
Reflections on the theme issue outcomes: Transitioning from unsustainable to sustainable: What are the solutions for tourism industry stakeholders in North Cyprus?

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the theme issue
outcomes

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Theme Editors Hale Özgüt and Ali Öztüren share their reflections on the significance and outcomes of the theme issue with Managing Editor Richard Teare.

Overview

Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes (WHATT) encourages its theme editors to explore the most intractable challenges and one of the most pressing questions is: How can tourism destinations begin and then generate momentum in favour of a transition from unsustainable to sustainable development? This requires a completely different way of thinking and acting in order to highlight yet preserve and protect precious natural resources, historical artifacts and the many other facets of sustainable tourism. This issue builds on earlier work and summary details of its contents can be found in [Appendix](#).

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

Thus far, it has not been possible to develop solutions to the existing, unsustainable development issues facing North Cyprus even though the situation is widely known and much talked about. Tourism is the country's most important industry and so it is a vital development instrument that needs to be prioritised. The reality is that unplanned and unmanaged activity generates economic, social, and environmental concerns and jeopardises tourism. In order to find enduring remedies, it is critical to identify the problems and weaknesses more precisely. As a result, this issue is solution-focused and offers practical recommendations to assist stakeholders to achieve their intended sustainable tourism development goal.

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

The majority of contributors to this theme issue attended the *WHATT* v13 n4 2021 theme issue launch event in October 2021 and so they have a thorough understanding of the philosophy, vision and format of the journal. Due to the collaborative nature of issue identification and discussion, the authors concentrated on debating and refining possible solutions to common challenges. This is a very positive step because the entire writing team believe in *WHATT*'s approach to generating real-world solutions that if implemented will have a positive impact. It is for this reason that they were enthusiastic about participating and were motivated to complete their articles in the hope and expectation of facilitating the much needed transition to more sustainable tourism development.

How did you engage with different stakeholder groups?

Following the publication of our earlier theme issue (*WHATT* v13 n4 2021): *How could tourism planners and policymakers overcome barriers to sustainable tourism development in*



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the small island developing state of North Cyprus? Feedback from stakeholders was gathered during and after our theme issue launch event. The event introduced WHATT's theme issue approach to key stakeholders and more than 30 academics, industry leaders, local and national government representatives, civic leaders, and environmental and policy specialists attended the launch and engaged in the discussions that took place. During our discussions, various unresolved problems re-surfaced and they played a formative role in preparing for and planning this issue.

What were the highlights from stakeholder group interactions?

One of the obstacles to sustainable tourism development in North Cyprus is the disparate earnings and perspectives of stakeholders. Historically, stakeholders seem to have been largely motivated by self-interest with little thought for the preferences and requirements of others. Yet, this theme issue has revealed that shared interests and common ground do exist and are attainable. While focussing on ways of addressing existing problems, we discussed how we could maximise the anticipated benefits and desired outcomes via a collaborative approach. As an outcome, this theme issue is central to understanding the approach that needs to be adopted now and for the future.

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

The enthusiasm and motivation of the writing team helped to ensure that our review process was effective and timely. At the outset, the team endorsed our vision for this theme issue and accepted that the best outcome would be to generate recommendations that could gain the support of all stakeholders and then be applied. To ensure that our work was aligned with this objective, all the articles were sent to industry professionals for their comment, input and feedback. Additionally, various supportive reviewers from industry offered suggestions and key points for further revision and refinement. This approach ensured the aggregation of opinions from a wide spectrum of expert sources.

What are the most significant outcomes of your theme issue regarding the contributions to knowledge and professional practice?

After our analysis and synthesis of stakeholder recommendations, the following themes emerged as critical concentration points for transitioning from unsustainable to sustainable tourism: the importance of sustainable tourism indicators (STIs), sustainable development through good governance, engaging cooperatives in urban areas for sustainable development, cultural heritage as a driving force for sustainable development, transportation as an enabling tool for accessible and sustainable tourism, contemporary trends in technology for sustainable development and miscellaneous factors to facilitate sustainable tourism development. These emerging themes will assist practitioners and managers to identify key areas and solutions in their quest to establish a sustainable tourism industry. We are delighted to say that all the articles adopt a solutions-oriented approach, incorporating suggestions for both immediate and long-term initiatives that managers can take.

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

The physical and geographical setting of SIDS puts them at a disadvantage. They have a finite number of resources, and it is almost impossible to recover lost and deteriorating resources. Most of the studies cited by the writing team identify the causes and effects of the

problems facing SIDS. This theme issue goes much further by adopting an application-based and solutions-oriented approach. In so doing, it serves as a guide for practitioners and decision-makers, and it provides recommendations for further applied research.

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

In general terms, academics have to write articles in order to advance their careers and yet most of us are unsure as to whether what we in the academic community are able to publish will have any kind of real-world impact. This journal and publishing experience is different, and we are proud to be members of the *WHATT* family because as theme editors, we can bring together all the stakeholders and together, we are able to make a difference. *WHATT* facilitates the creation of practical yet rigorous articles that contribute to academic thinking and via applied research, stimulate industry action. By serving as theme editors of this theme issue, we feel that we have been able to contribute to the development of sustainable tourism in Northern Cyprus and that the theme issue outcomes will help many other destinations too. In addition to fulfilling our editorial responsibilities as academics, we greatly appreciate the opportunity to form a team that has been able to collaborate with many stakeholders. Our interactions have led to a deeper understanding of the issues and we know that these relationships will endure. We are overjoyed that we have been able to facilitate real-world impact and we are grateful to *WHATT*'s Managing Editor Richard Teare for his vision and support to us throughout the process.

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About the Theme Editors:

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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.

Appendix: Theme issue contents (WHATT v14 n4 2022)

How should small island developing states approach long-term sustainable development solutions? A thematic literature review

Hale Özgüt

Outlines the challenges that Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face in developing long-term sustainability with particular reference to the implications for policymakers and tourism stakeholders who have to operate with limited resources.

Using self-determination theory to assess the tourism service product at local level: the case of North Cyprus municipalities

Nafiya Güden and Farzad Safaeimanesh

Draws on self-determination theory (SDT) and describes how motivation can be fostered in a local management context. The study aims to provide state and local government officials with a decision-making tool that enables evaluation of the quantity and quality of public services using SDT to interact with local residents and others.

How to unlock the benefits of ecotourism: a case study of Karpaz, North Cyprus

Erol Emin and İlkey Yorgancı

Assesses the current challenges faced by those involved in ecotourism and sustainable practices in the Karpaz peninsula, North Cyprus. The study was based on 20 in-depth interviews with ecotourism entrepreneurs, members of the Ecotourism Association, the Ecotourism Movement and the Karpaz Ecotourism Cooperative.

Cultural heritage tourism in North Cyprus: findings from in-depth interviews with experts

Mehmet Saydam, Ali Öztüren and Cemal Kilic

Heritage tourism is vital to the preservation of cultural resources and economic growth and tourism can be utilised to protect and promote cultural heritage. The study revealed six themes in descriptions of sustainable cultural heritage tourism: 'history'; 'promotion'; 'institutions'; 'protection and maintenance'; 'museums' and 'technology'.

A unique destination and transportation: current issues and possible solutions

Hale Özgüt and Orhan Uludağ

Consider the various ways in which transportation could be more sustainable in North Cyprus, which is mostly dependent on tourism and higher education as a small island destination. The study also sought to investigate current issues in the transportation sector related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Can blockchain technology help small islands achieve sustainable tourism? A perspective on North Cyprus

Hale Özgüt and Ahmet Adaher

Explores the presence and use of blockchain technologies (BCTs) in the North Cyprus hotel and tourism sectors by eliciting stakeholder perspectives on BCT's role in sustainable tourism development and the current state of its application in North Cyprus

Education for sustainable tourism development: an exploratory study of key learning factors

Hamed Rezapouraghdam, Habib Alipour, Hasan Kilic, Arash Akhshik

Aims to identify the main facilitating factors in learning sustainable tourism development from the perspective of tourism students. Three problems were identified that impede learning and three solutions emerged that help tourism students to learn about sustainable tourism development.

Environmental regulations versus sustainable tourism indicators: pathway to sustainable development

Hale Özgüt and İme Akanyeti

Profiles the current state of sustainable tourism indicators (STIs) in North Cyprus in order assess risks and draw attention to potential solutions, and finds that one of the primary impediments to sustainable tourism development is a lack of supervision and control over the enforcement of existing laws and regulations.

Conclusion: Transitioning from unsustainable to sustainable solutions

Ali Öztüren and Hale Özgüt

Provides an analysis of the outcomes of the theme issue and makes recommendations to politicians and tourist industry executives. The solutions include advancing sustainable tourism practices through technology and increasing policymakers' and tourism stakeholders' consciousness of sustainable tourism needs for North Cyprus.