

Horizons

SHTM Magazine

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IMPACT2025

Gala Dinner cum SHTM IMPACT Award Presentation Ceremony



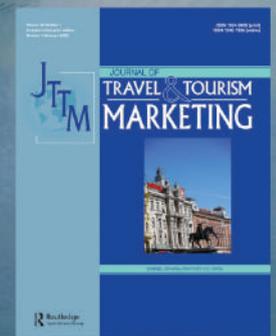
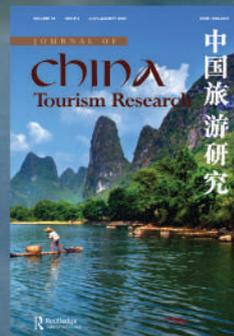
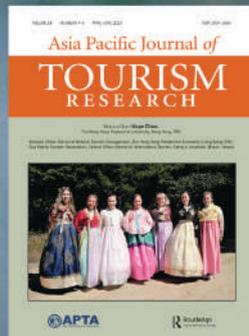
Seasoned Hospitality Expert Shares Insights
Two Impactful Conferences Hosted by the School
Faculty Win International Recognition
Student Ambassadors Shine on the World Stage

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THE HONG KONG
POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY
香港理工大學

SCHOOL OF HOTEL AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT

“

DEAN'S MESSAGE

This issue of *Horizons* opens with a story that captures a fitting start to the academic year: an inspiring Dean's Distinguished Lecture delivered by an industry pioneer, reminding us that “people are at the heart of our business”. This is certainly the motto of our world-leading teaching and research school Hotel ICON, which, as our second article recounts, has been awarded Hong Kong's first MICHELIN Key for its commitment to offering exceptional guest experiences.

The theme of industry leadership continues with three stories showcasing the School's role in shaping the future of hospitality and tourism. One marks the publication of a groundbreaking report co-authored by SHTM faculty on key trends in tourism. Two such trends – sustainability and technology – set the agenda for the IMPACT2025 conference, organised by the School to chart a course towards a greener, smarter future for the industry. At the UN Tourism/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook, the SHTM again orchestrated global exchange on resilience and technological trends in tourism.

We are also dedicated to shaping a better future for the industry by nurturing passionate, skilled professionals, and the achievements of the graduating class of 2025 are celebrated here in an article on the 31st PolyU Congregation (SHTM). With the expertise and hands-on experience they have cultivated at the SHTM, this year's graduates are poised to serve as ambassadors for the School on the global stage.

Two articles on the myriad enriching student activities and food and beverage activities conducted this academic year offer just some examples of the learning experiences that make graduates so well prepared to begin their careers. Prospective students at every level have much to look forward to at the School, as evident from a story on an event held to introduce the 2026 editions of our renowned Mainland China programmes.

The SHTM's pride in its students and alumni is matched only by its pride in and admiration for its exceptional faculty. Readers of this issue will learn of the highly competitive grants and international recognition secured by faculty members this academic year for their pioneering contributions to hospitality and tourism scholarship.

An introduction to six cutting-edge studies by SHTM researchers can be found in the issue's “Research Horizons” insert, offering a closer look at the research that is driving the industry forward. Those keen to learn more about the School's direct engagement with the industry should turn to our article on the latest executive and professional development initiatives developed and delivered by SHTM+ICON Consultancy. Alongside our main stories, the “In Brief” section presents a snapshot of the year's most memorable events and staff news.

Together, the articles in this issue illustrate the School's multifaceted approach to advancing hospitality and tourism. From groundbreaking research and international platforms for exchange to the achievements of our students and faculty and the continued excellence of Hotel ICON, this academic year has once again proven the SHTM's leadership in education, innovation and industry engagement.

”

Professor Kaye Chon

Dean and Chair Professor
Walter & Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in
International Hospitality Management
School of Hotel and Tourism Management
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University



Prepare for making your career make sense
make money and make contributions



LEARNING FROM A GLOBAL HOTEL LEADER

“People are at the heart of our business”

These are the words of industry pioneer Mr Tao Zhou, who kicked off the academic year on 29 August with a rousing Dean's Distinguished Lecture. Delivered to an audience of 559 new students assembled for Welcoming Day, along with staff and faculty, his lecture drew on decades of leadership in hospitality to prepare students to make their mark on our human-centred industry.



Rich Expertise

This eminent speaker was introduced by Professor Kaye Chon, SHTM Dean, Chair Professor, and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management, who began by warmly greeting the bright-eyed students joining the SHTM for bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies. "Hospitality is in our DNA", he told them. "Our School pledges to provide you with the best possible education and growth opportunities".

An important part of this commitment is orchestrating opportunities to learn directly from titans of the industry like Mr Zhou, who currently serves as Managing Director and Head of JLL Hotels & Hospitality Group, Greater China. Boasting 30 years of experience across nearly 200 top hotel brands, from Hilton to Ritz-Carlton, Mr Zhou is a trailblazer in global hotel asset management.

"His broad range of hotel and real estate experience includes market research, due diligence, operational management, asset management, refinancing, securitisation, acquisition and asset exit strategies across all hotel and tourism segments", said Dean Chon. Beyond these executive accomplishments, Mr Zhou is a talented educator, an industry thought leader, and the founder and president of China's Hotel Asset Management Association.



Textbooks and Beyond

"I would like to start by congratulating you on choosing four things", Mr Zhou told his student audience, praising them for their selection of major, university, city and region – all among the world's most dynamic. A golden-wrapped fortune cookie found in his room that morning, he said, offered an apt guiding principle for their journey ahead: *plan your work and work your plan*. "Today is the very first day for you to make your plan", he noted. "And for the next four years, you have a wonderful opportunity to work your plan."

Mr Zhou's own plans and the fruits they have borne over his long career offered invaluable lessons for his audience. "During my career path", he explained, "I always practised the method of reading thousands of

books, travelling thousands of miles". He urged the assembled students to learn a foreign language, particularly English, as the global *lingua franca* of hospitality.

"Any distinction between the wise and the mediocre comes down to the matter of education", Mr Zhou pointed out. "To study hard is very important". However, he also encouraged his audience to go beyond textbooks, reminding them that learning must take place both inside and outside the classroom, through interaction with Hong Kong locals as well as professors and peers.

"The people are the city", he said, quoting Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. "By talking to the people around you, you will grow and learn a lot of things".

From Knowledge to Action

Yet learning alone is not enough. "To learn and to apply is very important", Mr Zhou went on, echoing the University's motto. "You need to find a place to apply the skills you have learned at the School, build your experience, build a beautiful resume". The next four years at the SHTM, he said, would enable his student audience to discover their strengths. "You should identify what you are good at", he told them. "Find your true self".

Drawing examples from Hotel ICON and mixed-use developments, Mr Zhou highlighted the importance of understanding hotel ownership,

investment and asset management. "You should learn how to run a hotel in a more efficient, more effective way", he noted.

Neatly returning to the topic of the golden fortune cookie, which represented a natural and unobtrusive sales strategy, Mr Zhou went on to share practical advice on sales and client management. "Do your homework", he advised his audience. "If you know your product, you know your competitors". Just as important as background research is making a good first impression, he added.

Serving Society

Mr Zhou rounded off this inspiring lecture with the reminder that at the core of the industry is service to society. "It has been, and continues to be, our responsibility to fill the Earth with the light and warmth of hospitality", said Mr Zhou. In this spirit of generosity, he also took the time to answer students' questions about the future of the hotel sector. "Providing

the services and the facilities that guests want is very important", he emphasised.

The SHTM could not agree more. We extend our sincere gratitude to Mr Zhou for sharing his insights with the next generation of hospitality leaders and setting such an energising tone for the year ahead.



A HOTEL UNLIKE ANY OTHER

In the latest milestone for PolyU and the SHTM, Hotel ICON has been awarded One MICHELIN Key by the MICHELIN Guide in its inaugural Key Hotel Selection. This prestigious accolade recognises hotels that offer exceptional guest experiences, and Hotel ICON is among the first hotels globally – and one of only nine in Hong Kong – to receive this honour.

MICHELIN Keys are the hospitality counterpart to the renowned MICHELIN Stars for restaurants: awarded to game-changing institutions that set new standards for service, comfort and innovation. Indeed, Hotel ICON prides itself on being “a hotel unlike any other”, and this exceptionality is now inscribed in the MICHELIN Guide itself. “ICON is a teaching hotel, technically”, reads the entry, “but giving it a miss on that account would be a bit like scoffing at an invitation to dine at Noma”.

In line with its commitment to celebrating hotels that stand out for their design, architecture, service and personality, the MICHELIN Guide highlights Hotel ICON’s upscale rooms, spectacular views and “exemplary” public spaces. Perfectly summing up our mission, the guide describes the hotel as the SHTM’s “vision for the luxury hotel of the future: not so much a place to teach

existing hospitality norms but to set them for the next generation”.

This award thus reflects not only Hotel ICON’s commitment to excellence in hospitality but also its unique role as a teaching and research hotel. With its dynamic and interactive environment and full-service setting, the hotel nurtures future generations of hotel leaders for a better industry.

“This remarkable recognition is a testament to the hard work and dedication of the Hotel ICON team, as well as invaluable support from the SHTM”, said Professor Kaye Chon, SHTM Dean, Chair Professor, and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management. Confirming the SHTM’s status as an international leader in hospitality and tourism research, it is a shining example of how education and industry practice can together redefine excellence.

The Future of Work in Travel & Tourism

The key trends shaping workforce strategies



THE FUTURE OF WORK

More than 350 million people are employed in the travel and tourism sector globally, and this number is set to rise further in the next decade. To ensure that the sector remains robust while making the most of new opportunities, it is vital to tackle pressing challenges. A perennial such challenge is recruitment, given firms' reliance on a skilled and passionate workforce. Meanwhile, the switch to remote work and the increasing prevalence of technology are posing new difficulties.

In partnership with:

To help steer a course through these obstacles, industry leaders recently gathered for the 25th World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC) Global Summit in Rome, Italy. Held from 28 to 30 September, this exclusive, invitation-only event welcomed a delegation from the Research Centre of Digital Transformation of Tourism (RCdTT) and the SHTM. On 29 September, the RCdTT-SHTM team announced the publication of a report stemming from an important collaborative project with the WTTC.

Entitled “The Future of Work in Travel & Tourism: The Key Trends Shaping

Workforce Strategies”, the report provides a comprehensive overview of the changing skill requirements in our sector, together with practical guidance. The research was led by Professor Haiyan Song, SHTM Associate Dean, Chair Professor, Mr and Mrs Chan Chak Fu Professor in International Tourism, and Director of the RCdTT, along with Mr Nejc Jus, WTTC Director of Research, and co-authored with Professor Richard T.R. Qiu, Professor Yitong Yu and WTTC members.



SHIFTING SANDS

To compile the report, the RCdTT-SHTM research team drew upon a rich fund of qualitative and quantitative survey findings illuminating contemporary work life in travel and tourism. This was complemented by interviews with industry leaders, who shared their insights into the changes to come in the hospitality profession. Three major shifts in the landscape emerged from the researchers’ analysis.

“Recruiting and retaining talent”, write the team, “is the greatest challenge”. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to exert lingering effects, with ongoing staff shortages in several economies. Next come changing work patterns. “The increased desire for remote and hybrid work options presents a challenge for many jobs that traditionally relied on in-person service”, say the authors. Finally, firms must do more to ready themselves for the transformation brought on by artificial intelligence, while adapting their operations to ensure sustainability.

NURTURE PEOPLE, NURTURE SKILLS

To meet these 21st-century challenges, travel and tourism firms will need to rely on highly professional

personnel. According to the researchers’ surveys and interviews, “technological and digital literacy is seen as an important skillset, now and increasingly so in the coming years”. Moreover, upskilling is required at every level of the workforce: managers must possess critical and creative thinking abilities; customer-facing workers will need leadership and management experience; and lifelong learning will be ever more important in operational roles.

Underscoring the need for action, the report identifies a growing supply-demand imbalance of workers. It is projected that by 2035, “there will be a shortfall of 43.1 million people, with the labour supply at 16% below demand levels”. China will face the largest deficit in absolute numbers, while Japan’s gap will be the biggest in relative terms. Help is at hand, however, as the report – based on Professor Song and colleagues’ in-depth research – provides both actionable recommendations for practitioners and examples of best practices from around the world.

A PLAN OF ACTION

To tackle labour shortages, a five-pronged approach is recommended. This includes attracting new talent by making the sector more enticing to young people and improving worker retention through leadership development programmes and

promotion pathways. Additionally, Professor Song and fellow researchers urge tourism firms to “offer competitive wages and benefits, diversify the talent pool, and adopt a supportive company culture”. Firms can further solidify their status by using new technology to boost productivity and adopt flexible policies to manage fluctuating workforce demand.

“It is crucial for the travel and tourism sector to build a resilient and sustainable workforce”, the team note. “Collaborative efforts between the government, academia, and businesses are essential”. These should include skill-development initiatives such as free or subsidised worker training, adapting educational curricula to better match real-world requirements, and instilling a culture of lifelong learning throughout the sector.

The SHTM thanks the WTTC for the invaluable opportunity to conduct and report this research. As an institution, we are proud of our academics’ impressive contributions to the field of tourism management.



A GATEWAY TO A BRIGHT FUTURE

Graduation represents an opportunity to reflect on one's achievements while looking ahead to a bright future, and this was certainly true for the class of 2025, who celebrated their graduation on 4 November. The 31st PolyU Congregation (SHTM), held in PolyU's Jockey Club Auditorium, marked the formal conclusion of studies of 7 Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.), 43 Doctor of Hotel and Tourism Management (D.HTM), 277 Master of Science (MSc) and 245 Bachelor of Science (BSc) students.

LESSONS SHARED

Opening the Congregation's morning session was Professor Kaye Chon, SHTM Dean, Chair Professor and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management, who delivered a heartfelt welcoming address. "Today is your day: a day you have richly deserved", he told the assembled graduates, urging them to take pride in completing such a meaningful yet demanding academic journey at the School.

This sentiment was warmly echoed by the first guest of honour, who was introduced by Professor Haiyan Song, SHTM Associate Dean, Chair Professor and Mr and Mrs Chan Chak Fu Professor in International Tourism. "You've arrived at a defining crossroad", began Mr Anthony Lau, Executive Director of the Hong Kong Tourism Board, "one that opens the door to endless possibilities".

He went on to share lessons from his own – rather unconventional – career journey. "There wasn't a map", he said,



Mrs Karen Li



Mr Anthony Lau

recalling how an early academic disappointment came to reveal the path he was truly meant to follow. In this spirit, he encouraged graduates not to fear missteps ahead but to view them as “course corrections” that could lead to unexpected and rewarding destinations.

Closing his speech, Mr Lau emphasised the value that graduates of the SHTM, the world’s foremost school of hotel and tourism management, can bring to today’s industry. “You are graduating at a pivotal moment”, he said.

“
**You will join a big family
 working toward the same
 goal: showcasing Hong Kong
 to the world and welcoming
 every visitor with warmth and
 professionalism.**
 ”

EVOLVING TOGETHER

This inspiring address was followed by the presentation of D.HTM, MSc and BSc awards and valedictory speeches. Postgraduate representative Gordon Kwong, MSc in Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Hospitality with Distinction, described the crossroads he faced on his journey to academic success at the SHTM. “To reach my ultimate dream”, he recalled, “I had to break out of my comfort zone, I had to evolve”.

Next to speak was undergraduate representative Cathy Sun, graduate of the BSc in Hotel Management with First Class Honours and recipient of the SHTM Student of the Year Award 2024. “Thanks to the SHTM”, she said, “I was able to transition from a student mindset to a professional one”. This training allowed her to adapt quickly to the world of work and thrive as a hospitality analyst at Goldman Sachs.

Closing the morning session, Professor Catherine Cheung, SHTM Associate Dean and Associate Professor, presented awards to two outstanding students. The Best Ph.D. Thesis Award 2024/25 went to Dr Huicai Gao and the Best D.HTM Thesis Award 2025 to Dr Chenxi He.

Also honoured was Dr Ray Wang, CEO and Board Member, Zhejiang Haozhu Network Technology Co., Ltd. and Travel Ease International (Hong Kong) Ltd, who received the SHTM Outstanding Alumni Award (Professional Achievement) 2025. As Secretary General and Deputy Chairman of the Mainland Alumni Network, Dr Wang maintains close connections with his alma mater. “What does the SHTM mean to me?” he said. “It is not only a bridge to convert knowledge into utilisation, but also a gateway to discover our better selves”.

CROSSING THE FINISH LINE

The afternoon session began with an inspiring speech by guest of honour Mrs Karen Li, Executive Director of Lanson Place Hospitality Management Ltd. Introduced by Professor Billy Bai, SHTM Associate Dean, Mrs Li offered a striking metaphor for the graduates’ academic journey so far. “After many months running a marathon of project deadlines and exams”, she said, “today is to recognise your achievement in reaching the finish line”.

She went on to share the “ABCD” of career success in hospitality:

**Paying Attention to detail,
 Building a network,
 Creating a Good Reputation
 and Daring to Try New Things.**

With these principles in place, she said, graduates can step confidently into the next phase of their lives. “Make mistakes, learn from them, have compassion for others, build a career and have a great life that you,

your parents and the University will be proud of”, she urged them.

TRANSFORMATIVE JOURNEYS

Following the presentation of D.HTM, MSc and BSc awards, postgraduate representative Monica Chen, MSc in Luxury Experiences Management with Distinction, shared her experiences as an SHTM student. “We didn’t just learn theories”, she recalled. “We connected classroom knowledge with real-world applications”.

For undergraduate representative Akniyet Nygmet, BSc in Hotel Management with First Class Honours, studying at the School was a similarly transformative journey, which shifted her career path from hotel finance to event management. “The diploma we hold today is more than a paper”, she concluded. “It is a testament to the versatility of knowledge, skills, and experiences we have gained”.

At the end of the afternoon session, Professor Cheung presented the Best MSc Dissertation Award 2024/25 to Dongjie Zhang, Master of Science in International Tourism and Convention Management with Distinction. The recipient of the Best Undergraduate Honours Thesis Award 2024/25 was Sze Lam Lee, Bachelor of Science in Tourism and Events Management.

This historic event was brought to a close by Dean Chon, with richly deserved congratulations for the class of 2025. The School takes huge pride in its graduates’ achievements and looks forward to finding out how they will excel on the world stage.



Professor Catherine Cheung, SHTM Associate Dean (left), with Dr Ray Wang, SHTM Outstanding Alumnus 2025



A SMART AND SUSTAINABLE VISION

Leading lights in hospitality gathered recently in Hong Kong for the IMPACT2025 conference. Held from 7 to 9 December, the most recent edition of this SHTM-led event series was dedicated to pressing themes around sustainability and technology. Across the three days, industry executives, government officials and academics joined forces to plot a greener, smarter future for the industry.

Jointly organised by the SHTM and CoStar Group Academic Engagement, IMPACT2025 was expertly delivered by an Organising Committee comprising SHTM students from the Practice of Special Events Project. Entitled "Transforming Hospitality and Tourism for a Sustainable Future", the diverse programme featured esteemed speakers from around the world with first-hand experience of the trends transforming the hotel and tourism landscape.

"Tourism and hospitality are powerful forces for economic development, cultural exchange, and global connection", stated Professor Kaye Chon, SHTM Dean, Chair Professor, and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management, speaking at the Welcome Reception on 7 December. "With that influence also comes an equally significant responsibility to safeguard our planet", he added.

EXPERTS' PERSPECTIVES

The first full day, on 8 December, commenced with an Opening Ceremony. These formalities laid the groundwork for a packed academic schedule, starting with a Plenary Session graced by three pivotal industry figures: Mr Anthony Lau, Executive Director of the Hong Kong Tourism Board; Professor Sangwon Park, Professor at the College of Hotel and Tourism Management, Kyung Hee University, South Korea; and Mr Peter Semone, Chairman of the Pacific Asia Travel Association.

Next came an illuminating set of Parallel Sessions. According to their interest, attendees could learn more about the latest developments in new technologies, user-generated content, "digital+", wellness tourism or innovative practices.

Smart hotels were the next item on the agenda, in a Panel Session featuring the SHTM's Professor Gregg Rockett; Mr Frederick Wong, Senior Vice President – Operations at Regal Hotels International; and Mr Yungpeng Xie, Vice President, Beijing Yunji Technology Company Limited. The productive first day drew to a close with an additional suite of Parallel Sessions covering diverse themes ranging from restaurant management and destination choice to innovative hospitality practices, "solo travel + digitalisation", and experience management.



SHTM AT THE FOREFRONT

Day two (9 December) began with another Plenary Session. Among the talks were two by UK-based experts: Professor Dimitrios Buhalis, Director of the eTourism Lab, Bournemouth University, and Professor Gang Li, Professor of Tourism Economics, Surrey University. They were joined by researchers offering a US perspective: Pennsylvania State University's Professor Bing Pan, Professor of Commercial Recreation and Tourism, and Virginia Tech's Professor Zheng Xiang, Department Head of the Howard Feiertag Department of Hospitality & Tourism. The SHTM's Professor Bela Stantic contributed further expertise.

Memoranda of understanding (MoUs) between the Research Centre for Digital Transformation of Tourism and three corporations – China Tourism Group Hotel Holdings Company Limited, Convergent International Travel Development Company Limited and Regal Hotels International Limited – were affirmed in an MoU Signing Ceremony. These partnerships will pave the way for exciting advancements in tourism research.

A wide selection of tourism-related topics, from employee well-being and HR management to special

interest tourism and the role of AI, was then discussed in two sets of Parallel Sessions moderated by SHTM academics.

Complementing the previous day's Panel Session on smart hotels, sustainable tourism was put under the microscope in the second Panel Session. Leading these insightful discussions were Mr Vallois Choi, Director of Marketing at Hotel ICON; Ms Isabel Li, Education Executive Director, Ocean Park Corporation; Dr Sean T. Ruane, Lecturer, Shannon College of Hotel Management, University of Galway; and Professor Billy Bai, SHTM Associate Dean (Academic Affairs). The conference's academic agenda was wrapped up with a final set of expert-moderated Parallel Sessions.

The SHTM is committed to rewarding outstanding achievements, and it was in this spirit that IMPACT2025 culminated in a Gala Dinner cum SHTM IMPACT Award Ceremony in Hotel ICON's Silverbox Ballroom. Three top journals bestowed Best Paper Awards upon the authors of innovative research. To honour the up-and-coming generation of young talent, three winners of the Undergraduate Student Research

Competition were rewarded with prizes for their research papers.

Another highlight of the ceremony was the presentation of the inaugural SHTM Impact Award for Service Excellence – Hotel Industry to five hotels that offer exceptional service based on the findings of the Hong Kong Tourist Satisfaction Index, developed by the RCdTT. Five hotels ranked highest for overall service satisfaction, reflecting excellence across all five key dimensions (tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, and empathy): Grand Hyatt Hong Kong; Mandarin Oriental, Hong Kong; Nina Hotel Causeway Bay; Rosewood Hong Kong; and the Ritz-Carlton, Hong Kong.

The SHTM is proud to host a forum for such impactful research and exchange, as evinced by the #IMPACConnect campaign established by the team this year, which received an enormous number of submissions. We are thankful to all those who attended and contributed to IMPACT2025, and especially the dedicated student organising committee. We look forward to welcoming all to the next edition of IMPACT and anticipate fruitful ongoing collaborations in the meantime.

FACULTY WIN GLOBAL ACCLAIM

The SHTM has long been at the vanguard of innovative research in hospitality and tourism, with its faculty driving projects that link scholarship directly to the needs of the industry.

Testifying to this focus on meaningful, forward-thinking, globally minded work for the industry's benefit, SHTM researchers have once again secured highly competitive grants, as well as recognition from international ranking bodies.



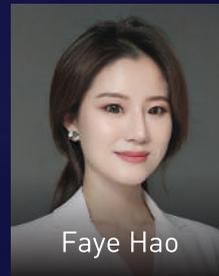
Daniel Leung



Hailey Shin



Kaye Chon



Faye Hao



Kam Hung



Eric Chan



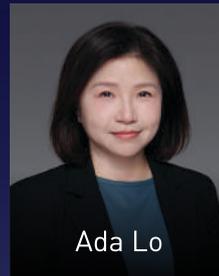
Norman Au



Cathy Hsu



Tony Tse



Ada Lo



Alice Hon



Bob McKercher

SUPPORT FROM RESEARCH GRANTS COUNCIL

We are proud to announce that five SHTM research projects have been awarded financial support under the Research Grant's Council's General Research Fund (GRF) and Early Career Scheme (ECS) for the 2025/26 academic year.

Supported by the GRF, Dr Ming Deng, SHTM Research Assistant Professor, is leading a study that explores how event attendees can be "nudged" to behave in eco-friendly ways. Sustainability is also the focus of GRF-funded research led by Dr Roshis Shrestha, SHTM Research Assistant Professor, on alleviating the impact of climate change on mountain tourism.

Recognising the ever-increasing

scale of urbanisation, Dr Emily Chen, SHTM Research Assistant Professor, is working with Professor Cathy Hsu, SHTM Chair Professor, and co-authors to explore ways of developing destinations in "mega-regions". Meanwhile, SHTM Assistant Professor Jaehee Gim and co-authors are using their GRF funding to reimagine service robots as "job providers, not replacers".

In an ECS-funded study that also tackles the thorny issue of artificial intelligence (AI) in hospitality, SHTM Assistant Professor Wangoo Lee and a collaborator ask how AI avatars in restaurant self-service technology can create a more human-like, welcoming experience for customers.

OTHER COMPETITIVE GRANTS

The 2025/2026 academic year has also seen SHTM faculty obtain grants from the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) and the Public Policy Research (PPR) funding scheme. Associate Professor Ying Wang received support from the NSFC General Programme Fund for a project investigating how visiting one's homeland fosters cultural identity among members of a diaspora.

A study by Associate Professor Daisy Fan on the influence of social contact between tourists and residents on destination prosocial behaviour in the Greater Bay Area received support under the NSFC Young Scientists Fund. Complementing her GRF



funding, Dr Ming Deng also secured support from the Young Scientists Fund to explore the potential of AI-driven digital nudging to promote pro-environmental behaviour among tourists.

Meanwhile, the School's Assistant Professor Hailey Shin and a co-investigator received PPR funding to develop and validate a scale measuring the performance of smart tourism destinations driven by environmental, social and governance imperatives.

A GLOWING REPUTATION

Beyond grant-related achievements, the SHTM and its faculty have again won acclaim from leading international ranking bodies. In 2025, the School was ranked number 1 worldwide by ScholarGPS in both the "Academic Institution (Lifetime)" and "Academic Institution (Last Five Years)" categories in the tourism field in 2025.

A prestigious global platform

that recognises the world's most influential institutions and scholars in their respective fields, ScholarGPS also ranked numerous individual colleagues among the world's top tourism scholars last year.

Those honoured were Professor Kaye Chon, Dean, Chair Professor and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management; Professor Haiyan Song, Associate Dean, Chair Professor, Mr and Mrs Chan Chak Fu Professor in International Tourism, and Director of the Research Centre for Digital Transformation of Tourism; Chair Professor Cathy Hsu; Professor Catherine Cheung, Associate Dean and Associate Professor; Professor Kam Hung; Professor Sam Kim; Professor Mimi Li, Associate Director of the Research Centre for Digital Transformation of Tourism; Professor Honggen Xiao, Assistant Dean; Professor Tony Tse, Professor of Practice and Programme Director (Industry Partnerships); Associate Professor Norman Au; Associate Professor Sabrina Huang; Professor Deniz Kucukusta, Assistant Dean and Associate Professor; Associate Professor Daniel Leung; Associate Professor Ada Lo; Associate Professor

Vincent Tung; and Dr Eric Chan, Senior Lecturer.

Five faculty members, namely Dean Chon, Professor Song, Professor Hsu, Professor Kim and Professor Xiao, have been ranked among the top 100 scholars globally by ScholarGPS throughout their careers.

This year, 18 faculty members were also named among the world's top 2% scientists in the prestigious ranking compiled by Stanford University and Elsevier for the year 2024. Indeed, Dean Chon, Professor Song, Professor Hsu, Professor Kim and Dr Chan have consistently ranked among the top 2% of scientists worldwide throughout their careers in the fields of Sport, Leisure and Tourism.

These achievements testify to the strengths of the SHTM community, with the vision, expertise and hard work of our faculty setting new standards for hospitality and tourism research. It is through their talent and commitment that the School continues to shape the industry's future. We look forward to the fruits of their newly funded research!



SHOWCASING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

Nearly 30 years ago, a new chapter in hospitality and tourism education began with the establishment of the Zhejiang University–The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) Joint Center (the Center) on the Zhejiang University campus in Hangzhou, China. Combining the two institutions' unique strengths, the Center's joint hospitality programmes – the Master of Science in Hotel and Tourism Management (MSc in HTM) and Doctor of Hotel and Tourism Management (D.HTM) – cultivate competitive, internationally minded hospitality professionals.

The MSc in HTM enables students to hone their skills as future industry leaders, educators and researchers. By integrating academic challenges into applied and practical contexts, it helps them transfer what they have learned in the classroom to the workplace. For those who are already mature and experienced academics or industry executives, the D.HTM offers opportunities to take their innovation, creativity and research skills to the next level.

The 2026 editions of these programmes – which are delivered within the unique Asian hotel and

tourism context – were showcased at an Information Seminar cum Industry Salon organised by Zhejiang University and PolyU on 6 November 2025. Held in Suzhou, China, the event brought together hospitality leaders, alumni and prospective students to discuss the merits of the programmes and pressing trends in the industry.

Kicking off the evening's packed schedule was an introduction to the School and the D.HTM programme delivered by Professor Haiyan Song, SHTM Associate Dean, Chair Professor, and Mr and Mrs Chan Chak Fu Professor in International Tourism.

Next, the MSc in HTM was introduced by its Programme Leader, SHTM Associate Professor Ying Wang.

Having learned about the opportunities afforded by these renowned programmes, future students then had the chance to gain first-hand insights into the learning journey from alumni, followed by an informative Q&A.

This memorable evening testified to the strength of PolyU and Zhejiang University's longstanding partnership in advancing world-class postgraduate education in hospitality and tourism.

Research Horizons

BEHIND THE SMILES: THE HIDDEN STRAIN OF HOTEL WORK

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Behind the Smiles: The Hidden Strain of Hotel Work

Organisations have a vested interest in supporting employees' mental health, and this is particularly true of hotels, given their inherently high-stress, high-stakes nature. The SHTM's Professor Antony Wong, Professor Sam Kim and Dr Yuchen Xu offer a multidimensional account of how work stressors affect hotel employees' well-being, empowering managers to implement proactive coping strategies for employees facing mental health challenges.

WORK STRESS AND MENTAL HEALTH

Employees do their best work when they feel psychologically healthy and supported by their organisations. Unsurprisingly, therefore, poor employee well-being worsens organisational performance, increases healthcare costs, and reduces engagement, safety and sustainability across all sectors. "These issues are magnified by the high-touch nature of hotel services", the researchers note, "which demand intense emotional labour and the delivery of exceptional guest experiences".

As well as interacting frequently with customers, hotel employees face challenges such as irregular working hours, precarious employment conditions and poor leadership, which can further damage their mental health. With the need to address mental health in hospitality becoming yet more urgent post-COVID-19, researchers have begun to examine how work-related stressors affect various mental health outcomes among hotel workers.

Regrettably, however, significant research gaps remain. For example, studies have generally treated mental health as a monolithic construct rather than examining its distinct sub-domains, and few have isolated the mental health effects of hotel-specific stressors, such as job insecurity and teamwork requirements.

To equip hotel managers to tackle specific mental health issues among employees,

the researchers sought to dissect the subdomains of hotel employees' mental health and pinpoint its antecedents and outcomes. They aimed to analyse how hotel-specific work stressors affect different facets of mental health; explore how these facets affect coping behaviours; and compare the experiences of junior versus senior, front-of-house (FOH) versus back-of-house (BOH) employees.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL CONSTRUCTS

The first step was to identify components of mental health that are particularly relevant to hotel work. Depression, which is caused by industry-specific stressors like long, irregular hours, was the first. The second was nervousness. "Staff may experience panic attacks, trembling, sweating, gastrointestinal issues and other nervousness symptoms when confronted by stressful situations", say the researchers. Loss of peace of mind, "triggered by hectic, chaotic work environments and constant guest demands", was the third focal component.

Next, the authors drew on the transactional theory of stress and coping (TTSC) to develop hypotheses. "Employees who feel immense personal responsibility and accountability for their work outcomes tend to experience higher stress and anxiety", they propose. Meanwhile, "the cognitive demands and skills needed for complex roles can become mentally draining over time", eliciting stress responses.

The same, the authors theorised, is true of hotel-specific work stressors. "Role ambiguity stemming from unclear expectations and role overload stemming from extreme demands have been linked to heightened mental strain, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction and performance among hotel staff", they suggest.

COPING WITH STRESS

How do employees deal with these multifaceted stressors? According to the TTSC, when individuals' mental health is compromised, they may perceive stressors as exceeding their coping capacity, leading them to adopt emotion- or avoidance-focused strategies. Accordingly, the researchers hypothesised that poorer mental health increases employees' use of emotion- and avoidance-focused coping but reduces their self-solving-focused coping.

Their final hypotheses concerned organisational roles. "FOH employees, such as receptionists, concierges and waitstaff, frequently engage in direct guest contact", the authors point out. Therefore, they face different stressors from those encountered by BOH staff, which revolve around workload and technical demands. The authors theorised that for FOH (versus BOH) employees, work stressors are more closely tied to mental health challenges, making them more likely to adopt emotional or avoidance-focused coping.

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Junior and senior hotel employees also differ in their stress profiles. For example, less experienced staff such as bellhops face less controllable work environments and receive less support at work, making them more vulnerable to the impact of work stressors on mental health and more likely to use emotion- or avoidance-focused coping.

VIEWS OF HOTEL EMPLOYEES

To test their hypotheses, the authors first developed a questionnaire on the stressors perceived by hotel employees and their coping responses. They distributed the questionnaire online to 756 employees in different departments at 45 deluxe, four-star and five-star Chinese hotels.

Statistical analysis of the data yielded suggestive, if sometimes surprising, findings. "This research revealed an intriguing counterintuitive result", the researchers report. "Traditional work-related stressors such as job responsibility and job complexity were associated with unexpectedly low levels of depression, nervousness, and loss of peace of mind".

Although unexpected, this finding may reflect a key principle of the TTSC: how people perceive stressors shapes their emotional and physical responses. When job demands like responsibility and complexity are seen as challenges rather than as burdens, employees may feel more in control and gain a greater sense of achievement, thus enhancing their personal growth and well-being.

These dynamics may be strengthened by the study's cultural context, China: "a society where collective well-being and harmony are paramount". Here, job responsibility and complexity may be perceived as routes to contributing to organisational success, in line with the deeply ingrained societal values of dedication and hard work.

VARYING RESPONSES TO STRESSORS

Another unexpected finding was that teamwork, often considered a potential source of conflict, was correlated with

better mental health among hotel employees. The other stressors examined, however, had devastating consequences for employees' well-being. The most influential was poor leadership, followed by job insecurity and the pressure to respond to electronic messages – all characteristics endemic to the hotel sector.

Depression, nervousness and loss of peace of mind all increased employees' tendency to rely on emotion-focused coping rather than proactive problem-solving. Depression further increased the use of avoidance-focused coping, which may itself negatively affect mental health.

Among junior employees, increased job responsibility alleviated depression, nervousness and loss of peace of mind, although all three facets were worsened by job complexity. In contrast, senior employees were susceptible to mental health problems due to role ambiguity and role overload.

Differences in organisational roles also affected employees' responses to stressors. BOH employees reported greater stress due to expanding job roles and constant digital connectivity, which increased their emotional labour. Despite their heavier workloads, FOH employees reported better mental health, as they enjoyed higher tips, more social interaction and a stronger sense of accomplishment.

BUILDING A HEALTHIER WORKFORCE

"The practical implications are far-reaching", say the authors. Above all, hospitality managers should develop targeted interventions that acknowledge the nuanced impact of different types of stressors on employee mental health. "For smaller hotel chains or independent hotels", the researchers add, "partnering with local mental health organisations or leveraging online resources can provide cost-effective solutions for implementing employee well-being initiatives".

In addition, training for supervisors and managers should emphasise the impact of their behaviour on employees' mental health, promoting supportive and fair leadership practices. "Organisations should critically re-evaluate their expectations around electronic communication", the authors add, "as the pressure to respond promptly emerged as a significant stressor". Staggered shifts and designated off-duty periods could encourage a healthier work-life balance.

Finally, employee assistance programmes and support systems should be tailored to employee groups, given that junior and senior staff and FOH and BOH employees respond to stressors in different ways. "By adopting a flexible and employee-centric approach," the authors conclude, "hospitality organisations can foster a supportive environment that promotes employee well-being, engagement and long-term commitment". This will contribute to the industry's overall resilience and success.

POINTS TO NOTE

Hotel employees face unique stressors, such as irregular hours and job insecurity, which damage their mental health.

Poor leadership, job insecurity and constant communication demands are the most important stressors.

Responses to stressors differ between junior and senior staff and front-of-house and back-of-house staff.

Hospitality managers should develop targeted interventions to mitigate the mental health outcomes of stressors.

Antony King Fung Wong, Seongseop (Sam) Kim and Yuchen Xu (2025). Does Hotel Employees' Mental Health Matter? Assessment of its Antecedents and Coping Behavior. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, Vol. 126, 104084.

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SUSTAINABILITY RIPPLES OUT

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Sustainability Ripples Out

Hotels have an indispensable role in reducing society's environmental footprint. The SHTM's Professor Dan Wang, Dr Mei Yang and Dr Zhiming Deng recently published a study exploring how third parties can play their part in achieving this goal. Their pioneering framework for identifying and classifying stakeholders in hotel environment management (EM) initiatives will help practitioners strategise the most effective ways to maximise sustainability.

A RECOGNISED NEED

Making a green transition is particularly important for the hotel industry. Hotel operation is resource-intensive and waste-heavy, and the rise in environmental awareness among ethical investors and the wider public has been accompanied by increasing legislation. "Hospitality scholars have long been investigating effective ways to improve environmental management", the authors write. "This has led to a vast body of research on various aspects related to environmental sustainability management in the hotel industry".

However, previous research has mostly viewed hotels in isolation, as individual entities striving to reduce their own environmental footprint. In fact, hotel operations are also influenced by the interests of various external stakeholders, such as local communities, governments and NGOs. Missing thus far is a broad view

that accounts for these other key actors. "Only a few studies", the researchers note, "recognise the importance of stakeholders in effectively implementing environmental sustainability practices and achieving sustainable outcomes".

The stakeholder management literature offers some guidance for hotels seeking to tap into their relationships with external stakeholders. The researchers saw that the time was ripe to apply these insights to the specific domain of hotel EM. Based on stakeholder theory, companies "actively evaluate how different group of stakeholders' engagement may either facilitate or hinder the successful execution of sustainable initiatives", they explain. "Thus", in the EM context, "it is important to specifically identify the stakeholders related to hotel EM and address their interests".

SALIENT STAKEHOLDERS

To this end, the authors drew upon the theory of stakeholder identification and salience. Their framework was "grounded in the premise that not all stakeholders are equal, and their importance to the organisation can vary based on certain attributes, including power, legitimacy, and urgency". Here, *power* reflects the ability of a stakeholder to influence an organisation, *legitimacy* refers to the perceived validity or appropriateness of the stakeholder's involvement, and *urgency* indicates the degree to which their needs or demands require immediate attention.

Firms therefore prioritise stakeholders seen as most salient. The authors' framework further specifies seven categories of stakeholder salience: dormant, discretionary, demanding, dominant, dependent, dangerous and definitive. "The determination of stakeholder salience", however, "is not solely a managerial perspective, especially in the context of sustainable development". They continue that "for a more inclusive assessment, a third-party perspective can be integrated into the evaluation process to

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balance the potential managerial bias and lack of intrinsic stakeholder engagement”.

This multi-perspective approach is consistent with the authors’ chosen research paradigm. Specifically, they situated their approach in the tradition of social constructivism, according to which “truth/reality is socially constructed and subjectively interpreted by the surrounding environment”. This view naturally lends itself to a qualitative methodology that can reveal participants’ personal experiences of the topic at hand.

HELPING HOTELS GO GREEN

Guided by this theoretical lens, the researchers performed real-world case studies in a selection of hotels to explore how stakeholders engage in EM. “The stakeholders identified by the hotels”, they report, “include hotel owners, guests, a hotel association, hotel employees, and local community representatives”. Interviews and on-site observations were conducted in five international hotel chains in Beijing and Shanghai to gather first-hand data on these various actors’ involvement with hotels’ EM initiatives.

To draw out the most relevant information from each interview, a separate questionnaire was drawn up for each type of hotel stakeholder. Senior management, for example, were asked mainly about the sustainability initiatives of their hotels in the present and anticipated future, while other hotel employees were invited to talk about their personal involvement in such practices and general observations. Guests, hotel associations, hotel owners and local community representatives likewise answered tailored questions about their knowledge of and opinions on hotel EM issues.

CONCERNED PARTIES AND BARRIERS

The conversations with managers revealed that international chains are taking EM seriously, with programmes to achieve specific emission and waste reductions. These goals, and the strategies to attain them, vary between firms: “Hilton, for instance, has set a near-term target for

2030 with its LightStay programme aimed at reducing carbon emissions by half and doubling investments in social impact”, the authors report, whereas Hyatt “adopts a broader view with its World of Care programme, encompassing the adoption of renewable energy sources”, alongside recycling and biodiversity protection.

As the most essential stakeholders, both hotel owners and employees were categorised as definitive, holding power, legitimacy and urgency. Nonetheless, despite the decision-making power of hotel owners, “their level of involvement and commitment is hindered by cost concerns and return on investment calculations”, the researchers found. The investments in new technology that are needed for energy-saving and emission reduction were repeatedly mentioned as barriers to owners’ engagement in EM – despite the recognition that “environmental sustainability is not only the responsible thing to do, but it also makes good business sense”.

Hotel employees, meanwhile, are on the frontline of EM initiatives. “Therefore”, the authors emphasise, “it is crucial for hotels to provide comprehensive training and education programmes to enhance employees’ understanding of environmental sustainability and promote a culture of green practices”. Kitchen, housekeeping and maintenance staff may be in particular need of greater EM awareness and knowledge, with one F&B director remarking that “there is often a lack of clarity on what ‘green’ really means and what each individual can do to contribute to the goal of achieving zero emissions”.

Hotel guests, classed as *demanding* stakeholders due to the urgency of their needs, showed mixed responses to EM

initiatives – valuing sustainability as a decision criterion but struggling with specific inconveniences, such as the decision not to provide bottled water. Many hotel chains are attempting to align guests’ service expectations more closely with their green values through clearer communication: as one director of marketing put it, “we want to inform consumers of the rationales of our actions”. The authors recommend combining this strategy with close attention to guests’ responses to sustainability initiatives.

Identified as a *discretionary* stakeholder with high legitimacy, the China Hospitality Association (CHA) has a comprehensive certification process for hotels’ environmental performance. “However”, the researchers point out, this “Green Hotel programme is voluntary, and the CHA has no legal authority to enforce compliance among hotels”. They call for changes to the institutional environment to encourage more EM initiatives, envisioning that an active CHA “can serve as a powerful advocate for sustainable practices in the Chinese hotel industry”.

A CLEARER WAY AHEAD

“Key stakeholders”, the authors sum up, “can influence the effectiveness of EM practice implementation”. Nonetheless, the ambitious EM programmes set out by major chains “face challenges in gaining support and engagement from stakeholders in the Chinese hotel industry”. The researchers’ systematic framework for stakeholder identification and engagement in the hotel EM context provides a valuable new perspective on holistic approaches to overcoming these barriers.

POINTS TO NOTE

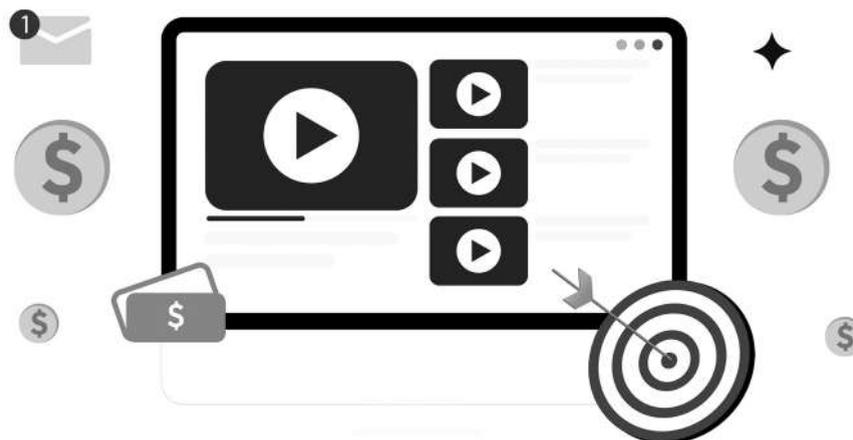
Hotels’ environmental management initiatives have numerous stakeholders. Managers and employees are the most influential stakeholders but face challenges. Hotel guests support sustainability drives, but their service needs must be recognised. Training programmes for employees are needed to help reach environmental targets.

Dan Wang, Mei Yang and Zhiming Deng (2025). Pathway to Environment Management in Hotel Industry: A Stakeholder Engagement Framework. *Journal of China Tourism Research*, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 580–600.

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HELPING DESTINATIONS TO SHINE ON YOUTUBE

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Helping Destinations to Shine on YouTube

In a media-saturated world in which consumers habitually skip ads and pay as much attention to comments as to posts, YouTube has become a challenging yet potentially very fruitful space for destination advertising. Thanks to the SHTM's Professor Seunghun Shin and co-authors, destination marketing organisations (DMOs) now have guidance for tailoring their video advertising strategies to reach a global audience of tourists on YouTube.

AN INFLUENTIAL ADVERTISING PLATFORM

"YouTube has emerged as a crucial marketing channel for DMOs", the authors begin, "with nearly half of their advertising budgets allocated to the digital channel". As one of the world's most visited websites in terms of search traffic, YouTube offers DMOs an invaluable and largely unparalleled opportunity to reach a global audience. To capitalise on this opportunity, however, DMOs must be ready to tailor their marketing strategies to YouTube's unique features.

These include users' viewing patterns, which, the researchers say, are "characterised by their active avoidance of advertisements, as they prefer to watch selected content and often skip ads". Another important factor to consider is YouTube's comment function. "Users frequently read and engage with comments while watching videos", the authors note, "and these comments can influence their perceptions of the content". To maximise the impact of their advertising efforts, DMOs must be skilled in managing and curating comments.

Surprisingly, despite YouTube's prominence as an advertising platform, few studies have asked how to adapt existing video marketing strategies to the platform's unique affordances and constraints. This research gap is particularly notable in the tourism context. "While some tourism studies have investigated YouTube as a marketing channel", say the authors, "they have mainly focused on describing the content of DMOs' YouTube advertisements or tourists' usage of the platform".

The authors resolved to fill these gaps, with the ultimate aim of helping destination marketers more strategically advertise their destinations online. Their study was structured around two distinctive aspects of video sharing on YouTube that may pose challenges when marketing destinations online: first, users' tendency to avoid adverts by skipping ahead; and second, the importance of comments.

DISGUIISING ADVERTISING

In the multimedia age, audiences have become adept at not only detecting efforts to persuade – such as adverts – but also

evading them. This is particularly true on social media, where people feel more goal-oriented and thus more irritated by marketing and where adverts can be easily skipped. "How to deal with consumers' advertising avoidance becomes an important question for marketers when they use social media platforms", the authors point out.

A possible tool that marketers can use to circumvent viewers' advertising avoidance online is *native advertising*. "Native advertising refers to a variety of techniques by which an advertisement is crafted to resemble non-advertising content", explain the authors. For example, a brand might craft a social media post to resemble that of an individual user, or embed its logo or product within a television programme (product placement).

"In the context of destination advertising", the authors say, "DMOs can create native advertisements by mimicking non-advertising content (e.g., mock movie trailers, parodies of music videos)". This can also help them avoid clichéd content like celebrity endorsements and catchphrases. As audiences perceive native advertising as more engaging and trustworthy than traditional formats, the researchers hypothesised that the less

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DMO YouTube adverts are identifiable as advertising, the more positively the adverts – and the destinations shown – will be received by tourists.

MANAGING COMMENTS

The authors' second area of interest was YouTube's comment function. "A comment is often perceived as part of the post", the authors tell us, "and thus it can influence users' perceptions". Indeed, the ratio of positive to negative comments on a video can significantly affect that video's popularity. However, the impact of comment management on advertising effectiveness had never previously been addressed in the context of tourism.

"To address this research gap", say the authors, "we attempted to confirm the importance of comment management by examining the effects of supportive comments left on DMOs' YouTube advertisements on tourists' perceptions". Combining their two areas of focus, they hypothesised that native advertising is significantly more effective when comments describe the advert as non-advertising content. Again, they expected this effect to go even further than the advert itself, making tourists more willing to visit the destination advertised.

TESTING ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

To test their hypotheses, the researchers conducted two experimental studies. Study 1 explored how recognising an advert as such influences tourists' perceptions. In Study 2, the researchers examined whether online comments strengthen or weaken the connection between advertising recognition and how tourists perceive the destination advertised. They also analysed YouTube comments for each study.

Adverts by the Korean Tourism Organization (KTO) provided an ideal sampling pool. "On YouTube, the KTO has recently created its advertisements in a way that mimics music videos, to avoid using the clichéd elements of destination advertising, and has drawn public attention because of its native advertising strategy", the researchers explain.

In Study 1, one group of participants watched a KTO YouTube advert containing clichéd depictions of a destination (e.g., a montage of famous places, foreign tourists looking happy), while another group watched an advert created with a native advertising strategy. They were then surveyed to measure their perceptions of the adverts and the destinations shown.

Study 2's participants were randomly assigned to groups that saw either a native or a non-native version of an advert and then read comments framed as either advertising-related (e.g., "advertisement," "promo") or non-advertising-related (e.g., "music video," "video"). After viewing the advert and reading the comments, they completed a survey on their reactions.

PRACTICAL TAKEAWAYS FOR DMOs

This multi-method approach yielded interesting results. Study 1 showed that – as expected – native advertising enhanced the impact of a DMO YouTube advert. In Study 2, comment management further increased the effectiveness of native advertising on YouTube, with users' perceptions of an advert affected by related comments.

Contrary to the researchers' expectations, however, "the comments were not powerful enough to change tourists' perceptions of the destination". This may have been due to the complexity of the

destination experience. "Altering one's perception of a destination based solely on others' opinions expressed on an online platform can be challenging", the researchers observe.

These findings hold important implications for DMOs wishing to maximise the impact of their advertising on YouTube. First, native advertising is likely to be the best approach. "DMOs should focus on downplaying the persuasiveness of YouTube advertisements while creating them", the researchers advise. For example, marketers should avoid the traditional "collage" effect and consider matching YouTube's aesthetic and purpose by fashioning adverts in the form of entertaining videos.

"Second", the researchers add, "our findings show that native destination advertisements are appreciated more by potential tourists when their native content is emphasised or highlighted in the comments". DMOs can thus use YouTube's "pin" function to draw attention to comments that describe their adverts as non-advertising content.

"Our findings provide DMOs with insights into the 'how-to' questions relating to optimal YouTube advertising", the authors conclude. But their insights can be extended beyond YouTube. "On Facebook or Instagram", they add, "DMOs could consider imitating the format of a personal user's post". On TikTok, DMOs could mimic or refer to reels made by ordinary users to minimise the impression of persuasion.

POINTS TO NOTE

YouTube is a key platform for destination marketing, but users often skip ads and rely on comments.

Native advertising – adverts disguised as regular content – can boost advertising effectiveness.

Comments that describe adverts as non-advertising content can further increase advertising effectiveness.

Destination marketers should tailor content to YouTube norms, circumventing ad avoidance and capitalising on comments.

Seunghun Shin, Taekyung Kim, Sunyoung Hlee and Chulmo Koo (2025). Destination Advertising on YouTube: Effects of Native Advertising and Comment Management on Tourist Perception. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 798–815.

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RETHINKING HOW HOTEL PERFORMANCE IS EVALUATED

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Rethinking How Hotel Performance is Evaluated

The 11 cities of the Guangdong–Hong Kong–Macau Greater Bay Area (GBA) are an economic powerhouse of southern China. Growth in the GBA’s hotel sector, however, could be improved by strengthening hotels’ operating efficiency, according to the SHTM’s Professor Henry Tsai and co-authors. Their study provides an innovative method of hotel performance evaluation tailored to an era of diversification, revealing useful insights for managers.

A DIVERSIFYING GBA

Boosting tourism is among the main aims of the GBA. The number of hotels in the region increased by 11% between 2015 and 2019, primarily thanks to development in emerging destinations such as Huizhou, Shenzhen and Zhuhai. However, despite the ongoing improvements in connectivity among GBA cities, differences in their business environment persist. “Disparities in economic development, customer demographics, urban characteristics, and competitive landscapes among these cities”, the authors say, “result in substantial variations in hotel operating income”.

The growing concentration of hotels in the GBA has sharpened competition. Many are responding by diversifying their services in a bid to maximise revenue. To help hotel

managers strengthen their businesses, scientific methods of performance evaluation can point the way. However, the authors warn that the increasing variety in hotels’ offerings makes this more complex. “The presence of product diversification introduces variations in hotel operations”, they write. “Ignoring this aspect can render hotel performance evaluation impractical and introduce bias”.

“As such”, they continue, “it is obviously not ideal to mix hotels offering different products for performance evaluation”. Instead, an approach mindful of non-uniformity is needed to ensure a fair comparison that can identify underperforming hotels. In particular, hotels across the GBA differ not only in their provision of rooms but also in extra services such as food and beverages (F&B), retail, conference venues and spa treatments. The authors realised that the standard business-studies approach

– data envelopment analysis (DEA) – needed to be updated to account for this heterogeneity.

TAILORING THE TRADITIONAL METHOD

Diversification is well established in hospitality. “By diversifying products”, the researchers note, “hotels can generate economies of scale and scope, thus reducing costs and improving performance”. However, the effectiveness of this strategy in terms of performance is hard to gauge, because diversification means that rival hotels are not competing in exactly the same markets. Moreover, hotels inherently differ in terms of operational resources, such as number of rooms and adoption of technology.

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A key measure of firm performance is efficiency. According to previous research – often based on DEA – large or budget hotels may be more efficient than small or mid-range ones, and chain hotels use more advanced technology than independents. However, as the researchers note, conventional DEA “cannot deal with the problem of hotel efficiency evaluation with product diversification”. Their novel solution was to modify DEA so that its unit of analysis – the decision-making unit (DMU) – is non-homogeneous.

Such an approach is particularly relevant in the GBA’s diverse hotel sector. Nonetheless, the authors note that “no hotel efficiency studies have considered the factor of product diversification, despite its practical existence”. To remedy this, they studied a sample of 53 GBA hotels offering different services. With their modified DEA method, they analysed how hotel operating efficiency was impacted by external factors, such as geographical location, and internal factors, such as product diversification.

EFFICIENCY ACROSS THE GBA

Businesses that compete through diversification are effectively using the same type of resources to produce different outputs. To capture this essential feature of the region’s hotel sector, Tsai and colleagues applied their model to analyse DMUs in seven GBA cities, aiming to identify resource redundancy. Efficiency is known as a key concern in the hotel sector, which, they write, “grapples with inefficient management of human resources and unnecessary expenditure, areas demanding substantial improvement”.

Rationalising resource usage is especially hard when competing on multiple fronts. “Hotels can be considered as multi-activity decision-makers”, the researchers write, “because they aim to cater to various needs and expectations of customers by offering diverse products”. Hence, their analysis accounted for four outputs: rooms, F&B, meeting services and spa services. Using operational data submitted by hotels to a third-party company for performance evaluation, they clustered the sample into groups that each offered the same mix of these four products, then calculated an efficiency value for each group.

ROOM(S) FOR IMPROVEMENT

The analysis yielded a range of instructive findings. In terms of overall efficiency, the researchers’ conclusion was stark: “considering the hotels’ diverse products, none were efficient during [the] 2015 to 2019 period, with average efficiency values ranging between 0.044 and 0.376” (out of a maximum of 1.00). This indicates an urgent need for hotels across the GBA to optimise their use of resource inputs and achieve the same (diversified) outputs more efficiently.

The study’s innovative use of non-homogeneous DMUs allowed the causes of these inefficiencies to be diagnosed in more detail than before. An important overarching conclusion is that optimal resource usage by a hotel can only be achieved when each of its product types is efficient. This, however, was not the case for any of the studied DMUs, all of which “had at least one product group that was operating inefficiently”. Meanwhile, the low overall scores emphasise the importance for hotel managers of improving the efficiency of each department to maintain a competitive advantage.

A detailed breakdown showed that the four product types did not contribute equally to the hotels’ efficiency scores. “The weighted efficiency of F&B surpassed that of the other product groups”, the researchers report, “indicating that F&B contributed the most to the non-homogeneous efficiency score”. Moreover, resource management was poorest for rooms and F&B, which had the lowest average efficiency scores. This explains why the least efficient hotel was one that offered only those two products, whereas the best-performing provided all four product types.

The authors’ analysis also confirmed the wisdom of diversification. “While groups providing different products exhibited varying performance levels”, they say, “those with higher levels of product diversification tended to outperform others” – something for managers to note. Meanwhile, a geographic breakdown found that hotels in Guangzhou had the highest efficiency (but still suboptimal), whereas Macau had the lowest. Regional efficiency strengths did emerge, with Zhongshan excelling in rooms, Macau in F&B, Hong Kong in meeting services and Shenzhen in spa services.

“Hotel managers can benchmark their hotel’s performance against others in the GBA, identifying product groups crucial to hotel operations yet displaying suboptimal performance levels”, the authors advise. A further implication is that hotels in node cities of the GBA should rate their performance against those in the better-performing core cities. Governments in node cities can play their part through tax incentives to encourage technology adoption by hotels.

AN INVALUABLE NEW TOOL

This study provides a sophisticated method of evaluating hotels’ business performance. Given the increasing turn to diversification as a competitive strategy in the dense GBA hotel market, it is more important than ever to account for heterogeneity. “Relying solely on the traditional model may lead to a falsely positive perception of performance”, they warn, noting that their modified DEA model revealed lower efficiency scores than the standard DEA. Managers and academics should now be better equipped to avoid such misapprehensions.

POINTS TO NOTE

Scientific methods of performance evaluation can help hotels gain a competitive advantage. Hotels in the Greater Bay Area are operating far below maximum efficiency. More diversified hotels perform better, but it is vital to optimise all product types. Greater Bay Area hotels should learn from each other’s strengths in different areas.

Henry Tsai, Chenchen Gao and Hongwei Liu (2025). Hotel Performance in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macau Greater Bay Area: A Non-Homogeneous Perspective. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 827–841.

Research Horizons

REVIEWS FORETELL A RESTAURANT'S FATE

Volume 20 | Issue 1 | February 2026



Reviews Foretell a Restaurant's Fate

An innovative study by the SHTM's Professor Hengyun Li and Mr Xiang (Kevin) Zheng, working with colleagues, puts business survival prediction in the spotlight. Their research, focusing on the determinants of success in the restaurant trade, yields invaluable lessons for the hospitality and tourism industry as it adapts to economic uncertainty and transition.

A SECTOR IN NEED

Protecting restaurants is a concern for governments, as the catering sector is among the largest sources of economic activity in areas dependent on tourism. Yet while crucial to economies' health, "the tourism and hospitality sector is naturally vulnerable and bears the brunt of crises", the researchers warn. Restaurants are no exception: with their limited resources and fragile finances, they are highly susceptible to failure when the business environment becomes more challenging. Buffering restaurants against economic storms to preserve the social and economic benefits they offer is thus paramount.

Tourism and economics scholars have an important role to play here. "Amid global uncertainty and an ever-changing business environment", the authors write, "researchers have increasingly striven to rationalise business failure and heighten firms' likelihood of surviving". In the restaurant context, scholars have identified

various factors that affect the likelihood of long-term survival. Increasingly, these reflect trends in today's social media age, in which online reviews can make or break a restaurant's reputation.

This has not gone unnoticed by businesses themselves, which are increasingly taking proactive steps to enhance their online word-of-mouth. "Major industry players (e.g., Marriott) have begun tasking individual staff, or even teams, with monitoring customer reviews to provide timely responses", the researchers note. "Hospitality businesses that attend closely to online reviews perform far better (e.g., in terms of revenue and visibility) than those that do not".

REVIEWS HOLD THE CLUES

In the era of big data, however, there is scope for a more nuanced look at the relationship between online reviews and

restaurant success. The most familiar metric from restaurant review sites might be the average customer rating. The authors realised that further insights could be gained from review variance, the extent to which reviews of a restaurant differ widely in terms of ratings and sentiments. So far, they write, "no study appears to have explicitly examined how review variance affects businesses' survival". This is a valuable research opportunity, given that "findings regarding review variance in other contexts (e.g., retail) imply a close relationship between these two variables".

Ratings and variance aside, the power of online reviews to affect real-world business survival might depend on another aspect: expertise. Prolific restaurant reviewers, especially those with high badge levels and numerous upvotes, tend to be seen as experts. Signalling theory suggests that such "expert" status signals to readers that a review is reliable. Expert reviews are thus likely to more strongly influence a restaurant's downfall. "Consumers' perceptions and decisions influenced by

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different signals", the authors summarise, "can affect product demand, which ultimately can affect business survival".

Since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, economies around the world have faced new challenges. For the vulnerable restaurant sector, a thorough analysis of the variables most closely linked to business survival would be a lifeline. Online reviews represent an invaluable, yet not fully utilised, resource in this context. "Within an unstable economy and a competitive business environment, timely research on restaurants' survival is urgently needed", the researchers tell us.

FEEDING IN DATA

To this end, their comprehensive, data-driven study leveraged mass restaurant review records from the major US city of Boston, "a popular tourist destination boasting a dining culture rich with restaurants and cuisine types". Over half a million online reviews from Yelp, covering almost 3,000 eateries in the Boston area, were analysed. The authors extracted potential key features of these reviews for predicting restaurant survival, including average rating scores, review length, number of reviews, and words indicating positive and negative sentiment.

Operational data on the restaurants were also acquired to untangle their relationship with review features. "Several business-related factors can affect restaurants' survival", the researchers note, "including chain business, price, the number of competitors, customer engagement, review ratings, review length, number of reviews, and business age". They then designed prediction models to test how review variance and review source (expert or non-expert) affected restaurants' survival, and they ran a further analysis to tease out the importance of other features.

READING THE SIGNALS

An array of findings emerged from the data, with strategic implications for businesses. First, reviews by "Elite" users (Yelp's certification for highly engaged reviewers, whose opinions are deemed helpful by the site's community) held the most sway. "Compared with non-expert reviews", report the authors, "the

variables extracted from expert reviews could more accurately predict restaurants' one-year-ahead survival status". That is, the models were better at forecasting restaurant survival when using reviews by Elite members, implying that these have more influence on diners' decisions and in turn the fates of individual businesses.

Regarding specific features, status as a chain restaurant, price, and business age were the variables most closely related to survival. Among averaged variables, reviewers' average level of sentiment regarding food prices was the best predictor of restaurants' fate. Nonetheless, for all variables *except* average price sentiment, the "the variance was more important than the average". Specifically, a wide variance in review features for any given restaurant strongly predicted its failure to survive the next one to two years.

The implications of these findings are clear. "Business owners should pay attention to review variance", write the researchers. The sophisticated mathematical methods used in their study provide a ready-made approach for restaurant managers and other stakeholders to forecast performance by using variance data from online reviews. "We have provided an additional tool with which to evaluate businesses' survival", the researchers note. When a high degree of review variance is observed, they advise managers that "it is important to minimise possible inconsistencies" in product and service delivery.

A more fine-grained interpretation of variance data is also possible. While variance in overall review sentiment is crucial, it can be broken down into specific

aspects of reviews that strongly indicate issues with business development. "At the micro level", say the authors, "restaurateurs should carefully evaluate customers' attitudes towards current price levels to see whether costs meet diners' expectations". The outsized influence of Elite reviewers, meanwhile, suggests that managers "should encourage diners with expert status to write reviews after visiting a restaurant".

The survival prediction tool that this study provides is relevant not only to practitioners but also to investors, for whom restaurants are invariably a risky sector. "By leveraging our prediction model", the researchers write, "investors can check the consistency of customers' attitudes towards certain restaurants to clarify businesses' status and potential". Armed with this information on review sentiment variance, "investors can then pursue opportunities with a higher presumed return on investment".

CLEAR LESSONS EMERGE

"Timely and accurate business survival prediction is vital in today's dynamic business environment", the authors remind us. For the food sector, this research provides timely insights that are ground-breaking in both detail and relevance. Their importance even extends to the site operators of review platforms, which could, for example, choose to utilise restaurants' review variance among their indicators. For the hospitality industry overall, the study reaffirms the importance of a data-informed understanding of businesses' survival prospects in uncertain times.

POINTS TO NOTE

Online reviews provide a wealth of data to improve restaurant survival prediction.

The variance in sentiment expressed by reviews is a strong negative predictor of survival.

Reviews by expert users have much more predictive power than non-expert reviews.

Restaurants should monitor review sentiment variance to spot emerging issues with quality consistency or customer satisfaction.

Hengyun Li, Anqi Zhou, Xiang (Kevin) Zheng, Jian Xu, and Jing Zhang (2025). Restaurant Survival Prediction Using Machine Learning: Do the Variance and Sources of Customers' Online Reviews Matter? *Tourism Management*, Vol. 107, 105038.

Research Horizons

EMPOWERING INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES THROUGH TOURISM

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Empowering Indigenous Communities through Tourism

Indigenous tourism may offer local communities a way to preserve and protect their cultural identity while achieving greater economic resilience. However, implementing such initiatives is not without challenges. Research led by the SHTM's Dr Roshis Krishna Shrestha with the Khokana Newar community of Nepal reveals how community-led approaches grounded in Indigenous governance and cultural values can turn these challenges into opportunities for sustainable, culturally anchored tourism.

PROMISE AND PERILS

"Indigenous tourism has emerged as a powerful avenue for communities worldwide to reclaim their cultural identity, strengthen their economic resilience, and maintain connections with their traditional lands and heritage", the authors begin. For many Indigenous communities, tourism offers a promising means of alleviating the lingering socio-economic consequences of colonialism.

Regrettably, however, implementing tourism initiatives in such contexts can be challenging. "The promise and perils of Indigenous tourism have been well documented", the researchers warn. Without proper consultation of or consent from cultural guardians, such as Indigenous Elders, tourism may result in the commodification of local heritage and resources even as it opens up new opportunities for economic development.

As such heritage and resources are hugely significant to Indigenous identity and need to be protected and preserved, it is vital for Indigenous tourism initiatives to be "community-based, aligned with collective aspirations, and respectful of Indigenous knowledge and heritage", in the authors' words.

A solution may lie in community-based tourism (CBT), which encourages and enables community members to collaborate and pool their resources and capabilities to achieve desired socio-economic outcomes. "This approach often leads to more equitable income distribution and community involvement", say the researchers, "compared to government or corporate-led initiatives".

Yet the effectiveness of CBT in practice is still unclear, and obstacles to its implementation persist, including a tendency to prioritise industry vitality over community welfare and failure to fully legitimise the agency and voice of individuals in the community. "This shortcoming underscores the need for a more nuanced approach that balances individual autonomy with collective agency", the researchers observe.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIPS

Such an approach may be afforded by community-based Indigenous tourism (CBIT), which extends CBT by placing Indigenous cultural knowledge and values at the core of tourism development. "CBIT fundamentally integrates Indigenous knowledge systems and values, anchoring

them within the community's own narratives and lived experiences", the authors explain. "Such a framework not only preserves cultural integrity but also fosters sustainable tourism practices that are intrinsically aligned with Indigenous worldviews and aspirations".

Importantly, this approach relies on the relationality of Indigenous values and beliefs, "which view personhood as inherently connected with others and shaped through shared experiences, challenges and actions". Effective self-determined tourism initiatives – those involving community-wide planning and collaboration – can integrate these relational values and beliefs into an economic paradigm while maintaining cultural empowerment.

Although the functional and structural aspects of CBT have been extensively researched, its Indigenisation has received surprisingly little attention from scholars to date. "The potential of community-based tourism to foster cultural empowerment though Indigenous ontologies, traditions and institutions remains unexplored", the authors note.

Setting out to fill this gap, they employed ethnographic methods to explore the role of CBIT in reinforcing cultural identity among the Newars of Nepal through their core traditional institution, the Guthi system.

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THE KHOKANA NEWARS

The Newars' home, Kathmandu Valley, is rich in cultural heritage and traditions. The authors focused on the Khokana Newars, a place-based subset of the wider Jyapu Newar community. The Khokana Newars have preserved numerous traditional cultural practices – notably the Rudrayani procession, which attracts significant domestic and international tourism – and have a robust Guthi system, indicating the depth of their cultural activities.

"Guthi" refers to a traditional Newar mechanism for self-governance. "It is primarily sustained through land ownership, allocating resources to cultural, social, and religious events", the researchers explain. As such, the system serves as both an Indigenous economic model and a sacred structure. Guthis – the institutions that make up this system – are composed of Indigenous community members and led by Elders, who act as social and spiritual guides and custodians of Newar customs and values.

The authors focused on Guthi-led tourism. "While not directly engaging in tourism as registered companies, Guthis play a critical role in creating tourism experiences in traditional Newari settlements in the Kathmandu valley", they say. "This approach provides a unique lens to understand how traditional values and contemporary interests are balanced as community members explore tourism opportunities".

RIGOROUS FIELDWORK

Within this Indigenous community, the researchers collected data first through "go-along conversations" held with two Elders while touring the local area, followed by in-depth interviews conducted with 19 community members in natural settings. "By embedding data collection within culturally significant settings and prioritising Indigenous perspectives, the study aims to produce a rich, nuanced, and respectful account of Newar practices, worldviews, and knowledge systems", the authors tell us.

Their fieldwork concluded with a collaborative workshop held at the local Guthi house. This meticulously designed

day-long event engaged 37 community Elders from Khokana in discussion of key topics related to CBIT, such as sociocultural values, community perceptions and collaboration approaches. This approach ensured that "the community's voice was not only heard but also instrumental in shaping the research outcomes".

TOURISM AND THE GUTHI SYSTEM

Analysis of the data gathered from the fieldwork revealed that, as anticipated, cultural empowerment played a vital role in CBIT practices among the Khokana Newars. The Guthi system was a pivotal mechanism for implementing CBIT, harmonising tourism development with Indigenous values and cultural practices in ways that went beyond conventional economic frameworks.

The researchers organised their findings into two key themes. The first was *empowering individual and collective social identity for tourism development*. "Cultural empowerment through Guthi fosters a reciprocal relationship between tourism and community identity", the authors explain. This ensures that tourism activities support and enhance Indigenous cultural pride and cohesion, rather than undermining them.

The second theme was *institutionalising the norms of reciprocity*. The Guthi system embeds the Indigenous Newar principles of reciprocity and shared responsibility into tourism practices, such as through festivals and storytelling sessions. "By serving as a repository of cultural memory

and a catalyst for cultural empowerment", say the authors, "Guthi ensures that CBIT remains intrinsically linked to the community's historical consciousness and shared values".

CULTURALLY ANCHORED TOURISM

"The Khokana Newars exemplify how CBIT can flourish when firmly rooted in Indigenous governance structures that prioritise cultural integrity and socio-economic resilience", the researchers summarise. Their findings yield two crucial practical implications for the development and promotion of CBIT among the Newars, especially in the context of the Guthi system.

First, it is vital to formulate tourism development strategies that respect and incorporate the social and cultural values of the Indigenous Newar people. "By doing so", the researchers say, "tourism initiatives can better align with Indigenous Newars' worldview and cultural practices, fostering more sustainable and culturally appropriate development".

Second, to effectively *incorporate* – rather than merely *extract* – Indigenous knowledge, tourism initiatives must be anchored in Newars' uniquely relational and reciprocal worldview. "The full realisation of the benefits of this approach", they conclude, "hinges on embracing the community's understanding of 'mutually beneficial' at initial stages of the collaborative process".

POINTS TO NOTE

Indigenous tourism can promote cultural identity and economic resilience but risks commodifying local values.

Centring Indigenous values and governance systems can ensure culturally aligned and sustainable tourism.

Tourism that strengthens individual and collective identity benefits the community through reciprocity and cohesion.

Elders and community members should be engaged in all tourism planning and decision-making.

Roshis Krishna Shrestha, J.N. Patrick L'Espoir Decosta and Michelle Whitford (2025). Reimagining Community-based Indigenous Tourism: Insights from the Traditional Knowledge of Indigenous Newars of Nepal. *Tourism Management*, Vol. 108, 105110.



A FORUM FOR THE FUTURE

A smart, sustainable, and resilient future for tourism is on the horizon, thanks in large part to the SHTM's tireless efforts to drive change. The School is proud to have co-organised the 19th UN Tourism/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook, together with UN Tourism and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA).

From 18 to 20 September 2025, global industry leaders gathered in Guilin, China for fruitful academic exchange under the theme "Synergy in Motion: Charting New Frontiers for a Resilient, Sustainable, and Smart Tourism Ecosystem". Hosting the event were the Guilin Municipal People's Government and the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region's

Department of Culture and Tourism, with international media support from *China Daily*.

Based at Guilin's Shangri-La Hotel, the Forum's esteemed guests included Professor Billy Bai, SHTM Associate Dean, who proudly represented the School through three days of presentations and discussions, along with a technical tour. With delegates including policymakers, destination managers and researchers, the event served as a dynamic platform for catalysing global collaboration, fostering local resilience and exploring the impact of digital technologies.

Participants at the 2025 UN Tourism/PATA Forum on Tourism Trends and Outlook



CATALYSING POSITIVE CHANGE

In this spirit, Day One was devoted to Technical Sessions on the industry's most pressing issues. Proceedings began with a presentation on the latest World Tourism Barometer by Mr Michel Julian, Senior Programme Officer, Market Intelligence, Policies and Competitiveness Department, UN Tourism. Mr Julian then moderated a discussion of data-based and collaborative strategies for steering policy directions.

Befitting the Forum's focus on resilience and smart tourism, a session on data-driven forecasting of Asia-Pacific travel came next, with Ms Fernanda Rodak, Manager, Project Management, PATA as the moderator, and panellists representing several Asian countries. It was then the turn of the SHTM's Professor Bai to chair a fruitful discussion of how talent and knowledge flow between industry and academia can foster tourist sector resilience.

The final Technical Session addressed cross-border collaboration, tech-driven innovation, and how they are reshaping the nature of business events. Moderated by Mr Jing Xu, Vice Chairman, Global Tourism Economy Research Center, the discussion explored emerging business models

from Chinese and international perspectives. It marked the end of a constructive day that laid the groundwork for the further in-depth exchange of ideas.

The official Opening Ceremony was held on the morning of Day Two, moderated by Mr Xinhua Lu, Secretary of the CPC Guilin Municipal Committee, Mayor of Guilin, and featuring a well-received address by Professor Bai. Subsequently, industry leader Dr Huilian Duan, Managing Director Asia-Pacific & Americas, TUI Hotels & Resorts, set the tone with a Keynote Presentation entitled "European Source Markets to Asia-Pacific".

Following a group photo and coffee break, a discussion on future-proofing smart destinations for sustainability and resilience was moderated by Mr Julian. After the lunch break, Mr Tong Teng, Vice President of Alibaba Fliggy, delivered the day's second Keynote Presentation. An in-depth Panel Session on "Measuring Success in the Tourism Economy" was then moderated by Ms Rodak, featuring insights from senior tourism officials from the Maldives, Malaysia and Australia.



REBOUNDED AND EVOLVING

The second day ended with closing remarks by Mr Liu Han, Secretary of the Party Group of the Department of Culture and Tourism of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region; Mr Harry Hwang, Director, Regional Department for Asia and the Pacific, UN Tourism; Mr Peter Semone, Chairman of PATA; and Professor Bai. Asked about the health of the global tourism sector, Mr Semone replied that "the latest World Tourism Barometer shows encouraging signs of recovery. In Asia, travel volumes have largely rebounded to pre-pandemic levels".

Mr Julian echoed Mr Semone's positive assessment of the resilience of the sector and added further

detail on specific measures that have borne fruit in the Asian context. "By launching initiatives such as handicraft development programmes", he noted, "China has successfully diversified its tourism offerings and breathed new life into rural communities".

Professor Bai, meanwhile, drew attention to the evolution of the sector as revealed by recent research. "Globally", he observed, "we're seeing a growing preference for regional travel, 'light tourism,' and 'micro-vacations'". The lesson is clear. "This trend", said Professor Bai, "requires tourism professionals and cultural authorities to conduct deeper research and develop offerings that cater to the layered and evolving demands of today's travellers".

Day Three was dedicated to an enriching Technical Tour of Guilin's geographic and cultural attractions. The region is famous for its scenic Ruyi Peak and cruises along the Lijiang River, both of which the delegates were treated to. They then enjoyed dinner at the Yangshuo Riverside Resort Hotel and a spectacular performance at the Impression Liu Sanjie Theater to round off an immersive day in this tourist hotspot.

The SHTM hopes that the latest UN Tourism/PATA Forum will make a lasting impact on the industry's approach to futureproofing. We thank all those who worked hard to bring this event to fruition and eagerly anticipate future collaborations.



EMPOWERING EXECUTIVES, STUDENTS AND FACULTY

For nearly a decade, SHTM+ICON Consultancy has synergised the School's research expertise with the practical experience accrued by Hotel ICON, our world-renowned teaching and research hotel, for the benefit of the industry. The 2025/2026 academic year is no exception, with the Consultancy engineering knowledge transfer to executives, students and faculty from across Asia and the Middle East.

EXECUTIVES LEARN FROM THE SCHOOL

The first of the year's activities, held on 3-7 June 2025, was an Executive Development Programme (EDP) tailor-made for Huazhu Hotels Group. Thirty-nine senior Huazhu executives participated in lectures, group projects and discussions on three key topics in today's hospitality and tourism industry.

First, they learned about innovation and leadership from Professor Kaye Chon, SHTM Dean, Chair Professor and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management. Artificial intelligence (AI) was next on the agenda, with Professor Faye Hao revealing how this trend is already reshaping the hotel sector. Finally, Professor Qu Xiao shed new light on strategic management in hospitality and tourism.

Two months later, on 20-25 August

2025, a group of executives from Quanzhou, China also had the chance to learn from SHTM faculty. Organised by the PolyU-Jinjiang Technology and Innovation Research Institute, five insightful lectures were delivered on need-to-know industry topics.

After learning how to create a high-quality service experience from Professor Lisa Gao, the 40 attendees gained insights into hospitality innovation management from Professor Daniel Leung, conflict management from Professor Pearl Lin, and AI from Professor Faye Hao. In the last session, Professor Michael Lin shed light on revenue management in hospitality.

The executives also had the opportunity to discuss their hospitality experiences with Hotel ICON's senior management, as well as visiting Hong Kong's Central Market and Tai Kwun.



A RENOWNED WINTER SCHOOL

The ultimate training opportunity for industry executives came at the 2026 Hong Kong PolyU Winter School®, held at the SHTM on 5–9 January 2026. Every year, this renowned programme gives a group of dedicated, forward-thinking professionals the chance to master the latest breakthroughs in artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

STUDENT BENEFICIARIES

As well as honing the skills of current hospitality professionals, SHTM+ICON Consultancy is invested in training the next generation of industry leaders. From 22 July to 15 August 2025, 21 students from King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia participated in a study programme designed to develop their practical skills and broaden their international perspective.

Tourism destination management students completed placements with the Hong Kong Tourism Board, Jebson Travel, Ngong Ping 360 and the Travel Industry Council of Hong Kong, while those studying international hospitality management undertook cross-departmental training at Hotel

ICON. Following their placements and a series of lectures and technical visits, the participants were presented with certificates by the Vice Minister of Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Tourism.

On 1 December, 63 undergraduate students from Wuyi University, China – alongside faculty members from the same university – had the opportunity to tour and learn from the SHTM and Hotel ICON. After an introduction to the School by SHTM Professor Kam Hung, the students learned about innovation and entrepreneurship in hospitality from Professor Michael Lin; the wine business from Professor Richard Qiu; luxury management from Professor Hung; and AI from

Professor Neil Li.

Later that winter, another group of students enjoyed a professional training programme tailor-made by the SHTM. In January 2026, students from Kyung Hee University in South Korea attended lectures on high-quality service experiences, environmental, social and governance issues, AI, revenue management, and innovation and entrepreneurship in hospitality.

Complementing their classroom learning, they also visited a luxury hotel and cultural attractions in Hong Kong to gain practical insights into the local hospitality and tourism industry.

Module	Instructor
AI in Hospitality and Tourism	 Prof Faye HAO Assistant Professor, SHTM
Intelligent Talent Management and AI-Augmented HRM	 Prof Crystal SHI Assistant Professor, SHTM
AI-Supported Service Operations and Guest Experience	 Prof Lisa GAO Associate Professor, SHTM
AI-Augmented Dynamic Pricing and Revenue Optimization	 Prof Neil LI Associate Professor, SHTM
AI-Enhanced Marketing and Customer Insights	 Prof Ada LO Associate Professor, SHTM

DEVELOPING FACULTY

Students and industry executives were not the only ones to benefit from the expertise of SHTM+ICON Consultancy this academic year, with dedicated faculty training programmes provided by the School.

In December 2025, faculty at the College of Arts and Sciences, Kunming, China learned about the SHTM's leadership in tourism management education; best practices in pedagogy; strategies for developing university–industry partnerships; and how to tackle the challenges of digital transformation in tourism.

Faculty from Camarines Sur Polytechnic Colleges were the next to benefit, with a customised faculty immersion programme in January 2026. The participants spent three days at the SHTM learning about teaching, industry engagement, and research and publication, followed by two days of shadowing and observational learning across various departments of Hotel ICON.

These transformative learning opportunities testify to another year of the Consultancy's dedicated efforts to elevate hospitality learning, research and professional development.

SHTM+ICON
Defining the Future



IN BRIEF



DRESS ORANGE DAY

Each year, the SHTM commemorates **World Tourism Day**, championed by UN Tourism, with a vivid demonstration of togetherness. On **Dress Orange Day**, this time held on 30 September 2025, staff, faculty and students dress in the School's colour, orange, to symbolise their shared support for the industry.

All SHTMers were invited to take part in the **Dress Orange Fashion**

Show Contest, a unique event in which competitors show off their orange clothes to a panel of judges. The winners were MSc student Xinyu Jiang, who entered as an individual contestant, and MSc students Jiasheng Cai, Qingsong He, Di Wu, Ruoshan Xu and Han Zhang, who entered as a group.

The winners of the **Dress Orange Photo Competition** were BSc

students Vici Chong and Katie Lee. Their impressive photos captured the day's vibrant spirit, making it even more memorable.

The School thanks all those who took part in 2025's Dress Orange Day. Their energy and creativity made the event a fitting celebration of unity within our vibrant industry.

OUTSTANDING FACULTY MEMBER HONOURED

Professor Haiyan Song, Associate Dean and Chair Professor, Mr and Mrs Chan Chak Fu Professor in International Tourism, and Director of the Research Centre for Digital Transformation of Tourism, has been elected a Fellow of the **Chinese Economic Association (CEA) UK/Europe**.

This appointment honours Professor Song for his significant contributions to the CEA and to Chinese economics research. He served as the CEA's eighth president (1996–1997) and is a founding editor of its journal, the prestigious *Journal of Chinese Economic and Business Studies*.

The School congratulates Professor Song on this well-deserved appointment and looks forward to his continued contributions to research excellence and academic leadership.



CELEBRATING OUR FACULTY'S EXCELLENT ACHIEVEMENTS



This year's **SHTM Excellence Awards** honoured a host of faculty members for their exceptional performance in various arenas.

Associate Professor Richard Qiu received the **SHTM Teaching Excellence Award (Early Career Teacher)**, while the **SHTM Research Excellence Award (Early Career Researcher)** was bestowed on

Associate Professor Neil Li. Professor Honggen Xiao, Assistant Dean, was honoured with the **SHTM Research Student Supervision Award**.

In addition, the **SHTM Knowledge Transfer Excellence Award (Industry)** went to a team led by Professor Dan Wang, including Professor Kaye Chon, Dean, Chair Professor, and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family

Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management; Professor Qu Xiao, Assistant Dean and Associate Professor; and Dr Ming Deng, Research Assistant Professor. This award was bestowed in recognition of their project entitled "The Development & Impact of Hotel Environmental Sustainability Management Index (HESMI)".



AN EXCEPTIONAL ALUMNUS

On 13 January 2026, **Dr Elton Sun**, Vice President of Hyatt China and CEO of UrCove Hotels, received the **Outstanding PolyU Alumni Award (Professional Achievement) 2025**. Dr Sun is a 2023 graduate of the Doctor of Hotel and Tourism Management programme and a 2004 graduate of the Master of Science in Hotel and Tourism Management programme. The School congratulates him on his industry-defining achievements since graduation.

STUDENT WINS COMPETITIVE SCHOLARSHIP

We are pleased to announce that D.HTM student **Michelle Yang** is the worthy recipient of this year's **Prof. Bob McKercher Scholarship**. This highly competitive scholarship was established through a generous donation by Professor Bob McKercher and is granted based on academic excellence. Congratulations to Michelle for her commitment to academic excellence and contribution to the SHTM community!



ANOTHER STUDENT'S TALENT RECOGNISED

The **Padma and Hari Harilela Scholarship 2024/25** was bestowed on D.HTM student **Miki Zhang**. Established in 2011 by Dr Hari N. Harilela, head of the Harilela Group, this scholarship is intended to nurture young people with a passion for hospitality. This is certainly true of this year's awardee, who stands out for her talent and commitment to advancing industry standards.



STAFF UPDATES



Ms Kelly Leung was promoted to Assistant Officer with effect from 6 January 2026.



Ms Brantty Liu joined the School as an Assistant Officer on 1 September 2025.



Ms Joyce Lam joined the School as an Assistant Officer on 15 September 2025.



Mr Denver Yeung joined the School as Executive Officer on 18 December 2025.



Dr Eunji Lee joined the School as a Research Assistant Professor on 1 September 2025.



Professor Bela Stantic joined the School as a Professor on 6 October 2025.



Mr Myron Chan joined the School as Technical Support Assistant on 10 December 2025.



Representatives of the PATA Hong Kong SHTM Student Chapter winning the Trailblazer Award 2025

A STANDOUT YEAR FOR OUR STUDENTS

PTM
PATA TRAVEL MART
2025 AUGUST 26-28, THAILAND

It has been a productive season of extracurricular activities for SHTM students. From 26 to 28 August 2025, the School was represented by its Student Chapter at the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) Travel Mart in Bangkok, Thailand. The 2025 edition of this venerable trade exhibition, organised by PATA, took place at the Queen Sirikit National Convention Center (QSNCC) and attracted over 1,000 delegates from across the world. The event organisers were supported by volunteers from the SHTM Student Chapter.

The spectacular QSNCC was a fitting venue for our Student Chapter to receive PATA's Trailblazer Award 2025, honouring their efforts to support responsible travel and tourism development. "Your belief in our chapter's potential inspires us to strive for excellence and achieve our goals", said Thomas Wan, Student Chapter President, in a letter of thanks to Professor Kaye Chon, SHTM Dean, Chair Professor and Walter and Wendy Kwok Family Foundation Professor in International Hospitality Management.

Thomas' sentiments were echoed by Charlotte Qiu, Student Chapter Internal Vice President. "Attending the award ceremony was a proud moment for all of us", she said. "It provided a unique platform to connect and network with professionals from the global travel and tourism industry". For Chapter member

Wendy Liu, whose volunteer service included collecting feedback from attendees, "receiving the Trailblazer Award was a tremendous honour, but the greater value came from the connections I made with other students and young professionals passionate about the future of tourism".

Chapter member Lessing Yin, who generously offered translation help in addition to other important voluntary work, summed up the feelings of the whole group. "Whenever asked where I came from", she wrote, "I proudly shared that I am from the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University". The SHTM is proud of its PATA Student Chapter and delighted to learn that they found attending the PATA Travel Mart so personally and educationally rewarding.

SCOUTING THE NEXT GENERATION

Next, it was the SHTM's turn to bestow awards in recognition of young talent. Headed by Dr Eric Chan, the competition "Tomorrow's Guestrooms in the Hotel Industry" aimed to spark young Hong Kongers' imagination about a career in hospitality. Following a workshop held in April 2025, participating secondary school groups competed to produce videos pitching suggestions for cutting-edge design for future hotel rooms and innovative ideas to optimise hotel guests' experience through technology, design or well-being.

The prize-giving ceremony on 10 October 2025 featured more than 80 secondary school student competitors. Taking the Champion prize was a team representing St Paul's Secondary School. Also honoured were teams from Li Po Chun United World College, with the 1st Runner Up prize, and Renaissance College, with the 2nd Runner Up prize. We thank all participants for their creative ideas and hope that this outreach event piqued their interest in the SHTM.

2025 also saw Singapore host the 35th Asia Pacific Hospitality Investment Summit (HICAP), to which the SHTM was proud to send a delegation of five student ambassadors from the HFTP Student Chapter. From 22 to 24 October, the delegation rubbed shoulders with industry leaders, investors and experts while practising their hospitality skills on the highest stage.

Reflecting on their experience, the Student Chapter members – Vera Zhu, Dolly He, Kiki Zhang, Yvonne Guan and Ruoran Li – expressed gratitude to HICAP for giving them the opportunity to facilitate communication between guests and organisers. "From daily guest registration and coordinating various plenary sessions to assisting speakers with technical setups, or answering inquiries about conference arrangements", they wrote, "we honed our strong sense of responsibility, proactive service, and excellent communication skills."



FOR A SECURE FUTURE

On 23 October 2025, the Beijing Hospitality Institute played host to the Future Hoteliers Summit. We are proud to report that two SHTM representatives – MSc student Cindy Yu and BSc student Erskine Sun, supervised by Professor Crystal Shi and Professor Daniel Leung – won the Summit's Second Prize.

Reflecting on the experience, the students highlighted the Summit's thoughtful curation and enriching activities, which allowed them to connect theoretical knowledge with real-life applications. "We returned to Hong Kong with renewed inspiration, meaningful connections, and a clearer vision for our future careers", they added.

The School kept up its high profile at the prestigious AFECA Asia MICE Youth Challenge 2025 in Jakarta, Indonesia on 6 November.

Students Emma Cheng, Elaine Tong, Helen Wong and Vicky Mok represented the SHTM, which they described as "an intense yet rewarding experience". Exchanging ideas with students from across Asia was particularly inspiring. "Their creativity and cultural insights broadened our perspectives", said the team, "and reminded us of how global and dynamic the MICE profession is".



SHTM students Cindy Yu (right) and Erskine Sun (left) winning Second Prize at the 2025 Future Hoteliers Summit

As the travel and tourism industry continues to evolve, the SHTM is heartened by the passion and determination of each year's student cohort. Facing multiple inflection points, we trust that the industry will be in safe hands with the next generation of talented young minds.

SAVOURING SUCCESS THROUGH HANDS-ON LEARNING



Every year, the SHTM offers a new set of enriching, innovative food and beverage (F&B) activities that prepare students for the industry through hands-on learning. Last summer saw these learning opportunities extended beyond the School, with F&B workshops tailored for visiting students from the University of Tabuk and King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia through collaborations with their respective universities.

Thanks to the Food and Wine Academy (FWA), our students – and the whole PolyU community – had the chance to take the Wine & Spirit Education Trust Levels 1 and 2 awards in the summer months, equipping them with essential tasting skills and a robust understanding of global wines and spirits.

Kicking off the academic year was a September guest lecture on Israeli cuisine delivered by the renowned Israeli food journalist Mr Gil Hovav and presided over by Mr Amir Laty, the Consul General of Israel. This was followed by a workshop on New Zealand apples, delivered with the support of New Zealand Trade and Enterprise. Next on the agenda that month were two pastry workshops hosted by the illustrious pastry chef Manuel Bouillet, with support from FB Solutions.

October 2025 saw the FWA host its second US Hands-on Cooking and Wine workshop, with support from

the Agricultural Trade Office (Hong Kong). Students had the opportunity to work with ingredients prominent in US cookery, from beef and eggs to tart cherries. A US Beef and Cheese workshop was also delivered in October, with support from the US Meat Export Federation (HK & Macau) and US Cheese Guild.

The spotlight turned to Europe in November, beginning with a Belgium Workshop to celebrate Hong Kong's 2025 Belgian Days festival. The workshop was delivered by beer judge and educator Mr Kenneth Ho and presided over by Ms Eva Morre, Deputy Consul General, Consulate General of Belgium in Hong Kong. In the same month, HTM1CN06 students learned from an English Tea workshop supported by Fortnum & Mason. Chef Daniel Fenner presented the traditional English delicacies of scones and tea and introduced the history of English afternoon tea.

In celebration of the Week of Italian

Cuisine in the World, the FWA partnered with the Italian Trade Agency to deliver an Italian chocolate masterclass in November. The founder of Scuola Tessieri, Mr Alessio Tessieri, explained how chocolate is produced from bean to bar, followed by a dessert demonstration by Chef Fabio Centoni and a chocolate tasting session delivered by Ms Christy Chan.



STUDENTS AND ALUMNI SHINE

On 20 October, the SHTM hosted the Hong Kong selection for the Young Chefs Young Waiter Young Mixologist competition. Competitors in three categories – chefs, mixologists and waiters – teamed up to perform a lunch service, with the list of ingredients disclosed less than 24 hours before the competition.

We are proud to announce that Nigel William Lee, a Year 4 student, was the winner in the waiter category, representing Hong Kong in a competition in London in February 2026. Indeed, the SHTM was well represented in October's competition, with Yuki Ng (a 2024 Hotel Management graduate) and Aisultan Toibolgan (a Year 4 Hotel Management student) reaching the finals in the waiter category and Anthony Wang (another 2024 Hotel Management graduate) placing in the mixologist finals.



Volunteering and charity work are at the heart of the School's dedication to serving the industry and the community, as amply demonstrated last year by Year 1 students from the HTM2306 course. Sixteen students volunteered at International Chefs Day, organised by the Hong Kong Chefs Association, and nine students served at other charities, such as

Feeding Hong Kong and Food Angel.

Feeding Hong Kong was assisted again by the SHTM in early December, when the FWA organised a food donation drive to support the charity's operations. We are thankful to the members of the PolyU community who donated food to this important cause.

LEARNING ENRICHMENT

None of these initiatives would have been possible without the commitment and passion of our teaching staff, whose ongoing professional development ensures that our students benefit from the most up-to-date industry expertise. This academic year, three F&B instructors earned Spanish Wine Specialist certification through a 50-hour online course supported by the Spanish Trade Office.

Professional excellence through enriching learning opportunities was also the vision of the School's interdepartmental collaboration on F&B activities. In August 2025, we hosted workshops on Hong Kong street food for the Global Engagement Office's International Summer School, followed by workshops on sake and wine for the Alumni Affairs Office. Partnering with PolyU's Research Institute for Future Food also enabled the SHTM to patent calcium-fortified hydroponic lettuce for Year 1 cooking classes.

In November, the FWA welcomed a delegation from the German Federal State of Saxony-Anhalt, referred by



the Research and Innovation Office. The members enjoyed a collaborative exchange on the future of food and technology innovation.

These are just some of the forward-thinking F&B activities delivered by the SHTM so far this academic year. Thanks to the FWA, our dedicated faculty, and our industry and interdepartmental partners, 2025/26 is proving another memorable year for students, alumni and staff.



A COMMUNITY RECONNECTED

Thanks to the SHTM Alumni Association (SHTMAA), alumni hailing from across the world have plentiful opportunities to stay connected with their alma mater and their peers through exciting, enriching events organised across the year.



The first of these events in the 2025/26 academic year was the SHTMAA Annual Dinner 2025, which took place at Happy Valley Racecourse on 14 November. Attendees had the option of dressing either in national attire or clothing representing the culture of their hometowns, which set the tone for an unforgettable evening of dining, music and dancing, accompanied by a lucky draw and other games and prizes.

The next event in the Association's

calendar, on 6 December, took alumni somewhat farther afield, with a day-long tour of Tai O. Known as "the Venice of the East", Tai O is a charming fishing village on the western side of Lantau Island, away from the hustle and bustle of city life.

On arriving in Tai O, the participants wasted no time in beginning to explore the village's fascinating local culture and heritage. With the capable guidance of two sixth-generation residents, Mr Fan and Mr Leung, they

first visited the stilt house owned by Mr Fan, followed by a round trip around the old village.

Next on the agenda was a boat tour to the open water outside Tai O, giving the attendees the chance to experience the village from the sea on a local wooden sampan. Their appetite piqued, the next stop was Hoi Wan Restaurant for a delicious lunch. After strolling through the streets to buy keepsakes and sample street snacks, the alumni had the opportunity to visit the Tai O Heritage Hotel, a beautifully restored heritage building on the edge of the island.

As the day drew to a close, the group returned to the city with not only souvenirs and memories of their time in Tai O but also a renewed sense of connection with each other and the School. We are grateful to the SHTMAA for the thoughtful planning and tireless dedication that make such meaningful experiences possible.



ALUM-NOTES

2000s

Ms Donna Wong	BA(Hons) in Hotel, Catering and Tourism Management 2003	Group Director of Luxury Sales – Asia at Minor Hotels
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2010s

Mr Arthur Chow	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2011	Operations Director at Compass Group HK Ltd
Ms Carman Kwok	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2015	General Manager of Business Development at eDraco Travel Ltd
Ms Queena Li	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2016	Senior Vice President – Value Creation at Weave Living
Ms Fang Li	MSc in Global Hospitality Business 2019	General Manager at Yinkentala Desert Ecological Cultural Tourism Area
Ms Nikki Cheung	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2019	Marketing Officer at Vocational Training Council
Ms Jessy Wang	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2019	Global Partnerships Executive at Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation

2020s

Mr Pierandrea Falchi	MSc in Global Hospitality Business 2022, BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2017	Assistant Director of Finance at Mandarin Oriental, Prague
Ms Regine Boenardi	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2022	Chef De Rang at Roganic Hong Kong
Ms Niki Cheung	BSc(Hons) in Tourism and Events Management 2023	People & Culture Officer – Learning and Development at Swire Hotels
Ms Vivian Lee	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2023	Langham Leadership Trainee – F&B at Langham Hospitality Group
Ms Yuki Ng	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2024	Food & Beverage Manger-in-Training at Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong
Dr Maroun E. Aouad	Ph.D. in Hotel and Tourism Management 2025	Assistant Professor/Senior Lecturer in School of Tourism and Service Management, Modul University Vienna
Ms Monica Chen	MSc in Luxury Experiences Management 2025	Communications Coordinator, Sales and Marketing at Renaissance Harbour View Hotel Hong Kong
Mr Gordon Kwong	MSc in Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Hospitality 2025, BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2022	Founder & Chief Executive Officer at Konnedle Limited
Ms Karen Ngo	MSc in Luxury Experiences Management 2025	Brands Operations Officer at Langham Hospitality Group
Mr Martin Yang	MSc in Luxury Experiences Management 2025	Marketing and CRM Specialist at Hästens Beds
Ms Ka Wing Chan	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2025	Commis Chef at Roganic Hong Kong
Ms Stephanie Chan	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2025	Assistant Project Officer at HKSAR National Games Coordination Office
Ms Akniyet Nygmet	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2025	Conference & Catering Sales Coordinator at The Ritz-Carlton Abu Dhabi, Grand Canal
Ms Cathy Sun	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2025	Analyst in Hospitality Management at Goldman Sachs (Asia) LLC
Mr Sam To	BSc(Hons) in Hotel Management 2025	Marketing Officer at Hotel ICON

PROFESSORS FOR A DAY

The School extends its sincere thanks to the exceptional industry professionals who recently served as professors for a day.

SPEAKER	TITLE AND COMPANY	TOPIC
Mr Joey AU	Founder and Director, Wine Geek HK	Italian Wine 101
Mr Jock AULD	7th Generation Co-Owner, Auld Family Wines	Australian Wine 101
Ms Regine BOENARDI	Chef De Rang, Roganic Hong Kong	Alumni Sharing – Working in the F&B Industry
Ms Nateerat BOONRAT	HR Director, Food Passion Co., Ltd	Supply Chain Management in Food and Beverages Management
Mr James CAICA	National Sales Manager, Black Type HK	Australian Wine 101
Mr Chanson CHAN	Food Sourcing Manager, Feeding Hong Kong	Introduction to Feeding Hong Kong
Ms Ka Wing CHAN	Commis Chef, Roganic Hong Kong	Alumni Sharing – Working in the F&B Industry
Mr Ron CHAN	Chef, Angliss Hong Kong Food Service	Plant Based Seafood
Mr Shaman CHELLARAM	Senior Director, Colliers	Hotel Investment and Lease Management
Ms Danqun CHEN	General Secretary, Hangzhou Travel Agency Association	Quality Service Management in China
Prof Hongyu CHEN	Professor and Head of the Cultural Heritage Department, School of Humanities, Nanjing University of the Arts	Revitalisation and Innovative Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage
Dr Liang CHEN	Deputy General Manager and Chairman of the Trade Union, Zhejiang Tourism Shengjing Capital Investment Co., Ltd	Hotel Owners' Decision Model of Hotel Brand Selection After High-End Hotel Merger and Acquisition
Ms Ziyun CHEN	Vice GM, Hangzhou Luyun Technology Co. Ltd	Luyun Strategic Positioning and Product System: A Lens of IT and Competitive Advantage
Mr Aska CHEUNG	Senior Marketing Manager – Partnerships & Affiliates, Klook	From Clicks to Trips: How Klook Builds Value Through Digital Marketing and Partnerships
Mr Vallois CHOI	Director of Marketing, Hotel ICON	Managing Marketing in the Hotel and Tourism Industry
Ms Irene CHUNG	Owner, Rosy Sky	Decision-Making in the Hospitality Industry
Ms Novem CHUNG	Assistant Director of Human Resources, Marco Polo Hongkong Hotel	Rosy Sky Hospitality Labour Supply
Ms Jessie CUI	Director of Openings, Luxury and Lifestyle, IHG Hotels & Resorts	Quality Control in IHG
Mr Graeme CUMINE	Restaurant Manager, L'Enclume	Sharing – Working in the F&B Industry (Roganic) Manager of Chan Ka Wing & Regine
Mr Victor DELAOUSTRE	Sales Director, Gourmet en Provence and Plantin Kaviari Ambassador	Introduction to Caviar
Mr Chanin DONAVANIK	Vice Chairman/Executive Committee Chairman, Dusit International	Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management
Dr Vilas DUANGKUMNERD	Lecturer, College of Aviation Development and Training, Dhurakij Pundit University	Airline Catering
Mr Thomas EGLOFF	Director, Food Sourcing, Feeding Hong Kong	Introduction to Feeding Hong Kong
Chef Daniel FENNER	Executive Chef, 181 at Fortnum & Mason	English Afternoon Teas Workshop
Prof Alexandre FERRAGU	Adjunct Professor, ESSEC Business School	Navigating Challenging Times in the Luxury Industry
Ms Ellen FRANKE	General Manager, Patina Osaka	Trends and Issues in Tourism and Hospitality in Japan
Ms Ivy FU	Executive Assistant – Operations, Asia Pacific, Rosewood Hotel Group	Upward Communication
Mr Lingyao GONG	Chairman, Wuxi Fulang Culture Development Group Co., Ltd	Revitalization and Innovative Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage
Mr Wei GUO	Business Development Director, Kantar	Tourism Economics Research: Real-World Applications and Data Collection
Mr Chengcheng HE	General Manager, GreenCloud	Data Collection, Statistics Analysis, and Marketing Research
Dr Charlene HO	Chief Connector, Nutritionexus	Roundtable – Environment Analysis and Strategic Management
Mr Gil HOVAV	Israeli TV Presenter, Culinary Journalist, Restaurant Critic, and Author	Umami Workshop Introduction to Israeli Cuisine
Mr Alex HUELS	Deputy General Manager, Mandarin Oriental Bangkok	Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management
Mr Jan JANSEN	General Manager, Conrad Hong Kong	The Success of Conrad
Mr Anand JINDAL	Group Director, Revenue Management & Distribution, Wharf Hotels	Running Good Revenue Meetings
Mrs Irma KANTOLA	Spouse of Finnish Consul General	European Cuisine Cooking Demonstration – Finnish Food Workshop
Mr Vinson KONG	Learning Development Manager, Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts	Today's Talent and Culture Landscape in the Hospitality Industry
Mr Albert KWOK	Research and Development Manager, Angliss Hong Kong Food Service	Plant Based Seafood
Ms Margaret KWOK	Director of Human Resources, Le Meridien Hong Kong, Cyberport	Sustainability in the Hotel Industry
Mr Jun LAI	SVP Business Growth, DerbySoft	PriceVerse: The Classroom of Hotel Pricing Experience Design
Mr Kenny LAI	CEO, Hong Kong Nameless Digital Carbon Tracking Technology Ltd	Roundtable – Environment Analysis and Strategic Management
Mr Jonathan LAM	Director of Catering, Hotel ICON	Hotel ICON Catering and Events
Mr Matthew LAM	Director of Marketing – Digital, Swire Hotels	Managing Marketing in the Hotel and Tourism Industry
Mr Isaac LAU	Assistant Student Development Officer, UniY, Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong	Recreation Policies and Development in Hong Kong
Mr Sam LAU	Founder and CEO, Total Loyalty Company	Tourism and Hospitality Industries – From Startups to MNC Perspectives
Ms Josephine LEE	Chief Operating Officer, Reed Exhibitions Greater China	Meeting and Exhibition Management
Ms Olivia LEE	Founder, Penticton Pacific Company Ltd	Food and Wine Pairing Exercises
Mr Patric LEE	Director of Finance, The Murray, Hong Kong, a Niccolo Hotel	USALI: Its Local Application Challenges and Solutions
Ms Vivian LEE	Langham Leadership Trainee – F&B, Langham Hospitality Group	Non-Alcoholic Beverage
Prof Willy LEGRAND	Professor, IU International University of Applied Sciences	Is Sustainable Luxury Hospitality a Synergy, a Dissonance
Ms Fian LEUNG	Head of Accommodation Business for Hong Kong & Macau, Trip.com Group	Digital Marketing in Trip.com
Dr Gary LEUNG	CEO, Blue Pin International	Entrepreneurship
Ms Maggie LEUNG	Director of Human Resources, Hong Kong Ocean Park Marriott Hotel	Enhancing Employee Retention and Company Culture Through Strategic Staff Benefits
Ms Niji LEUNG	Ph.D. Student, SHTM	Careers in Event Management
Ms Junie LI	Human Resources Manager, The Ritz Carlton Hong Kong	Application Letter and Resume Writing
Mr Jason LIM	Director of Sales & Marketing, Patina Osaka	Trends and Issues in Tourism and Hospitality in Japan
Mr Chang LIU	General Manager, Haoze Hotels	AI, Human, and Hybrid Services in Hospitality Business
Mr Hao LIU	General Manager, Walling Hotel	Quality Service Management in China
Prof Hongwei LIU	Professor and Vice Dean, School of Business, Anhui University	Tourism Efficiency and Industrial Agglomeration
Ms Dabei LU	Regional Vice President – Greater China, CXG	CX in Luxury
Ms Zhoujing LU	Managing Director, WuYou Cultural and Creative Company	Revitalisation and Innovative Development of Intangible Cultural Heritage

SPEAKER	TITLE AND COMPANY	TOPIC
Mr Rehaan LULLA Prof Jiaying LV	Co-Founder, AlGreen Professor and Vice Dean, International School of Cultural Tourism, Hangzhou City University	Algreen Consumer Behaviour Logic and Cultural Meanings in Heritage Tourism
Mr Jeremy MCCARTHY	Consultant & Former Group Director of Leisure, Spa & Wellness, Mandarin Oriental Hotel Group	Leisure, Wellness, Spa and Hospitality
Mr Grégoire MICHAUD Dr Tingting MO	Founder, Bakehouse Associate Professor, Wenlan School of Business, Zhongnan University of Economics and Law	Entrepreneurship Experimental Design
Ms Daphne MOK	In Charge, Principal Programme Secretary, Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong	Recreation Policies and Development in Hong Kong
Ms Pattaraanong NA CHIANGMAI	Deputy Governor for International Marketing (Asia and South Pacific), Tourism Authority of Thailand	Gastronomy Tourism
Ms Amy NG Mr Lawrence NG	Senior Event Manager, Informa Markets Senior Vice President – Sales & Marketing, Langham Hospitality Group	Informa Markets Event Management Interview Skills
Mr Samuel NG Mr Wee Kee NG	Director of Operations, Travel Industry Authority Vice President Loyalty, Deputy Head Shangri-La Circle, Shangri-La Group	Introduction to Travel Industry Authority Designing Digital Touchpoints for Engagement That Lasts
Ms Yuki NG	Food & Beverage Manger-in-Training, Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong	Alumni Sharing – Working in the F&B Industry
Ms Ricary OSIRO DA SILVA Ms Karen PAGUIO	Learning & Development Manager, Pirata Group Senior Manager – Business Planning & Corporate Affairs, San Miguel Brewery Hong Kong Ltd	Getting the Most Out of Internship Responsible Serving Training
Ms Janice POON Ms Teresa POON	Marketing Communications Manager, Informa Markets Vice President, Quality and Sustainability Operations, Langham Hospitality Group	Informa Markets Event Management Quality League: Elevating Service Excellence through Quality Management at Langham Hospitality Group
Mrs Hathairat PROMPHET Dr Frank QI	Owner, Genesha Ceramic, Sukhothai Lecturer, College of Science & Technology, Ningbo University	Ceramic Painting Workshop Key Factors and Mechanism of Hotel Ranking on City Listing of Major Chinese OTA Platforms
Ms Ai REYNOLDS Prof Gregg ROCKETT	Director of Marketing Communications, Patina Osaka Professor of Practice (Hotel Management), SHTM & Former Vice President of Development, Hilton Worldwide	Trends and Issues in Tourism and Hospitality in Japan Scale Matters in Luxury Hotel Development Innovation & Trends in the Hospitality Industry Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management
Mr Adrian RUDIN Mr Michael SAM	General Manager, Harbour Plaza Metropolitan Shanghai & Metropolitan Residence Shanghai	Digital Marketing in Luxury Service: Practical Perspective
Mr Norman SCHMIEDL Mr Randy SEE Ms Caroline SHEN Mr Ivan SIN Ms Pavornrat SUBHIMAROS	CEO, Columbia Blue Founder, Club Bâtard and Bistro du Vin Director of Sales & Marketing, The Peninsula Bangkok Investigator, Travel Industry Authority Dean, College of Aviation Development and Training, Dhurakij Pundit University	Exploring the Craft of Exceptional Experiences at Sea – Maritime Luxury Entrepreneurship Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management Introduction to Travel Industry Authority Airline Catering
Dr Elton SUN	CEO and Managing Director, Yusu Hotel Management Co., Ltd	Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management
Dr Yan SUN	Associate Professor and Dean, School of International Education, Shanghai Polytechnic University	Choosing Research Method for Tourism Research
Mrs Suphaje SUTHUMPUN Ms Xiaodan TANG Mr Piyaporn TANKONGKARAT Mr Charunrod THEPTEE Mrs Ungkana THOUNTAM Mr Tongyong TIAN Ms Nattapawn TRERUNGKIJ Mr Matthew TSANG Ms Janis TSE	Group Chief Executive Officer, Dusit International General Manager, Zhejiao Murren Ltd Owner, Tung Seng Jua Chinese Cake Shop Chief Supply Chain Officer, Food Passion Co., Ltd Owner, Rest Space Home Café Founder and CEO, LUMOUS Owner, Busaba Dessert Café, Ayutthaya Learning & Development Manager, Conrad Hong Kong CEO, Yates and Partners	Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management Roundtable – Environment Analysis and Strategic Management Chinese Cake Workshop Supply Chain Management in Food and Beverages Management Thai Curry Paste Cooking Workshop Innovative Experience Design Thai Dessert Workshop The Success of Conrad From Global Lounge Operator to Global Guest Experience Consultancy – Key Challenges and Strategies Co-Creation of Experience – A Case of Ngong Ping 360 Getting the Most Out of an Internship Charting the Course in the Digital Transformation: Navigating the Intersection of the Hospitality Industry and Education
Ms Jessie WANG	Global Partnerships Executive, Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation	Young Alumni Career Spotlight
Dr Liang WANG	Associate Professor, School of Management, Zhejiang University	Non-Interaction and Identity Change in COVID-19 Tourism
Ms Sandra WATERMANN Mr Dean WINTER Ms Ada WONG Ms Elaine WONG Ms Sindy WONG Mr Tony WONG	Managing Director, Rosewood Bangkok Managing Director, Swire Hotels Director of Human Resources, Conrad Hong Kong Director, ConferencePro Ltd Head of Tourism and Hospitality, Invest Hong Kong Senior Director – Finance Transformation, Langham Hospitality Group	Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management Changing Consumer Behaviour – Implications for the Hospitality Industry The Success of Conrad A Journey to Become a Professional Event Planner Tourism and Hospitality Industries – From Startups to MNC Perspectives USAL: Its Local Application Challenges and Solutions
Ms Gloria WU Dr Jia WU Ms Yoyo WU Ms Danqian XU	Deputy General Manager, China Travel Services (H.K.) Ltd Lecturer, Xingzhi College, Zhejiang Normal University Senior Project Management Manager, Kantar Head of Operations Support, IHG Hotels & Resorts	Design Culture Tourism Products for Hong Kong Leadership and Value Co-Creation of Village Cadres in Rural Tourism Data Collection, Statistics Analysis, and Marketing Research The Efficiency Revolution in Large-Scale Hotel Operations: From Data Insights to Intelligent Execution
Ms Michelle YAM Dr May YANG Ms Yang YANG Dr Shun YE	Founder and Principal Consultant, Michelle Yam & Co. Founder, Aloha AI Lab Senior Sales Manager, The Peninsula Bangkok Associate Professor, School of Management, Zhejiang University	Building Organisational Culture: Challenges and Opportunities Roundtable – Environment Analysis and Strategic Management Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management A Structured Way of Doing Qualitative Research
Ms Carrie YING Ms Angela YIP Ms Linlin YONG	Cluster Director of People and Culture, Mandarin Oriental Director of Learning & Development, Minor Hotels Senior Manager, Finance Shared Service Center for the Greater China and Mongolia Region, Hilton	Strategic Human Capital Management in Hospitality Asian Paradigm in Hospitality Management Quality Service Management in China
Mr Calvin YUEN	Assistant Vice President, Food & Beverage, Shangri-La Group	ESG in Hotels' F&B
Ms Carmen YUEN Mr Gequan ZHANG	Senior Investigator, Travel Industry Authority Vice President, SSAW Hotels & Resorts	Introduction to Travel Industry Authority Roundtable – Environment Analysis and Strategic Management Quality Service Management in China MGH Experiences
Ms Sijia ZHANG	Assistant Manager – Development, Langham Hospitality Group	MGH Experiences
Ms Xixi ZHENG	Marketing and Communication Manager, Hilton Shanghai	Quality Service Management in China
Dr Yuheng ZHENG	Associate Professor, School of Hotel Management, Tourism College of Zhejiang	Unravelling Internal Dynamics: Leadership, Organisational Climate, and Employee Behaviour in the Hospitality Industry

UPCOMING EVENTS

2026

27
MAR

Event
Organiser
Contact

Career Expo 2026
SHTM
Ms Adelaide Lau
Email: adelaide.lau@polyu.edu.hk

1-4
JUN

Event
Organiser

International Academy for the Study of
Tourism Biennial Conference, Hong Kong
SHTM and International Academy for the
Study of Tourism

5
JUN

Event
Organiser

SHTM Lifetime Achievement Award
SHTM

11-13
JUN

Event
Organiser
Contact

15th Asia Tourism Forum,
Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
SHTM and Mongolia Tourism Organisation
Professor Tony Tse
Email: tony.tse@polyu.edu.hk

11-13
DEC

Event
Organiser
Contact

4th One Belt • One Road • One Tourism
International Conference, Chiang Rai,
Thailand
SHTM and Mae Fah Luang University
Professor Tony Tse
Email: tony.tse@polyu.edu.hk

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