpose of visit. Chapter 2, "Teaching Tourism Service Quality in Iran," by Siamak Seyfi, Adel Nikjoo, and Pooya Alaedini, is also set in Iran and highlights the strategic importance of human resources development in assuring quality services and developing experiences. With the backdrop of Iran becoming an emerging destination, the authors identify several gaps in the quality of tourism education in its second most populous city, Mashhad, and call for the stakeholders to collaborate on addressing them.

Mashhad is again the destination setting for Chapter 3 by Mohamad Sharifi-Tehrani and Kourosh Esfandiari. "Risk Perception and Tourism Experiences among Pilgrims" studies Iran's domestic religious tourists and finds that their perceived risk of the destination is associated with the quality of past visits, nonvictimization experience, and destination loyalty. The relationships between the quality of destination services and culturally segmented source markets are examined in Chapter 4, "Culture and Service Quality: Case of Hong Kong." Bona Kim, Lingxu Zhou, and Anyu Li focus on expectation–performance gap and find that tourists from Mainland China whose cultural difference is small are less satisfied with the quality of services in Hong Kong, whereas tourists from Western source markets with a large cultural difference are more satisfied. In Chapter 5, "Quality Experiences of China's Family Tourists in the United States," Yunzi Zhang and Liping Cai examine family tourism. This investigation reveals that traditional Chinese values assist family members to navigate the multigenerational relationships and to construct a quality experience with the destination attributes.

Part II of the book, *Tourists at the Core*, focuses on the quality of experiences from the perspectives of tourists. It features innovative concepts, which are mostly illustrated empirically. This part begins with the contribution by

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Gianna Moscardo, "Tourist Experience Design: A Storytelling Framework." It describes a comprehensive storytelling framework and a set of principles for the design of tourist experiences. These are applied to the Australian destination of Magnetic Island to demonstrate how tourists' experiences may be framed as stories of their own. The chapter illustrates that destination organizations do not provide experiences but rather offer opportunities for tourists to co-create the experiences of their own. Such co-creation is instrumental for both tourist satisfaction and the success of the destination. Co-creation of experiences is also a subject of Chapters 7 and 8. In "Social Network Sites and Virtual Tourism Experience," Seyedeh Fatemeh Mostafavi Shirazi present four propositions on the role of social network sites and how the sites can provide opportunities for tourists to virtually experience destinations prior to their potential journeys. Virtual experience is also discussed in the following chapter, albeit in the context of post-visit interactions between event attendees and event managers. In "Horseracing Event Experience and Social Media," Chloe Downes, Roya Rahimi, and Peter Robinson investigate the role of social media in enhancing the interactions. They find that the most popular place for event attendees to leave feedback is on social media. Yet, none of the managers interviewed in their study had used social media to gain feedback. The quality of the interactions, or the lack thereof, diminishes the opportunities of co-creating experiences.

Chapter 9, "Experiences of the Plural Tourist: A Perspective of French Sociology," is by Christophe Guibert. His contribution features the verbatim narratives of experiences by four French tourists as empirical cases. A sociological analysis is conducted on the textual data to examine the reasons why individual tourists might get involved in one or more types of tourism activities as a measure of their social status and to understand their experiences and social characteristics. His sociological approach to studying tourists' experiences and their social characteristics leads to the proposition of the concept of the plural tourist. In Chapter 10, "Emotional Outcomes of Dining-Away-From-Home Experiences," Saerom Wang and Liping Cai focus on one specific type of experience of tourists and present six propositions on the relationship between their emotional outcomes and each of the six factors. They are expectations of culinary experience, appraisal of the intrinsic qualities of food, evaluation of contextual cues, appraisal of overall culinary experiences, neophobic level of individuals, and post-ingestive effect. Underlining these propositions is the important linkage between the emotional outcomes from one particular experience and the quality of overall tourist experiences.

Part III of the book, *Hotels, Conferences, and Big Data*, features five contributions that are concerned with the quality of services of hotels and conference facilities. In Chapter 11, Shiva Hashemi, Azizan Marzuki, and Shaian Kiumarsi examine the impacts of conference quality on behavioral intentions and perceived value of international attendees in Malaysia. They find positive and significant effects on the former by the quality dimensions of venue facilities, professional education, and social network and on the latter by the dimensions of accessibility, professional education, and social network. As the central contribution of their study, perceived value is found to have a mediating role in the relationship between venue facilities and behavioral intention. Quality services and experiences at luxury hotels are the foci of three chapters in Part III. Chapter 12, “Service Experiences at Luxury Hotels: Business Travelers’ Perspective,” is contributed by Ruiyu Feng, Yao-Chin Wang, and Bill Ryan. They identify the service experiences of business travelers as consisting of the three constructs of service: surprise, recovery, and sweetness, and posit that emotional value from the experiences can enhance their attitude of gratitude and result in their willingness to pay a price premium. They further propose a conceptual framework that integrates the three constructs of service experiences and a value–attitude–behavioral model. Luxury hotels are also the subject in Chapter 13 by Amelia Tomašević. “Luxury Hotels: Concept and New Trends” relates the concept of luxury to hotels and discusses the global trends and attributes of luxury hotels in the two categories of tangibles and intangibles.

In Chapter 14, “Big Data and Service Quality: Barcelona’s Hospitality Industry,” Ainhoa Serna, Antònia Casellas, Grant Saff, and Jon Kepa Gerrikagoitia explore how the analysis of user-generated content from the travel site of TripAdvisor can provide insights on the service quality of hotels in Barcelona, Spain. Their findings illustrate that the site provides user-generated content which can be dissected to measure the five dimensions of the classic SERVQUAL model and thus represents an innovative way to considerably advance the ability to study the service quality in the hotel sector.

Online travel agents are the subject of Chapter 15 in Part III. In “A Hotel Classification Framework for Quality Service,” Tahir Sufi and Narges Shojaie challenged the conventional hotel classification systems as not representing real guest expectation and serving as indicators of price rather than quality. These systems, which are not consistent within or among themselves and do not consider service aspects directly associated with customer satisfaction are therefore losing relevance, especially when

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online travel agents are using innovative methods to evaluate tourist satisfaction with hotels. By analyzing five popular hotel classification systems and incorporating academic literature and innovative attributes of online travel agents, the chapter proposes a new framework to classify hotels on the basis of nine criteria which can serve as quality indicators of hotel services and reflect customers' satisfaction with their hotel experiences.

The collection of these 15 contributions presents the latest theories and practices on quality services and experiences in hospitality and tourism. It offers a conceptual discourse, empirical evidence, application of existing and emerging concepts and theories, and implications of practical findings. As such, the collection shares new knowledge by connecting scholarly works and real-world cases. It also sheds light on the perspectives of both providers and recipients of quality services, as well as the actors of quality experiences, across a wide spectrum of hospitality and tourism sectors.