

## Editorial

As the summer of 2005 draws to a rather lingering conclusion, one is reminded again of the external events which have such an impact on tourism and hospitality and affect our lives more generally. While the world at large may be a more peaceful place, there are still many troubled areas which affect tourism and hospitality. The Middle East witnesses continued conflict and terrorist activities against tourists have taken place again in Egypt. Recent announcements note a security fence to be constructed around Sharm El Sheikh, including the airport, with the aim of preventing further terrorist incursions. In July, terrorist bombs exploded in London, England, and at the end of the summer, again in Bali, Indonesia. While the tragic earthquake in Pakistan will not have the same effect on tourism as the Asian tsunami at the end of 2004, it demonstrates the vulnerability of places to the forces of nature. Finally, the consequence of the hurricane season in the Caribbean has been more hurricanes than normal by this time of year, including the most intense storm yet recorded, and the devastation wrought on New Orleans has had severe effects on tourism and many other aspect of life there. Despite all of these events, tourism continues relatively unabated at the global level, but with significant regional fluctuations, some short term, others of perhaps a longer duration.

In all the cases above, however sophisticated our forecasting, no-one could predict the specific locations to be affected, the timing of the event nor necessarily even the nature of the events. Tourism remains highly vulnerable to such occurrences, although in some areas, such as the United Kingdom, tourism does not seem to have

declined for more than a very short period. One wonders what avian flu and a possible re-appearance of SARS might do to tourism in Southeast Asia or other parts of the world in the months ahead. The paper by Joan C. Henderson in the Practice Section of this issue looks at the response to the tsunami of one specific establishment, a forerunner of what is likely to be a number of articles on such a theme.

One of the ways in which modern day tourists are able to adjust to such catastrophes is through the use of information technology (IT), to find out what is happening in particular areas and to explore possible alternatives. Two of the papers in this issue deal with this topic, a reflection of the ever-increasing attention being paid to the roles of information and technology in tourism and hospitality. Marion M. Bennett and Chi-Wen Kevin Lai assess the influence of the internet and its associated elements on travel agencies in Taiwan, one of the parts of the world most receptive to such new technology. A.J. Singh and Michael L. Kasavana examine another aspect of IT, namely the way in which it is likely to affect the management of lodging operations in the future. Personal online booking of holidays and travel does not guarantee the ability to avoid external events, however; indeed, it may leave people more vulnerable if they have booked accommodation and travel separately and independently rather than as a package through a travel intermediary. To secure cheap fares they may book the travel component of their trip very early, but delay making accommodation bookings until close to departure to take advantage of last minute reductions in accommodation prices. They may then be less pro-

tected in the event of terrorist activity or natural calamity if they wish to cancel or change their plans. IT does, however, give the very considerable advantage of being able to respond quickly to such an event, although that is often not very comforting to operators in or to the areas affected.

Despite our inability to predict events such as earthquakes or tsunamis with any great accuracy with respect to timing or precise location, academics spend a great deal of time and effort in terms of exploring ways of predicting tourist numbers. Chau Jo Vu and Lindsay Turner continue to further research in this area in their paper on data disaggregation, in attempting to understand and better predict tourist numbers to destinations. The paper by Robert Inbakaran and Mervyn Jackson also concentrates on tourists, in this case by endeavouring, through the use of segmentation analysis, to improve our understanding of resort tourists by studying profiles of sets of tourists.

One very specific set of tourists is examined by Tom Hinch and Gordon J. Walker. They study casino patrons, both local gamblers and those who can be classified as tourists, and review the differing markets represented by these two basic groups. This is a topic of considerable interest in many parts of the world, not the least the United Kingdom, which has changed its gambling laws and is in the process of deciding locations and numbers for major casino developments. These new casinos are regarded as a key element in plans to rejuvenate some declining traditional British tourist resorts such as Blackpool. The language of proponents of development and resort supporters is very reminiscent of that used when gambling was being discussed and promoted as a rejuvenation tool for Atlantic City in New Jersey. It will be interesting in future years to see if the same process of rejuvenation occurs in the UK as in the USA.

This issue of *Tourism and Hospitality Research* marks a number of significant changes in the life of the Journal, now fully online, and shortly to introduce online reviewing of papers. This should speed up a process which inevitably has been subject to some considerable delays over the past few years, as well as making things easier for both reviewers and the editors. Most significantly, perhaps, the Journal now has a new publisher, Palgrave Macmillan — *Tourism and Hospitality Research* is just one of a number of journals acquired by Palgrave from Henry Stewart Publications.

As editors, Professor Andrew Lockwood, Professor Peter Jones and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Daryn Moody and Kerry Barner and their staff at Henry Stewart Publications for agreeing to start the Journal in the first place, and for their encouragement and input in getting the Journal through its first five years, always the hardest time for any new publication. In this day and age, as journals proliferate — in the tourism and hospitality area this is particularly true — competition is fierce and not all journals are able to continue despite good material being submitted.

We are grateful, therefore, to our founding publishers, to the Editorial Board, the reviewers, and of course to the contributors to the Journal. The Journal editors and publishers will be placing considerable emphasis on increasing the visibility of *Tourism and Hospitality Research* in potential markets where the Journal currently is not as strong as it might be. To increase and reflect its greater international standing, we intend to drop the subtitle 'The Surrey Quarterly Review', although the editorial home of the Journal will remain the University of Surrey, and two of the three co-editors are still based there. This co-editor has left the University of Surrey for more northern pastures (or fairways) but is continuing in his position with the Journal.

Subscriptions to the Journal have increased considerably, particularly over the last year, and this is a very encouraging sign. Submissions have also increased in number, and as the British Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) looms ever nearer (2007), we are anticipating, as in 2000, a significant rise in submissions from UK academics wishing to gain publications for their submissions to the RAE panels. This raises the vexing issue of journal ranking, a subject which is under constant review in some quarters. Members of the RAE subject panels all deny the existence of ranking lists of journals on which they base their scoring of articles, academics and departments, yet, particularly in some disciplines (and business/management seems one especially bothered in this connection), ranking lists abound. Mostly these do not serve tourism and hospitality well, as journals in these fields often do not feature in such lists at all, or, if they do, seem to be automatically discounted as not being in the highest ranks because of their marginal interest to the parent discipline, such as management, economics or geography. The continued absence of an RAE panel for tourism and hospitality (and/or recreation and leisure) leaves those of us publishing in such areas at a distinct disadvantage. Our work is rarely cited in 'established' disciplinary journals, and thus we and journals such as *Tourism and Hospitality Research* score low in formal citation indices. There is no easy solution to this, and it will inevitably take a long time for most tourism and hospitality journals to reach a high ranking in assessments such as the RAE, if they ever do.

Fortunately, perhaps, rejection rates are not a formal part of journal assessment. It

is an interesting argument that a journal must be good if it has a high rejection rate of papers submitted, but not one that I have ever accepted. Good material should be accepted, perhaps with modifications required; poor material should be rejected, if possible with suggestions on how it can be improved. To insist on a high (eg 90 per cent) rejection rate implies that 90 per cent of the work that referees do is relatively pointless, except to confirm that the vast majority of material will be rejected, or suggests that most manuscripts submitted to such a journal are too poor to be acceptable. A high rejection rate does not by itself confirm quality on a journal. The quality can surely only be judged on what is actually published, not what is rejected.

In this regard, the role of a reviewer is not only to assess manuscripts with respect to quality, consistency, appropriateness, innovativeness and contribution to the literature, but also to identify areas of weakness and to suggest improvements, either to reach acceptable publishable standards, or to at least assist the author(s) in resubmission. Undoubtedly some submissions are too poor or inappropriate to send out to review and are rejected by the editors initially, but the vast majority go out for review and authors are given the opportunity, where reviewers agree it is appropriate, to revise and resubmit the manuscript for further consideration. The increasing number of submissions and subscriptions to *Tourism and Hospitality Research* suggests that there is support for this viewpoint.

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