

Editorial

In its travel and tourism economic impact report for India (March 2016), the World Travel and Tourism Council ranks India second (among 184 countries) for rate of industry growth and third in its long-term growth forecast. We began tracking hospitality and tourism development in India in *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* (WHATT) volume 1 number 1 (2009) by posing the question: “What contribution will hospitality and tourism make in securing sustainable economic growth in India?” and I am delighted to welcome back theme editor Gunjan Sanjeev and her team who explored the role that innovation is playing in supporting the development of hospitality services in India. A valuable feature of this issue is the dialogue between industry and academia that underpins every article and I would like to thank Gunjan and her contributors for producing a comprehensive response to her question about the current hospitality and tourism developments in India and the wider implications for innovation-led change.

WHATT aims to make a practical and theoretical contribution to hospitality and tourism development, and we seek to do this by using a key question to focus attention on an industry issue. If you would like to contribute to our work by serving as a WHATT theme editor, do please contact me.

Richard Teare
Managing Editor, WHATT

How is the need for innovation being addressed by the Indian hospitality industry?

In today’s trading environment, innovation is central to growth and plays an important role in business success and the related incremental development of products, services and processes. Service organizations are driven by a culture of near-constant innovation with a strong emphasis on empathy and connectedness with their customers. Given the rapid rate of development that is occurring in the Indian hospitality industry, it is pertinent and timely to explore ways of addressing customer needs and enhancing customer experience to secure competitive advantage in value creation, cost reduction and profit improvement.

It is interesting to note how the hospitality industry has witnessed various innovations in the recent past that were designed to enrich the experience of customers. For example, Hyatt Residency, Chicago, offers guests hassle-free check-in via a lobby ambassador holding a special iPad; Radisson also offers a similar service with the new iConcierge app on Android and iOS; Tallahassee’s boutique hotel Duval initiated a 23-inch Interactive Customer Experience (ICE) touch screen display; Boston’s Revere Hotel features iPads preloaded with the iKnow Concierge in six different languages to help guests access a wide variety of services and so on. In these and many other examples, advances in technology are the catalyst for service improvements that offer many benefits to customers and operators.

While these are some of the innovations involving technology, other departmental and specialist functions offer scope for innovation in: financial management, human resource management, cost management, revenue management, technology management, strategic management, culinary management, and customer service,

among others. From guest entry to the point of exit, innovation in every segment can improve guest experience. A happy guest can result in improved customer retention and a long-term boost in revenue. Some of these topics are covered in this theme issue. There are nine papers in all – seven practitioner research-based papers and two viewpoint articles. The papers are authored by a team of practitioners and academics and together, they bring much experience and different perspectives. Most of the papers are based on interviews with practitioners so they provide first-hand information from the industry that is relevant and contemporary to the readers of this journal.

This issue presents real case studies and examples from the Indian hospitality industry that reflect the current development scenario in India. As numerous international hotel chains are investing in partnerships in India, it will be of interest to them to review some of the issues related to innovation in products and services and support functions. Further, this review may have implications for other developing countries, so we hope that this issue will be of interest to a worldwide readership.

Gunjan M. Sanjeev
Theme Editor

About the Theme Editor

Gunjan M. Sanjeev, PhD, is the Vice President – RBEF (Amity Education Group), Director International Affairs & Professor (Finance) at Amity University, Haryana, (India). She is responsible for some of the institution's key strategic initiatives such as establishing international campuses, fostering international linkages and international accreditation relationships. She is an experienced researcher and her papers have won awards in various forums: Emerald Group Publishing, UK (2013, 2011); IIM, Lucknow (India); COSMAR, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore (India) and at several international conferences. She has conducted executive development programs and she is a visiting faculty member at IIM Ahmedabad. Gunjan has also served as a *WHATT* theme editor on three occasions. She has traveled extensively in the USA, UK, France, Ireland, Singapore and Sri Lanka for various academic and collaborative initiatives with foreign universities.