The "Tourism Studies on the Mediterranean Region" Book Series

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launches its second volume:

Tourism, Hospitality and Culture 4.0: shifting towards the metaverse

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Call for chapters

The emergence and uprise of technologies 4.0, including Internet of Things, Big Data Analytics, Location-based Services, Artificial intelligence, Blockchain, Robots, Virtual Assistant, Chatbots, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Mixed Reality, etc., have been transforming both how businesses operate and the customer experience in all sectors, with tourism, hospitality and culture not being an exception (e.g., Hoyer et al., 2020; Ivanov et al., 2020; Stankov & Gretzel, 2020).

The key role of these technologies have become even more evident since the COVID-19 pandemic (Yung et al., 2021), when they have been successfully adopted to mitigate the effects generated by this health-related crisis on organizations and to keep in touch with customers while guaranteeing hygiene, promoting social distancing (e.g., Del Chiappa et al., 2021) and providing them with personalized experiences (e.g., Gursoy & Chi, 2020; Ivanov et al 2020; Seyitoğlu & Ivanov, 2020), also remotely (Lau, 2020). Based on current research, the rapid and massive digital transformation that has been occurring in the last few years, put at risk a human-centric experience design perspective which, in turn, harms the chance to support transformations towards wellbeing and sustainability (e.g., Stankov & Gretzel, 2020) and challenges individuals in their ability to cope with this technological injection at mental, physical and cultural level.

The analysis of the opportunities and threats deriving from these technologies has gained huge and growing attention in both the Accademia and the industry. Despite that, a number of issues related to this research area still need to be further explored and looked at in detail.

For example, although several studies have hitherto showed the advantages and disadvantages of Artificial Intelligence (AI) (e.g., Ivanov et al., 2020; Techlabs, 2017; Wilson et al., 2017), additional research is needed on the role of AI in tourism, looking at the actual financial e non-financial costs and benefits of an AI and robotized based business models. Cross-sectional research focused on the

customer acceptance of AI technologies (e.g., Ivanov et al., 2018) should be complemented by longitudinal studies, also adopting a multi-service and multi-cultural perspective (Lu et al., 2019; Tuomi et al., 2021), in order to develop new interpretive models of such a rapidly evolving technological scenario (e.g., Lin et al 2020). Moreover, additional research might be needed to: identify new constructs in the context of AI robot interactivity and consumer perceptions, attitudes, trust, and reactions (e.g. Belanche et al., 2020; Go et al. 2020; Tussyadiah et al., 2020); investigate the role of customer relationship orientation of robot influences (Qiu et al., 2020) and the extent to which consumers are willing to pay for a robotized-based experience (Ivanov & Webster, 2021), etc.

An extensive number of studies have been devoted to analysing the acceptance of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR) in different settings (e.g., Vishwakarma et al., 2020; Han et al., 2019; tom Dieck & Jung, 2018; Jung et al., 2018). However, deeper knowledge is still needed about the adoption of augmented reality wearable devices (Han et al., 2019a) and the array of subjective, objective and contextual factors that might influence their acceptance (tom Dieck & Jung, 2018). Mainly focusing on consumers, existing literature has analyzed the influence of VR, AR and Mixed Reality (MR) on tourist's decision making and related responses, and their role in enhancing the consumption experience and the advertisement efforts (e.g., Buonincontri et al, 2017; Han et al. 2019; Trunfio & Campana, 2020; Israel et al., 2019; Leung et al., 2020; Zeng et al., 2020; Lo et al., 2020). However, future studies should investigate the perceived value of VR and AR based on a multiple stakeholders-based perspective also acknowledging the views of other actors, such as managers, local councils, and policy makers (tom Dieck & Jung, 2017).

Furthermore, studies relying on innovative methods, such as those based on recording biometric/physiological parameters (e.g., skin conductance responses, hearth rate variability) or brain activities (e.g., electroencephalographic, EEG), would be needed to effectively capture the ebb and flow of consumers' emotions and to more precisely measure their effects on individual responses (Han et al., 2019b). Yet, there is a need to carry out more studies adopting an interdisciplinary (Hoyer et al., 2020) and multidisciplinary perspective (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019) to gain a better understanding about key topics including software development, user interfaces and user movement within the virtualized environment (Beck et al., 2019). Again, further studies might address the characteristics of different segments of tourists experiencing tourism attractions through VR applications, also considering other visitor-based (e.g., personality), technology related (e.g., visual appeal) and/or social variables (e.g., as social presence) that could exert a significant role in shaping a VR-mediated experience (Errichiello et al., 2019). Finally, despite literature has quite recently started to analyse the influence of VR on the perceived authenticity of the experience (e.g., Atzeni et al., 2021), further room for investigation exist in this regard (Yung & Khoo-Lattimore, 2019). For example, it would be useful to understand the role that the perceived authenticity, as elicited by a virtualized experience, might have in shaping experience memorability and in incentivising short-term online behaviour such as intensification and content generation (Atzeni et al., 2021).

Digital and virtual world development are now facing the challenge of moving from a set of sophisticated and independent immersive environments to an integrated network of 3D virtual words, the so-called "Metaverse". The metaverse is a network of interconnected experience and applications, devices and product tools and infrastructure generating a "new" world where everyday life and economic-related activities are conducted by virtual avatars, replacing individuals in reality, interacting among them and with 3D digital objects in a complex manner that mimics the real world (Kim, 2021). Research has shed light on the main features of the metaverse, such as realism, ubiquity, interoperability and scalability (Dionisio et al 2013). It is quite evident that this innovative network of 3D virtual words has the potential to significantly alter the dynamics of the tourism and travel sector creating opportunities for new companies, products and services and challenging all the elements of tourism and related marketing dynamics (e.g. customer journey, proliferation of touch pints, targeting, etc.) giving value to "experience of interest" rather than "physical point of interest" and creating even greater need for sophisticate data analytics. Yet, it represents a completely unexplored research area that future studies should develop by adopting both supply and demand-side perspectives.

Objective of the 2nd Volume

Based on the above considerations, the aim of the second volume of the book series "Tourism Studies on the Mediterranean Region" is to offer new critical perspectives on tourism, hospitality and culture 4.0 and the paradigmatic shift toward the metaverse. The volume also aims to enrich the methodological approaches traditionally applied in this growing research area by presenting innovative interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary empirical research, both theoretically- and practice-driven, focused on tourism businesses and destinations.

Recommended topics

Without limiting the scope of the book chapters to be submitted, this call welcomes original work related to the following topics:
- The role of technologies 4.0 (e.g., Internet of Things, Big Data Analytics, Artificial intelligence, Augmented Reality, Virtual Reality, Mixed Reality, etc.) in tourism, hospitality and culture
- The impact of technologies on customer experience
- Subjective, objective and contextual factors that might influence the use and acceptance of technologies 4.0 in tourism, hospitality and culture
- Actual financial e non-financial costs and benefits of an AI and robotized based business models
- Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies on the acceptance, adoption and use of AI

- AI robot interactivity and consumer perceptions, attitudes and behaviours towards AI and robotized-based experience
- Robot Influences and AI multiple stakeholder-based perspective
- On-site and post-trip impacts of extended reality
- Technologies 4.0 and the use of biometric, physiological methods and recording of brain activities
- Interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary perspectives to dig knowledge on technologies 4.0
- Cross-setting analysis
- Perceived authenticity of virtualized experiences
- Virtualized experiences and their influence on memorability, intensification and content generation
- Supply and demand-side analysis on metaverse and tourism
- Technologies 4.0, metaverse and biosecurity and privacy concerns

Submission procedure

Prospect authors are invited to submit original and unpublished manuscripts (written in British English) from a wide range of disciplines; an interdisciplinary approach is also strongly encouraged. The call welcomes both theoretical and empirical studies using a range of methodologies including qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods and multi-methods. Next to cross-sectional studies, longitudinal research designs, also adopting a multi-service and/or multi-cultural perspective, are highly welcomed.

Potential authors should provide a structured abstract (i.e.: purposes – methodology – findings – originality – limitations – implications) of no more than 500 words. Author(s) would need to also submit a short bio-sketch (job title, department, university name, research interests or recent publications, and achievements) (up to 100 words). Please kindly note that the abstract acceptance does not necessarily guarantee the publication of the submitted full manuscript. All manuscripts will be subject to a double-blind peer review process.

Please submit your abstract proposal by e-mail to gdelchiappa@uniss.it with the following in cc: roberto.micera@ismed.cnr.it; piera.buonincontri@ismed.cnr.it; luisa.errichiello@ismed.cnr.it.

The book will be published by Mc-Graw Hill.

Key dates

The publishing calendar is the following:

✔ **10th February 2022**: submission of a **structured abstract** including purposes – methodology – findings – originality – limitations - implications **(up to 500 words)**. Author(s) would need to also submit a **short bio-sketch (up to 100 words)**.

✔ 15th February 2022: notification of the acceptance abstract

✔ 15th April 2022: full paper submission

✔ 30th May 2022: notification about the acceptance and peer review report (double-blind)

✔ 15th July 2022: submission of the final version

✔ **30th September 2022: publication in the book**

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