

Preface

The current book is the outcome of the effort of many people, who participated at the *2nd International Conference organized by the International Association of Cultural and Digital Tourism (IACuDiT)* in Athens, May 21–24, 2015 <http://iacudit.org/Conference2015/>. The theme of the Conference was on the ‘Forms and Norms of Tourism and Culture in the Age of Innovation’. The scope of the conference was to gather latest developments around several key themes, placing at the heart of the discussion the prominent goal of sustainable tourism, as a sector cross-cutting and interacting with cultural, environmental, economic, and social dimensions of our society. Towards this end, efforts were carried out for establishing a fruitful and challenging dialogue, understanding, and interaction among academic researchers and scholars, tourism industry professionals and key practitioners, as well as decision-makers, in order for knowledge and experiences to be creatively shared and synergies to be created. Athens, with its long history of democratic debate, was an ideal setting for this conference, and we really think that it provided a fitting opportunity for an open and productive discussion. In a globalized, digital era, nations seek to retain a sense of identity through their very unique cultures and history.

The Conference was chaired by the International Association of Cultural and Digital Tourism (IACuDiT) and co-chaired by University of Greenwich—UK, Linnaeus University—Sweden, and National Technical University of Athens (NTUA)—Greece.

The International Association of Cultural and Digital Tourism (IACuDiT) is a global network of people, projects, and events that bear on a wide range of issues of concern and interest in cultural and digital tourism, in an era of major global

changes. IACuDiT is a non-profit international association, which values creative, ethical, and progressive action, aimed at the improvement of global hospitality and tourism research on cultural and digital issues. IACuDiT brings together a wide range of academics and industry practitioners from cultural, heritage, communication, and innovational tourism backgrounds and interests. It mainly promotes and sponsors discussion, knowledge sharing, and close cooperation among scholars, researchers, policymakers, and tourism professionals. It is based on the notion that: 'Technological changes do not influence the missions of cultural tourism actors in the areas of promotion and product development, but rather the manner of carrying them out.' It provides its members with a timely, interactive, and international platform to meet, discuss, and debate cultural, heritage, and other tourism issues that will affect the future direction of hospitality and tourism research and practice in a digital and innovational era.

The valuable contributions to the 2nd IACuDiT Conference have formed the content of the current book. This is the amalgam of a variety of contributors, including academic researchers and scholars, industry professionals, and government/quasi-government officials and other key industry practitioners, who will share and highlight tourism industry trends and research gaps from a pragmatic and applied perspective.

On this occasion, we would feel obliged to express our sincere gratitude to the people and organizations for their contributions, help, and support for making the 2nd International Conference of IACuDiT a reality. We would also like to express our sincere appreciation to all our Keynote speakers who have enriched our discussion and questioning around key themes of the conference. In this respect, we would like to address our sincere thanks to *Zefi Dimadama*, Director General of the ICBSS (International Centre for Black Sea Studies); *Georgios Drakopoulos*, Special Advisor to the Secretary General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization and Counsellor in the European Economic and Social Committee; *Amitabh Upadhy*a Professor—Dean Skyline University College, University City Sharjah; and *Hilary du Cros*, Honorary Senior Research Fellow, University of New Brunswick, Canada.

We would like to hope that this conference has added some value by sharing our knowledge and stepping a bit further interdisciplinary communication and understanding, issues that are forming the cornerstone for indulging in future tourist sector's developments.

We would also like to think that we have added some value to the intriguing and fascinating issue of tourism, although we always keep in mind its complexity and exposure to a range of unexpected and unpredictable factors (political, social,

economic, technological, environmental, etc.) that are shaping its future, a fact that was wonderfully expressed by John Steinbeck's words (Nobel Prize, 1962):

A journey is like marriage.

The certain way to be wrong is to think you control it.



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