

Themed editorial: Smart tourism: what developments and issues are important to the Baltic States?

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It is a pleasure to welcome back theme editors Zanete Garanti and Galina Berjozkina joined by Anda Zvaigzne to investigate smart tourism developments and challenges in the Baltic States. A large and experienced writing team examined aspects of smart tourism in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, using an array of methods and approaches, including stakeholder engagement. I should like to thank Zanete, Galina, Anda and their team for a comprehensive and fascinating review of smart tourism developments in the Baltic region.

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 me.

Richard Teare
Managing Editor, WHATT

The “Baltic States” – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – are located on the Eastern coast of the Baltic Sea in Northern Europe. In terms of population, the biggest of the three is Lithuania, with approximately 2.8 million inhabitants. In general, the Baltic States have been economically successful since regaining their independence and, in 2004, European Union membership confirmed that they had well-functioning democratic systems and competitive market economies. Further, admission to the Euro area – Estonia in 2011, Latvia in 2014 and Lithuania in 2015 reflected the fact that they had achieved a high degree of convergence in terms of inflation, interest rates, budget balance and public debt.

Tourism and especially incoming tourism in the Baltic States, is already a significant economic sector and Estonia, the smallest of the three Baltic States, centred on its capital, Tallinn, has become a global leader in digital innovation. It is the first nation to have declared that Internet access is a basic human right and it was the first to accept digital signatures for most transactions, the first to institute online voting, and in 2023, one of the first nations to provide a rapid 5G network throughout the country. Estonia's high-tech hub hosts global innovation incubators and startups like Starship Technologies, a maker of “delivery robots”, by the co-founders of Skype (another Estonian e-invention). Yet, to-date, the smart tourism challenges in the Baltic States have not been systematically investigated. Given this, the articles in this issue provide significant studies of the tourism industry and specifically, the impact of the development of smart tourism in the region. We hope that you will enjoy the outcomes of our work.

Zanete Garanti, Galina Berjozkina and Anda Zvaigzne
Theme Editors

About the Theme Editors:

Zanete Garanti, PhD is Associate Professor and Head of the research centre at City Unity College Nicosia, Cyprus. Zanete obtained her PhD degree from the Faculty of Economics, Latvia University of Life Sciences and Technologies. She lectures in marketing, management and sustainability courses and serves as a guest professor in Latvia and Estonia. Among



others, Zanete's recent studies explore sustainability challenges and opportunities, overcoming seasonality in Cyprus and digitalisation and smart tourism in the Baltics and her work has been published in internationally recognised books and journals.

Galina Berjozkina is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management at City Unity College Nicosia, Cyprus. Galina has a Degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management and an MBA from BIA University of Applied Sciences, Latvia. She is also PhD student at the University of Strathclyde, UK. Her research interests include hospitality education, tourism and hospitality management and tourism planning and development. She has attended and organised several international academic conferences, acted as a keynote speaker and has published a book on destination marketing.

Anda Zvagzne is Associate Professor in Management Sciences, Latvian Council of Science expert, active Researcher and Director of the Research Institute for Business and Social Processes at Rezekne Academy of Technology (RTA), Latvia. Anda has authored and co-authored a range of research papers and is the Chief Editor of the RTA the *Journal of Regional Economic and Social Development* – an international scientific journal. Anda is delighted to be a co-theme editor of *Smart tourism: what developments and issues are important to the Baltic States?* (2023) Published in *Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes*.

Richard E. Teare

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