

## **The way forward: how is Malaysian hospitality and tourism education working with industry?**

*Worldwide Hospitality and Tourism Themes* encourages its theme editors to build on prior work and I am delighted to welcome back Kashif Hussain, who reviewed contemporary approaches to rural tourism development in Malaysia (WHATT Volume 5, Number 4, 2013) and benchmarking innovations and new practices in rural tourism development (WHATT Volume 7, Number 5, 2015). Joined by Neethiahnanthan Ari Ragavan, Vincent Tang Thien Ming and Chris Low Kam Loong, they explore in this issue how Malaysian hospitality and tourism education is working with industry. I would like to thank them, their editorial assistant Leong Quee Ling and their writing team for a fascinating and comprehensive analysis of industry-led hospitality and tourism education and human resource issues.

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, then do please contact me.

**Richard Teare**

*Managing Editor, WHATT*

### *The way forward: how is Malaysian hospitality and tourism education working with industry?*

Malaysia is currently the 11th most visited destination in the world with 25.8 million tourist arrivals in 2018 contributing MYR 181.4bn to the economy, with 1.7 million jobs being the total contribution to employment. By 2028, Malaysia is expected to welcome 49.4 million tourist arrivals, contributing MYR 296.3bn (14.4 per cent) to the economy, with 2.3m (13.2 per cent) being the estimated contribution to employment. This presents an immense challenge to the Malaysian hospitality and tourism industry as it is estimated that it will need skilled graduates for 600,000 new job opportunities in the coming decade (WTTC Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Report 2018 on Malaysia from: [www.wttc.org](http://www.wttc.org)). In this context, the theme issue explores the question: *How is Malaysian hospitality and tourism education working with industry?*

University hospitality and tourism departments are complex organizations that are expected to deliver excellence in education, job placement and research. Balancing these demands with economic realities, changes in visitor behaviour and expectations and rapid advances in technology pose significant challenges that academic leaders must confront. A further dimension that adds to complexity is the on-going internationalization of the hospitality sector, job placements and the proliferation of cross-border education and research collaboration. Given these and other developments, it can be argued that hospitality education is at crossroads. In fact, it is set to face many different challenges all at once. From a societal perspective, there is an expectation that hospitality education will result in employment with significant earnings potential. The motivation and expectations of students pursuing a hospitality education coupled with the need to meet the constantly changing expectations of customers means that it is imperative to raise productivity in the hospitality sector, without losing the “personal touch” that is at the core of hospitality as a service industry. Disruptors such as Airbnb pose a further challenge to the status quo.



Therefore, graduates will need to be prepared for these changes so that they can thrive in this twenty-first century.

A specific aim of this theme issue is to explore the role that lifelong learning can play in fostering a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing hospitality and tourism education and to begin articulating a practical vision for moving hospitality schools forward. This prompted some further questions:

- Q1. What paradigm shifts and new educational frameworks will be needed to support hospitality and tourism curriculum development?
- Q2. What new partnerships are needed to advance hospitality and tourism education and industry collaboration?
- Q3. What are the hospitality and tourism industry salary prospects as well as minimum wage and employability issues?

The theme issue consists of an interrelated collection of studies that taken together, addresses these key questions. The theme editors also draw on their own academic and industry backgrounds together with a writing team of both academics and industry practitioners. This blend of skills and experience enabled us to ensure that this issue is of practical and theoretical value to hospitality and tourism education development with particular reference to current industry issues in Malaysia.

Kashif Hussain, Neethiahnanthan Ari Ragavan, Vincent Tang Thien Ming and Chris Low Kam Loong

#### **About the Theme Editors**

Kashif Hussain is a Professor in Hospitality and Tourism Studies and Director of Research, Faculty of Social Sciences and Leisure Management at Taylor's University, Malaysia. He is also a Senior Research Fellow at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee in USA; Member of the Panel of Experts and an External Auditor, National Programme Standards at the Malaysian Qualifications Agency in Malaysia; Advisor and External Assessor for Quality at East West International College; Member of the Promotions Panel at the University Putra Malaysia and for Programmes at the University College Sabah Foundation in Malaysia. He was formerly Dean of the Faculty of Hospitality and Tourism Management (FHTM) of UCSI University and Former President of the Malaysia Centre for Tourism and Hospitality Education (MyCenTHE) for the Ministry of Education in Malaysia. He has more than 18 years of professional experience in teaching, consultancy and research. He holds a PhD (Educational Administration and Supervision) from the Near East University, an MSc (Tourism Management) and BSc (Tourism and Hospitality Management) from the Eastern Mediterranean University, Northern Cyprus. He is the author of more than 90+ research publications in the form of journal articles, books, book chapters and international conference papers. He is the founding editor of the Asia-Pacific Journal of Innovation in Hospitality and Tourism (a Scopus-Index journal) and a member of several NGOs and national bodies.

Neethiahnanthan Ari Ragavan is a Professor with more than 25 years of academic experience and holds a doctoral degree from France. He is highly involved in hospitality and tourism education in Malaysia and the region. In November 2013, he initiated the establishment of the ASEAN Tourism Research Network – now known as the ASEAN Tourism Research Association (ATRA) that promotes regional cooperation among universities in ASEAN countries for greater research and education collaboration on issues

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related to hospitality and tourism. He is currently President of the ASEAN Tourism Research Association (ATRA) and has been active in various International Boards such as the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA). His areas of research include: Higher Education Models and Systems, Hotel and Tourism Development and Innovation, and Food and Culture. Presently, he is an Executive Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Leisure Management at Taylor's University, overseeing five Schools and one Institute – one of the school's is currently ranked 14th in the world by QS World University Rankings by Subject (School of Hospitality, Tourism and Events) and it is internationally benchmarked by the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) TedQual certification.

Vincent Tang Thien Ming is Regional President, South East Asia, Global University for Lifelong Learning based in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and has wide experience in education, public service, media and communications and business management. Some thirty years ago, his career began as a secondary school teacher in Malaysia. He was later appointed Assistant Director of the Curriculum Development Centre, Ministry of Education, Malaysia, to develop schools' syllabus and conduct training and inspections of fellow teachers. He holds a BA (Hons) Economics from the University of Malaya, a Diploma in Education (University of Malaya) and a Higher Group Diploma (Accounting/Costing/Economics) from the London Chamber of Commerce, UK. In the 1990s, he was appointed as a Private Secretary by the State Government of Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia and as Seremban district councilor in 1998. From 2000 until 2016 he served as the Confidential Secretary to the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports in Malaysia, and he was awarded the 'Excellent Service Award' in 2003. He formerly held a number of educational leadership roles including: CEO, Portman College, external verifier for City and Guilds (UK) and quality inspector for the Institute of Leadership and Management (UK). In 2007, he was appointed as Regional President (SEA) of the Global University for Lifelong Learning, USA. This role draws on Vincent's more than 20 years of experience in education and training, particularly in developing youth in support of Asia's human resource capital development. Arising from his significant portfolio of interests, he has conducted training and development courses in Malaysia, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Indonesia and Cambodia among other South East Asian countries.

Chris Low Kam Loong is the Director of SWAG Consultancy Sdn. Bhd. in Malaysia. He holds a Diploma in Hospitality Management, and in advanced wine education from the Wine and Spirits Education Trust (UK). He is also a Certified Hospitality Trainer (CHT) awarded by the American Hotel and Lodging Association-AHLA. Chris lives and breathes the hospitality industry, his entire career has spanned the length and breadth of this grueling yet rewarding arena, from running his own restaurant to operations at hotels such as The Renaissance and New World Hotel. A graduate of The American Hotel and Motel Association, the ins and outs of the dining table have been his never-ending study and focus of attention from then until today. This equates to more than two decades of experience in the world of hospitality. Chris is one of three *Commanduer de Honneur de L'Ordre du Bontemps* in Malaysia and he was appointed as the *Chancellor for the Jurade of Saint-Emilion for Malaysia* in 2018. His passion for sharing the joy of great food and beverage has led Chris down the path to becoming an established and sought-after speaker and coach on various hospitality industry topics. Successful participants in his training programmes include students from various universities and colleges, hotels, restaurants, wine bars, wine importers and wine retailers.