

Reflections on the theme issue outcomes: Work–life balance: How can quality of life provisions be integrated with the corporate social responsibility initiatives of hospitality firms?

Theme Editors Dimitrios Diamantis and Ruth Puhr share their reflections on the significance and outcomes of the theme issue with Managing Editor Richard Teare.

Overview

This theme issue sought to explore the extent to which quality of life provisions can be integrated with corporate social responsibility initiatives in hospitality and tourism settings. The articles were researched and written by Master of Business Administration (MBA) students at Les Roches, Switzerland, and in addition to secondary analysis, they contain case study examples from Radisson, Scandic and Peninsula Hotels; Four Seasons and Hyatt hotels; Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc., Club Med, and Alaska Airlines; Shangri-La, B&B and Riu hotel companies; Newbury Hotel Boston, USA; Six Senses and Air Canada. A list of the articles in this issue can be found in [Appendix](#).

Why in your view, is your theme issue strategic question important?

The concept of work–life balance has been an important issue for several years now, and it became even more prominent at the outset of the pandemic. To attain balance, we have often looked to the concept of quality of life and the question that this issue sought to explore relates to advances in quality of life provisions through corporate social responsibility strategies in hospitality and tourism settings. Using a series of case studies, MBA second semester students explored an array of current practices. They also considered the connections with circular economic thinking so that a micro and macro balance can be achieved in making the concept of work–life balance a strategic choice on the journey towards sustainability.

Thinking about your theme issue plan and approach, what worked well?

One of the most rewarding experiences is to see MBA students responding with enthusiasm to the challenges posed by this theme issue question and the issue contains the best responses from among the cohort. The MBA group undertook secondary research including detailed literature analysis, support by live case study work involving surveys and interviews with senior practitioners. We are delighted that their work is now available to a wider audience and this process has enabled young professionals to engage with the rigours of academic publishing, equipping them with new skills in scholarly communication. We are especially pleased to see via the case studies, the growth in quality of life provision that is arising from corporate social responsibility initiatives in hospitality firms.



How did you engage with different stakeholder groups?

From the MBA cohort perspective, the discussions with different stakeholders occurred during their research and this theme issue highlights their interactions. Overall, engagement with industry gave the group a broad insight on the progress that has been made towards attaining better work–life balance. Second, within the framework of the MBA course “Sustainability” theme, several master classes were conducted by industry leaders, and this provided a wide-ranging set of insights on the global sustainability challenges that we face.

What were the highlights from stakeholder group interactions?

The highlights of group interactions were for us, seeing how the MBA group as a whole has been inspired by the drive for and goal of attaining sustainability. Our objective is to educate the students but further, to equip them to become champions of sustainability. The aim here is to help shape the thinking of leaders of tomorrow, given that sustainability is an important leadership goal. Understanding the challenges of the concept, exploring its domain and then writing an article that is shared widely is for us, the main highlight arising from all the stakeholder interactions.

Thinking about your peer review process: What went well and why?

The fact that our MBA Sustainability course has facilitated the development of environmentally-centred events and that these facilitate shared learning and feedback, meant that the peer-review process underpinning the preparation of articles could be extended and strengthened. In summary, we felt that the procedures used to develop the articles from early-stage ideas to draft form and then further refined after presentation and discussion worked very well, and we appreciated the comments and the constructive insights that were received.

What are the most significant outcomes of your theme issue in terms of the contributions to knowledge and/or professional practice?

They are numerous outcomes:

- (1) Exploring current quality of life practices and provisions in the context of corporate social responsibility initiatives;
- (2) Identifying the importance of work–life balance as a sustainability driver;
- (3) Exploring the link between the circular economy and quality of life provisions;
- (4) Showcasing current advances in thinking about the linkages between circular economic activity and quality of life for employees in hospitality and tourism settings;
- (5) Examining current trends in sustainability practice;
- (6) Understanding the areas of improvement in corporate social responsibility practices;
- (7) Identifying and better understanding the link between micro and macro levels of quality of life provisions.

What are the implications for management action and applied research arising from your theme issue outcomes?

The main implication is that work–life balance provisions need to play a more central role in the thinking and actions of hospitality and tourism companies. It should also be

extended to strategies for managing circular economic activity. Further, applied research that reaches beyond the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, should embrace quality of life provisions that are not only attainable but transferable to different societies and/or industries.

Having served as a *WHATT* theme editor, what did you enjoy about the experience?

We have enjoyed the journey! We have greatly appreciated the support and encouragement of *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT)* Managing Editor Richard Teare from the outset, and it is satisfying to know that as a team, we have accomplished something that is worthwhile. A new experience for us has been the challenge of guiding a group of postgraduate students – the next generation of industry professionals – in the process of applied research, analysis and on writing for publication. The *WHATT* format and approach has enabled us to do this, and we hope it will inspire future generations of postgrads to engage in this way. We believe that future generations of students and others will need to find their own solutions to the problems caused by climate change and other negative impacts – this is an important principle of sustainable practice. This is our second *WHATT* issue (the first was published in 2020) and so we are grateful for this wonderful opportunity.

About the Theme Editors:

Dimitrios Diamantis is an Executive Academic Dean of Les Roches, Global Hospitality Education in Switzerland, and has more than 20 years of hospitality research and teaching experience.

Ruth Puhr has worked for Les Roches since 2006, initially teaching Arts and Humanities electives prior to becoming Faculty Development Advisor. She currently oversees Teaching and Learning Development.

Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (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 the Managing Editor, Dr Richard Teare via the Emerald website. and

Appendix: Theme issue contents (WHATT v14 n3 2021)

Corporate social responsibility and work–life balance provisions for employee quality of life in hospitality settings

Dimitrios Diamantis and Ruth Puhr

Outline the rationale for the theme issue question and introduce articles written by MBA students at Les Roches Global Hospitality Education, Switzerland. The issue provides best practice examples of corporate social responsibility in hospitality settings and explores the outcomes and implications for employee quality of life.

How can aspects of quality of life be incorporated into corporate social responsibility strategies to achieve work–life balance?

Jenny Zheng

Concludes that well-conceived, multidimensional corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategies, combined with transparent reporting tend to enhance employee job satisfaction and

quality of work life (QWL). Draws on the literature and case study examples from three companies with a reputation for sustainable thinking and practice.

Reflections on
the theme issue
outcomes

Do social corporate responsibility initiatives help to promote circular economic activity and quality of work life for employees?

José Luis Egas and Scott Davies

Examine the impact of hospitality and tourism on the environment and also its employee retention challenges. Interviews conducted with three managers reveal awareness of the potential QWL benefits of CSR practices. Findings suggest that successful, on-the-ground practice involves adapting corporate principles for each property.

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What is the relationship between sustainability, corporate social responsibility and quality of life applications at work?

Etienne Haarpaintner

Examines the *Food with Integrity* initiative of Chipotle Mexican Grills Inc. and similar approaches being implemented by Club Med resorts; and the LIFT program at Alaska Airlines, to illustrate the importance of both large and small-scale strategies in achieving quality of life (QoL).

What is the relationship between quality of working life, work–life balance and quality of life?

Aleksander Zabilski and Zhiwei Su

Investigate the relationship between QWL, work–life balance and QoL, with reference to CSR approaches used at the Shangri-La, B&B and Rui hotel companies. Find that CSR practices have a positive impact on QoL, regardless of company size, location or type of initiative and they underline the importance of education as a key to success.

What is the role of place attachment and quality of life outcomes in employee retention?

Patrick Finocciaro

Analyzes employee retention with reference to QoL outcomes linked to CSR initiatives that focus on “place”. The benefits are categorised and the employee experience compared with that of the customer. This framework is then discussed with managers at The Newbury Boston; Four Seasons, Madrid and Four Seasons One Dalton, Boston.

Towards sustainability in hospitality operations: How are quality of life and work–life balance related?

Shio Fushini, Ernesto Aguilar and Lisha Zang

Details the core characteristics of CSR and QoL and how they relate to hospitality industry settings. These theoretical underpinnings are then used to examine the practices of Hoshima Resort Tomamu, Japan, and the findings of several similar case study applications.

Hotel general managers’ quality of life and its impact on organisational sustainability and corporate social responsibility initiatives

Nivesh Bhagtani

Using a combination of the PERMA well-being profiler and three in-depth interviews, this study examines the relationship between well-being, as measured by PERMA, CSR practices and awareness of CSR implementation. In addition, the potential role of the circular economy is considered in fostering hospitality employee well-being.

How do corporate charitable and economic social responsibility practices help to improve the quality of work life for employees?

Minh Quy Pham, Mohit Dhir and Thomas Guillomet

Use case study analysis of Six Senses Hotels Resorts and Spas and Air Canada to conduct a comparative analysis of the reported CSR practices of companies in different tourism sectors based on competitive strategy; environmental protection; internationalisation of CSR; and transparency and accountability.

Macro- and micro-level connections between work–life balance, quality of life and circular economic thinking as drivers of sustainability

Dimitrios Diamantis and Ruth Puhr

Summarise and review the contributions made to the theme issue and observes that synergistic relationships between micro and macro levels of corporate social responsibility initiatives are needed to enable quality of life measures to be embedded in circular economic thinking and practice.