

Acknowledgments

I wrote my doctoral thesis nine years ago under the supervision of Dan Fesenmaier at Temple University. In it I used search results from Google and user queries from several search engines to examine the structure and characteristics of the so-called online tourism domain. Looking back, my thesis was purely “descriptive” using “secondary” data, which would most likely be viewed as “unorthodox” back then. Today, many of the analytical approaches to understanding the new reality, which is constantly being shaped by information technology, have grown to dominate our everyday conversations about the meaning of knowledge creation. Since my graduation, I have been working with a number of colleagues worldwide on different types of research problems related to IT in travel and tourism, many of which can now be characterized as “data analytics.” While I have benefited a lot from my collaborators in the works we published together, Dan’s influence and support has been tremendous throughout my intellectual development. Notwithstanding his relentless pursuit of rigor and excellence, Dan has huge impact on my way of looking at the world, particularly with his open-mindedness to research and willingness to learn new things no matter how outlandish they appear at the beginning. This book embodies, primarily, Dan’s idea of “moving forward” within the realms of technology, data, design of tourism experience, and the emerging topic of smart tourism.

Besides, I would also like to thank the contributors of this book. While some of them are well-established scholars around the world, several authors are actually quite young, who represent the future of research. I am grateful for the privilege of working with them on this project.

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The origins of this book lie with my early years at Texas A&M University where in 1985 we designed something called the Texas Travel Research Information System (TTRIP), over twenty years of the research conducted by students and staff of the

National Laboratory for Tourism & eCommerce (NLTeC) and with the many researchers associated with the International Federation of Information Technology and Tourism (IFITT) and its annual ENTER conference. Indeed, the foundations of big data, smart systems, and tourism design were imagined by Clare Gunn and others long ago but now have been actualized by many scholars including Hannes Werthner, Arno Scharl, Matthias Fuchs, Wolfram Höpken, Zheng (Phil) Xiang some years ago, and others included in this book, wherein this work has coalesced into a defined field. In this acknowledgment, I would like to thank all the Ph.D. students associated with Texas A&M University and NLTeC during this time including Seong Il Kim, Wes Roehl, James Jeng, Christine Vogt, Kelly MacKay, Yeong-Hyeon Hwang, Ulrike Gretzel, Raymond Wang, Bing Pan, Dan Wang, Florian Zach, Sangwon Park, Jamie Kim, Jason Stienmetz, and Yeongbae Choe for all their hard work, creativity, and support and for their dedication to helping shape the future of tourism research. And, I would like to thank all my colleagues at IFITT and ENTER who I have had the privilege to meet and to learn from during this time. Last, I thank Phil for coordinating this particular volume and all the excellent scholars giving voice to the visions set forth so long ago.

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Concepts and Methods

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