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Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes

**What are the emerging
contemporary rural tourism
innovations and how are they
enhancing responsible tourism
practices in Malaysia?**

Guest Editors: Vikneswaran Nair,
Kashif Hussain and Sridar Ramachandran

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Emerald

This issue explores contemporary responsible rural tourism innovations in Malaysia. It is the first time that *WHATT* has addressed this topic and I should like to thank Vikneswaran Nair, Kashif Hussain, Sridar Ramachandran and their team of contributors for a comprehensive and fascinating analysis of contemporary responsible rural tourism studies.

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

Contemporary responsible rural tourism innovations: what are the emerging contemporary rural tourism innovations and how are they enhancing responsible tourism practices in Malaysia?

The tourism industry in many developing countries is being transformed from low yield to high yield. Rural tourism is growing at a phenomenal rate in these regions and is expected to be a major contributor to tourism receipts. Nonetheless, in the last decade, the concept of rural tourism has melded with mainstream tourism resulting in a loss of distinctness. Consequently, the growth of the tourism industry over the years has created an increasing amount of stress economically, socially and environmentally. Hence, the imperative is for the development of a sustainable and responsible rural tourism that fulfills the objectives of all stakeholders in the system to move the industry up the value chain towards high yield. Responsible tourism behaviour is all about stakeholders taking responsibility for their actions and behaviour to ensure that all visits to a destination area benefit travellers, operators and the local people. In view of this, this theme issue aims to explore three key questions:

- (1) What are the emerging innovative models used in economic, socio-cultural and environmental responsibility in rural tourism destinations?
- (2) How are stakeholders' perspectives impacting economic, socio-cultural and environmental responsibility in rural tourism destinations?
- (3) How do we enhance the concept of sustainability and responsibility through rural tourism experiences and practices?

To investigate these questions, the theme editors invited academic professionals and industry experts attending the 4th Asia-Euro Conference 2012 in Tourism, Hospitality and Gastronomy to participate. This event is organized every two years by Taylor's University of Malaysia, in collaboration with University of Toulouse 2 – Université de Toulouse II Le Mirail – of France. A call for papers was also sent to a Responsible Rural Tourism Network Network in Malaysia for participation. This is a network of academic professionals and industry experts from several institutions managed by Taylor's University under a Long Term Research Grant Scheme (LRGS) in the field of "rural responsible tourism" funded by the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia.

The theme issue contains eight articles that fully explore the three key questions cited above. To fulfill the journal's editorial requirements, three workshops were conducted by the theme editors to provide constructive feedback, guidance and suggestions to the author(s) of the selected papers. Finally, we would like to acknowledge the support and assistance provided by Taylor's Press who proof-read all the articles. We hope that you will enjoy the outcomes!

Vikneswaran Nair, Kashif Hussain, Sridar Ramachandran
Theme Editors

About the Theme Editors

Dr Vikneswaran Nair is currently the Programme Leader for the Responsible Rural Tourism Network based at Taylor's University, Malaysia and also an Associate Professor at the School of Hospitality, Tourism & Culinary Arts of the university. In addition to that, he was also the former Director for Research & Development at Taylor's University, Director of the Taylor's-Toulouse University Centre Research Group and the Associate Director of Taylor's Centre for Research & Innovation in Tourism (CRiT) that focuses on research in hospitality, tourism and gastronomy. He has more than 15 years' experience in the field of sustainable tourism and environmental management. A seasoned and award-winning researcher and consultant with extensive publications, he was honoured with the Outstanding Young Malaysian of the Year Award in 2006 and 2009. In 2007, he was elected as the President of the Asia-Pacific Council on Hotel, Restaurant and Educational Institution (CHRHE). He is also currently the Editor-in Chief of *TEAM (Tourism Educators Association of Malaysia) Journal of Hospitality & Tourism*.

Dr Kashif Hussain is an Associate Professor of Services Management, Director of Centre for Research and Innovation in Tourism, Hospitality and Food Studies (CRiT) and Associate Dean of Research and Innovation of School of Hospitality, Tourism and Culinary Arts at Taylor's University. He has over ten years of teaching experience and parallel industry consulting experience. He has provided research and consultancy services to several companies such as Memduh Erdal BP & LO Ltd, Ideal Tourism Co., Convex Malaysia Sdn. Bhd. (Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre) and Malaysia Convention and Exhibition Bureau (MyCEB). He is the author of more than 40 international refereed journal articles, book chapter(s) and international conference papers. He is the founding editor-in-chief of the *Asia-Pacific Journal of Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism*. Kashif Hussain is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: Kashif.hussain@msn.com

Sridar Ramachandran is an Associate Professor specialising in the areas of responsible tourism and marketing with Universiti Putra Malaysia's Faculty of Forestry. Sridar Ramachandran's research contributions include publications of articles in international journals as well as at international conferences. Tourism marketing, collaborative management in responsible tourism, corporate social responsibility in tourism and research philosophy are his areas of research interest, publication and supervision. He has secured research grants from government agencies and has participated and won awards in research exhibitions. In his consulting career, he is specialised in marketing research, sustainable tourism planning and strategic management. Sridar has vast teaching experience in the areas of tourism, hospitality, recreation, marketing and management both at undergraduate and post-graduate levels.

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