The 27th Council for Hospitality Management Education Annual Research Conference was held in Bournemouth University, hosted by the Department of Tourism and Hospitality, on 22-25 May 2018 with the theme of “Innovation in Hospitality: Connecting all stakeholders to deliver memorable experiences.”

The pre-conference comprised of the PhD Workshop where 17 doctoral students had a valuable opportunity to present their research under the themes of digital technology, service management and talent management. Professor Adele Ladkin shared top tips for PhD success, and leading scholars of each expertise gave insightful and constructive feedback on theory, methodology and contributions to the current hospitality scholarship. The conference sponsor STR Share Centre also provided the delegates a wonderful opportunity to gain the Certification in Hotel Industry Analytics.

On the first day of the conference, delegates were welcomed by the Chair Dr Hanaa Osman and Host Professor Dimitrios Buhalis. The first session was led by Dr Ulrike Gretzel on live branding and its implications on hospitality strategies. The programme then broke into parallel sessions with the overall themes of human resource management and leadership, learning and education in hospitality, digital technology, and the future of hospitality and tourism. Professor Cihan Cobanoglu discussed the various technologies in services, while Dr Iis Tussyadiah raised the current issues of consumer trust on robotics in hospitality. Professor Bruce Tracey introduced the issues of talent management in the current era, highlighting the need for multi-level studies, contingency explanations and cross-disciplinary integrations in research.

Day two began with an insightful discussion on female entrepreneurship in hospitality, highlighting the importance of gender equality in our industry. Various studies such as the impact of social media on firm performance, the career perceptions of millennials on hospitality and tourism and examples of sustainable practices were debated. Further, keynote speakers from industry and academia came together to discuss the global hospitality challenges. Academic views were presented by Professor Fevzi Okumus and Professor Hanqin Qiu, especially on the future of hospitality education and leadership. The reality of the industry was voiced by Dale MacPhee, General Manager of Waldorf Astoria Edinburgh, emphasising the challenges of pricing and staff retention in the dynamic environment.

The final day of the conference highlighted the importance of domestic tourism, introduced new methodologies and identified the missing gaps of research on age diversity, the sharing economy and tourism risks and security. Industry examples and practices were shared in response to the changes in the business environment, introducing new strategies that focus on people and changing the industry image for future talent. The final keynote was delivered by Professor Andrew Lockwood on the nature of service encounter in relation to technology.

Overall, the common topic throughout the conference was the relationship between people and technology, and this highlights the need for our industry and discipline to respond and adapt to the rapidly changing service landscape.

In addition to the academic programme, the host university arranged social programmes for each evening, including cultural and leisure events and various dining experiences that represented the hospitality of Bournemouth. The highlight of the conference was the CHME celebratory party at the Bournemouth Pier, where the delegates were treated to exceptional food and had time to recognise the success of best papers.

As doctoral students, it was our first hospitality research conference and a fantastic and unforgettable experience at that. It was also a chance for us to widen our spectrum and understanding of the current hospitality research, and we had valuable time to network with world class scholars and practitioners, as well as fellow doctoral students around the world. Invaluable insights were gained throughout the three-day conference, and we look forward to the upcoming 28th Council for Hospitality Management Education Annual Research Conference which will be hosted in May 2019 by the renowned University of Greenwich.

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