

Sustainable tourism development is a core theme of this journal, and the dramatic global contraction in tourism that took place during 2020–2021 prompts many questions about recovery and future patterns of tourism. This is a moment for reassessment, and I am delighted to welcome Theme Editors Hale Özgüt and Ali Öztüren and their team. In this issue, they take an in-depth look at the barriers to sustainable tourism development in North Cyprus and how they might be addressed. I would like to thank Hale, Ali and their colleagues for a fascinating assessment of the challenges facing and opportunities for sustainable tourism development in North Cyprus and the wider implications of their work for similar island destinations.

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.

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How could tourism planners and policymakers overcome the barriers to sustainable tourism development in the small island developing state of North Cyprus?

Tourism is a leading invisible export industry that contributes to countries that embrace it. However, policymakers need to consider tourism activity as a microeconomic development phenomenon because of its impact on a country's sociocultural structure. In this regard, if it is possible to develop and sustain sociocultural resources, tourism is of benefit to the development of a country's economic resources too. Given this perspective, worldwide tourism development should reflect growing concerns about future sustainable development practices – now widely recognised in the literature with increasing attention from tourism researchers and practitioners alike. Tourism development in small island developing states (SIDS) is often criticised because of its rapid pace of growth and its environmental impact. That said, tourism is seen as an effective vehicle for development, mainly as SIDS have less diversified economies and more limited human and economic resources. However, SIDS are increasingly faced with local environmental concerns arising from pollution, population pressure and natural resource management. Hence, the conservational and environmental impact of tourism, which includes sustainability, has a significant effect on tourism development. In response to this, SIDS must develop and implement tourism planning and policies for sustainable tourism development.

Tourism contributes to the social life and social integration of SIDS in many ways, yet dependency on tourism threatens their limited resources and limits their ability and flexibility to respond to crises, unprecedented situations and sustainability challenges. At a time when the world is facing unique challenges and circumstances, rapid changes in the tourism industry should encourage policymakers and tourism planners to include stakeholder collaboration and community involvement in the development process. In fact, collaboration among an array of stakeholder groups throughout the decision-making process is crucial in achieving a collective sense of responsibility and ownership. Further to this, community involvement in tourism planning is key to understanding the expectations



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of local communities so that sustainable development meets their needs too. Efforts to reach the maximum number of tourists – as may have been the case before the pandemic – are no longer applicable. In fact, attempts to overcome the crisis cannot succeed based on the efforts of a single segment or community. At this point, comprehensive, collaborative and participatory approaches are needed to find more holistic solutions. When tourism is seen to be successful in this endeavour, private developers and governmental agencies are often willing to invest even more because of the sustainable foundation that has been established. In this, public and private sector initiatives are pivotal to sustainable tourism development. Government involvement in many SIDS is high due to the importance of tourism and also because of the limited resources available. For instance, in many countries, tourism promotion and marketing is regarded as the government's responsibility, and in so doing, it plays a facilitation role in managing tourism.

Managing SIDS as tourist destinations is one of the foremost issues to be considered, and given the changes in destination features and the personal and behavioural attributes of tourists, managing the dynamism of tourism is becoming harder. In this sense, tourism's contributions to sociocultural, economic and environmental costs are difficult to quantify. Given that SIDS are characterised by limited natural resources and agricultural potential, small domestic markets and limited local employment opportunities, it is important to make wise decisions – not least because the costs that arise from tourism development affect the host communities and the sustainability of social values and the environment. It is local communities that contribute to tourism in the destination, and they expect to pass on a sustainable future. Sustainability is a concept that makes sense from a wide-ranging perspective as nature, culture, history and other resources combine to provide tourist attractions at a destination. Further, these relationships need to be preserved for current users and also for future generations. Host–tourist interactions, newly developed tourism activities, a decrease in useable land resources, deterioration of the environment and the quality of living standards and conservation of cultural resources are all examples of potentially negative impacts because of the development of tourism. Thus, for SIDS, different practices need to be evaluated to minimise the negative impacts and maximise the positive potential of sustainable tourism development.

This overview points to the need for sustainable development in SIDS, so this theme issue aims to focus attention on sustainable development practices in this context and more specifically the economic, political, sociocultural and environmental sustainability issues facing North Cyprus. It is for this reason that our theme issue question is: *How could tourism planners and policymakers overcome the barriers to sustainable tourism development in the small island developing state of North Cyprus?* The following sub-questions helped to guide our investigation:

- Q1: How are sustainable tourism practices managed in North Cyprus?
- Q2: What are the sustainable measures for managing and mitigating tourism impacts in North Cyprus?
- Q3: How is stakeholder collaboration in sustainable tourism policy and planning managed in North Cyprus?
- Q4: What practical tools do tourism planners and policymakers in North Cyprus use to encourage tourism sustainability?

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Theme Editors

About the Theme Editors

Hale Özgüt is an Associate Professor in the School of Tourism and Hotel Management at Cyprus International University. She has published in peer-reviewed journals, attended a number of international conferences and is an Editorial Board Member of several international journals. Her PhD focussed on the evaluation of tourism education in higher education from a strategic management perspective. Her research interests are tourism management, sustainability, tourism education, organisational behaviour and human resources management in tourism and hospitality organisations.

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