

Preface

The current book of proceedings is the outcome of the effort of a number of people, who participated at the *3rd International Conference organized by the International Association of Cultural and Digital Tourism (IACuDiT)* in Athens, May 19–21, 2016 (<http://iacudit.org/Conference2016/>). The chair of the conference, i.e. IACuDiT is a global network of people, who 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 nonprofit 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, policy makers, 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 Conference was co-chaired by the Skyline University College, United Arab Emirates; the University of Applied Sciences, Austria; and the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), Greece.

The *theme* of the 3rd IACuDiT Conference was on the *Tourism, Culture and Heritage in Smart Economy*. The *scope* of the conference was to shed light on the latest developments in the tourism sector, a sector considered as a key driver for many national and regional economies, cross-cutting cultural, environmental,

political, economic, social and technological aspects of contemporary societies. In this respect, the ultimate goal was to provide a step motivating an interdisciplinary, fruitful, and challenging dialogue that could promote further understanding and interaction among a multidisciplinary academic audience, tourism industry professionals and key practitioners, as well as decision makers. Towards this end, the Conference is touching upon a range of key themes affecting both the tourism sector per se but also sustainable tourism development, in order scientific knowledge but also practical experiences to be creatively shared and synergies to be created.

Based on the nature of the tourism sector and its interaction with many different dimensions of tourist destinations, an interdisciplinary audience of academic researchers and scholars, industry professionals, and governmental officials and other key industry practitioners have contributed to the 3rd IACuDiT Conference. Their valuable contributions have formed the content of the current book, enriching though the perspectives, the context, the approaches and tools that can be used for a thorough understanding, planning and promoting local assets along the lines of sustainability in environmental, economic and social terms.

To all these people who have helped and supported the realization of the 3rd International Conference of IACuDiT and have brought to an end the current editorial effort, we would like to express our gratitude. Special thanks and sincere appreciation are due to all our keynote speakers, for providing valuable input that has enriched discussions and argumentation of the Conference. We would also like to address our gratitude to the Greek Ministry of Tourism and the Hellenic Republic Ministry of Culture and Sports, without the support of which it would not be possible to organize this symposium. Their full understanding, support and encouragement made this task much easier for us. Finally, special acknowledgement goes to the Universities co-chairing and supporting this conference, namely the: Skyline University College, United Arab Emirates; University of Applied Sciences, Austria; and the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA), Greece.

We would like to hope that our ambition to add value to such a complex and intriguing issue as the one of tourism, by shedding some light on its interdisciplinary nature as well as tools and approaches to cope with it, was fraught with success. In any case though, bearing in mind the Henry Miller's saying:

"... one's destination is never a place, but a new way of seeing things",

we would like to hope that the 3rd IACuDiT Conference has contributed to the creation of a fertile ground for interdisciplinary work and new ways of thinking of the current, but also future challenges of the topic at hand.

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