Handbook of Tourism and Quality-of-Life Research
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Enhancing the Lives of Tourists and Residents of Host Communities
Foreword

A Nice Place to Live is a Nice Place to Visit

Of journeying the benefits are many: the freshness it bringeth to the heart.... (Persian poet Saadi). Every now and then go away, have a little relaxation,...[when back], your judgment will be surer... (Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci). You will come back from your trip, measuring it not in hours or in miles traveled, but in its happiness-value (American poet T. S. Eliot)

Through time, past savants of both East and West have written eloquently on travel and its many benefits, all enriching one’s quality-of-life. Meanwhile commoners, in millions, (knowingly or not) have been experiencing these acclaimed values, as is apparent from their globe-trotting patterns. With this vast spreading, travel became tourism – indeed, a giant industry worldwide – and later its practice a popular field of investigation. Significantly, this growth and shifting pattern took place mainly recently: the amassing of tourism after World War II and its scientification during the last two decades. Within the latter period, countless studies on tourism’s structure and function poured out. Now, libraries of articles, books, and references later, with over 100 academic journals continuously publishing the latest, along with thousands of universities everywhere offering bachelor’s, master’s, and Ph.D. degrees in tourism, still the age-old claims of the savants about the benefits of travel are unsubstantiated. While financial gains from tourism are known, its sociocultural values to the host and guest populations and its contributions to their quality-of-life are only among emerging questions, with many still unasked.

This academic volume, Handbook of Tourism and Quality-of-Life Research, with its appropriate subtitle, Enhancing the Lives of Tourists and Residents of Host Communities, is edited by three well-established scholars in our field: Muzaffer Uysal, Richard R. Perdue, and Joseph Sirgy. Featuring contributions submitted by authors ranging from iconic to emerging, it takes important strides in claiming and advancing our knowledge on this new research theme. It surveys what is known about tourism and quality-of-life and, significantly, signals what lies ahead. This contribution is both timely and important.

Generally speaking, in the past, one lived to work, while today people work to live. Also, until some years ago, when people got old, the rest was used to prepare for dying. Today, they want to live and live it up. These two practice and behavior shifts connect directly with tourism in at least two ways. One, people in addition to seeking better quality-of-life at home, expect the same – if not more – when on the move, seeking enriched experience, with “experience” becoming a popular research and practice focus in itself. Two, residents of host destinations expect better quality-of-life also through tourism nested in their communities.
For me the subject of quality-of-life and tourism goes back to the 1980s. First, along with several other colleagues, I was engaged in a longitudinal project studying the relationship between tourism and host communities in several countries. This so-called Vienna Center survey was carried out twice within 5 years. The study sought, among other things, to determine the attitude of the host communities in almost all European countries. The findings of the first round indicated that the relationship was unsettled, with the second round suggesting that their attitude had shifted in favor of tourism. In general, the host communities appeared more receptive to tourism due to its socioeconomic qualities, but without connecting these to what is called quality-of-life today. Somewhat independent from this study, toward the end of the decade, I chaired the plenary session of a conference, held in Poland, which dealt with tourism and lifestyle. Again, “quality-of-life” was not used then; but the idea that tourism enriches the lives of those who participate in it was in focus. Later, in the 2000s, I was one of the organizers of a conference on tourism and wellness, held in Mallorca, Spain. Its coverage more closely connected to the context of the ongoing discourse. This conference was followed with another in Mallorca; this one focusing on community-based branding, with the host’s quality-of-life brought to the surface. Both conferences resulted in books covering their respective subject areas. Based on these four examples, the topic has certainly evolved. But past attempts across the field have been narrow and sporadic. This handbook marks a change in favor of engaged systematic and cumulative treatment of the quality-of-life subject, for all tourism stakeholders (not tourists only), as well as for the diverse theoretical and practical ramifications it can offer.

As the handbook states, it has two principal goals. First, it aims to provide a platform for scholars to explore the linkage between tourism activities and quality-of-life for tourists and, significantly, residents of host communities, as well as the well-being of the workforce engaged in this industry. Its second aim is to lead the relationship between tourism and quality-of-life to new research questions, to plant seeds in fertile scholarly grounds, and to direct the subject to new frontiers of understanding. In this fashion, the handbook initiates and maps new paradigms of research and scholarship on the topic and in the field of tourism in general.

Subjects and dimensions explored in this 38-chapter volume are all important, but as a cultural anthropologist I pick one: the relationship between tourism and the quality-of-life of its host community. While the host community focus goes back to the early 1970s, sparked by anthropologist Valene Smith, the mainstream topics have dealt with impacts of tourism on culture and heritage mainly, including attitudes of host communities. The question of the relationship between quality-of-life and tourism is of more recent vintage. And this is precisely one of the strong footholds and the advocating strength of this handbook: taking the lead in promoting a major shift in tourism studies.

The bulk of past investigations, particularly those springing from business, management, and marketing perspectives, were tourist-centered: what tourists want to see and do, how to attract them, how to satisfy them, how to retain them, how to adjust tourism products to their liking, and the like. Tourists have been in the center, as the king, with all else in place to respond to the guest (“who is always right”), to be understood and satisfied. Recognizing that the throne is lodged in someone else’s territory has typically been alien to most studies, but not so to the present handbook. What an appraisal on behalf of the silenced host population, their culture and heritage, their environment, their quality-of-life! This is actually the way tourism should have been viewed and treated all along: home-inspired, home-based, home-grown, and home-delivered. This has been a position promoted by some socioculturally inclined scholars since the early 1970s, but now is orchestrated by the same and other researchers in this landmark publication.

With this extensive volume, the above perspectives find a grounded foundation or platform. Yes, tourism should, among other things, improve the quality-of-life of all its stakeholders; and now gears shift, firmly placing the host community and its quality-of-life into a thematic focus. “A nice place to live is a nice place to visit” is a theme that I have been advocating in recent
conferences. A community which is enriched and satisfied attracts tourists who in turn are satisfied with their visits, catered by satisfied people serving them, for improved quality-of-life for all stakeholders. Participation and cooperation of the private and public is the key, starting with the willingness of the host to become host. A destination which delivers poor quality-of-life to its own residents cannot sustain offering high-quality tourism experience. A destination which is concerned with per capita happiness of its residents has a better chance to increase tourists’ per capita expenditure, while providing them with valued experience, something that today’s tourists seek – something that can spring only from the local hospitality which the tourism industry “packages” in the name of the community. With informed public/private community-based policies and with locally supported/empowered hospitality experience, quality-of-life for all can be advanced – for the present and future generations of the host and guest populations.

While I have singled out the host community and its quality-of-life as a theme, this should not be understood out of context. Indeed the book covers economic, sociocultural, health, environmental, as well as quality-of-life effects. These and other aspects discussed within its covers are significant, as no dimension of tourism can be viewed in isolation. It is this diachronic and holistic treatment which has led tourism to its present frontiers of knowledge and will continue to be its driving force as the search reaches for inner layers, in themselves and in relation to the total environments in which tourism is sustained. And it is this broader and deeper perspective which 68 multidisciplinary authors from around the world have brought to life in this landmark tome – signaling tourism’s homecoming.

Founding President

Jafar Jafari

Department of Hospitality and Tourism, School of Home Economics
University of Wisconsin at Stout
113 Heritage Hall, Menomonie, Wisconsin 54751 USA
Jafari@uwstout.edu
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Editors

Muzaffer Uysal
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

Muzaffer Uysal is a professor of tourism (Ph.D., Texas A&M University), Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). He has extensive experience in the travel and tourism field, authoring or co-authoring a significant number of articles in tourism, hospitality, and recreation journals, proceedings, book chapters, and four monographs, and four books related to tourism research methods, tourist service satisfaction, tourism and quality-of-life, and consumer psychology in tourism and hospitality settings. He also has conducted workshops and seminars on similar topics and field research in several countries. He is a member of International Academy for the Study of Tourism, the Academy of Leisure Sciences, and serves as co-editor of Tourism Analysis: An Interdisciplinary Journal. In addition, he sits on the editorial boards of several journals, including Journal of Travel Research, and Annals of Tourism Research as resource editor. He also received a number of awards for Research, Excellence in International Education, and Teaching Excellence. His current research interests center on tourism demand/supply interaction, tourism development, and QOL research in tourism.
Richard R. Perdue
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

Richard R. Perdue is a professor of tourism (Ph.D., Texas A&M University), and head of the Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). He is an elected fellow, board chair, and past president of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism. Additionally, he currently serves as editor of the *Journal of Travel Research* which is widely recognized as one of the premier scholarly journals in tourism. He is also currently on the board of directors of the Travel and Tourism Research Association and on the editorial boards of three other tourism research journals. He has published extensively in the tourism scholarly literature, including numerous articles, proceedings, book chapters, and one book examining consumer psychology in tourism and hospitality settings. Over the past three decades, much of his research has focused on the effects of tourism development. His current research focuses on consumer behavior and sustainable development of tourism in rural, resort settings.
M. Joseph Sirgy
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

M. Joseph Sirgy is a social/consumer/organizational psychologist (Ph.D., U/Massachusetts, 1979), professor of marketing, and Virginia real estate research fellow at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). He has published extensively in the area of quality-of-life (QOL) research, business ethics, systems science, and organizational/consumer psychology. He is the author/editor of many books related to quality-of-life and business ethics. He co-founded the International Society for Quality-of-Life Studies (ISQOLS) in 1995 and is currently serving as its Executive Director. In 1998, he received the Distinguished Fellow Award from ISQOLS. In 2003, ISQOLS honored him as the Distinguished QOL Researcher for research excellence and a record of lifetime achievement in QOL research. He also served as president of the Academy of Marketing Science from which he received the Distinguished Fellow Award in the early 1990s and the Harold Berkman Service Award in 2007 (lifetime achievement award for serving the marketing professoriat). In the early 2000s, he helped co-found the Macromarketing Society and the Community Indicators Consortium and currently is serving as a board member of these two professional associations. Furthermore, he is the current editor of the QOL section in the Journal of Macromarketing and the editor-in-chief of Applied Research in Quality of Life.
Derek Alderman, Ph.D., is professor of geography at East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, where he also serves as a research fellow in the Center for Sustainable Tourism, Division of Research and Graduate Studies. His research interests focus on the relationship between the politics of place-making, sense of place, and tourism promotion and development, with a special emphasis on African American heritage tourism.
Benoni Amsden
Plymouth State University, USA

Benoni Amsden, Ph.D., is research assistant professor of rural sociology and tourism management in the Center for Rural Partnerships at Plymouth State University. His work uses a sociological lens to examine the sustainability of natural resource-based recreation and tourism. He has studied the economic, social, and environmental impacts of tourism development in rural communities; engagement and collaboration in communities transitioning to a tourist economy; farm-based recreation and tourism; the socio-ecological factors of place attachment and their role in community response to recreation management; and the efficacy of natural resource-based volunteer stewardship programs.

Can Armutlu
Baskent University, Turkey

Can Armutlu is an assistant professor at Baskent University, Faculty of Commercial Sciences, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management. She studies consumer behavior, symbolic nature of consumption, self-concept, and research methodology in marketing. She earned her bachelor’s degree in economics from Gazi University, master’s degree from Baskent University in Business Administration, and her Ph.D. degree in business administration from Gazi University in 2008. She teaches marketing management and introduction to business courses at Baskent University since 2009.
Gregory J. Ashworth
Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, the Netherlands

Gregory Ashworth was educated at the Universities of Cambridge, Reading and London (Ph.D. 1974). He taught at the Universities of Wales, Portsmouth and since 1979 Groningen. Since 1994, Professor of heritage management and urban tourism in the Department of Planning, Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen (NL). His main research interests include heritage management, urban tourism and place marketing.

Pierre Benckendorff
University of Queensland, Australia

Dr. Pierre Benckendorff is a senior lecturer and social scientist in the School of Tourism at The University of Queensland, Australia. His current research interests are broad and include visitor attraction management, tourist shopping, tourism in built environments (landscapes, streetscapes, and servicescapes), tourism and technology, tourism marketing, bibliometric analysis, social network analysis, generation Y, and tourism education, and he has authored and co-authored a number of academic articles and publications in these areas.
Bianca Biagi
University of Sassari, Italy

Bianca Biagi is lecturer in economics at the University of Sassari (Italy) and researcher at the Centre for North South Economic Research, University of Sassari and Cagliari (Italy). She specialized in tourism economics at the University of Perugia (Italy) and in urban and regional economics at the University of Reading (UK). She earned the Italian Doctorate in Social Science (majoring in economics) at the University of Sassari (Italy). She is member of the European Regional Science Association and the International Association of Tourism Economics. Her publications cover a range of topics including tourism, quality-of-life, interregional migration, and regional multipliers.

B. Bynum Boley
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

B. Bynum Boley is a Ph.D. student pursuing a degree in hospitality and tourism management from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). He is a graduate of the University of Montana where he received an M.S. in recreation management and the University of Georgia where he earned dual B.S. degrees in forestry and natural resource recreation and tourism (NRRT). His research interest focuses on sustainable tourism with a special attention to the congruence of a destination’s emphasis on sustainability and its overall competitiveness as a destination. A major aspect of this focus on sustainability is preserving the charter of place that makes destinations unique and using this uniqueness as a competitive advantage to attract market segments such as geotravelers and ecotourists.
Kelly S. Bricker
University of Utah, USA

Kelly Bricker is an associate professor at the University of Utah, in parks, recreation, and tourism. She is currently on the chair of The International Ecotourism Society, and serves as chair of the Interim Advisory Committee of the Tourism Sustainability Council. She completed her Ph.D. research at The Pennsylvania State University where she specialized in sustainable tourism. She has published research on sense of place and whitewater recreationists; and, tourism topics relative to ecotourism, certification and policy, heritage, social and environmental impacts, and community health.
Dimitrios Buhalis
Bournemouth University, UK

Professor Dimitrios Buhalis is a strategic management and marketing expert with specialization in technology and tourism. He is currently established chair in tourism and deputy director of the International Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Research (ICTHR) at the School of Tourism at Bournemouth University and Professorial Observer at the Bournemouth University Senate. He is leading eTourism research and is working with the Bournemouth team for introducing technology in all aspects of tourism research and teaching. In 2009, he led Bournemouth University successfully through the UNWTO.TedQual Certification Process and is the BU representative to the United Nations World Tourism Organization. In recognition of his contribution to tourism research, he was elected in August 2009, as a fellow of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism. In April 2010, he was also elected as president of the International Federation of Information Technology for Travel and Tourism (IFITT). He was previously working at the University of Surrey, IMHI (Cornell University-Ecole Superieure des Sciences Economiques et Commerciales ESSEC) in Paris, Hong Kong Polytechnic University, China, University of Aveiro, Portugal, and Modul University in Vienna, Austria. He has been involved with a number of European Commission FP5 and FP6 projects and regularly advises the World Tourism Organization, the World Tourism and Travel Council, and the European Commission.
**Jack Carlsen**
Curtin University, Western Australia

Professor Jack Carlsen is currently professor of sustainable tourism at Curtin University, Western Australia and co-director of the Curtin Sustainable Tourism Centre. He has produced more than 150 scholarly publications since 1995 on various topics related to tourism planning, markets, development, and evaluation. In 2004, he co-authored *The Family Business in Tourism and Hospitality* (CABI 2004), and in 2006 he co-edited *Global Wine Tourism: Research, Management and Marketing* (CABI 2006).

**Lisa C. Chase**
University of Vermont, USA

Lisa C. Chase, Ph.D., is extension associate professor and natural resources specialist at the University of Vermont Extension and director of the Vermont Tourism Data Center. Her research and outreach focus on the intersection of environmental conservation, economic development, and community capacity. Working with farmers, forest owners, and rural entrepreneurs, she conducts applied research to help communities make informed decisions about tourism development and potential impacts on quality-of-life.
Erik Cohen
Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel

Erik Cohen is the George S. Wise professor of sociology (emeritus) at the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Born in 1932 in Zagreb, Yugoslavia, he immigrated to Israel in 1949. He studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem between 1954 and 1961 (B.A. in sociology and economics, M.A. in sociology and philosophy), and completed his Ph.D. in 1968. He taught at the Hebrew University from 1959 to 2000. His principal research areas were collective settlements, urban studies, folk arts, and tourism. He conducted research in Israel, Peru, the Pacific Islands, and, since 1977, in Thailand, and is the author of more than 180 publications. His recent books include: The Commercialized Crafts of Thailand (Curzon and Univ. of Hawaii Press, 2000), The Chinese Vegetarian Festival in Phuket (Bangkok: White Lotus, 2001), Contemporary Tourism: Diversity and Change (Elsevier, 2004), Israeli Backpackers and Their Society (edited with Ch. Noy) (Albany NY: SUNY Press, 2005), and Explorations in Thai Tourism (Emerald, forth. 2008). He served as sociology editor of Annals of Tourism Research since 1976. He is also on editorial boards of several other journals and a founding member of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism. He presently lives in Bangkok, and works on some new topics, such as animals in tourism, medical tourism, and tourism and disaster. E-mail: mserik@mscc.huji.ac.il
Robertico Croes, Ph.D., is an associate professor at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management at the University of Central Florida. He is also the associate director of the Dick Pope Sr. Institute for Tourism Studies at the University. He is the author of a book on the modeling of tourism demand, *Anatomy of Demand in International Tourism* as well as numerous journal articles, book chapters, and conference presentations on tourism economic impact and development. His forthcoming book pertains to overcoming scale challenges through tourism specialization. He teaches courses in tourism economics, industry analysis, and methodology.
Geoffrey I. Crouch
La Trobe University, Australia

Geoffrey I. Crouch is professor of marketing in the School of Management and an elected fellow in the International Academy for the Study of Tourism. Before joining La Trobe University, he previously held positions in the World Tourism Education and Research Centre at the University of Calgary, Canada, and the Graduate School of Management at Monash University, Australia. He was an elected member of the board of directors of the Calgary Convention and Visitors Bureau and has undertaken consulting assignments and research projects in conjunction with organizations such as the Australian Tourist Commission, the Hong Kong Tourist Association, various state tourism organizations, and other tourism associations. He serves on a number of editorial review boards of scholarly journals and is co-editor-in-chief of the journal *Tourism Analysis*. He has published numerous academic articles in leading journals including the *Journal of Travel Research*, *Tourism Management*, *Annals of Tourism Research*, and the *Journal of Business Research*. In 2003, he was the organizing chair for the Third Symposium on the Consumer Psychology of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure. He is a co-author of the book *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective* (CABI Publishing, 2003). His research interests include destination marketing and competitiveness, tourism psychology and consumer behavior, and space tourism marketing for which he has received a number of university, journal, and conference awards.
Graham M.S. Dann  
Finnmark University College, Alta, Norway  

Graham M.S. Dann, Ph.D., D. Litt., (Emeritus Professor of Tourism) was born in Edinburgh. After receiving his Ph.D. in sociology from the University of Surrey, UK, in 1975, he joined a team investigating quality-of-life at the Social Science Research Council in London before taking up successive teaching positions at universities in Barbados, Bedfordshire, UK, and Alta, Norway. He is a founder member of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism and also of the research committee on international tourism of the International Sociological Association. His research interests lie principally in the push/pull paradigm of tourist motivation and the semiotics of tourism promotion. E-mail: dann_graham@yahoo.co.uk

Sara Dolnicar  
University of Wollongong, Australia

Sara Dolnicar is a professor of marketing at the University of Wollongong in Australia and director of the Institute for Innovation in Social and Business Research. She holds a Ph.D. (1996) from the Vienna University of Economics and Business and a master’s degree in psychology from the University of Vienna. Her key areas of expertise are market segmentation and marketing research methods. To date, she has (co)authored 75 refereed journal articles, 48% of which were published in A* or A-ranked journals. She won a number of awards, including the prestigious Charles R. Goeldner Article of Excellence Award (2003).
Contributor Bios

Alessandra Faggian
University of Southampton, UK

Alessandra Faggian is reader at the University of Southampton (UK), and visiting associate professor at the Ohio State University (USA). Her research interests lie in regional economics. She is the 2007 recipient of the Moss Madden Medal from RSAI: Irish and British section and her research has been funded by ESRC. She is treasurer of RSAIBIS, on the RSAI Executive Council, external examiner for the European School of Economics in Florence, and in the ESRC Peer Review College. She serves on the editorial board of Papers in Regional Science, the management committee of Spatial Economic Analysis, and is book review editor for Growth & Change.

Sebastian Filep
Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia

Dr. Sebastian Filep is a research fellow in Travel and Wellbeing at the Centre for Tourism and Services Research at Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia. He is the co-author of Tourists, Tourism and the Good Life, an introductory book on positive psychology and tourism. He has published internationally on the topics of happiness, tourist satisfaction, and positive psychology. In 2009, he received his Ph.D. in tourism at James Cook University. He is a member of the International Positive Psychology Association, a member of the Australian Centre on Quality of Life, and a Pacific Asia Travel Association Young Tourism Professional.
**John B. Ford**  
Old Dominion University, USA  


**Ruhet Genç**  
Istanbul Bilgi University, Laureate Universities, Turkey  

Ruhet Genç is chairman and associate professor at Istanbul Bilgi University, Laureate Universities in Istanbul. He is also a director of three predominant touristic entities and the advisor of some major logistics companies in Turkey. He has three books in Turkish namely, *International Hotel & Restaurant Management in Relation with Human, Concepts and Methods of Professional Manager,* and *Concepts and Methods in Logistics and Supply Chain Management.* His business and international connections make him to live and work in three different continents, namely Asia (China, South Korea, and Taiwan), Europe (Turkey and Germany), and North America (Canada and the USA). By doing so, he is able to look at the tourism and logistics sectors from different angles. He values very much cultures where he can discover new synergies with the business and academic arena. His research interests include cross-cultural values of tourism and different aspects of tourist behavior.
Deepu V. George
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

Deepu V. George is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Human Development at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (1880 Pratt Drive, RB XV, Blacksburg, VA 24060). His research focuses on applying systems thinking to understanding and measuring community development, capacity building, and community change processes. He is a fellow of the Institute of Policy and Governance at Virginia Tech, and a Via International Scholar with the Global Dialogue for Response Ability Project.
Ebru Günlü
Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir, Turkey

Ebru Günlü is associate professor at the Dept of Tourism Management, Faculty of Business, T.C. Dokuz Eylül University, Izmir, Turkey. Her main research interests lie in the application of managerial issues and behavioral sciences to the hospitality industry. She has also co-authored a book “Convention Management” and wrote a book titled “Workplace Romance.” In addition, she has written some book chapters like “Leadership Styles and Motivation” and “Deviance Behavior.” On the topic of “Crisis Management in Tourism,” she and her colleague Gurhan Akta have a book chapter titled “Crisis Management in Tourist Destinations,” which appeared in the new edition of Global Tourism published in 2005. They have also co-authored a conference paper “Concerning Crisis Management” presented at International Congress on Marine Tourism, which was rewarded as “the best paper” of the congress. She has also won another best research paper reward with her co-authored research, “The Effects of Workplace Freindship on Organizational Climate: A Research of Travel Agencies in Mersin.” She is the vice chairperson of the Department of Tourism Management at the Dokuz Eylül University, where she delivers under-graduate and post-graduate courses on human resources in tourism, management of tourism operations, convention management, and tourism sociology.
Huili Hao  
East Carolina University, USA

Huili Hao, Ph.D., is the research director for the Center for Sustainable Tourism, Division of Research and Graduate Studies, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. Her research interests include impact of second home and tourism development, sustainability, community sense of place, and sustainable Brownfield redevelopment.

Heather J. Hartwell  
Bournemouth University, UK

Dr. Heather Hartwell, associate professor, is a registered nutritionist and a member of the Nutrition Society. Her expertise is within the academic discipline of public health nutrition. Being part of the Centre for Well-being and Quality of Life, she has responsibility for coordinating the well-being research theme pan-university. In her duty as trustee of the Royal Society for Public Health, she is actively involved in policy decision making and contributes to advisory committees at a national level. She is engaged with the British Nutrition Society being the food and nutrition specialist on the Registration Committee and assessor for new registrants. She is a fellow of the Higher Education Academy, Fellow of the Royal Society for Public Health, and editor of the highly acclaimed Perspectives in Public Health journal published by Sage. As chief external examiner for the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and examiner for the Royal Society for Public Health, she is part of the development team required to provide relevant proficient and technical guidance within the general field of nutrition and food safety. Her aim is to provide a learning environment of the highest possible quality, which is both academically stimulating and vocationally relevant. This was recognized in 2006 when she was awarded a Bournemouth University Learning and Teaching Fellowship.
Pamela Ho
PolyU Hong Kong Community College, Hong Kong

Dr. Pamela Ho is a lecturer in the PolyU Hong Kong Community College. She devoted her career in the travel and tourism industry since she got her B.A. (Hons.) degree in tourism management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. It was where she subsequently obtained her Ph.D. She has been active in research and consultancy projects. Her research areas cover cultural tourism, attractions, and theme parks management. She has published in referee journals and was responsible for several tourism-related consultancy projects for private companies and the Hong Kong SAR Government including the Feasibility Study on Conservation and Development of Wun Yiu Pottery Kiln Site and the Northern New Territories Tourism Development Study.

Mick Ireland
JDD, Mayor of Aspen, Colorado, USA

Mick Ireland, JDD, is mayor of Aspen, Colorado, and a two-term past member of the Pitkin County, Colorado, Board of Commissioners. He has studied, experienced, and shared across many venues the experiences and leadership role Aspen and the surrounding regions have played in addressing the many issues facing rural resort regions with high-end second home development.
Robert J. Johnston
Clark University, USA

Robert J. Johnston is director of the George Perkins Marsh Institute and professor of economics at Clark University. He received his B.A. from Williams College and Ph.D. from the University of Rhode Island. Among other appointments, he is currently president of the Northeastern Agricultural and Resource Economics Association (NAREA), on the Program Committee for the Charles Darwin Foundation, the Science Advisory Board for the Communication Partnership for Science and the Sea (COMPASS), the Gulf of Maine Regional Ocean Science Council, and is the vice president of the Marine Resource Economics Foundation. He is a natural resource and environmental economist who has published extensively on tourism economics and sustainability, valuation of natural resources and ecosystem services, and management of aquatic, coastal, and ecological resources. He has also recently co-authored Economic Analysis for Ecosystem Based Management: Applications to Marine and Coastal Environments, published by RFF Press.

Bryce L. Jorgensen
East Carolina University, USA

Bryce L. Jorgensen is assistant professor of child development and family relations at East Carolina University (Rivers W 335, Greenville, NC 27858). His research and theorizing focus on the capacity of families to be strong and resilient over the life course within a community context.
Soo Hyun Jun, Ph.D., is lecturer of tourism management and marketing in the School of Tourism at Bournemouth University, UK. She earned her Ph.D. degree in tourism, recreation, and sport management at the University of Florida and her master’s degree in park, recreation, and tourism resources at Michigan State University, USA. Her current research interests are consumer behavior, information-processing strategies, information and communication technology, strategic marketing for tourism and hospitality, and experimental research methods. Her works appear in *Journal of Travel Research, Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing, Parks and Recreation*, and several refereed conference proceedings. She was awarded the Best Illustrated Paper at the Annual TTRA Conference (2004), the Poster Award at the Michigan Land Use Summit Forum (2004), the Master’s Student Research Merit Award at the Annual TTRA Conference (2005), and the Best Presentation of Student Research at the TTRA Canada Conference (2008). Before moving to the USA, Soo worked for the Division of Corporate Strategic Planning at CJ Corporation in Seoul, Korea, which focuses on food services and entertainment businesses, and the Division of Marketing at CJmall.com.
Deborah L. Kerstetter  
Pennsylvania State University, USA

Deb Kerstetter is a professor in recreation, park, and tourism management and co-director of the Tourism Research Lab at The Pennsylvania State University. Her research interests lie primarily in the areas of consumer decision making in a tourism context, the impact of tourism development on cultural and social institutions, and the importance and meaning of place. In an effort to stay current, she serves on numerous tourism boards and works directly with providers interested in enhancing their strategic marketing initiatives.
Stefan was born at Kroonstad, South Africa. He has worked at very exotic destinations in the hospitality industry. He was also the protocol manager at the Sun International Group responsible for several heads of state. After working for many years in the tourism and hospitality industry in managerial positions, he has accepted a position in the Tourism Programme of the School of Business Management, North-West University, Potchefstroom. He holds a doctorate in tourism and hospitality management. His research interests include quality-of-life, tourism and hospitality management, food and nutrition sciences, and positive psychology. He is also a licensed moderator of the Cape Wine Academy, and is a food safety auditor. He is a lifelong student of the famous culinary expert, Jamie Oliver. Since 2004, he has published various peer-reviewed articles in journals and has attended various conferences, both national and international. His hobbies include fire breathing, collecting bonsai, playing piano, clarinet and flute, and hunting. He serves on the Journal of Applied Research in Quality of Life as book review editor. He is currently a member of the International Society of Quality of Life Studies, the South African Chefs Association, the Federated Hospitality Association of South Africa, the National Confederation of Hunters Associations of South Africa (CHASA), and has completed his dedicated hunting license.
Dionysia Lambiri
University of Southampton, UK

Dionysia Lambiri is a research associate at the School of Geography, University of Southampton (UK), currently working on a project looking at the economic effects of large foodstore developments on small towns in England. Dionysia earned a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Reading (UK) where she also worked as a teaching fellow, teaching microeconomics, urban economics, and real estate economics. Her doctoral research, partly funded by the University of Reading, looked at urban regeneration and neighborhood dynamics in the case of Barcelona (Spain), with particular focus on residential submarkets. Her research interests lie in the fields of urban economics, housing economics, and quality-of-life studies.

Michael S. LaTour
University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

Dr. Michael S. LaTour is professor of marketing at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. He earned his Ph.D. at the University of Mississippi. His research focuses on consumer memory, gender issues, and psychophysiological responses to marketing communications. His research has appeared in a variety of journals including the Journal of Marketing, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Advertising, Journal of Advertising Research, and the Journal of Business Research.
Katie Lazarevski  
University of Wollongong, Australia

Katie Lazarevski is a research associate with the Institute for Innovation in Social and Business Research at the University of Wollongong (Australia). Her research focuses on improving the managerial usefulness of market segmentation solutions for the tourism sector. In her Ph.D. thesis, she uncovered that tourism managers have difficulty in understanding the market segmentation process. She developed a formative model that tourism managers can use to assess the attractiveness of market segments. To date, Katie has (co)authored five refereed journal articles.

Xiang (Robert) Li  
University of South Carolina, USA

Dr. Xiang (Robert) Li is an assistant professor at the School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management, University of South Carolina. His research mainly focuses on destination marketing and tourist behavior, with special emphasis on international destination branding, customer loyalty, and tourism in Asia. He has worked extensively with international destination marketing organizations and companies. He has authored nearly 60 scientific publications and currently serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Travel Research, Journal of Leisure Research, and Tourism Analysis. He is also a frequent speaker at numerous international and industry conferences.
**Janne J. Liburd**  
University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Dr. Janne J. Liburd is an associate professor and director of the Centre for Tourism, Innovation and Culture at the University of Southern Denmark, Denmark. She is a cultural anthropologist and her research interests are in the field of sustainable tourism development. She has published on national park development, open innovation and Web 2.0, tourism education, tourism crisis communication, events, NGOs, and accountability. She has conducted a number of research projects relating to competence development for tourism practitioners and tourism educators. She is the chair of the BEST Education Network and steering committee member of the Tourism Education Futures Initiative.

**Patrick Long**  
East Carolina University, USA

Patrick Long, Ed.D., is the director of the Center for Sustainable Tourism, Division of Research and Graduate Studies, East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina. His research focuses on tourism planning strategies, sustainable practices in tourism, community development and resource conservation, host community adjustments to tourism development, gaming tourism, and the impact of climate change on tourism business.
Vincent P. Magnini  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

Dr. Vincent P. Magnini, assistant professor of hospitality and tourism marketing at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, earned his doctoral degree from Old Dominion University. His research focuses on services marketing issues and has appeared in a variety of journals including the Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Business Research, Journal of Services Marketing, and the Journal of Service Research. He has also co-authored (with Francis Noe and Muzzo Uysal) a service encounter book entitled Tourist Customer Satisfaction: An Encounter Approach aimed at providing students, educators, and practitioners with a comprehensive synthesis of service theories as they apply to frontline interactions.

Jay A. Mancini  
University of Georgia, USA

Jay A. Mancini is Haltiwanger distinguished professor at the University of Georgia, and head of the Department of Child and Family Development (123 Dawson Hall, Athens, GA 30602). He also is director of the Family and Community Resilience Laboratory. He is a fellow of the National Council on Family Relations and of the World Demographic Association. His empirical and theoretical work focuses on the resilience and vulnerability of individuals, families, and communities.
Gianna Moscardo  
James Cook University, Australia

Professor Gianna Moscardo has qualifications in applied psychology and sociology and joined the School of Business at James Cook University in 2002. Prior to joining JCU, she was the tourism research project leader for the CRC Reef Research for 8 years. Her qualifications in applied psychology and sociology support her research interests in understanding how consumers, especially tourists, make decisions and evaluate their experiences and how communities and organizations perceive, plan for, and manage tourism development opportunities. She has published extensively on tourism and related areas with more than 150 refereed papers or book chapters. She has been invited to speak on issues related to tourism in New Zealand, South Africa, Botswana, Italy, Finland, and the USA. Her recent project areas include evaluating tourism as a tool for economic development in rural regions, tourist experience analysis, and tourist shopping villages.

Norman McIntyre  
Lakehead University, Canada

Dr. Norman McIntyre is professor emeritus and director of the Lakehead University Centre for Tourism and Community Development in Thunder Bay Ontario, Canada. He has a broad international experience in nature-based tourism and leisure having taught and conducted research in Australia, New Zealand, Sweden, Japan, Canada, and the USA. His current research is focused on lifestyle migration and its social, economic, and environmental implications for transitional rural communities in Canada and elsewhere.
Bob McKercher
Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hong Kong

Dr. Bob McKercher is a professor of tourism in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He began his career at Charles Sturt University in Albury, NSW, Australia. Prior to that he worked in the Canadian tourism industry in a variety of advocacy and operational roles. He has wide-ranging research interests and is the co-author of *Cultural Tourism: The Partnership Between Tourism and Cultural Heritage Management*. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Melbourne in Australia, a master’s degree from Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada, and his undergraduate degree from York University in Toronto, Canada.

Minkyung Park
George Mason University, USA

Minkyung Park (Ph.D., Texas A&M University, 2000) is an assistant professor in School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism at George Mason University. She worked at Maryland State Tourism Office before she joined Tourism and Events Management Program at George Mason University. Her research interests include impacts of tourism on communities and individuals, cultural events and festivals, globalization, and tourism behavior.
Philip L. Pearce
James Cook University, Australia

Philip Pearce was appointed as the first professor of tourism in Australia. He earned a doctorate from the University of Oxford studying tourists in Europe. He has held a Fulbright scholarship at Harvard University. He has over 150 publications and six books on tourism and supervises a large number of Ph.D. students. He is a foundation member of the International Academy for the Study of Tourism and was the chief editor of Australia’s Journal of Tourism Studies from 1990 to 2005. His interests are in tourist behavior, tropical tourism, and tourism education.

Mike Peters
University of Innsbruck, Austria

Mike Peters finalized his apprenticeship training and worked for several years in the hotel industry. He studied at the Faculty of Business Administration at University of Regensburg (Germany) and is a graduate of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Innsbruck (Austria). In his dissertation, he investigated the growth (behavior) of tourism enterprises and therefore analyzed entrepreneurial motivations in small and family businesses. In 2008, he became associate professor at the Department of Strategic Management, Marketing and Tourism at the University of Innsbruck. His main areas of research are small- and medium-sized enterprises in tourism: problems and challenges, entrepreneurship in tourism, and innovation and product development in tourism.
Rhonda G. Phillips
Arizona State University, USA

Rhonda G. Phillips, Ph.D., is professor in the School of Community Resources and Development at Arizona State University where she teaches in the tourism development and management and the nonprofit and philanthropy leadership programs. She holds professional certifications in planning (AICP) and economic and community development (CEcD). Her work with communities centers on revitalization using tourism-based development, arts and cultural applications, as well as evaluative work using community indicator systems. Fostering community well-being has been the focus of her research and service work for over 20 years.
Ige Pırnar (professor, Ph.D.) currently works as chair of Department of Tourism & Hotel Management, Yaşar University. She achieved her M.B.A at Bilkent University (1989) and Ph.D. at Ankara University (1998). She held job postings at Bilkent University (1989–1996) as assistant director of School of Tourism & Hotel Management, vice chair of Department of Computer Aided Accounting, and vice chair of Department of Commerce & Administration. She has previously worked as part-time lecturer at METU (1993–1996), Izmir University of Economics (2004–2006), and Beykent University (2009). She has four books published in Turkish (two of them with co-authors) on topics of Convention and Meetings Management, TQM in Tourism, Direct Marketing, PR in Tourism, and is one of the editors of Quality Management in Services. She has scholarships for Tourism Education in Universities from WTO (New Delhi, 1990) and Teaching Assistantship Scholarship from Bilkent University (1987). She has many articles and presentations on tourism management, international tourism studies, global marketing, alternative tourism applications, hospitality marketing, and EU tourism policy, either published in national and international journals or presented at national and international conferences. She is also among the editorial member boards of many tourism-related journals, the organizing committee members, and/or the scientific board members of many tourism-related congresses.
Abraham Pizam
University of Central Florida, USA

Abraham Pizam is dean and Linda Chapin Eminent Scholar Chair in Tourism Management in the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, at the University of Central Florida, Orlando, Florida, USA. Professor Pizam is widely known in the field of hospitality and tourism management and has conducted research projects, lectured, and served as a consultant in more than 30 countries. He has held various academic positions, in the USA, UK, France, Austria, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Israel, and Switzerland, has authored more than 150 scientific publications and eight books, is the editor-in-chief of the *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, and serves on the editorial boards of 18 academic journals. He has conducted consulting and research projects for a variety of international, national, and regional tourism organizations. He holds a master’s degree from New York University and a Ph.D. from Cornell University, and is the recipient of several academic awards.

László Puczkó
Xellum Ltd., Budapest, Hungary

Dr. László Puczkó is a managing director and head of tourism section at Xellum management consulting company. He is board member of the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) European Chapter, professor at Corvinus University, Budapest, and president of the Hungarian Association of Tourism Consultants. His main areas of expertise are in tourism research, strategy preparation, planning, and management. Based on his works, several market analyses have been prepared focusing on the characteristics of theme parks, health tourism, thematic routes, heritage tourism, attraction and visitor management, destination marketing, and impact analysis.
Jeffrey Michael Rempel  
Environmental and Regulatory Manager, Alberta, Canada  

Mr. Rempel is an environmental assessment and management expert. He is the founder of PhilEco Environmental Consulting (est. 1998, Inc. 2010). His interdisciplinary education and work experience provide an integrated approach (social, economic, ecological, and institutional) to the management of complex adaptive social-ecological systems. His project experiences include: contaminated sites, waste management, oil sands environmental and regulatory project management, legislation review, EIA coordination, wildlife and fisheries biology, hydrology, and hydrogeology. His excellent project management skills have developed over the past 11 years to include work plan, budget, and proposal preparation as well as field logistics and sampling. He is also proficient in a wide variety of PC applications and understands the benefits of using GIS in cross-disciplinary management. He is an effective communicator, as a scientist and to nontechnical audiences. He has experience working with various levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal) and communities including first nations. He is a proven leader, project manager, and natural scientist with a high degree of professionalism and attention to detail.
Dr. Ritchie holds the professorship of tourism management in the Haskayne School of Business at the University of Calgary. He also serves as chair of the University’s World Tourism Education and Research Centre. He was elected as the founding chair of the United Nations World Tourism Organization’s Tourism Education Council in 2001. In 2004, he was awarded the UNWTO Ulysses Prize for “his scientific contributions to the theory and practice of Tourism Policy, as well as his leadership over the past 25 years in the area of tourism education and research.” He has published extensively on tourism and related topics in leading journals in the field. He is co-author of numerous books, most notably: *Tourism: Principles, Practices, Philosophies* (now going into its 12th edition and widely regarded as the leading introductory textbook in the field of tourism); *Travel, Tourism and Hospitality Research: A Handbook for Managers and Researchers; Consumer Psychology of Tourism, Hospitality and Leisure-Vol 2; The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective*, has been endorsed by the United Nations World Tourism Organization as a theoretical and practical framework for effective destination management. He currently serves on the editorial review boards of numerous leading journals in the field. His active research focuses on destination competitiveness, destination branding, destination management, the environmental impacts of visitor behaviors, and the tourism experience.
Amir Shani
Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Eilat Campus, Israel

Amir Shani is a lecturer in the Department of Hotel and Tourism Management in Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Eilat Campus, where he teaches courses in ecotourism, tourism ethics, and marketing research. He earned his Ph.D. at the Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, where he also served as an instructor for undergraduate courses in tourism management and guest services. In addition, he served as faculty in the Disney Scholars Program. He specializes in tourism and hospitality ethics, as well as current issues in tourism marketing, such as destination image and loyalty. His articles have appeared in Journal of Travel Research, Journal of Sustainable Tourism, Cornell Hospitality Quarterly, International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, as well as other tourism and hospitality journals.
Manisha Singal
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

Dr. Manisha Singal is assistant professor of strategy in the department of hospitality and tourism management in the Pamplin College of Business at Virginia Tech University. She received her Ph.D. in strategic management at Virginia Tech in 2008. She teaches strategic management in the hospitality industry at the undergraduate, graduate, and Ph.D. level. Her research interests lie in the area of corporate governance and firm strategies and topics related to the hospitality and tourism industry. Several of her papers have been nominated/selected for best paper awards at the Academy of Management Meeting, Family Enterprise Research Conference, and Strategic Management Society Conference. She has published papers on tourism area life cycle and consumer brand perceptions in the restaurant industry. She serves on the editorial review board of *Family Business Review* and as an ad hoc reviewer for several journals like *Cornell Quarterly, Journal of Business Research, International Journal of Hospitality Management, Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, and *Tourism Analysis*.

Melanie Smith
Corvinus University of Budapest, Budapest, Hungary

Melanie Smith is an associate professor and researcher in tourism at Corvinus University, Budapest, where she is developing an M.A. in tourism management. She has been a tourism academic for almost 15 years. She was director of B.A. Tourism and M.A. Cultural Tourism Management Programmes for several years at the University of Greenwich in London. She is also chair of ATLAS (Association for Tourism and Leisure Education), which has around 300 members in 70 countries. She is author of several books and journal articles with research interests in cultural tourism, urban regeneration, health and wellness tourism, and quality-of-life.
Patricia A. Stokowski  
University of Vermont, USA

Patricia A. Stokowski (Ph.D., University of Washington, 1988) is a faculty member in the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, University of Vermont; she previously worked at Texas A&M University and the University of Colorado-Boulder. Her work focuses on social and cultural aspects of outdoor recreation behavior, and tourism development impacts. She is the author of Riches and Regrets: Betting on Gambling in Two Colorado Mountain Towns (1996; University Press of Colorado) and Leisure in Society: A Network Structural Perspective (1994, Mansell Press). E-mail: Patricia.Stokowski@uvm.edu

John E. Tunbridge  
Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada

John E. Tunbridge is visiting professor, School of Business (Heritage Studies), University of Brighton, UK, and emeritus professor of geography and environmental studies, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. He studied at Cambridge and Bristol Universities and, via a preliminary post at Sheffield University, came to Carleton in 1969. He has held visiting positions at the Universities of New England, Armidale, Australia; Portsmouth, UK; and Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. He has written extensively on heritage, tourism, and related issues for some 35 years, with particular reference to Canada, South Africa, and Central Europe. His recent work has focused on naval heritage, primarily in the contexts of Bermuda and Malta. His longstanding co-authorship with Gregory Ashworth notably includes Dissonant Heritage (1996) and The Tourist-Historic City (1990 and 2000).
Timothy J. Tyrrell
Arizona State University, USA

Timothy J. Tyrrell is professor of tourism development and management and director of the Megapolitan Tourism Research Center at Arizona State University. He earned a Ph.D. from Cornell University in agricultural economics in 1979 after earning an M.A. in economics from the University of Tennessee and B.A. in mathematics from the University of South Florida. He served as professor of tourism economics at the University of Rhode Island from 1978 until 2005, and as professor and founding director of the Megapolitan Tourism Research Center at Arizona State University from 2005 until the present. He has conducted market research, sustainable development, and economic impact studies of tourism in many parts of the world. He is a member of the Travel and Tourism Research Association and the International Association of Scientific Experts in Tourism. He serves on the Leadership Council of International Association of Tourism Economists. His article co-authored with Rob Johnston “A Dynamic Model of Sustainable Tourism” won the Charles R. Goeldner Article of Excellence Award in 2005 for top article in the Journal of Travel Research.
M. Mithat Üner
Gazi University, Turkey

Mithat Üner is a professor in the Department of Marketing at Gazi University, Ankara/Turkey. Mithat Uner received his B.S. in business administration in 1983 from the Hacettepe University, and his MBA from Gazi University in 1986 and M.S. in international business 1989 from the University of Wisconsin at Madison. He received his Ph.D. in business from Gazi University. He completed his postdoc studies at the University of Pisa in Italy. Most of his research centers around services marketing, marketing strategy, positioning, and internationalization of firms. He was the dean of School of Tourism at the Gazi University for 6 years. He has been serving as a consultant to the Ministry of Tourism in Turkey. He is married and a father of two.

Manuel Vanegas
Adjunct Professor, University of Minnesota, Saint Paul/Minneapolis, USA

Dr. Vanegas is breaking ground on the hypothesis that tourism development offers a well structured road through which developing countries can both effectively reduce poverty and at the same time enhance the level of economic growth. His main research activities are in the areas of tourism economics and quantitative analysis with applications in poverty reduction, economic growth, marketing effectiveness, and demand analysis. He served as tourism policy advisor to the President of Nicaragua (2002–2005), UN chief technical advisor to the government of Aruba (1994–2002), and chief of party macroeconomics to the government of Uganda (1989–2003). He is an adjunct professor in the Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota, Saint Paul/Minneapolis, USA. He received his Ph.D. from the Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota.
**David Weaver**  
Griffith University, Gold Coast, Australia

Dr. Weaver is currently professor of tourism research at Griffith University, having held prior academic appointments in Canada, Australia, and the USA. He is a specialist in ecotourism, sustainable tourism, and destination life cycle dynamics, and is the author or co-author of more than 100 refereed journal articles, books, and book chapters. He sits on the editorial boards of eight academic tourism journals and has recently delivered invited keynote addresses in South Korea, Mexico, South Africa, and Sweden.

**Klaus Weiermair**  
University of Innsbruck, Austria

Klaus Weiermair was educated at the Vienna School of Economics of Business Administration and earned his master and doctorate degrees at the same institution. He served as professor and from 1991 to 2004 head of the Institute of Tourism and Service Economics at the University of Innsbruck. Until recently he was full professor at the Department of Strategic Management, Marketing and Tourism at the University of Innsbruck. His previous appointment was, among others, professor at the Faculty of Administrative Studies, York University. His areas of research include tourism management and entrepreneurship, organizational development, and quality measurement and management. His publications can be found in well-known journals, such as *Annals of Tourism Research, Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, or *Journal of Management Studies*. 
Daniel R. Williams
Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA

Daniel R. Williams is a research social scientist with the Human Dimensions Research Program, Rocky Mountain Research Station, in Fort Collins, Colorado, USA. His research examining the impact of globalization on the meanings of tourist landscapes has appeared in the *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, *Journal of Leisure Research*, *Norwegian Journal of Geography*, and *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*. He recently co-edited (with McIntyre) *Multiple Dwelling and Tourism: Negotiating Place, Home and Identity*, published by CABI. His current research examines community vulnerability to landscape change to identify the adaptive capacities that make them more resilient in the face of such change.

Eunju Woo
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, USA

Eunju Woo is a Ph.D. student currently working in hospitality and tourism management at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. She completed her master’s degree in the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism from University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign in 2009. Her research interests include destination marketing, tourist behavior, and quality-of-life.
Venkata Yanamandram
University of Wollongong, Australia

Venkata Yanamandram, Ph.D., received his doctorate from the University of Sydney, and is a lecturer in the Marketing discipline at the University of Wollongong, where he teaches marketing principles and services marketing at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. His research has been published in the *International Journal of Services Industry Management* (currently published as *Journal of Service Management*), *Managing Service Quality, Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice*, and *Australasian Accounting Business and Finance Journal*. Venkata.yanamandram@uow.edu.au

Li Yang
Western Michigan University, USA

Li Yang is an assistant professor in the Department of Geography at Western Michigan University. Her research career has focused on tourism planning, marketing, cultural tourism, ethnic tourism, tourism analysis and forecasting, and applied statistics. Her research interests are interdisciplinary, as she has a diverse background in tourism, planning, statistics, and economics. She has been involved in many tourism research projects and has obtained university and governmental research grants and awards. She received her Ph.D. in planning from the University of Waterloo, Canada, and M.Sc. in statistics from Yunnan University, Yunnan, China.
Contributors

Derek Alderman  Center for Sustainable Tourism, Division of Research and Graduate Studies, East Carolina University, RW 208A Rivers Building, Greenville, NC 27858, USA
Department of Geography, Cultural and Historic Tourism, East Carolina University, RW 208A Rivers Building, Greenville, NC 27858, USA

Benoni Amsden  Center for Rural Partnerships, Plymouth State University, 17 High Street, MSC 68, Plymouth, NH 03264, USA, blamsden@plymouth.edu

Can Armutlu  Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Faculty of Commercial Sciences, Baskent University, Baglica, Ankara, Turkey, carmutlu@baskent.edu.tr

Gregory J. Ashworth  Faculty of Spatial Sciences, University of Groningen, Postbox 800, 9700AV Groningen, NL, Netherlands, g.j.ashworth@rug.nl

Pierre Benckendorff  School of Tourism, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, QLD 4072, Australia, p.benckendorff@uq.edu.au

Bianca Biagi  Department of Economics, University of Sassari and CRENoS, Via Torre Tonda 34, 07100 Sassari, Italy, bbiagi@uniss.it

B. Bynum Boley  Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA, bynum.boley@vt.edu

Kelly S. Bricker  Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism, University of Utah, Annex C, Room 1070, 250 South 1850 East, Room 200, Salt Lake City, UT 84112-0920, USA, Kelly.Bricker@health.utah.edu

Dimitrios Buhalis  International Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Research, School of Tourism, Bournemouth University, Dorset House, Talbot Campus, Fern Barrow, Poole, Dorset, BH12 5BB, UK, dbuhalis@bournemouth.ac.uk

Jack Carlsen  Curtin Sustainable Tourism Centre, Curtin University of Technology, Perth, WA 6845, Australia, j.carlsen@curtin.edu.au

Lisa C. Chase  Vermont Tourism Data Center, University of Vermont Extension, 11 University Way #4, Brattleboro, VT 05301-3669, USA, lisa.chase@uvm.edu

Erik Cohen  Department of Sociology, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Jerusalem, Israel, mserik@mscc.huji.ac.il
Robertico Croes  Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, 9907 Universal Blvd., Orlando, FL 32819, USA, rcroes@mail.ucf.edu

Geoffrey I. Crouch  School of Management, Faculty of Law and Management, La Trobe University, Bundoora, Melbourne, VIC 3108, Australia, geoffrey.crouch@latrobe.edu.au

Graham M.S. Dann  Department of Tourism, Finnmark University College, 9509 Alta, Norway, dann_graham@yahoo.co.uk

Sara Dolnicar  Institute for Innovation in Business and Social Research, University of Wollongong, Northfields Ave, Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia, sarad@uow.edu.au

Alessandra Faggian  School of Geography, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ, UK, A.Faggian@soton.ac.uk

Sebastian Filep  Centre for Tourism and Services Research, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia, Sebastian.filep@vu.edu.au

John B. Ford  Department of Marketing, Old Dominion University, 2117 Constant Hall Norfolk, VA 23529, USA, jbford@odu.edu

Ruhet Genç  Department Coordinator, International Logistics & Transportation Department, Istanbul Biliği University, Laureate Universities, drgenc@drgenc.com

Deepu V. George  Department of Child and Family Development, Family and Community Resilience Laboratory, University of Georgia, 261 Dawson Hall, Athens, GA 30602-2622, USA, georgedv@uga.edu

Ebru Günülü  Faculty of Business Administration, Department of Tourism Management, Dokuz Eylül University, Buca, Izmir 35160, Turkey, ebru.gunlu@deu.edu.tr

Huili Hao  Center for Sustainable Tourism, Division of Research and Graduate Studies, East Carolina University, RW 208CA Rivers Building, Greenville, NC 27858, USA, haoh@ecu.edu

Heather J. Hartwell  Foodservice and Applied Nutrition Research Group & Centre for Wellbeing and Quality of Life, School of Health and Social Care, Bournemouth University, Dorset House, Talbot Campus, Fern Barrow, Poole, Dorset, BH12 5BB, UK, hhartwell@bournemouth.ac.uk

Pamela Ho  PolyU Hong Kong Community College (West Kowloon Campus), 9 Hoi Ting Road, Yau Ma Tei, Kowloon, Hong Kong, ccpamela@hkcc-polyu.edu.hk

Mick Ireland  City of Aspen, PO Box 1432, Aspen, CO 81612, USA, mick@sopris.net

Robert J. Johnston  Department of Economics, Clark University, 950 Main St, Worcester, MA 01610, USA, rjohnston@clarku.edu

Bryce L. Jorgensen  Child Development and Family Relations, College of Human Ecology, East Carolina University, Rivers W 335, Greenville, NC 27858-4353, USA, jorgensenb@ecu.edu

Soo Hyun Jun  School of Tourism, Bournemouth University, Dorset House, Talbot Campus, Fern Barrow, Poole, Dorset, BH12 5BB, UK, sjun@bournemouth.ac.uk

Deborah L. Kerstetter  Department of Recreation, Park and Tourism Management, The Pennsylvania State University, 801 Ford Building, University Park, PA 16802, USA, debk@psu.edu

Philippus Stephanes (Stefan) Kruger  Institute for Tourism and Leisure Studies, North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus), Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom 2520, South Africa, stefan.kruger@nwu.ac.za
Dionysia Lambiri  School of Geography, University of Southampton, Highfield, Southampton SO17 1BJ, UK, d.lambiri@soton.ac.uk

Michael S. LaTour  Department of Marketing, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89154, USA, MichaelLaTour@unlv.edu

Katie Lazarevski  Institute for Innovation in Business and Social Research, University of Wollongong, Northfields Ave, Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia, katiel@uow.edu.au

Xiang (Robert) Li  School of Hotel, Restaurant, and Tourism Management, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC 29208, USA, robertli@sc.edu

Janne J. Liburd  Centre for Tourism, Innovation and Culture, Department of History and Civilization, University of Southern Denmark, Niels Bohrs Vej 9, DK-6700, Esbjerg, Denmark, liburd@hist.sdu.dk

Patrick Long  Center for Sustainable Tourism, Division of Research and Graduate Studies, East Carolina University, RW 208A Rivers Building, Greenville, NC 27858, USA, longp@ecu.edu

Vincent P. Magnini  Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech, 355 Wallace Hall, Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA, magnini@vt.edu

Jay A. Mancini  Department of Child and Family Development, University of Georgia, 123 Dawson Hall, Athens, GA 30602-2622, USA, mancini@uga.edu

Norman McIntyre  Outdoor Recreation, Parks & Tourism, Centre for Tourism and Community Development Research, Lakehead University, 955 Oliver Rd, Thunder Bay P7B 5E1, Canada, nm McIntyre@lakeheadu.ca

Bob McKercher  School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Kowloon, Hong Kong, hmbob@polyu.edu.hk

Gianna Moscardo  School of Business, James Cook University, Townsville, QLD 4811, Australia, gianna.moscardo@jcu.edu.au

Minkyung Park  School of Recreation, Health, and Tourism, George Mason University, 10900 University Blvd. MSN 4E5, Manassas, VA 20110, USA, mparka@gmu.edu

Philip L. Pearce  Tourism, School of Business, James Cook University, Townsville, 4811 QLD, Australia, Philip.pearce@jcu.edu.au

Richard R. Perdue  Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA, perduer@vt.edu

Mike Peters  MCI Management Center Innsbruck, Department of Tourism Business Studies, Weiherburggasse 8, 6020 Innsbruck, Austria, mike.peters@mci.edu

Rhonda G. Phillips  School of Community Resources & Development, Arizona State University, 411 N. Central Avenue, Suite 550, Phoenix, AZ 85004, USA, rhonda.phillips@asu.edu

Ige Pirnar  Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Department of Tourism and Hotel Management, Yaşar University, Bornova, Izmir 35100, Turkey, ige.pirnar@yasar.edu.tr

Abraham Pizam  Rosen College of Hospitality Management, University of Central Florida, 9907 Universal Blvd., Orlando, FL 32819, USA, apizam@mail.ucf.edu

László Puczkó  Xellum Ltd, 1051, Október 6. u. 14, Budapest, Hungary, lpuczko@xellum.hu

Jeffrey Michael Rempel  PhilEco Environmental Consulting, 1505 – 21 Avenue S.W, Calgary, AB, Canada T2T 0M8, jeff_rempel@hotmail.com; www.phileco.ca
Contributors

J.R. Brent Ritchie  Haskayne School of Business, University of Calgary, 2500 University Drive, NW, Calgary, AB T2N 1N4, Canada, brent.ritchie@haskayne.ucalgary.ca

Amir Shani  Department of Hotel and Tourism Management, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, Eilat Campus, P.O. Box 653, Beer-Sheva 84105, Israel, shaniam@exchange.bgu.ac.il

Manisha Singal  Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA, msingal@vt.edu

M. Joseph Sirgy  Department of Marketing, Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA, sirgy@vt.edu

Melanie Smith  Tourism Management, Budapest Business School, Budapest, Hungary, melanie.smith@uni-corvinus.hu

Patricia A. Stokowski  Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources, University of Vermont, 305 Aiken Center, Burlington, VT 05403, USA, Patricia.Stokowski@uvm.edu

John E. Tunbridge  Carleton University, 63 Parkmount Cres, Nepean, ON K2H 5T3, Canada, John_Tunbridge@carleton.ca

Timothy J. Tyrrell  School of Community Resources and Development, Arizona State University, 411 N. Central Ave., Suite 550, Phoenix, AZ 85004-0690, USA, tmt@asu.edu

M. Mithat Üner  Department of Business Administration, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Gazi University, Beselver, Ankara, Turkey, mithatuner@gazi.edu.tr

Muzaffer Uysal  Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA, samil@vt.edu

Manuel Vanegas, Sr.  Adjunct Professor, Department of Applied Economics, University of Minnesota, Saint Paul/Minneapolis, MN 55108, USA

3579 E. Wyatt Way, Gilbert, AZ 85297, USA, mavanegas@yahoo.com

David Weaver  Department of Tourism, Leisure, Hotel and Sport Management, Griffith University, Gold Coast campus, Gold Coast, QLD 4222, Australia, d.weaver@griffith.edu.au

Klaus Weiermair  Department of Strategic Management, Marketing and Tourism, University of Innsbruck, Universitätsstrasse 15, A-6020 Innsbruck, Austria, klaus.weiermair@uibk.ac.at

Daniel R. Williams  Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fort Collins, CO 80526, USA, drwilliams@fs.fed.us

Eunju Woo  Department of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Pamplin College of Business, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, VA 24061, USA, eunjuw3@vt.edu

Venkata Yanamandram  Institute for Innovation in Business and Social Research, University of Wollongong, Northfields Ave, Wollongong, NSW 2522, Australia, venk@uow.edu.au

Li Yang  Department of Geography, Western Michigan University, 1903 W. Michigan Avenue, Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5424, USA, li.1.yang@wmich.edu